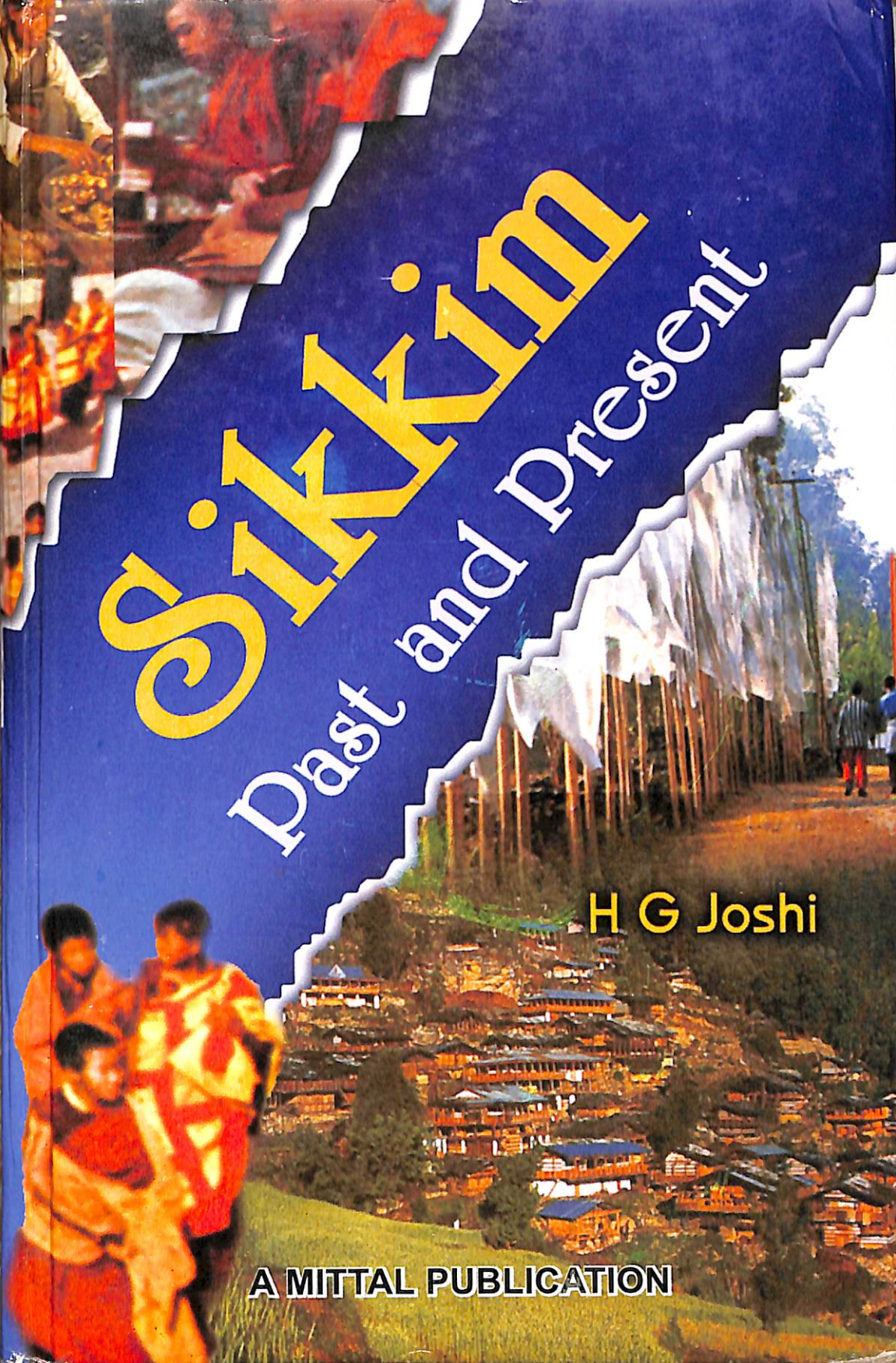
Sikkim
Past and Present
H G Joshi
A MITTAL PUBLICATION

SIKKIM

PAST AND PRESENT

Edited by

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PREFACE

Sikkim, an erstwhile Himalayan Kingdom became a state of Indian Union in 1975. Tibet, Nepal, and Bhutan all touch its borders. Here, the scenic beauty of mighty snow-capped peaks, such as the 28,162-foot Kanchenjuga on the Nepal-Sikkim border, mingles with the romanticism of an historical past. There are huge, pine-covered forests bordering terraces of rice. Sikkim's simple, sturdy, and struggling people have preserved a distinct cultural and historical identity. Its villages of quaint wooden buildings huge rugged Himalayan slopes, lights of little hamlets glitter like a myriad of glow-worms in the evening. Old Buddhist monasteries perch on rocky shelves beneath the eternal snows. A mule train picks its way over the sharp rocks that pave the old trade route to Lhasa, Tibet; for here in Sikkim, is a past living in the present.

From Sikkim's easily traversed passes, which give access to the Tibetan Chumbi Valley, the comparatively low (15,200 feet) and gently graded approaches of the Nathu La (Nathu Pass) lead directly to the core region of Tibet around Lhasa. Sikkim occupies a commanding position over the historic Kalimpong-Lhasa trade route, the subject of a continuous succession of international arguments and treaties.

Due to mountains peculiarities, modern infrastructure development is a tough task involving huge expenditure. Under the existing agro-climatic conditions, horticulture, floriculture, off-season vegetables and orchids have flourishing potential. Salubrious hilly climate of Sikkim can boost the exploitation of tremendous potential of tourism industry. Forest-based eco-friendly industries, and other traditional handicrafts may prove an asset to a less developed economy of Sikkim.

The present book, a multi-disciplinary study, portrays different aspects of Sikkim—its history, politics, economy and sociology in entirety. Organised in seven chapters, this volume may likely prove a handy and compact encyclopaedia on Sikkim. Researches and academics in different streams of social sciences will find it useful and informative.

To make the work comprehensive, information is liberally drawn from various authoritative sources. Hence no claim of originality except in way of presentation. Though every care is taken to make it foolproof, we will appreciate if our attention is drawn towards any shortcoming that may have crept in inadvertently.

We are deeply beholden to all those, whose views and works are cited or substantially borrowed. All my friends, colleagues and family members deserve my deep sense of gratitude for their moral support, assistance and patronage. Finally, I am indebted to Shri K.M. Rai Mittal for his inspiration and also undertaking publication of this book.

Editor

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SIKKIM: AN OVERVIEW

Area	: 7,096 sq. km	Population :	540,493 (288,217 Male + 252,276 Females)
Capital	: Gangtok	Principal Languages :	Lepcha, Bhutia, Nepali and Limbu

Density : 76 persons per sq. km.

History and Geography

The early history of Sikkim starts in the 13th century with the signing of a brotherhood treaty between the Lepcha Chief Thekong-thek and Tibetan prince Khe-Bhumsa at Kavi in north Sikkim, historical visit of revered saints at Yuksam in 1641 in West Sikkim and beginning of Namgyal dynasty in Sikkim in 1642. With the march of history, events also brought a change from monarchy to democracy and Sikkim became an integral part of the Indian Union in 1975. Sikkim lies in the heart of the towering Eastern Himalayas; and is bounded by Nepal in the west, Bhutan in the south east, Tibet in the north east and the district of Darjeeling (West Bengal) in the south. Sikkim has a varied topography, with the elevation ranging from 800 feet. Most of the 7,300 sq. km. of Sikkim consists of mountainous terrain, interspersed with ravines and green valleys. The two main rivers are Tista, originating from the Tsolham Lake in North Sikkim; and Rangit, originating from the Rathong Glacier in West Sikkim.

Khanchenjunga situated on Sikkim's western border with Nepal, dominates the land with its awe-inspiring beauty and majesty and its splendid height of 28,208 feet which makes it the third highest mountain in the world. There are over

4,000 species of different plants. Forests consisting of fir, oak, sal, chestnut, birch, maple etc., cover almost a third of Sikkim. There are also varieties of moss, forn, bamboo profusely in the alpine zones, covering entire hillsides with their splash of attractive colours.

Agriculture

State's economy is basically agrarian. Maize, rice, wheat, potato, large cardamom, ginger and orange are principal crops. Sikkim has the largest area and highest production of cardamom in India. Ginger, potato, orange and off-season vegetables are other cash crops. Since the area available for cultivation constitutes only 11 to 12 per cent of total land utilization in the State, scope of increasing production through area expansion is limited. Thrust in agriculture development, therefore, has been to maximize productivity and net income per unit area. Emphasis, at present, is being given for development of commercial and horticulture crops and floriculture is also being promoted. Intensive agriculture is being followed with adequate support of inputs.

Industry

Sikkim has been declared as industrially backward and the Department of Industries has launched a number of promotional schemes. In order to plan Survey Reports' have been prepared in respect of two of the four districts. The Industries Department has laid emphasis not only on the promotion and development of various types of small and tiny industries, but is also generating employment opportunities by transforming the unemployed local persons into successful entrepreneurs. Government Institute of Cottage Industry at Gangtok provides training to young boys and girls in traditional arts and crafts and also runs a sales counter.

Temi Tea Estate, the only tea estate in Sikkim with an area around 400 acres has earned great reputation both in domestic as well as foreign markets for its superior quality tea. A number of industrial units have sprung up in the State. They produce fruit jam and juice, bakery products, beer, matches, washing soap, plastic goods, wrist watches, tannery,

leather goods, electric cables, barbed wires and industrial jewels.

At the same time consistent efforts have been made to promote and preserve traditional arts and crafts such as wood carving, carpet weaving *thanka* painting and traditional type of handloom (*Lepcha* weaving) etc.

Irrigation and Power

During the Seventh Plan period (1985 to 1990) many new irrigation schemes for providing assured water both for kharif and rabi cropping were taken up and to avoid damages to open channels due to landslide, concrete hume pipes and HDPE pipes in sinking areas, were used extensively within this period. An additional irrigation potential of 6,359 hectare was created and corresponding 5,530 hectare of potential was utilised. The State has initiated steps to prepare a master plan for irrigation in the entire State in collaboration with the Agriculture Finance Corporation. A 200 kw micro hydel scheme at Lachung in North Sikkim has been commissioned. Two more similar schemes are to be taken up during the Eighth Plan period in a phased manner. The total power potential of the State is about 8,000 mw.

Transport

Roads : Gangtok is connected by road with Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Siliguri and other centres and also with all the district headquarters within Sikkim. Road length in the State is 2,383 km.

Railways : The two closest railway stations are Siliguri (114 km) and New Jalpaiguri (125 km) connecting Kolkata, Delhi, Guwahati, Lucknow and other important cities in India.

Aviation : There is no airport in Sikkim. Bagdogra airport in West Bengal caters to the State which is 124 km and approximately five hours drive from Gangtok. Bagdogra has regular Indian Airlines services from Kolkata and Delhi and also the north-east. Sikkim is to have its first airport in 2005.

Festivals

Sikkim's population is comprised of the three principal ethnic communities of the Bhutias, the Lepchas and Nepalese. Maghey Sankranti, Durga Puja, Laxmi Puja and Chaita Dasai,

are the main festivals celebrated by the Nepali community. Fang Labsei, Lossong and Losar are celebrated by the Bhutia community. Namsoong is celebrated by the Lepcha community.

Tourist Centres

Some important tourist centres are Gangtok, Bakhim, Yumthang, Dubdi, Dzongu, Varsey, Tashiding, Rumtek monastery, Pemayantse monastery, Changu and Phodong monastery. There are 200 monasteries in Sikkim.

Area, Population and Headquarters of Districts

District	*Area*	*Population*	*Headquarters*
1. East	954	244,790	Gangtok
2. North	4,226	41,023	Mangan
3. South	750	131,506	Namchi
4. West	1,166	123,174	Gyalshing

University : Sikkim Manipal University of Health, Medical and Technological Sciences, Gangtok.

Administration : Sikkim has a unicameral legislature.

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SIKKIM: ABODE OF SNOWS

Small but beautiful, Sikkim is situated in the Eastern Himalayas. Spread below the Mount Khangchendzonga, (8534 mts.) the third highest Mountain in the world and revered by the Sikkimese as their protective deity. Sikkim shares her borders with Tibet in the North, Bhutan in the East, Nepal in the West and State of West Bengal in the South.

With an area of 7,100 sq. kms. and measuring approximately 100 kms. from North to South and 60 kms. from East to West, Sikkim has a population of 540,493 (2001 Census) with a density of 76 persons per sq. kilometre. The elevation ranges from 244 mts. to over 8540 mts. above sea-level. Amidst the grandeur of the mountain peaks, lush valleys, fast flowing rivers, terraced hills, Sikkim offers her visitors a rare and singular experience. Within a matter of hours one can move from the sub-tropical heat of the lower valleys to the cold of the rugged mountain slopes that reach up to the areas of perpetual snow.

The Grandeur of Gangtok

A perfect symbol of the confluence of the past and present is Gangtok—the capital of Sikkim. Built on the flank of a ridge, Gangtok is 1600 mts. above sea level. The town's unique ambience derives from the happy blend of tradition and modernity. Alongside the deeply felt presence of stupas and monasteries, Gangtok also bustles like any other town. But with many of these oasis of quiet, those unexpected pockets of peace exist.

Places of Interest In and Around Gangtok

Directorate of Handicrafts & Handloom—Centre for promoting and keeping alive the traditional Arts & Crafts, a veritable storehouse of exquisite Carpets, Blankets and Shawls in 'Leocha' weaves.

Deer Park—A heaven for nature lovers, where the Red Panda and fleet footed deer can be observed in their natural habitat. An imposing status of the Buddha is situated here. (Open from 8.00 am—11 am. on working days and 8.00 am. to 5.00 pm. on holidays).

Do-Drul Chorten (Stupa) — One of the most important Stupas of Sikkim, built by Trulsi Rinpoche, head of the Nyingma order, containing rare mandalas, of Dorji Phurpa (Bajra Kilaya), Holi Books, Mantras and encircled by 108 prayer wheels.

Research Institute of Tibetology -- Renowned worldwide centre for study of Buddhist philosophy and religion, a treasure house of rare Thankas, Statues, over 200 Buddhist icons and prized objects of art. (Closed on Second saturdays and Government holidays).

Orchid Sanctuary—An exotic sight of over 200 species of orchids set amidst beautiful landscape. Situated just below the institute of Tibetology.

Enchey Monastery—3 kms from Gangtok, this 200 year old Monastery was built on the site blessed by the great tantric master Lama Druptab Karpa, known for his flying powers. Religious masked dance is performed on the 18th and 19th of the twelfth Tibetan month.

Orchidarium—Maintained by the Department of Forests, one can see a spectrum of colourful orchids and other rare tropical and temperate plants.

Rumtek Monastery—A must for every visitor. Situated 24 kms. away the seat of the "Kagyu order' a close replica of the original Kagyu in Tibet. Here one can find some of the most unique art objects of the world.

Tashi View Point—Situated 8 kms from Gangtok, this sight offers a breathtaking view of the majestic Mount Khang-chendzonga and Mount Siniolchu.

Phodong Monastery— 38 kms from Gangtok, one of the six major monasteries of Sikkim. About 4 kms from Phodong is the uniquely architectured Labrang Monastery.

Jewels of Faith

One of the sacred objects of worship to the Sikkimese is Bumchu a sacred pot containing holy water, blessed by a Buddhist saint in the 17th century. Today even after 300 years the water remains as fresh as before. Religion forms the main thread in the fabric of life of the Sikkimese. With close to 194 monasteries and Mani Lhakangs the influence of Buddhism is all pervasive. Even in the remote mountain regions, near wind-swept summits, fringing monasteries or private houses, flutter the ubiquitous prayer flags.

The main monasteries are Pemayangtse and Tashiding in West Sikkim. Enchey in Gangtok and Rumtek near Gangtok. Ralong in South and Phodong and Tolung in North Sikkim. Influencing the lifestyle and cultural heritage of the people each monastery is host to a number of festivals which are a singular experience in pomp and pageantry. The lama dances complete with fierce masks, gorgeous brocade costumes, music and chants is at once evocative and out of this world.

The Sikkimese Nepali is the inheritor of the legacy of Hindu traditions. The visitor to Sikkim is spellbound by the colourful festivals of Dasain/Tewar celebrated by the Hindu Nepali population.

Invocations are made to Goddess Durga and barley seeds are planted in prayer rooms. Their other important festival is Dipawali, a rare treat.

Months of Festivals

According to the Buddhist calendar with approximate months corresponding to the English calendar all festivals are mentioned below:

Saga Dawa	Full moon of the 4th month, around end of May and early June.
Drukpa Tseshi	4th day of the 6th month, around August.
Pang Lhabsol	15th day of the 7th month, around end of August-September.

sun at those altitudes, the new snow soon disappeared, but as it had made everything rather uncomfortable, we decided not to move camp that day.

We were now really entering unexplored country, as I wished to go down the Kangchen glacier to the source of the Rungnu-chhu, and thence to follow the stream to Ringen. None of my coolies had ever been over the ground, and as I found to my cost, there was not even a track. The first two marches were very easy, as we kept to the centre of the glacier, which we found quite smooth and very good going, quite unlike most of the other glaciers I have been over, either those on the south of the Giucha-la, which are completely cut up, have enormous holes in them, and over which it would be quite impossible to march; the Zemu glacier, which is much the same, or the glaciers in the extreme north of the Lonak Valley, which again appear more like a rough sea suddenly frozen into enormous hummocks of ice.

This difference in the Kangchen glacier I am unable to account for, unless it may be that the ice, running as it does in a very narrow valley, is of a much greater depth, and also that the valley lying east and west gets less sun and escapes the full force of the south-west monsoon. It is a curious phenomenon and would be well worth investigation, but its solution will, I think, require the study of experts in such matters. This glaciers ends at an elevation of 12,100 feet in an ice cliff, from a cavom in which the Rungnu takes its rise, and here my worst difficulties began.

The cliff was topped with *debris* and boulders of every size just on the balance, which at any moment might go down with a crash to the bottom, and it was no easy matter to climb down myself without bringing tons and tons on the top of me, and more difficult to get all my coolies and baggage down. Only one man could come at a time, a long process, but it was eventually carried through without mishap. At the foot of the ice cliff I pitched my camp in the midst of rhododendrons and pines.

Looking directly up the valley was the end of the glacier I had just descended, gloomy and forbidding, and on the right, to the north, was the limit of the glacier from the 19,000-

foot gap, adding to the scene of desolate grandeur; for I think there can be no more wild and desolate scene than these moraines, in which the large glaciers end in utter confusion, giving the impression of a battlefield where giants and titan monsters have torn up huge masses of rock to hurl at one another, with the constant fall of stones as the ice melts, and the weird feeling that everything in addition is quietly though imperceptibly on the move.

On close examination, the ice is very beautiful, and the ice caves out of which the river rushes are magnificent. The colouring of the ice was lovely, varying in every shade of green and from pale turquoise blue to almost black in the depths of the caves, with opalescent tints where the sun's rays struck its edges. Immediately surrounding me was a carpet of the Alpine vegetation, so lovely in these hills, and amongst the undergrowth I found oak and silver ferns, anemones, primulas, gentians of every shade of blue, buttercups, violas and innumerable other flowers, with her and there magnificent rhododendrons and silver pines, though the latter were still stunted at that elevation.

Beautiful as the vegetation is, it makes travelling both arduous and difficult. There was no track of any kind, the bottom of the valley was a mass of rocks strewn in every direction and densely covered with dwarf rhododendron, which necessitated cutting every foot of the way, and progress was in consequence extremely slow, sometimes not three miles in a day. To add to our discomfort the fine weather broke and a constant drizzle set in.

I knew my way out lay down the stream, but whether it was feasible was another matter. We struggled on for several days till we came to a gorge running down from the 17,000 feet gap which lies between the magnificent snow peaks Siniolchu and Simvoo, and which at this point had cut into a water-worn chasm 300 feet to 400 feet deep, and some 40 feet to 50 feet wide, with absolutely perpendicular sides as slippery as glass.

Here we were obliged to wait till we could find a way across. There was no camping ground, not even room to pitch a tent, only some narrow ledges of rock, but here perforce I

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HISTORY OF SIKKIM: A HIMALAYAN KINGDOM

The Himalayan state* of Sikkim, with its population of about 4 lakhs was most significant in view of its geopolitical implications. Tibet, Nepal, and Bhutan all touch its borders. Here, the scenic beauty of mighty snow-capped peaks, such as the 28,162-foot Kanchenjunga on the Nepal-Sikkim border, mingles with the romanticism of an historic past. There are huge, pine-covered forests bordering terraces of rice. Sikkim's simple, sturdy, and struggling people have preserved a distinct cultural and historical identity. Its villages of quaint wooden buildings huge rugged Himalayan slopes, lights of little hamlets glitter like a myriad of glow-worms in the evening. Old Buddhist monasteries perch on rocky shelves beneath the eternal snows. A mule train picks its way over the sharp rocks that pave the old trade route to Lhasa, Tibet; for here in Sikkim, is a past living in the present.

From Sikkim's easily traversed passes, which give access to the Tibetan Chumbi Valley, the comparatively low (15,200 feet) and gently graded approaches of the Nathu La (Nathu Pass) lead directly to the core region of Tibet around Lhasa. The country occupies a commanding position over the historic Kalimpong-Lhasa trade route, the subject of a continuous succession of international arguments and treaties. Because of its location astride this vital trade artery, both India and

* This chapter portrays the picture of Sikkim, an erstwhile Himalayan Kingdom, before it became a state of the Indian Union in 1975.

Tibet have frequently intervened in its internal affairs. The British Indian government particularly exerted pressure upon Sikkim for access to Central Asia. It is a tribute to Sikkim—not only to the erstwhile kingdom, but to Sikkim as the political core of the larger former kingdom—that the Kalimpong-Lhasa route between India and China remained open under Sikkimese control.

Aside from the trade route with its strategic and historical significance, Sikkim's location favours a dynamic role in international relations between the two great powers of Asia— India and China. Historically, Sikkim has figured prominently as a trade link between the Indian subcontinent and the heartland of Asia. More recently, it has been playing an important role in securing the Indian subcontinent against Communist aggression.

The study of the political geography of Sikkim must necessarily delve into two major aspects of the kingdom. First, the evolution of the Sikkim national state may be dealt with principally as factors of the political area. Second, the politico-geographic problems of the state itself, as one of the critical regions of the world, can be analysed as an example of geostrategic location.

Historic Evolution of Sikkim

Sikkim, although settled as early as the thirteenth century by the Lepcha migrants from the Assam hills, came into being as a political entity in 1641. In that year the Lama of Lhasa, with the aid of two other lamas, converted the people of Sikkim to the Buddhist faith and appointed Penchoo Namgyal to be the first king, or *gyalpo*. The newly created kingdom established political relations with the Tibetan government, which had hitherto regarded Sikkim as a dependent vassal state. The first king reigned for 12 years; and little is known of his successor, Chagdor Namgyal, the third king, came to the throne in 1700. The "All-Victorious Thunderbolt Bearer," as his name translates, was a pious Buddhist. He augmented the annual autumn offering to Sikkim's mountain deities by the great masked dance of the lamas, which is still performed. During the region of the fourth king of Sikkim, Chogyel Gyurme (1717-1734), the "All-Victorious Inimitable King of

Religion," hordes of warlike Bhutanese surged into Sikkim from the east, plundering the settlement and carrying off their inhabitants as slaves to Bhutan, the "land of dragons." After his death, Gyurme was succeeded by his minor son. During his minority, Sikkim was governed by a regent from Tibet. The regent reorganised the kingdom's administration, levied annual taxes, and drafted a code of law establishing the rights and duties of the citizens of Sikkim.

In 1780 Tensing Namgyal (the "All-Victorious Preserver of Religious Doctrine"), the sixth king of Sikkim, succeeded to the throne. His reign was ill-started; the territorial integrity of Sikkim was threatened by the frequent attacks of the Bhutanese and Gurkahas on the Kingdom's eastern and western frontiers, respectively. The war-like Gurkhas had conquered Nepal in 1769 and were now seeking to extend their domination to the east in Sikkim. The attack from the east and west forced Sikkim to fight a desperate two-front war against the invaders. In those early years Sikkim was much larger in area. It included the eastern section (Ilam district) of Nepal, the Chumbi Valley of present-day Tibet, and the Ha Valley of Bhutan. Its southern frontier reached the plains of India and included Kalimpong and Darjeeling districts. But strategically placed as it has always been and sandwiched between warring nations, Sikkim lost much of its territory to invading Bhutanese and Nepalese in 1788 and 1789.

Tensing Namgyal's successor was Tsugphu Namgyal, who began his reign in 1793. During the reign of this seventh king, Sikkim came into contact with the British. In 1814 a powerful British force came to the aid of Sikkim; the Gurkhas were defeated, and the subsequent peace treaty (1817) established the Nepal-Sikkim boundary.

In 1835 the king of Sikkim "presented' the hills of Darjeeling "out of friendship" for the Governor General of India, Lord William Bentinck, to the East India Company. Thus, all the land south of the Great Rangit River was ceded unconditionally to India; but the British government granted the king an allowance of 3000 rupees per annum as compensation, and this was raised in 1846 to 6000 rupees.

Tibet, which has so far considered Sikkim as its vassal state, regarded the cession of Darjeeling to the British as an illegal action on the part of the king of Sikkim. Tension resulted between Sikkim and Tibet, and Tibet prohibited Sikkimese monarchs from visiting holy Lhasa more than once in eight years.

In 1849 the maltreatment of high-ranking British officials travelling in Sikkim caused a serious criticize in British-Sikkim relations. Sir Joseph Hooker, a distinguished botanist, was imprisoned while exploring the Lachen region of Sikkim. Finally, British troops advanced to Tumlung, then the capital of Sikkim, and the British government gradually assumed control over much of the Kingdom. On the matters of foreign policy, it exercised complete authority.

Despite territorial losses to Nepal, Bhutan, and British India Sikkim survived as a distinct political entity. By the Treaty of 1861, Sikkim's political integrity as British India's protectorate was confirmed by the British. In 1886 the Tibetans penetrated temporarily into Sikkim. This action prompted the British punitive expedition to Lhasa in 1888, and on the conclusion of the expedition the British Indian government appointed a resident political officer to administer the affairs of the kingdom in conjunction with the local officials. Through its political officer in Gangtok, the British Indian government gained almost complete control of this Himalayan kingdom by reducing the power of the maharajah.

As a protest against the high handedness of the British Resident, the ninth king of Sikkim fled to Tibet in 1892. The quarrel between the king and the Resident Political Officer was eventually settled, and the four Sikkimese monarchs who have reigned since then have been nominally the masters of their realm. The real power has been retained by the political officers, who have their residence at Gangtok, next door to the royal palace. This political administrative measure has safeguarded Sikkim from further aggression by its covetous neighbours to the north, east, and west.

Since the little Himalayan Kingdom, forming a bridge between India and Tibet, was of considerable commercial and

military importance to the British, visitors from Europe and America were allowed into Sikkim only by special permission. Permits from the Indian authorities are still required to visit the kingdom, and in many ways it has now become even more difficult for Americans or Europeans to enter Sikkim.

In 1947, after independence, India inherited the responsibilities of the British in Sikkim, and in 1950 India entered into a new treaty with the present maharaja, Sir Tashi Namgyal. The new treaty makes Indian responsible for Sikkim's external affairs (whether political, economic, or financial), defence, and strategic communication. Furthermore, just as in the British period, India, by treaty, has a representative permanently resident in Gangtok, the capital. The current Indian representative is a senior diplomat.

Sikkim faced two major politico-geographic problems. One the demand for her own people for economic progress and representative government. The other is the pressure of Chinese Communism. In the following sections these problems are analysed from the viewpoint of political geography, taking into consideration the chief physical and cultural attributes working to unite or divide. ("centripetal and centrifugal forces")[1] Sikkim as a state.

Physical Landscape

The natural environment of Sikkim is generally inhospitable, though not sufficiently so as to preclude material advancement by an energetic people. Adverse surface features seriously impede human development over large areas; cultivated land amounts to only a small proportion of the total area of the kingdom. The climate is generally harsh, hampering economic development.

Sikkim is essentially an enclosed basin, nearly 40 miles wide, between two deeply dissected north-south transverse ridges, each of them about 80 miles long. To the west the remarkable Singalila ridge marks the boundary with Nepal and includes the peak of Kanchenjunga (28,168 feet). To the east the crest of the Donkhya range forms the boundary with Tibet. To the north the central basin is cut off from Tibet by

area into 12 dzongs (districts), each under a Lepcha Dzongpon (governor). He had a council of 12 ministers. Phuntshog Namgyal chose Yoksam as his capital.

This ruler had an only son named Tensung Namgyal who was born in 1644 and who succeeded him about 1670. Tensung Namgyal moved the capital to Rabdentse. Tensung was married three times; His first wife was a Tibetan named Numbe Ongmu by whom he had a daughter, Pende Ongmu who was destined to play an important but disastrous role in the history of Sikkim. His second wife was a Sikkimese, Debasam-serpa who bore him a son, Chakdor; and his third marriage was to the daughter of a Limbu Raja. From this union with the Limbuni princess he had two children, a son, Shalngo-Guru, and a daughter, Pende Tshering Gyemu. His reign could be called a marital one but otherwise uneventful.

Chakdor Namgyal, the son of Tensung, whose mother was Sikkimese was born in 1686. He was a youth of 14 when he succeeded his father as ruler about 1700. Trouble arose between him and his eldest sister, Pende Ongmu, who assumed she was entitled to the accession of the throne. She thereupon engaged and allowed a Bhutanese force to invade Sikkim so as to help her evict her brother. Yugthing Teshe, a loyal councillor, came to the rescue of the Ruler, Chakdor, and took him to Lhasa trekking via Elam and Walong, which was then a part of western Sikkim but is today in eastern Nepal. In Lhasa the young Chakdor distinguished himself in the study of Buddhist teachings and Tibetan writings. He eventually became the favoured and official astrology to the sixth Dalai Lama. For these services the Dalai Lama rewarded him with landed estates in central Tibet; which in turn were inherited by his successors and continued to be theirs to the end of the 18th century. Tibet reacquired these estates during the time of Tsugphud Namgyal's minority rule when with the war between Nepal and Tibet a period of confusion prevailed.

However, in the meantime, the Bhutanese forces were successful in their invasion and captured the Palace in Rabdentse which was held by them for eight years. Upon the death of the sixth Dalai Lama about 1707 Chakdor Namgyal

was prompted to return to Sikkim, accompanied by a Tibetan Lama named Jigme Pao. When he returned the Bhutanese forces withdrew and evacuated Sikkim west of the Teesta but still maintained their position at Fort Dumsong. This was a permanent loss to Sikkim in that it was never regained.

The bitter tension between the brother and sister continued and came to a crisis when Chakdor was murdered during a visit to the Ralang hot springs about the year 1717. A Tibetan physician overzealously allowed him to bleed to death by opening a main artery. Soldiers who supported the Raja were sent to Namchi, the doctor executed, and Pende Ongmu, the sister, strangled with a silken scarf and her corpse was burnt. The Tibetan Lama Jigme Pao became the Regent for a while.

Chakdor Namgyal, the murdered Raja, was married to a Tibetan. She bore him a son in 1707 named Gyurmed. Gyurmed also married a Tibetan, the daughter of an abbot from Mingdoling. The story is told that she was so unattractive looking that he left her and retired to the Dechhen-ling monastery to be alone. Further dissensions within the country led to the loss of Limbuana which chose disassociation from Sikkim's rule and later annexed itself to Nepal. Gyurmed, the restless Ruler, went his own way disguised as a religious mendicant. He left on a pilgrimage to Tibet, and eventually returned to Sikkim but remained eccentric in his behaviour. For instance, he refused to take a second wife, his first wife having fled in the meantime to Tibet. This stubborn celibacy was of great concern to the court and to his subjects since there was no direct heir to the throne.

In 1734 Raja Gyurmed was taken seriously ill, and upon being asked on his death bed to name his heir gave the name of a nun in Sangna-Cholling stating that she was carrying his child who, when born, was named Namgyal Penchoo (or Phuntshog). This was realised in 1733, but it paved the way for trouble for Sikkim. One of the Dzongpons (governors) who were chosen traditionally from the Kazi families, Chandzod Tamding, rebelled and refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the nun's offspring. He appointed himself the Raja. Tamding ruled for a few years; but finally the

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THE MODERN STATE

"Nations, like individuals, are products of heredity and environment, although in the case of nations heredity is to be sought not in the genes but in the social heritage which flows from generation to generation to give some national content to men's mind."

The basic foundation of community life in Sikkim is tribalism. Individuals are identified for the significant roles on the basis of their tribal and ethnic affiliations. However, the politically dominant tribe is in a minority and the parity system has been devised to introduce an artificial equality between this dominant minority and the majority community. In this way, there is a lack of political model belonging to a single tribe around which the Sikkimese national identity may be evolved.

Search for the Model of "National" Identity

The various aspects of political life in Sikkim were bound to lead to a struggle between Lamaist traditionalism and secular democracy. The former, with its monk-incarnate Ruler, theocratic political structure, and religious and aristocratic bureaucracy is based on the Tibetan political system. Sikkim, formerly under Tibetan tutelage, had been ruled by the Bhotia rulers who respected the tenets of the Lamaist theocratic practices. The elite of the nobility, the Kazis, the Bhotias and the Buddhists preferred this model because of their historical, cultural and political ties with Tibet. During the phase of colonial feudalism this model suffered a setback and Sikkim was not only freed from the Tibetan tutelage, but was also reduced to the status of an ordinary zamindari of a North Indian state.

with the concept of pollution and untouchability. Eating of beef was taboo for the clean caste Nepalese. This innate sentiment of the Nepalese ritual superiority over the "poliandrous and the beef-eating Lamaists" provided a sense of ritual solidarity among the Nepalese against the Buddhists.

Finally, the Nepali language written in *Devanagari* script was to only the *lingua franca* of Sikkim, but also served as the cultural link of communication among the Nepali-speaking population of Nepal, India and Bhutan. The Nepalese claimed that since their language with its own literary sources is spoken and understood by almost every Sikkimese, it should be accorded the status of the state language. On the other hand, the elite of the nobility, the clergy and the Bhotia aristocracy were keen in elevating the Bhotia dialect (of the Tibetan language) as the official "Sikkimese" language. In this way, the primordial attachments of the assumed blood ties, religion, social customs and language led to a serious conflict between the ruling minority and democratic majority.

Nation-Building Efforts

Despite the struggle for superiority of the conflicting political models, certain developments took place which led to the growth of democratic institution in Sikkim. With an apparent mutual consent, the inter-tribal and ethnic conflicts were sorted out through an ethno-political bi-polarity, i.e., the parity formula. This formula was applied to the distribution of political power, bureaucratic positions and economic gains among the ethnic stocks. It is a fact that this arrangement was not working upto everybody's satisfaction. However, it goes without saying that it was a genuine attempt at bringing all the conflicting ethnic stocks together. Secondly, a number of political institutions, in which various ethnic and tribal stocks were given due representation, emerged as the integrating forces. Among them, mention may be made of the Executive Council, the State Council, the bureaucracy, political parties, local self-government and the constabulary. These political institutions, based as they were on the parity formula may be considered as beginning of evolving a democratic Sikkimese structure.

Thirdly, certain efforts were made to develop the national

economy of Sikkim. This may be inferred from the establishment of the State Bank of Sikkim, state-sponsored Sikkim Chamber of Commerce and various state-subsidized industrial and commercial enterprises. It is a fact that these economic institutions and industrial enterprises were controlled and managed by the patricians and the neo-rich plebeians. Still, all Sikkimese entrepreneurs were given preference, irrespective of their ethnicity, to the non-Sikkimese. This practice, in course of time, was apt to led to the emergence of a democratic economic base for Sikkim. A continuation of this effort may be found in the Sikkimese search for an enemy, who, they assumed, was responsible for all their socio-economic and political problems. The Sikkimese political status as an Indian protectorate, the presence of the deputationist Indian bureaucrats and the Indian control of the Sikkimese foreign policy and trade were considered the evidence of the Indian neo-colonialism in Sikkim by the members of the now disbanded Sikkim Study Forum and old traditionalists.

Dilemma of Nation-Building Efforts

The competing political models, obstacles to the growth of national identity and the nation-building efforts indicated a situation in which Sikkim was caught in a political dilemma. This dilemma may be identified at three levels: First, because of the inherited past and the geo-political location, the Sikkimese political structure was patterned on the Tibetan theocracy. Love for the post, real or assumed, grandeurs and a degree of the primordial sentiments induced the Buddhist elite to maintain, sustain and strengthen their distinct Lamaist political image. It was specially so as the ruling Buddhist elite had a vested interest in the preservation of the political structure on the Tibetan pattern. The ruling elite were confronted with the dilemma whether they should or not maintain minority rule over the majority through the mechanisms of the parity formula, separate electorate and risk a growing majority discontent. Another option open to them was that they accepted the principle of democratic participations based on universal adult franchise, and joint electorate and willingly foreign their unequal privileges. These issues became all the more critical because of the ethno-

respective authority. The administrative structure, based on paternalism and Durbari discipline, failed completely to cope with the extraordinary demands on it. And this failure of the Sikkimese bureaucracy was largely mistaken for the preponderance of the deputationist bureaucrats from India.

The Sikkim Congress would have provided a useful service in maintaining the rubric of pubic life. But the very structure of the Party belief such a hope. The Kazi is the father figure in the party and his immense popularity would have been an asset to any political party. But in spite of his advanced age, he leads an active life. Political manipulation has been so intense in Sikkim that he has failed to carve out a second line of leadership in the party. That is why there is nobody matching or even approachable to his stature in the party. The Sikkim Congress lacks internal cohesion and organizational discipline. It is deeply divided within itself and torn by personal and political rivalry. In spite of the meticulous sophistication, faultless planning and energetic execution of the affairs of the Sikkim Congress by the Belgian-born British consort of the Kazi, Kazini Eliza Maria Dorjee, it gives an impression of a joint front of discordant elements representing dedicated activists, liberal democrats, young radicals, arch communalists and rank opportunists. The functioning of the party smacks of Durbari discipline rather than of a political party addressed to democratic participation.

The Sikkim Congress, without an organized opposition of significance, gives an impression that the senior leaders do not exercise control over the cadre. For the last several years, the core of the party has been formed more and more around the young radicals of the Youth Congress. It was mainly because of the senior leaders' dependence on the Youth Congress for organizing processions, demonstrations, rallies, public meetings and other ways of mass politics. The Youth Congress, divided into the Khatiwara and Pondyal factions, grew stronger in the organizational set-up of the party. This gave an amount of acceptance, respectability and confidence on which they staked their claim to special treatment in deference to their past services. That is how a populist pressure came into being, at times as a threat to the very structure of public life. One wonders how it will help

the new system to command respect for law, authority and the Constitution.

There is another aspect of the populist sanction in the body politic of Sikkim. The Youth Congress is essentially a Nepali organization. They are rightly proud of their language, religion, history and culture. But there is also an overtone of Nepali communalism in their *modus operandi*. The recent upheaval in Sikkim has given these young activists confidence. One hopes such easy achievements may make these young radicals sober in their approach to socio-economic issues. Otherwise, they may be attracted to new political slogans, such as pan-Nepalism. Their immense energy, unbounded enthusiasm and legendary stamina must be judiciously used in ameliorating the misery of the masses and nursing the cause of a real commonwealth of Lepchas, Botias and Nepalese. And only then will Sikkim's shift from a feudal set-up to democracy be complete and meaningful.

Pre-Accession Perspectives

The period of active and effective British influence on Sikkim commenced with the establishment of the British Residency in Gangtok under John Claude White, the Political Officer, in the year 1889. Ironically, this happened at the time when Sino-British relations were at a standstill. Other writers have referred to it as the period of "masterly inactivity" in Sino-British relations. In 1879, the British had in fact completed an unpaved road to the Jelep-la so as to facilitate their travel to Lhasa in order to further Indo-Tibetan trade. Then, in 1881, a branch of the East Bengal Railway was extended from Siliguri, the starting point in North Bengal for a journey to Sikkim, to Darjeeling. The first English school in this country was opened in Gangtok in 1906. Even though when in 1905 the Ruler, Maharaja Thotub Namgyal was re-instated with authority, the British Resident in Gangtok exercised vigilant control in most matters. His control in fact continued for a number of years.

John Claude White, the first British Political Officer, has described this period in the following terms:

> Chaos reigned everywhere, there was no revenue system, the Maharaja taking what he required as he wanted it

5

PROFILE OF LAND AND PEOPLE

"There is to the north a king of mountains called 'Himalaya', which in reality is a god and which, with its two ends dipped in the eastern and western seas, lies like a yardstick measuring the earth." Thus, poet Kalidas describes the Himalayas, and true to these words of the immortal bard, the mighty Himalayas have for centuries stood guard over the people living in the vast expanse of their lap. The impact of the Himalayas on the culture and personality of the people of the Himalayan kingdoms has been profound and massive.

Physically, this mountainous mass has three parallel zones: the Great Himalayas, the Inner or Lesser Himalayas and the sub-Himalayan foothills. The Great Himalayas, with a number of high peaks skirting southern border of the Tibetan plateau, rises to more than 29,000 feet and maintains an average height of 20,000 feet above sea level. These peaks are cris-crossed with passes through which caravans of traders travel to trans-Himalayan countries. This 15-mile-wide region is dissected into a series of north-south mountain blocks by river systems such as the Manas, the Tista and the Kosi. These river valleys with extremely cold winters and short growing seasons are occupied by small, clustered settlements.

The Inner Himalayas, with an average width of 50 miles, possesses remarkable uniformity of height ranging between 6,000 and 10,000 feet. Though not as inaccessible as the Great Himalayas, forest-clad ranges of the Inner Himalayas have isolated the intervening fertile valleys of the Himalayan kingdoms from those of the Gangetic plains. The difficult

terrain, numerous gorges and network of river systems make communication a difficult task. In this region lie some of the most populated Himalayan valleys such as Paro, Gangtok, Kathmandu and Pokhra. The Himalayan foothills constitute the dense forest areas between the Inner Himalayas and the Ganga-Brahmputra plains. Stretching from east to west, these foothills are known as the Duars, the Morang and the Tarai.

On the basis of general spatial differentiation of associated geographic elements and broad pattern of human occupation, Karan divides the Himalayas into three major realms: (1) Western Himalayas, (2) Central Himalayas, and (3) Eastern Himalayas. These realms possess some unifying physical and cultural traits, with certain measure of geographical homogeneity. Sikkim constitutes the western-most part of the Eastern Himalayan realm within the Great and the Inner Himalayan regions. Forty miles wide, it is enclosed between the Singalila ridges and the Donkhya range, which are 80 to 90 miles long. While the former constitute the Sikkimese border with Nepal and include the highest Sikkimese summit, the Kanchenzunga (28.150 ft.), the latter separates north-east Sikkim from Tibet. The southern border of Sikkim is formed by the Darjeeling ridges, through which the Tista has carved a deep and narrow gorge.

Ethnic Groups

The relief and climate have imposed harsh living conditions, restricted population movement and difficulties of communication for the Sikkimese. With their typical population, idiosyncratic settlement patterns and unique economic system, the Sikkimese have been able to preserve their cultural individuality to a great extent, though the authochthonous Lepchas have been sandwiched between the more assertive Bhotias and Nepalese. The Bhotia immigrants, representing the Tibeto-Burman stock, brought from the north the Tibetan culture, the Tibetan language, the Lamaistic Buddhism, and a combination of pastoralism and semi-settled agricultural pattern. On the other hand, the Nepalese contributed the Indo-Aryan languages, Hinduism, and settled agricultural practices to the Sikkimese complexity. The State recognizes two broad ethnic groups: the Lepcha-Bhotia and

the Nepalese. A close scrutiny suggests that the former may be divided into two different tribes with diverse traditions, the Lepchas and the Bhotias.

The Lepchas (the Nepali *Lap* (=vile)+che (=speakers), i.e. vile speakers, a contemptuous name because the Lepchas spoke their own dialect and refused to adopt the Nepali), "the Rong (the ravine folk) as they call themselves...are known to the Tibetans as 'Mon-ba' or 'Mon-risk', people of the Mon country —a general Tibetan name for the lower Himalayas, from Kashmir to Assam and Myanmar." They inhabit the slopes of the hills in the central and western Sikkim. They are divided into a number of patrilinear clans (ptso), which are believed to have originated from supernatural and mythological ancestry, At present, the main function of these clans is to regularize marriages and prevent incest, through exogamy. The family relations of Lepchas show traces of matriarchy, according to which the children trace their descent through their mother and not through their fathers. There is no ceremonial marriage.

The Lepchas as well as the Bhotias have an old tradition of polyandry. The Lepcha conversion to Lamaism paved the way for a social intercourse at the highest level with the Bhotia aristocracy around the monasteries. The new Bhotia rulers inveigled them into a ritual bond of blood-brotherhood. That is how a new social class of the Kazis emerged in Sikkim. The Lepcha commoners, driven to woods, led the life of hunters and collectors of wild roots. Even then they were well connected to the world outside, though their own custom of 'ingzong' (literal meaning 'like younger brother') i.e. ritual friendship of economic ties. Under the patronage of their guardian spirit (Komsithing) the Lepchas negotiated 'ingzong' with 'the Nepalese for their pigs, with the plains Indians for their copper vessels, with the Bhutanese for their fine cloth, with the Tibetans for their rugs and with the Bhotias for their oxen."

In contemporary Sikkim, it is difficult to locate an all-exclusive Lepcha settlement outside the Ruler's private estates of Dzongu and Dikchu. The Lepchas' affinities with the Bhotias exist mainly in the identity of their religion, around

which their entire cultural life revolves. At the same time, Lepchas do not hide their solidarity with the Limbuan Lepchas (from eastern Nepal) and the Muglan Lepchas (from Darjeeling in India), even if the latter two are animists, Hindus or Christians. Christians churches of various denominations are working among the Sikkimese Lepchas. Relatively better-educated and more affluent, the Lepcha Christians have shown an urge for the awareness of the Lepcha identity and a sense of assertion. They are numerically small but have risen to many important positions in the administration.

The Tibetan traders, farmers and the lamas were in search of new areas for colonisation long before the 15th century. Sikkim at that time was very sparsely populated by the primitive tribes of the Lepchas and the Limbus. The Tibetan graziers and the missionary lamas were possibly the easiest immigrants to Sikkim in search of new pastures and potential converts to their religion. They were followed by the traders in their pursuit of bartering their goods. And lastly, the Tibetan peasants came in search of rich rice fields. All these stocks found in Der-me-Dzong (Denzong—the valley of rice—a Tibetan term for Sikkim) a wide scope for expansion. During this period (the later half of the 15th century) and important Bhotia patriarch named Khye Bumsa from Phari (Chumbi Valley—Tibet) came to Sikkim, prevented ceremonial offerings to the then Lepcha chief, Tho-Kung-Tek, and established a blood-brotherhood. Meanwhile his followers and kinsmen settled in Sikkim as pastoralists and traders. The Tibetan lamas of various sects had been trying to convert the animist ribes without much success. The Lamaist missionaries strongly felt the need for establishing a central authority to their liking, which might be instrumental in the Tibetization of Sikkim. They could discover such qualities of leadership in one of the Bhotia peasants—Phuntsoh Namgyal (Panche Namge)—in the sixth generation of Khye Bumsa. A band of the Tibetan lamas installed the first Bhotia ruler of Sikkim in 1642 and thus marked the beginning of a effective Bhotia control over the Sikkimese destiny. The appointment of the Lepcha 'Dzongpens' and the Bhotia 'Kalons' by the first ruler, in time led to the emergence of two parallel phenomena of feudalism

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and bureaucracy. Not only was the first ruler declared an incarnate lama and a sanction from the Dalai Lama obtained, but the Lamaist Church of Tibet also undertook the role of the moral guardian of Sikkim.

The inter-marriage between the Bhotias and the Lepchas provided an opportunity for the warriors to bid for, and secure, a higher status in the social hierarchy. The social situation remained fluid in the early period of the Bhotia rulers because of constant strife. In such a situation, a proletarian Bhotia labourer who might have had some savings, could turn to be a trader, buy some cattle and land, get some people around him, marry a Lepcha chief's daughter and consequently be recognized as Kazi. The lamas commanded the respect of the commoners, and the favour of the ruler and the aristocracy. In this way the Bhotia immigrants became a stratified society with the Lamas (the clergy), the Kazis (the aristocracy) and the commoners enjoying a social status in the descending order. Since the British withdrawal in 1947, a new class of commoners of the neo-rich plebeians has emerged to challenge the status and authority of the erstwhile Kazi patricians.

The Nepalese community in Sikkim is inclusive of the three sub-cultural stocks: the Kiratis, the Newaris and the Gurkhas. The Kiratis, which include Limbus, Lepchas, Rais, Magars, Gurungs, Tamangs and a host of marginal tribal stocks, are the autochthonous inhabitants of Sikkim. The Limbu sources do not maintain much distinction between the Lepchas and the Limbus. They also has a tradition of inter-marriage. The Limbus call themselves Yakthamba (yak-herders or traders) and are divided into three 'septs'—the Kashigotra, Bhuiphuta or Phedhap, and the Lhasa gotra (the Tsongs). While the former two are animistic and to some extent Hinduized tribals, the last sept follows Lamaism possibly because the tribal tradition maintains that they came from Tibetan provinces of 'U' (Lhasa) and Tsang (Tashilhumpo). They are addressed by the Nepalese as Limbus and as Tsongs (cattle or yak merchants and butchers in Sikkim) by the Bhotias and the Lepchas. The greatest contribution of the Limbus to Sikkim is the appellation 'Sikkim' itself. With the growing assertion of the Bhotia rulers,

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SOCIO-CULTURAL BELIEFS AND TRADITIONS

The socio-cultural makeup of Sikkim is greatly influenced by Tibetans. The folktales and folklore prevalent among Sikkimese represent testimony to this. Besides this many features of Indian and Nepali tribal life are alike. In the following narration we have tried to reflect on socio-cultural beliefs and practices of Sikkimese society.

The Mun and the Bong-thing bear the closest resemblance to the Barwas of the Bhils, the Pariar or Prihar of the Korkus (Central India), the Nantravadis of the Parayans and Pulayans (South India), and the Mantravadis of many other primitive tribes of India. We find here a very old class of magicians who have maintained their primitive tradition, and have well established rites and rules.

Next in importance to the Mun and the Bong-thing, the male Pau and the female Andshemu or Mandshemu are to be found among the Lepchas. Both these are said to be Tibetan spirits and are not empowered to perform the great sacrifices. They need the equipment of the Tibetan Shaman—thunderbolts, skull-drums, etc. Tibetan influence is clearly evinced in all details. It may be noted that a Mun can also be an Andshemu, e.g. Han-bu-ni. When she came forth as an Andshemu she spoke Tibetan in the trance and employed the Tibetan articles in the performance of the ceremonies. A Bong-thing can at the same time be a Pau, and he uses the Tibetan articles when he presents himself as a Pau. Some

investigators have failed to observe this difference, and have in consequence erroneously declared the Mun and the Bong-thing to be identical with the Tibetan Bon-po. Gorer failed to perceive this important distinction, and hence there occur in his work, statements which are contradictory to the observations we have made. He states, for example, that the Mun are only female. We have taken great pains to verify that there are both male and female Mun. He calls the Bong-thing "Padem," who was supposed to represent a Tibetan spirit. This, however, indicates the extent to which Tibetan influence has extended in the area, particularly as the district in which Gorer carried out his research lay further north, to the Tibetan frontier. Gorer considers the Bong-thing to be weaker than Mun, which again is not true in the districts in which we carried out our research. He draws a distinction between two kinds of Mun; the good Tang-li Mun, the white magician, and the bad Mun-mook Mun, the black magician. Gorer however admits that whether one belongs to one type or to the other, depends upon the teacher from whom the instruction is received. If the teacher is a black magician, he teaches the black arts. It therefore has nothing to do with the Mun spirit who would be from the very beginning an evil being. This entirely contradicts the ancient tradition of the Mun and the Bong-thing who were established as mediators between God and men and as the protectors of men against the machinations of the demons. To this date the Mun and the Bong-thing have preserved these old traditions.

The spirits of the Mun and the Bong-thing do not always live in their mediums, but they stay in place called Tiamtan, as we learned above. They come down from there only when they are summoned. They take complete possession of their mediums only two or three times each year, particularly at the time of the festivals of the great sacrifices. At other times the mediums do not fall into a total trance. As we did not have the opportunity of observing such a trance personally, we repeat the description as given by Gorer, "When they come down, the vessel which receives them feels as though bowed down by heavy weight.

The Mun only takes possession of this vessel twice a year,

once in the hot season, and once in the wet season. This is a big ceremony and elaborate sacrifices are made. The day before the sacrifices I start feeling ill; I feel heavy and pressed down and cannot bear any noise. I tremble constantly and I am covered with sweat. I pray to the gods to let me off, and I offer the *chi* and incense in preparation for them to wait for the true sacrifices. The next day the ceremony is held inside a house and many people are present. I sit down cross-legged in front of the offerings. Besides the ordinary offerings there is a wreath of flowers and a flower bedecked stick. When I sit opposite these I feel a heavy burden pressed over my shoulders and as if my flesh is being poked with sticks—zinga-zinga-zinga-zinga; suddenly a sort of darkness comes over my eyes, it is as if I was in a sort of dream so that I know, see and remember nothing. But from what other people have told me and from what I have seen when other Mun have prophesied I know what takes place. I put on the flower necklace and take up the stick and go and walk in the courtyard. (Where anybody else to put on the necklace on me the gods would be angry, and the rash man would receive the burden of the gods.) When I return everybody is hushed even the children.

I blow into each person's face and on the offering; then I scatter chi and prophesy in a loud and audible voice the things which are going to take place in the following half year. After the prophecy, I recover consciousness; but not till cock crow next day do I feel all right again.

When I am called in the case of an illness, the god does not fully enter me but I see the devil which is attacking the sick person either in the form of some animals or insect or person, depending on which devil it is. Thus Lum-dong-mong appears in a pig, Sor-moog as a dirty ragged old woman, Arot-moong as a red butterfly. I see these visions out of the corner of my eye; if I look directly there is nothing there. But I watch these devils carefully out of the scorner of my eye; if they go away without eating anything the patient will recover quickly; but if they take food the patient will probably die though I only tell him that the illness is very serious."

Mun and the Bong-Thing

We had the opportunity of being present at and observing the sacrifice for a sick woman, by the Lha-ba Bong-thing (who is also a Pau). This sacrifice is called Mung-zug-fat. Mung-zug means "to cast out demons" ; "fat" is sacrifice. To start with, all the things necessary for the sacrifice are kept in readiness. The Torma of rice and butter are arranged. The chi containers are filled, the butter-lamps are put up; incense and holy water are kept ready. A bullock is then brought near the front door of the house. A rope is tied to its right horn and the other end of the rope is taken into the house, and the sick woman is asked to hold it in her hand. The Bong-thing then comes near the ox and says, "Instead of the life of the woman, take the life of the ox. I am giving you the life of this ox in lieu of the life of woman. His life is of greater value than hers. Take it! The body and soul of the ox are greater than those of this person. Take them! Leave the people in peace." As he says this he offers chi, rice and butter, laying these three sacrificial gifts on the forehead of the animal. Then, he says with greater emphasis, "the Body and the soul of this animal must be sacrificed." The ox is then killed by the blow of an axe on the nape of its neck. Any one except a woman, can perform the actual killing; for if a woman were to kill the animal it would be a terrible misfortune and no one would be allowed to eat the meat. The head of the ox is then severed from the body and the body is carved up. The legs are taken off, the entrails and the internal organs are drawn out, the head is taken off, the thorax is divided vertically into two, and the loins with the tail are dissected.

The first part of the sacrifice is performed in front of the house near the door. Except for the head, loins, tail and the entrails, the left side of the animal is sacrificed to the demons. From the more valuable parts, e.g. the heart, liver, spleen, kidneys and lungs, only very small pieces are taken away for the sacrifice to the demons. The Torma for about fourteen demons are placed on a little table; for Ge-be-mung, Techu-mung (the fever-demon), Tsang-dog-mung (the demon who causes stiffness in the limbs), Me-sun-mung (the life-spirit), Mog-nyan-mung, Ka-so-mu, Me-mu and others whose names

we could not ascertain. It is believed that the demons are appeased through this sacrifice, that they leave the sick person and come no more into the house.

The second part of the sacrifice takes place inside the house. The right side of the animal together with the head, the more valuable parts, the entrails, the loins and the tail are ranged in the following manner. In the large room a little distance away from the fire place, the skin of the animal is spread on the floor with its hairy side down, and the tail end nearest the fire place. Over this the skull is laid at the head end, with the snout pointing to a little table which is placed against the wall opposite to the fireplace. A little behind the skull the fore and the hind legs are placed on the right and left side of it. In between the legs are laid the breast bones, the loins, the tail, entrails and the valuable parts. These cover up the entire skin. The blood is not used at all. On the little table that is against the wall the Tormas are deposited and in front of them the two butter-lamps. The order of the Tormas is as follows: 1. Rum-thing-bo-a-mu, the wife of the supreme God. 2. Rum-thing-bo-a-bo, the Supreme God. 3 Nyom, the daughter-in-law. 4. Rum-thing-bo-gri-kob, the son of the Supreme God. 5. San-tug-kan-dro-mu (San-tug is a place below Algara; Kan-dro-mu is evidently like the Tibetan bKa-gro-ma, a sky fairy.) 6. Don-dyo-chi-log, another spirit who personifies both the intoxicating drinks, dyo and chi. Each of these six deities has on either side of it two servants who are called Bya-ro-Torma number 2, which represents the Supreme God, is the largest. It is about five inches high, of oval shape and is decorated with ten small lumps of butter. Torma number 1, the wife, is smaller, benign about four inches high and round in shape with the same decorations of butter. Tormas number 3 to 6 are similar to number I, except that they are three inches high only. In front of this row are three Ka to, Tormas number 7, 8 & 9. In a squarish socket five cone shaped objects are placed. These are perhaps symbolical of the five-peaked mountain, but we could find out nothing more definite about them. Torma number 10 is a deity, Ka-to-sam on Gon-hiu-so. It is about two inches high, conical in shape, and decorated with streaks of butter. The Tormas of the Bya-ro servants are all alike, a little smaller

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SIKKIM TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT

Generally climatic conditions and physical geography determines the shape and destiny of economic development of a state or region. Mountainous physiographic conditions in case of Sikkim has hampered the infrastructure development. Tourism and horticulture have tremendous scope and potential in Sikkim.

Here, we have tried to give a categorical account of the journey of Sikkim's economic development.

Development Framework: Early Years

The potential of Sikkim in terms of manpower, natural resources and industrial entrepreneurship has been recognized. An instance of this is that the annual plan outlay for 1994-95 for this state has been fixed at Rs. 135 crores.

Sikkim is essentially a mountainous country without a flat piece of ground of any size anywhere. The mountains rise in elevation northward, culminating in the Kanchenjunga. The northern part is cut into deep escarpments, and, except in the Lachen and Lachung valleys, is thinly populated. In contrast southern Sikkim is at a lower altitude, is more open and supports more people. This physical configuration is partly due to the geological structure. The northern, eastern and western parts of the country are constituted of hard gneissose rocks capable of resisting erosion, while the central and southern region is formed of comparatively soft, thin, slaty and half schistose rocks.

The two principal mountain ranges are the Singilela and

Chola which start in the north and continue following a more or less southerly direction. Between these ranges are the principal rivers, the Rangit and the Teesta, forming the main channels of drainage. The valleys cut by these rivers and their chief tributaries are very deep, at times over 5,000 feet. These rivers are fed by the monsoon rains as well as by melting glaciers. The perpetual snow line in Sikkim is about 16,000 feet. The higher altitudes both in the north and east abound in small lakes.

The mineral wealth of Sikkim is mainly comprises of copper, tin, zinc and lead. Copper veins are widespread and constitute the principal source of mineral wealth. The richest ores occur at Pachikhani and Bhotang and the latter is at present being worked by the Sikkim Mining Corporation, an enterprise financed jointly by the governments of Sikkim and India. The copper concentrates, together with some lead and zinc, are sent to India for refining. Deposits of copper are found also at Dikchu, Rhenock, Lingui, Ronglichu, Londok, Rathokhari, Barmiak, Tukkhani and Rinchanpong.

Other minerals such as pyrites are found in abundance at Bhotang, limestone and coal near Namchi, and graphite is being mined in the Chhitre area.

By and large Sikkim's wealth is derived from agriculture and forests. The economy of the land is principally agrarian. Rice and maize are the main monsoon crops. Other grains include millet, buel, wheat, barley, dhal which constitute other subsidiary crops. Mustard is grown for its oil, and cardamom, the cultivation of which is rapidly increasing is the main export crop. The cultivation of the potato is growing in importance especially in western Sikkim, at altitudes of about 8,000 feet. A potato farm has been established by the government also in that region. Sikkim's seed potatoes are valued in the potato growing areas of India. Tea is a new venture and a government tea estate is being developed in Kewzing in the western part of Sikkim. Citrus fruits, apples and pineapples are also grown, and a fruit preservation factory, government run, is in production at Singtam.

Cattle of local breeds, yaks, sheep and goats are to be found throughout Sikkim. As may be expected, in an area

which extends from the tropical terai to the highest regions of the Himalayas, there is an immense variety of vegetation. The lower or tropical zone abounds in plantains, tree ferns, bamboo, laurel, and some walnut, sal and oak. In the intermediate zone are oak, cherry, laurel, chestnut, maple and birch; and finally at higher altitudes rhododendrons, the glory of Sikkim, magnolias conifers, larches and junipers.

Orchids are a special feature of Sikkim, of which some 600 species are listed. The more important of them are the Dendrobium, Coelogyme, Cymbidium, Vanda, Arachananthe, Saccolabium, Aerides and Phaloenopsis which attach themselves to trees and rocks, as also Calanthe, Goodyera, Habenaria, Diplomeris and Cypripedium of the terrestrial species. Sikkim is equally famous for its primulas. Perhaps no other country of equal or larger size presents such a wide variety of flora.

Almost one-third of Sikkim's area of 2,818 square kilometre consists of forests, a potential and important source of wealth. The rests of sal and bamboo in the south as well as of coniferous trees in the north are capable of exploitation but are not as yet utilized. Attempts to float timber down the Teesta from the Lachen-Lachung area have not so far met with success owing to the sudden floods to which the river is liable. A fuller survey of the prospects for paper pulp production is currently in progress.

Programmes for the Development of Sikkim

The idea of planned development to stimulate Sikkim's economy was the outcome of Indian Prime Minister Nehru's first visit to Gangtok in April of 1952. After discussions with Maharaja Tashi Namgyal, and upon his return to New Delhi he directed the Indian Planning Commission to draft a development plan for this country. Nehru's conclusion was that the resources and potentialities of the state were not large and therefore the available resources had to be carefully screened and utilized properly for planned projects. A programme of development, as broadly conceived by Prime Minister Nehru, would in its first phase cover the improvement of all communications, some of these were obviously of strategic value; the promotion of education by

opening more schools; the expanding of health facilities; and finally the setting up, in gradual stages, of small and large-scale industries based on Sikkim's natural wealth—copper and other metallic ores, agriculture and timber. According to him the fostering of cottage industries, too, merited greater attention.

A number of experts of the Indian Planning Commission visited Sikkim and drafted a seven-year economic development plan for the period starting 1954 through to 1961. Guidelines for the achievement of the plan objectives for Sikkim were laid down. The main points of the plan were:

(a) *The improvement of road communications:* The opening up of northern and eastern Sikkim by extending the notional highway to Alachen and Lachung in the north and to Nathu-la in the east; a second traffic artery to the east from Ranipul to Pakyong, Rhenock, and finally linking with Rangpo. These thoroughfares were to be the responsibility initially of the Indian Central Public Works Department and later of the Indian Border Roads Organization because of their strategic importance. The western part of Sikkim to be linked by a roadway running from Singtam through Namchi and Naya Bazar and circling back to Singtam via Geyzing and Rabang-la.

(b) *The provision of additional educational facilities*: More schools of both primary and secondary grades to be established throughout the country.

(c) *The reorganization and expansion of health services*: More hospitals, clinics, dispensaries to be built in various parts of the country.

(d) *The completion of basic geological and forest surveys*: Fundamental data on Sikkims mineral, timber and other resources was essential in determining the feasibility of setting up specific industries in the country.

(e) *The fostering of cottage and small-scale industries*: This would revive Sikkim's traditional and exquisite arts and crafts—blanket weaving, wood carving, hand

worked articles in silver and other metals in typical designs.

(f) *The improving of Sikkim's agriculture and horticulture*: The expansion of irrigation facilities, setting up seed farms.

(g) *The building of hydro-electric projects*: Essential for the power requirements of new industries and for modern amenities in towns and villages.

Undertaking a programme on such a vast scale naturally presented its own problems, the main one being an acute shortage of trained manpower. To execute the programme technical experts would mostly have to be supplied by India.

India's contribution to the first development plan was mostly financial and technical. A total of Rs. 325 lakhs was offered by India to Sikkim as grants for the seven year plan period. This did not include amounts spent directly by the Government of India for the extension of the national highway to northern and eastern Sikkim, as these projects were carried out by the Indian Border Roads Organization and charged to the Indian exchequer. The ropeway from Deorali (Gangtok) to Thegu, near Nathua-la was financed by an Indian loan.

A second Five-Year Plan was then drafted and approved for the period covering 1961-66. The plan was to cost Rs. 813 lakhs and sought a further all round improvement in living standards, and added impetus to agricultural production, an expansion of cottage and small-scale industries and a general increase in employment for young men and women. Many of the projects of this second plan carried forward work which had been started during the first seven-year plan period.

The third Five-Year Plan has now been drawn up, covering the years from 1966 to 1971. With marked progress achieved in the fields of communication, education, health and social services, one could concentrate on increasing domestic economic capacity and building up the State's export potential. Agricultural development called for closer attention as with a growth in population and a rise in the standard of living, planned progress had brought about a gap between consumption and production, particularly of cereals, which

and care have been achieved. Programmes of malaria eradication, vaccination, etc. have resulted in a vast all-round improvement in efficiency.

Agriculture is traditionally the mainstay of Sikkim's economy. So special emphasis was placed on agricultural development. Experimental laboratories and model farms have been set up at various places: to name a few: Geyzing, Tadong, Lachung, Ribdi. Government nurseries at Geyzing and Ninth Mile, also at Lachung, assist the farmer in horticultural development. Trained workers and specialists teach the farmers improved methods of agriculture, and plant protection facilities are available as a part of government assistance.

The Cottage Industries Institute, a Sikkim government institution in Gangtok set up in 1957, instructs boys and girls in the traditional arts and crafts such as weaving, carpet making and wood carving. Those who are trained in the Institute then take their knowledge and skills back out the villages and it is hoped that this diffusion will lead to subsidiary occupations and income.

Sikkim's first hydro-electric power project at Sangkhola was completed in 1964. It has a capacity of 2100 kw. and now provides power to Gangtok, Singtam and Rangpo. Fourth other micro-hydel[1] schemes have been planned and which will supply power to Mangan, Naya Bazar, Namchi, Geyzing, Pakyong and other townships.

Sikkim's per capita income is higher than that in most parts of India. For its area and population the per capita export factor is also higher than that in many equivalent areas of India. Together, the principal export crops of cardamoms, oranges, apples and potatoes were estimated (in 1960) to be worth Rs. 70 lakhs. In 1967 this was about three times as much. There was no unemployment in Sikkim and no beggars.

The revenue-earning capacity of the state has increased a great deal. In 1960, Sikkim's revenue was Rs. 41 lakhs which later rose the estimate is about Rs. 120 lakhs. It is gratifying to see that in a period of six to seven years the revenue has almost trebled. This is no doubt due to the

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