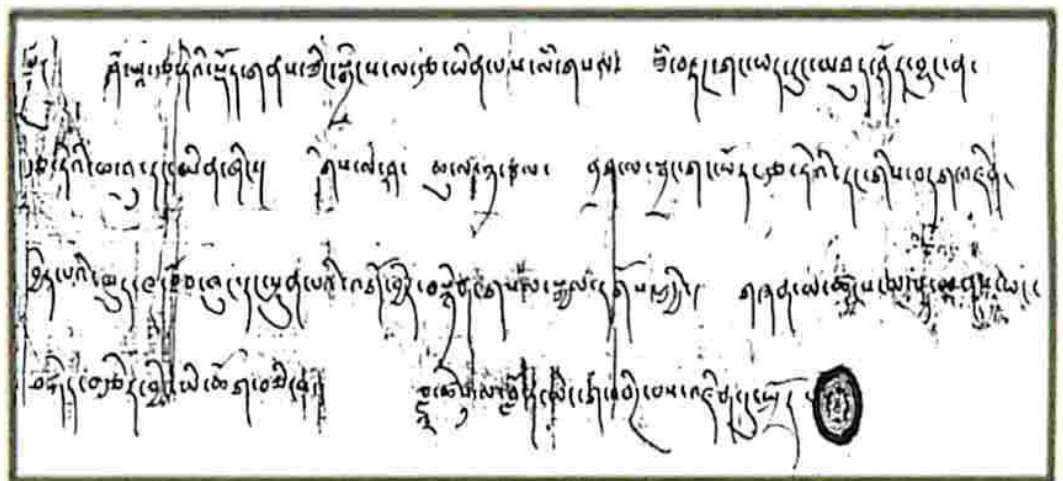
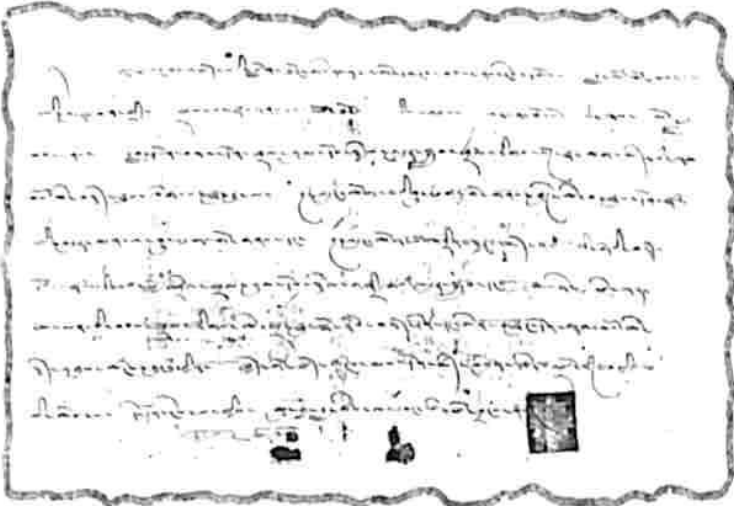


History, Growth and Development of Limboo Language: A Present Context in Sikkim



All the Lho, Moo, Tsong, in high and low status, must keep necessarily (the contents of this notice) in [their] minds. From the successive Chogyal to till today, the ancestors of Drakshar is a minister. In addition to this, from this year [I was] appointed as General official authority or in-charge of the upper, middle and lower part of this land of the Ehutia, Lepcha and Subbha. As per the notification of the Chogyal which entrusted me with the responsibility in regards to the lands, I am giving information to all the jewelry, copper, brass, irons traders as well as the traders from the Subbhas regions that, the leader of the collection of *zogyad* (tax) is appointed to *Tsatsay Subbha*. It is thus necessarily important for above mentioned traders to pay their taxes to *Tsatsay Subbha*. If anyone contradicts the meaning of the above mentioned decree, there is no doubt that [they] will be punished.

Document was send on the 11th day of the 4th month of the water tiger year from the *Dichenkshong*.

Namberi Subba's doe
The land tenure document of the Subba from Dalid, Bhara Khelay

TRANSLATION
All the ministers, officials, stewards, Jongpon, Palace officials and General citizens must remember this. From the reign of 2nd Chogyal of Sikkim Tenzung Namgyal, a man named Domikpa was appointed as Regional Leader. By the consent (of the Chogyal) he was appointed in Dalid, where he resided and was given the authority to the *miser*³ over the people recorded in the registers³. Even to this day, his successor named Namberi, (father and his son) is regional leaders and does the work. Even though they had been the successor, the *miser* thus remains the same. The son of Ichen called Sembhar, who is exempted as he was a domestic servant⁴, but his mother and three brothers are must pay all of their taxes and *walag*⁵ (like) general taxpayers without fail and work under the jurisdiction of Namberi. Other than that the investigations are held by the higher authority regarding all the Subba or Tsong headmen that they should act as the owner of the *miser* in one's own region and it is not permissible to act against the *miser*. As for the *miser* they must stay under their leaders and [fulfill their responsibilities]. If anyone contradicts the meaning of the above mentioned decree, there is no doubt that [they] will be punished [with such punishment as] gorging of eyes and beheading. On account of that law, it has been made valid that [no one] would like to be punished as such [and doesn't act against the law].
From the 12th day of the 10th month of the Earth Pig year (this could be year 1779)

tax, compulsory service, transport goods, buffalo tax, sheep tax, cardamom tax must be paid to government with sincerity.
[This letter was issued] from the Tumlang palace in water bird year

New Document Line
This letter states that a place called Zing Denglatta is a residential place of *Tsatsay Subba*, and a letter has been sent concerning the given responsibility of road clearance and building of bridges to *Tsatsay Subba* (father and son). It is also into his category to keep information of wild animals and provide information regarding phurkha to the equally designated head men of his region. [The letter also states that] other people cannot interfere on above mentioned matters.
Dater: 1st month of 3rd month of lunar calendar
Author/origination: Minister of Kahi.

New Document 10
Nogo and Shakden's Document
In this letter the Shakaden Tashi and Nogo from Galad are stated to be serving as *dumyang* and *Gyappon* for the past Chogyal. It seems there is an internal conflict between *dumyang* and *gyappon*. After the discussion among other officials on above matter, a final conclusion has made that as a regular punishment one must pay one hundred *ma Tam*, whoever breaks the law before this conflict reached the Chogyal. And again a taxpayer must be settling (under the above mention two names) as before.
Dater: 15th day of the 2nd month of Iron dragon year.
Sign by *zhal magpon* (army officer)

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FOREWORD

Articles comprised in this book are very interesting and thought-provoking. In real sense the presentation of author's intellectual exercise in the subject of arts and humanities is very illuminating and freelance in style of writing. Ash Bahadur. Subba has written in a paragraph of one article, "...the Limboos are the victims of situation for all time. They have significant role in shaping up the history of Sikkim from time immemorial." It is a mind-catching tone of voice dripping wet from the corner of the heart of a keen observer of the society. Being a keen observer of the little known society in the Indian context I also do feel in case of my society; it is like spontaneous sprinkling of the sea water. All of the language lovers of the world do agree that language is the key of identity of the society. A linguistic community always looks into the inherent identity of their language; and does utmost exercise for preservation and further development at any cost. Even they do battle for identity of their own. For good example anybody can collect information from the Bodo society that happened during the Roman Script movement of 70's and the Bodoland movement of 80's decade. To speak, among the Bodos language movement for safeguarding linguistic identity was started since the early period of 20th century and still the struggle is remain continuing in various forms and phases. He has recalled society's deep aspiration in his article. The article entitled "The Pre- History of Sikkim and Limboos" is a good presentation which recounts history and identity of the Limboo tribe of Sikkim from historical perspectives. Lots of articles have been dedicated to the presentation for raising the voice for linguistic identity of the minority languages of Sikkim. I observe, in all the articles Subba has made a prolific discussion from sociological as well as socio-linguistic point of view. A good job has been fairly

exhibited with facts and figures in terms of academic and social responsibility.

Date: Friday, 8th July, 2016

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Preface and Acknowledgements

This book deals with the Languages in general and Limboo language in particular. It has focussed on the linguistic scenario of Sikkim and its adjoining areas like Nepal, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Dooars and so on. It has revealed the language education system of the past and existing one in the schools and colleges of Sikkim.

Limboo is one of the non-schedules and tribal languages of Sikkim. It is a definitely endangered language. An attempt has been made to throw some light on the origin, development vis-avis the present status of language and linguistics along with the reasons of endanger-ness and an attempt has been made to provide measures to safeguard it from extinction. It is an anthology which contains articles having mention of Limboo folklores, history etc. It is widely accepted fact that the folklore may not strictly adhered to single community, it may be common to various communities of the given time and place too. My intention is to expose and dig out indigenous knowledge, origin, customs and traditions of Limboo community along with their history through these topics. The history chapter deals with role played by the kings during their monarchical period and highlighted the vivid socio-economic status and it includes crucial role played in the formation of welfare modern state by Limboos during the Namgyal dynasty. Some of the events mentioned in the history seriously need evidences and good number of references. I hope that the historians, linguists, researchers and academicians and readers may find out their way to fulfil my curious desires in due courses of time. I have failed to write the events due to the inadequate primary and secondary sources though they are worth mentioning here to be exposed.

This book is dedicated to my beloved father late Pancha Lal Subba and mother late Purni Maya Subba who brought me up and educated me to this level. Credit goes to my respected brothers Mr. B.B.Subba, Special Secretary and Mr. B.R. Subba, Additional Secretary to the Government of Sikkim and sisters who encouraged me to introduce this first book. I am equally indebted to my friend Dr. P. C. Basumatary, Associate Professor, Bodoland University, Kokrajhar, Assam for writing short and sweet *Foreword* for this book. I have an opportunity to appreciate Dr. Durga P. Chhetri, Associate Professor, Sikkim University for his highly valuable suggestions for the publication of this book. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. B.L. Subba, Namchi Government College for his valuable suggestions and encouragement in bringing out this book. I acknowledge all the esteem publishers, editors for the republication of my articles published in those edited books, journals and magazines and so on in this book. They are ever my sources of inspiration to start writing research and academic articles. They deserve my sincere and special thanks. I am also obliged to Mr. Nima Sherpa, Office Superintendent, Sikkim Government College, Tadong for his endless and encouraging moral support for bringing up this book in this stage.

I extend my sincere thanks to Mr. Bikash Sharma, Assistant Professor, Sikkim Government College, Tadong for the correction of articles.

I owe Ms. Asha Subba, Assistant Professor, SGC Tadong for sparing her valuable time when I was busy preparing this work. My beloved wife, Mrs. Anju Pradhan also deserves special thanks for her patience in providing me tea, breakfast, food and the like. I extend my hearty gratitude to *Gamma Publication*, Darjeeling for setting, printing and binding etc

and *The Pancha-Purni Publication*, Barakhelay, Soreng for the publication of this book in such a short span of time.

I would like to express deep sense of gratitude to the officials of Language Section, HRDD, the Government of Sikkim for providing data related to my work. I extend my special gratitude to my respondents for their valuable interview, time, etc.

Last but not the least, I apologise that at one point readers may not feel convenient as some sentences have spoken the bitter truths which are to be accepted and look forward in positive way and they are written as per the prior references cited by the eminent scholars of various disciplines. Feed backs and healthy criticisms are expected.

SEWARO

Date: 10.08.2016

Ash Bahadur Subba
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Glossary

Bungthing (Lep.): Lepcha shaman

Chang (Tib.): Sikkimese Limboo

Chogyal (Tib.): Religious head

Dewan (Hindi): Chief Administrator

Dzongpens (Tib.): Regional overlord

Denzong (Tib.): Valley of Rice or Sikkim

Durbar (Hindi): Durbar

Kazi (Tib.): Sikkimese Aristocrat

Jhakri (Nep.): Shaman

La:ng (Lim.): Dance

Lho-men-tshongsum(Tib.): Treaty of ritual blood brotherhood among Bhutia, Lepcha and Limboo

Lungyem (Lim.): Stone-age or erected stone

Manghim (Lim.): Worship place of Limboo

Na-ong (Lep.): An extinct sub-clan of Lepcha

Mondals(Hindi/Nep.): Village headman

Mon(Lep): Lepcha

Mundhum(Lim.): The Limboo philosophy or sacred narratives

Munism(Lep.): Animistic religion of Lepcha

Pa:lam(Lim.): A type of Limboo traditional song

Phaktanglungma(Lim.): Mount Kanchanjunga

Phedangma(Lim.): A multi-purpose shaman of Limboos

Samba(Lim.): A Limboo Priest

Sangha(Pali): The Buddhist Monastic Body

Sawbwa(Burmese) or Subha(Lim.): Village head of Limboos

Singkhim(Lim.): wooden house

Tageraningwa?phuma(Lim.): The Supreme Goddess of
Limboos

Tsong/Tshong(Tib.): The Limboos of Sikkim

Tumyehangs(Lim.): Limboo civil society

Samphimma lung(Lim): Stone as offering place for local deities

Yakthung(Lim.): Limboo/ Subba/ Tsong/Tshong

Yakthungpa:n(Lim.): Limboo language

Yumasamyo(Lim.): Animistic religion of Limboo

Yeba(Lim.): A tantric type Limboo shaman

Abbreviations

BCE: Before the Common Era

BS: Bikram Sambat

CBSE: Central Board of Secondary Education

DESME: Department of Economics, Statistics and Monitoring and Evaluation

HRDD: Human Resource Development Department

IBL: Indian Broadcasting Limited

INC: Indian National Congress

IPR: Information and Public Relations

MHRD: Ministry of Human Resource Development

NEC: North-East Council

OBC: Other Backward Class

OSCE: Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

PACE: Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

PG: Post Graduate

RTE: Right to Education

SJP: Sikkim Janata Parishad

SSP: Sikkim Sangram Parishad

SU: Sikkim University

TB: Tibeto-Burman

UGC: University Grants Commission

UT: Union Territory

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

VSNL: Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited

Introduction

A lot of introduction of Limboos and their language has been made so far in different chapters of this book. So, without much stressing on that let me throw light on the various chapter-wise subjects. The very first chapter has made an attempt to focus on the history of Limboos in Sikkim. As per the legends, they are aborigines, autochthones, tribes and living before there was Sikkim. Limboos find themselves in the history of Sikkim sometimes as son, some more times as soft targets and still remained as the victims for all times. They have lost more than what they achieved. They were one of the King makers to establish the Namgyal Dynasty. They had potential to play a key role in establishing the socio-economic developments and maintaining peace and integrity in the state. As Sikkim has an unexplored history, related data for writing history are not abundantly available.

As this book is all about the language, the Limboo language seems to be more particular to put in the discussion. The language of Limboos is as old as Limboos. The origin of Limboo is not exactly known. But, we can assume that it is one of the oldest language belonging to sub-group of Himalayan Kirati language of Tibeto-Burman Language family which is comparable to Burmese, Tibetan and some languages of North Eastern India. The large chunk of Limboo speakers are in Limbuwan province of Nepal followed by Sikkim. There are approximately 3, 33000 Limboo speakers in Limbuwan and 34, 292(Census, 2001) speakers in Sikkim state but in other states of India have almost lost their indigenous language. An eminent linguist, Mark Turin has mentioned that Darjeeling at one time had more Limboo speakers in comparison to Sikkim.

In Sikkim, the use of script started at Hee-Martam (west district) in 1737 by Srijonga II. Due to the sanction of prohibition of use of script once more time by the then administration, the Limboo community could not continue it and remained silent till the advent of Lal Shore Sendang. In 1951-52, three social leaders Tilok Singh Nugo, Lal Man Nugo and Bharna Dhoj Tamling from West Sikkim emerged to take care of the Limboo language. They apprise the then Chogyal Tashi Namgyal for the formal Limboo Language teaching in the schools of Sikkim. Their dream was fulfilled only in 1967. Initially, the formal Language education started with single teacher. The recognition of Limboo language as one of the Official Languages of Sikkim has encouraged academic field to some extent. The aspiring students got an opportunity to write their examination as one of the subjects in class X and XII. Just because of this language, many aspirants got employment in teaching and other jobs. Presently, it is taught in both Under Graduate and Post Graduate levels.

Limboos are animistic in faith and belief system. They do not worship idol but worship the nature. They have distinct culture, customs and traditions. *Mundhum* is their philosophy and way of life. It is comprised of oral sacred narratives. It is a ritual language or classical language mostly handed down from one generation to another generation through oral tradition. So far, *mundhum* has remained as unwritten epic. It is a subject of all knowledge. Effort is being made to translate those *mundhums* into English, Hindi etc. for exposure. It cannot be easy task for the common Limboo people because it has remained a long tradition of narrating *mundhums* in classical language. Some of the educated shamans are engaged in the said work.

Media is always an important tool for the empowerment for any nation. Media has played a crucial role in developing

the communication system through language and in shaping up the society. During the monarchy, Darbar Ghosna or royal proclamation was done through the Government Gazette. The Sikkim Herald was introduced in 1956 during the reign of Sir Tashi Namgyal. In Sikkim, media and journalism started with the English newspaper called 'Bulletin' in 1956 which was introduced by the Information Service of India, Gangtok. The 'Kanchendzonga' edited by Nakul Pradhan and Kashi Raj Pradhan was a first monthly Nepali magazine published in 1957 which was the landmark in the history of journalism in Sikkim. The All India Radio, Gangtok was established during 1980s which was another means to connect the rural masses. It started with the Hindi, English and Nepali programmes. Computer was also introduced in 1980s for better connectivity in the state. Government has encouraged the regional languages of Sikkim in the field of media and journalism aiming to include them in mainstream.

In 2014, a survey was done to find out the number of Limboo reading students in the government and private schools. Data was collected from the concerned cell of Human Resource Development Department as well as from 100 schools of the state. Out of 100 schools, 40 schools (the maximum number of Limboo reading students) were selected from the west and 60 schools from rest of the state. It is observed that there were only 103 students in pre-primary, 189 in class I and 186 in class II in 100 schools. Study tells us that any time soon the Limboo reading students may disappear from the schools of Sikkim. It is feared that many language teachers have to loss their job.

Globalization has many effects on minority language like Limboo. It has affected the culture, customs and traditions at large. Indigenous and the minority communities are the main

bearers of linguistic and cultural diversity in any given place. It is quite obvious that linguistic and the cultural genocide are triggered mainly by modernization and globalization.

Although the language shift is a common phenomenon, it is very difficult for the survival of such languages which have very small number of speakers. They are more vulnerable to extinction in the age of modernisation and globalisation. It is an excerpt from one the chapters of this book, "In Sikkim, Limboo are mostly bilingual in Nepali and Limboo in both rural and urban areas because the Nepali is a lingua-franca of Sikkim. Migration from rural area to urban area is one of the factors of language shift in this community. There is a language shift from Limboo to Nepali or English which is common in educated section of Limboos. Majority of Limboos who migrated from the rural to urban areas have already lost their language. Limboo is a minority language which tends to shift to the dominant language and merged with the larger group like Nepali and English. Language shift to the local dominant language is due to the social and political factors." The process of language shift takes place due to the mixed culture or mixed society in any given area. The inter-caste marriage has become the biggest challenge to them. The process of Aryanisation has largely influenced Limboos to shift their language into the dominant Nepali language. The educated middle class people always make a choice to opt dominant languages like English, Hindi, Nepali and so on for the employment opportunity. The language attitude and word economy are some of the factors which has made Limboo as an endangered language.

The Limboo community and its language alone cannot survive. It should be widely spoken by other communities irrespective of gender, caste, religion etc. Each community member should have positive attitude and should always value their language.