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GANGTOK, SIKKIM

The Bulletin of Tibetology seeks to serve the specialist as well as the general reader with an interest in the field of study. The motif portraying the Stupa on the mountains suggests the dimensions of the field.

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Submission guidelines. We welcome submission of articles on any subject of the history, language, art, culture and religion of the people of the Tibetan cultural area although we would particularly welcome articles focusing on Sikkim, Bhutan and the Eastern Himalayas. Articles should be in English or Tibetan, submitted by email or on CD along with a hard copy and should not exceed 5000 words in length.

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CULTURE, HISTORY AND LANGUAGE IN SIKKIM

CONTENTS

MARK TURIN Editorial introduction	5
HELEEN PLAISIER A brief introduction to Lepcha orthography and literature	7
BAL GOPAL SHRESTHA Ritual and identity in the diaspora: the Newars in Sikkim	25
SAUL MULLARD A history from the hidden land: Some preliminary remarks on a seventeenth century Sikkimese chronicle	55
<i>Book Review</i>	
ANNA BALIKCI-DENJONGPA <i>Sikkim Himalaya: Travels in the Cloud Kingdom.</i> David Lang.	87
<i>Obituaries</i>	
ANNA BALIKCI-DENJONGPA <i>German Akay (1915-2005)</i>	89
ROGER CROSTON <i>Henry George Baker (1918-2006)</i>	91
<i>Notes on contributors</i>	99

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

MARK TURIN

University of Cambridge

When Dr. Anna Balikci-Denjongpa, editor of the *Bulletin of Tibetology*, approached me last year to ask whether I could offer my services as guest editor for an issue of the *Bulletin*, I leapt at the opportunity. Over the last few years, thanks largely to the tireless efforts of Rinpoche Tashi Densapa, Director of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, and Dr. Balikci-Denjongpa, Research Coordinator at the Institute, the *Bulletin* has been revitalised and is now once again an important peer reviewed journal for the Himalayan region. In the present issue, in an effort to showcase recent scholarship of Sikkim, we have solicited three original articles dealing with aspects of Sikkimese culture and history.

In the first article, Dr. Heleen Plaisier of Leiden University, the Netherlands, offers an introduction to the literature and orthography of Lepcha, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Sikkim and neighbouring West Bengal by the indigenous ethnic group of the same name. Dr. Plaisier provides a historical account of studies on the Lepcha community and their language, as well as a helpful overview of the mechanics of the Lepcha script. The comprehensive bibliography which the author provides as a postscript will be an invaluable resource for all scholars and students interested in Lepcha studies.

The second article is also authored by a scholar presently at Leiden University, although his permanent institutional home is the Centre of Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS) at Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu. Dr. Bal Gopal Shrestha, an ethnic Newar from Sankhu in the Kathmandu valley, conducted a period of intensive fieldwork among the Newars of Sikkim. Studies of diaspora communities have become increasingly popular in cultural studies and anthropology, and nowhere is such ethnography needed more than in contemporary South Asia, a region in which porous borders contribute to large scale population movements between nations. Dr. Shrestha documents with historical precision the formation, features and membership of the Newar community in Sikkim, from the first settlement of prominent families to the contemporary jostling among ethno-political organisations.

The third and final article in this issue is by Saul Mullard of the University of Oxford, a frequent contributor to the *Bulletin*. In this important contribution, Mullard provides the reader with his prudent analysis of the annotated contents of a rare seventeenth century text from the Barmiok collection, entitled (when translated into English): ‘A concise compilation of royal historical works and pilgrimage guide books to the hidden land of Sikkim’. The document provides a number of insights into early Sikkimese history and the formation of the Sikkimese state. Mullard is careful in his interrogation of the document, suggesting and hinting at possibilities rather than stridently overturning generally accepted dates and historical narratives. Over time, then, as other documents relating to early Sikkimese history come to light, Mullard’s elucidations will likely become part of accepted understandings of the workings of the nation-builders of Sikkim.

This issue is completed by a book review of David Lang’s *Sikkim Himalaya: Travels in the Cloud Kingdom*, and obituaries of German Akay (1915-2005) and Henry George Baker (1918-2006). On behalf of the editorial board, I hope that you enjoy reading this issue as much as we have enjoyed compiling it.

Amsterdam
February 2006

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO LEPCHA ORTHOGRAPHY
AND LITERATURE

HELEEN PLAISIER
Leiden University

Introduction

The Lepcha people are believed to be the aboriginal inhabitants of Sikkim. The Lepcha language is spoken in Sikkim, Darjeeling district in West Bengal in India, in Ilām district in Nepal, and in a few villages of Samtsi district in south-western Bhutan. The tribal homeland of the Lepcha people is referred to as ལྷ་མཚོ་ལྷ་མཚོ་ལྷ་མཚོ་ *ne máyel lyáng* ‘hidden paradise’ or ལྷ་མཚོ་མཚོ་ལྷ་མཚོ་ལྷ་མཚོ་ *ne máyel málúk lyáng* ‘land of eternal purity’. Most of the areas in which Lepcha is spoken today were once Sikkimese territory, as the kingdom of Sikkim used to comprise all of present-day Sikkim and most of Darjeeling district.

Today the Lepcha people constitute a minority of the population of modern Sikkim, which has been flooded by immigrants from Nepal. Although many Lepcha people estimate their number of speakers to be over 50,000, the total number of Lepcha speakers is likely to be much smaller. According to the 1991 Census of India, the most recent statistical profile for which the data have been disaggregated, the total number of mother tongue Lepcha speakers across the nation is 29,854. While their distribution is largely in Sikkim and the northern districts of West Bengal, there are no reliable speaker numbers for the Darjeeling district, where there are many Lepcha villages particularly in the area surrounding the small town of Kalimpong. There are reportedly roughly a hundred Lepcha households in Ilām, mainly in the villages Nāmsālīñ, Phikkal, Kolbuñ, Pañckanyā, Kanyām, Śrī Antu and Cisopānī, and approximately a thousand Lepcha speakers in Samtsi District, in Denchukha north of the 'Amochu in Bhutan (van Driem 2001: 819). Although Lepcha is unmistakably a Tibeto-Burman language, its exact position within the Tibeto-Burman language family is still unclear.

The English name ‘Lepcha’ derives from Nepali *lāpce* or *lāpcā*, which originally had the derogatory connotation of ‘inarticulate speech’. Nowadays, the term ‘Lepcha’ is widely used without this connotation. The Lepcha call themselves རོང་ལྷ་མཚོ་ རོང་ལྷ་མཚོ་ *mútuncí róngkup rumkup* ‘children of the Róng and of God’, or simply རོང་ལྷ་མཚོ་

róngkup ‘children of the Róng’. Alternatively, the Lepcha people may call themselves འཇུ་རྩེ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ *róng ʔágút* ‘the Róng tribe’. The Lepcha word for ‘language’ is འཇུ་ལྷོ་ *ʔáring*, and the Lepcha call their own language འཇུ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ *róngring*.

The Lepcha divide themselves into four main groups according to the region they inhabit. The Lepcha from Kalimpong, Kurseong, Mirik and Darjeeling are known as རྩེ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ *támsángmú*, the Lepcha from Sikkim are called རྩེ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ *renjóngmú*. The smaller group of Lepcha living in the Ilām district of eastern Nepal are known as རྩེ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ *ʔilámmú* and the Lepcha who live in རྩེ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ *prolyáng* ‘Bhutan’ are referred to as རྩེ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ *promú*. The Lepcha of Kalimpong, though formerly part of Bhutanese territory, are *Támsángmú* and not *Promú*. There is some debate over whether the Lepcha from Kurseong, Darjeeling and Mirik should belong to the *Renjóngmú* or the *Támsángmú* Lepcha, as some people use the name *Támsángmú* strictly for Lepcha living in and around Kalimpong.

The four groups do not represent four different dialects; although there are regional differences between the Lepcha spoken in different areas, these differences are largely lexical. The Lepcha spoken by the *Renjóngmú* is generally more influenced by Denjongkay, the language spoken by the Bhutia people of Sikkim, than the Lepcha spoken by the *Támsángmú*, which in itself is more influenced by Nepali than the Lepcha spoken by the *Renjóngmú*. Since there is a lot of mobility between Sikkim and Darjeeling district, with children going to school or college or finding jobs in areas different from where their parents live, the regional influences are not always straightforward. However, the sense of regional identity is strong enough, buttressed by a number of real cultural differences, between the *Renjóngmú* and the *Támsángmú* to make the distinction between these major groups within the Lepcha speaking community a vital one.

In Sikkim, Lepcha is one of eleven official languages. Lepcha is taught in schools, there is a textbook department that develops official learning materials, there is a Lepcha edition of a government newspaper, the Sikkim Herald, and the government radio station broadcasts news bulletins and cultural programmes in the Lepcha language. A special area in North Sikkim holds the རྩེ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ [Dzongú] *[zónggú]* Lepcha reserve, a Lepcha conservation area where but few outsiders have been allowed to settle. In the Darjeeling district, the Lepcha have had to struggle to get official status in order to receive special benefits and to be able to have air time on the official radio stations. The Lepcha Association, which is a social and cultural

organisation with several different branches and chapters in which many Lepcha people have organised themselves, coordinates evening classes in the Lepcha language and other social and cultural initiatives, such as festivals and archery competitions.

The Lepcha are divided into various clans or families known as ཡལ་ཤོ་ *putsho* and each clan has its own ལ་དྲཱ་ *dâ* ‘lake’ and ལུ་ཚུ་ *cú* ‘mountain peak’. The *cú* are regularly honoured in ལུ་རྩེ་ལུ་ *cú rumfát* ‘mountain worship’ ceremonies. In the Kalimpong area, the origin of the clan names is traditionally explained as follows: when the evil king ལཱ་ལོ་ལྷ་ *hlaso múng* ‘Lhasa Devil’ was killed by ལཱ་ལོ་ལྷ་མེད་ *támsáng thing* ‘Lord Támsáng’, then Lord Támsáng expressed his gratitude to 108 men by bestowing upon each of them an honorary title, as well as placing each of them under the protection of a specific lake and mountain peak. The honorary titles developed into clan names, such as ལུ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ *lúksómmú*, ལུ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ *simíkmú*, ལཱ་ལོ་ལྷ་ *sadámú*. Although most Lepcha know to which *putsho* they belong, they do not always know the corresponding *dâ* and *cú*. Today the full clan name may be shortened, e.g. *Simik* from ལུ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ *simíkmú*, anglicised and shortened, e.g. *Foning* from ལཱ་ལོ་ལྷ་ *fonyung rumsóngmú*, or the clan name may be substituted by the generic epithet ‘Lepcha’, e.g. *Dorji Tshering Lepcha*.

The central religious roles in the Lepcha community are traditionally occupied by the ལུ་ལྷོ་ *mun* and ལཱ་ལོ་ལྷ་ *bóngthíng*, who both function as shamans. The *bóngthíng* is traditionally a male shaman who presides at recurring religious ceremonies and seasonal festivals and may heal acute illness. The *mun*, often but not necessarily a female shaman, is a healer who exorcises demons, helps to heal illness and guides souls to the afterlife. It is possible for a *bóngthíng* to develop into a *mun*, in Sikkim such healers are known as ལཱ་ལོ་ལྷ་ *padem*. In the eighteenth century, the Lepcha people were converted to Buddhism, although indigenous Lepcha shamanism managed to coexist with Buddhist customs and beliefs. Both Buddhist lamas and Lepcha *bóngthíngs* preside at many important ceremonies in Lepcha life, each to perform their own rituals. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, in the Darjeeling district a significant number of Lepcha people have converted to Christianity. Many Christian Lepcha people have lost their language and have distanced themselves from the old shamanistic rituals and beliefs. This stance occasionally gives rise to tension between Buddhist and Christian Lepcha.

History of Studies on the Lepcha Language

Archibald Campbell published a short list of Lepcha words in 1840 and a short introduction on Lepcha in 1869. In 1842, the independent clergyman William Start brought more than twenty German missionaries to Darjeeling in order to start a Christian mission post there. Although the initiative was not a lasting success, William Start and his colleague Karl Gottlieb Niebel did run a school for Lepcha children in Tukvár, near Darjeeling, for some time and translated parts of the Bible into Lepcha (Start and Niebel 1849, 1872). When Start returned to England in 1852, Niebel continued his missionary work in the area. A commemorative plaque in St. Columba's Church in Darjeeling reads: '1865. Karl G. Niebel, 23 years translator with the Lepcha, died' (Perry 1997: 31). Some of the other missionaries that Start had brought over settled in the region and started up various businesses.

At around the same time that William Start became interested in the Darjeeling area, Colonel George Byres Mainwaring of the Bengal Staff Corps made his first visit to Darjeeling. The Lepcha customs and way of life had a great impact on Mainwaring, who saw all the traits of Lepcha culture he so admired reflected in their language. He was the first to write a grammar of Lepcha, which was published in 1876. Mainwaring worked on a Lepcha dictionary as well, the manuscript of which was edited and published in 1898 by Albert Grünwedel after Mainwaring's death. Mainwaring's work has been of pivotal importance for the survival of the Lepcha language, although it has also been criticised because of its strong latinized bias.

Apart from editing Mainwaring's dictionary, Albert Grünwedel published translations of Lepcha texts based on Tibetan sources. Lawrence Waddell published an article with remarks on a number of Lepcha place names in 1892, and in an article in 1899 he translated and explained nine Lepcha songs. In his account of Tibetan Buddhism, Waddell (1895) also described Lepcha religious practices. These works were followed by different short accounts of the Lepcha language by Schott (1881), Drouin (1901) and Feer (1898).

Several studies on Lepcha culture or aspects thereof have been published, such as those by Stocks (1925), Morris (1938), Gorer (1938), Hermanns (1954) and later Klafkowski (1980, 1983), Thakur (1988) and Chattopadhyay (1990). The Austrian tibetologist René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz published extensively on the religion of the Lepcha until his early death in 1959. The most important

anthropological study of the Lepcha people and their culture remains the monumental work by Halfdan Siiger and Jørgen Rischel, published in 1967.

Notable 20th century publications on the Lepcha language consist of studies on the field of classification (Benedict 1972, Bodman 1988, Shafer 1955, Forrest 1962), orthography and inconsistencies in spelling (Chakraborty 1978, Haarh 1959, Sprigg 1983, 1989, 1997b, 1998a) and phonology (Bodman 1989, Sprigg 1966a, 1966b). In 1966, Prabhakar Sinha wrote an unpublished grammar of Lepcha as a Ph.D. dissertation at Deccan College in Pune. The present author is also working on a descriptive study of the Lepcha language. The data for this study were collected during several sojourns among Lepcha speakers in Kalimpong and Sikkim between 1994 and 1998.

The Lepcha Textbook Officers in the Department of Human Resource Development (formerly the Department of Education) of the Government of Sikkim and the various Lepcha Associations of Kalimpong, Darjeeling and Sikkim have been publishing periodicals, books, plays and collections of poetry in Lepcha for decades. The Lepcha author Arthur Foning published his influential book *Lepcha, My Vanishing Tribe* in 1987, and the book was reprinted in 2003. Two other outstanding Lepcha scholars, ཧྲིལ་ཤེལ་མཁའ་མཚོ་ Khárpú Támsáng and འཕྲུལ་ལྷོ་འཕྲུལ་ལྷོ་ Dóngtshen Luksóm, have both published grammars of Lepcha written in Lepcha, i.e. Támsáng (1978), Luksóm (1981), as well as other studies.

Several dictionaries of the Lepcha language have been compiled (Cemjong 1970, Grünwedel 1898a, Kumar 1978). Khárpú Támsáng's magnificent *Lepcha English Encyclopedic Dictionary*, published in 1980, is indispensable to anyone working on Lepcha. In 1983, a *Lepcha Hindi English Dictionary* was compiled by Dóngtshen Luksóm. In 1996, an *English to Lepcha Dictionary* was published by the eminent Lepcha authors ཡུ་ཤིལ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ Ugen Shipmú, ཨིལ་ལཱ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ Karma Lode Rigimú, ལཱ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ Nakú Tshering Likmú and ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ Dorji Wángdi Kunchúdyangmú.

Ever since its first issue in 1997, the quarterly Lepcha bilingual news magazine འཕྲུལ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ *Aachuley* [áçúle] published by the Lepcha Literary Organisation in Kalimpong and edited by ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ Lyángsong Támsáng, has proven to be an important forum for contributions on Lepcha language and culture written by authors from all over the world.

The Lepcha Script

The Lepcha have their own indigenous script which dates back to the 18th century. The Lepcha script is written from left to right, with spaces between words. In Lepcha, no distinction is made between capital and lower-case letters. Punctuation marks are similar to the ones used in the Tibetan orthography, although nowadays full stops, commas and question marks from the Roman alphabet are also used. The ‘alphabet’ or ‘syllabary’ is referred to in the Lepcha language as $\epsilon\zeta$ *kakha* ‘ABC’, $\alpha\delta\zeta$ *chomíng* ‘written letters’ and $\delta\zeta\zeta$ *míngzât* ‘treasure of letters’. The native Lepcha orthography is systematically treated in the text $\omega\alpha\zeta$ *lazóng*, the book on the Lepcha alphabet, which is traditionally used to teach Lepcha orthography (Plaisier 2003: 31-32).

The order of the Lepcha alphabet as given in the $\omega\alpha\zeta$ *lazóng* is different to the order in which the Lepcha alphabet is taught and read out today. The original Lepcha syllabary was built out of five units, as given below in Diagram 1 below, the first units running from α *pa* to ζ *ma*, and the second unit running from ν *ha* to ρ *tha*, etc. Although most $\omega\alpha\zeta$ *lazóng* books use the same order, occasionally there is some variation in the order of the units. A similar conclusion was pointed to by R. K. Sprigg in his article ‘Original and sophisticated features of the Lepcha and Limbu scripts’ (1998). The order of the consonant symbols within the five units may vary slightly between different versions of the $\omega\alpha\zeta$ *lazóng*, between the introductory summary of the alphabet in the opening part of $\omega\alpha\zeta$ *lazóng* and the actual listing of all possible syllables in $\omega\alpha\zeta$ *lazóng* books. However, the differences are minor and most of them are apparently oversights of the copyists.

α <i>pa</i>	ϵ <i>ka</i>	ω <i>ga</i>	ζ <i>pa</i>	ξ <i>fa</i>	\omicron <i>ba</i>	ζ <i>ma</i>		
ν <i>ha</i>	γ <i>ra</i>	ζ <i>kha</i>	ξ <i>ta</i>	ρ <i>tha</i>				
μ <i>da</i>	ω <i>la</i>	γ <i>kla</i>	ω <i>gla</i>	ζ <i>pla</i>	ω <i>fla</i>	\omicron <i>bla</i>		
δ <i>m</i> <i>la</i>	\times <i>h</i> <i>la</i>	\omicron <i>v</i> <i>a</i>	γ <i>n</i> <i>ga</i>	δ <i>c</i> <i>a</i>	ζ <i>p</i> <i>ha</i>	ζ <i>n</i> <i>ya</i>	\omicron <i>n</i> <i>a</i>	ζ <i>t</i> <i>sa</i>
ω <i>w</i> <i>a</i>	ω <i>j</i> <i>a</i>	μ <i>z</i> <i>a</i>	ϵ <i>y</i> <i>a</i>	ϵ <i>s</i> <i>ha</i>	α <i>c</i> <i>ha</i>	ω <i>t</i> <i>sha</i>	ω <i>s</i> <i>a</i>	

Diagram 1: Original order of the syllabary

In the ལཱཱོང་ *lazóng*, all the orthographic symbols and combinations of symbols are treated in a specific order, building from simple consonant or vowel signs to more complex syllables. Apart from a few paragraphs which introduce the different sections making up the book, the ལཱཱོང་ *lazóng* does not contain running text as such. The traditional method of instruction is for the teacher to recite sections of the ལཱཱོང་ *lazóng* in a set melody and for the students to read and chant along with the teacher, until the students have memorised the values of the letters and the syllables and are able to read and to recite by themselves. Although most people nowadays learn to read and write Lepcha through primers and textbooks based on different methods, the traditional method based on recitation of the ལཱཱོང་ *lazóng* is still practised. The list of possible syllables in Lepcha given by Mainwaring in his grammar (1876: 12-18), is clearly based on the ལཱཱོང་ *lazóng*. The order of the syllabary that is mostly used in primers and textbooks today, clearly influenced by the order of the *devanāgarī* alphabet, is given in Diagram 2 below, starting with ཁ ཁ་ *ka*, ལ ལ་ *ka*, ཅ ཅ་ *kha*, འ འ་ *ga*, ཅ ཅ་ *nga*, and ending with འ འ་ *bla*, མ མ་ *m̐la*, ལ ལ་ *hla*.

The 36 consonant symbols (མཚོན་ རྩམ་མཚོན་ *chomíng ṽámo* or རྩམ་མཚོན་ *ṽámú ṽámíng* ‘consonants, mother letters’ are given below with a Roman transliteration of each symbol. When the consonant is not marked by any vowel sign, the inherent vowel of the consonant is the vowel transliterated as *a*.

ཁ	ལ	ཅ	འ	ཅ	ཅ	ཅ	ཅ	ཅ
<i>ka</i>	<i>ka</i>	<i>kha</i>	<i>ga</i>	<i>nga</i>	<i>ca</i>	<i>cha</i>	<i>ja</i>	<i>nya</i>
ཅ	ཅ	ཅ	ཅ	ཅ	ཅ	ཅ	ཅ	ཅ
<i>ta</i>	<i>tha</i>	<i>da</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>pa</i>	<i>pha</i>	<i>fa</i>	<i>ba</i>	<i>ma</i>
ཅ	ཅ	ཅ	ཅ	ཅ	ཅ	ཅ	ཅ	
<i>tsha</i>	<i>tsha</i>	<i>za</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>ra</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>ha</i>	<i>va</i>	
ཅ	ཅ	ཅ						
<i>sha</i>	<i>sa</i>	<i>wa</i>						
ཅ	ཅ	ཅ	ཅ	ཅ	ཅ	ཅ		
<i>kla</i>	<i>gla</i>	<i>pla</i>	<i>fla</i>	<i>bla</i>	<i>m̐la</i>	<i>hla</i>		

Diagram 2: Consonant letters

Vowel diacritics may be added to the consonant symbols. The vowel diacritics are traditionally known as (ᄁᄃᄅ ᄁᄃᄅ) *chomíng ṽákup* or ᄁᄃᄅ ᄁᄃᄅ ṽákup ṽámíng ‘vowel signs, child letters, small letters’ and ᄁᄃᄅ ᄃᄃᄅ ṽákúp thámbyín or ᄃᄃᄅ ᄃᄃᄅ míngkup thámbyín ‘diacritical vowel signs’.

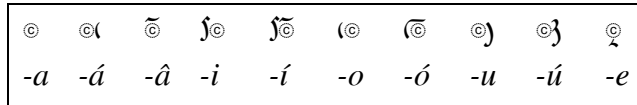


Diagram 3: Vowel signs

Any Lepcha consonant may occur at the beginning of a syllable. Although all Lepcha vowels may be found at the end of a syllable, only a limited number of consonants can occur syllable-finally. The consonants found at the end of syllables are: *-k, -t, -n, -p, -m, -r, -l* and *-ng*. The ᄃᄃᄅ ᄃᄃᄅ *tyelbú thámbyín* or ᄃᄃᄅ ᄃᄃᄅ *míngtyel thámbyín* ‘final consonant signs’ are given in Diagram 4 below.

The ᄃᄃᄅ *nyíndo* sign, i.e. ‘ᄃᄃᄅ’, transliterated here as *-ang*, is used to indicate a final velar nasal when no specific vowel sign is indicated, as in ᄃᄃᄅ *sang*. The ᄃᄃᄅ *lakang* sign, i.e. ‘ᄃᄃᄅ’, is used to indicate a final velar nasal in combination with diacritical vowel signs, as in the syllables ᄃᄃᄅ *sáng*, ᄃᄃᄅ *síng*, and ᄃᄃᄅ *song*. The distinction between the ᄃᄃᄅ *nyíndo* and the ᄃᄃᄅ *lakang* is not always made when people discuss orthography, often the ᄃᄃᄅ *nyíndo* is used as a general term for a written final velar nasal.

For those consonant clusters in which the initial consonant is followed by one of the post-consonantal glides *-y, -r* or *-l*, the term ᄃᄃᄅ *míngthyú* ‘conjunct consonants, affixed consonants’ is used. The ᄃᄃᄅ *míngthyú* series includes the consonant symbols ᄃ *kla*, ᄃ *gla*, ᄃ *pla*, ᄃ *fla*, ᄃ *bla*, ᄃ *m̄la* and ᄃ *hla*, which are also sometimes referred to as the ᄃᄃᄅ *lathyú* ‘l-cluster’, literally ‘l-affix’. The orthography also has special symbols for post-consonantal *-y* and *-r*, i.e. the ᄃᄃᄅ *yathyú* ‘y-affix’ and the ᄃᄃᄅ *rathyú* ‘r-affix’. The ᄃᄃᄅ *yathyú* and ᄃᄃᄅ *rathyú* symbols can be used in combination with each other, as for example in ᄃᄃᄅ *fryóm* ‘suspect’. The ᄃᄃᄅ *yathyú* and ᄃᄃᄅ *rathyú* symbols may also be used in combination with the ᄃᄃᄅ *lathyú* series, as in ᄃᄃᄅ *mlyúk* ‘lukewarm, tepid’, in which case the ᄃᄃᄅ *yathyú* always follows either the ᄃᄃᄅ *lathyú* or the ᄃᄃᄅ *rathyú*. The ᄃᄃᄅ *lathyú* and ᄃᄃᄅ *rathyú* may not be combined with each other.

symbol	ཀྱ	ཀྲ	ཀླ
transliteration	-k	-m	-l
name of symbol	ལྔཱལ	ལྔཱེ	ལྔཱུལ
examples	ལྔཱལ རལྔཱལ	ལྔཱེ རལྔཱེ	ལྔཱུལ རལྔཱུལ
symbol	ཀྱ	ཀྲ	ཀླ
transliteration	-n	-p	-r
name of symbol	ལྔཱཱལ	ལྔཱཱེ	ལྔཱཱུལ
examples	ལྔཱཱལ རལྔཱཱལ	ལྔཱཱེ རལྔཱཱེ	ལྔཱཱུལ རལྔཱཱུལ
symbol	ཀྱ	ཀྲ	ཀླ
transliteration	-t	-ng	-ang
name of symbol	ལྔཱཱལ	ལྔཱཱེ	ལྔཱཱུལ
examples	ལྔཱཱལ རལྔཱཱལ	ལྔཱཱེ རལྔཱཱེ	ལྔཱཱུལ རལྔཱཱུལ

Diagram 4: Final consonant signs

symbol	ཀྱ	ཀྲ
transliteration	-y	-r
name of sign	ལྔཱཱལ	ལྔཱཱུལ
examples	ལྔཱཱལ རལྔཱཱལ, ལྔཱཱུལ རལྔཱཱུལ	ལྔཱཱུལ རལྔཱཱུལ

Diagram 5: Affixed consonant signs

For retroflex sounds, which occur mainly in loanwords from Denjongkay, the clusters ལྔཱཱལ *kra*, ལྔཱཱུལ *hra* and ལྔཱཱུལ *gra* are used, e.g. ལྔཱཱལ *throm* ‘town, market’, and ལྔཱཱུལ རལྔཱཱུལ *trók chí* ‘thank you’. The retroflex sounds are usually marked by a dot written below the graph, so as to distinguish these sounds from the unmarked non-retroflex sounds *kra*, *hra* and *gra*, which occur widely in Lepcha, e.g. ལྔཱཱལ *krít* ‘hunger’, and ལྔཱཱུལ *hróng* ‘come up, arrive’. This useful diacritic was introduced by Mainwaring (1876: 10-11), and is known as *Mainwaring’s dot*. Mainwaring suggests that the dot was also used with the letters ལྔཱཱལ *za* and ལྔཱཱུལ *ra*, but this particular usage is no longer found (Mainwaring 1876:

11). Although not all Lepcha writers favour the orthographic innovation, Mainwaring’s dot is still widely used to indicate retroflex sounds.

𑌖	𑌗	𑌘	𑌙	𑌚	𑌛
<i>kra</i>	<i>gra</i>	<i>hra</i>	<i>tra</i>	<i>dra</i>	<i>thra</i>

Diagram 6: Retroflex consonants

The 𑌖 *rân* ‘circumflex’ sign is a diacritic flourish written over a consonant sign or over a vowel sign ‘𑌖’, as in 𑌖 *rân*, 𑌖 𑌖 *â* or 𑌖 𑌖 *î*. Although the original function of the 𑌖 *rân* sign is still unclear, it is often present in closed syllables, in which case the circumflex sign should be written above the final consonant sign. It has been suggested that the function of the 𑌖 *rân* is to indicate stress or pitch, in order to distinguish stressable syllables from syllables that never appear in a stressed position, and this hypothesis may well be correct (Plaisier 2003: 28-29, Sprigg 1983: 316). However, because the function of the 𑌖 *rân* sign is unclear to most writers, nowadays the sign is used by the Lepcha in a variety of ways, and opinions vary strongly as to which is the correct usage.

Although many Lepcha believe that a literary tradition existed among the Lepcha before the arrival of Buddhism in the area, thus far no evidence has been found to corroborate this claim. It seems more likely that the invention of the Lepcha alphabet was motivated by the religious activities of Buddhist missionaries. The Buddhist monks were keen to communicate with the Lepcha people in their own language, and as so often happens when the influence of a new religion spreads, religious texts were translated into the local language of the area, in this case Lepcha, for which an alphabet had yet to be created (Plaisier 2003: 20-23, Risley 1894: 13, Sprigg 1983, 1996).

The Lepcha script is understood to have been devised during the reign of the third chogyal of Sikkim, 𑌖𑌖𑌖𑌖𑌖𑌖 *Chogyal Chador Namgyal* (imperabat 1700 - 1716). According to Lepcha tradition, the native Lepcha orthography was created by the Lepcha scholar 𑌖𑌖𑌖𑌖 *Thikúng Mensalóng*, who is believed to have been a contemporary of 𑌖𑌖𑌖𑌖𑌖𑌖 *Lama Lhatsun Chenpo*, i.e. 𑌖𑌖𑌖𑌖𑌖𑌖 *Lama Lhatsun Namkha Jigme* (1597 - 1654), the patron saint of Sikkim, who played a definitive part in the Sikkimese conversion to Buddhism. Since sources mention that 𑌖𑌖𑌖𑌖 *Mensalóng* and *Lhatsun*

Chenpo met each other (Foning 1987: 152), it might well have been the case that they worked together on the Lepcha orthography, which would account for a Tibetan tradition which ascribes the introduction of the Lepcha script to *Lhatsun Chenpo*. The Lepcha tradition that credits མཚོ་ལོང་ *Mensalóng* with the invention of the Lepcha script seems even more plausible when we realise that during the reign of *Chador Namgyal* not just the Lepcha script, but also the Limbu or Kiranti script was developed, not by *Chador Namgyal* himself, but by the Limbu monk *Śirijaṅgā* (van Driem 2001: 674-675).

Lepcha literature has hardly been studied at all, yet it is generally believed that an indigenous Lepcha literature does not exist. This view is based on the fact that many written Lepcha texts are translations, or rather adaptations, of Tibetan Buddhist works. Since the Lepcha script was probably introduced to write down Lepcha translations of Tibetan Buddhist texts, and keeping in mind that the original Lepcha stories were passed on orally, from generation to generation, and were traditionally not written down, it is not surprising that most Lepcha texts are indeed of a Buddhist nature. However, despite the large amount of books that show a strong Tibetan influence, there are also many books with a native Lepcha character. Many tales clearly reflect values and beliefs of the indigenous shamanistic Lepcha religion. In this respect, Piotr Klafkowski makes the important point that the Tibetan influence on Lepcha literature has been much overemphasised (1980: 112, 1983: 172). Apart from the indigenous Lepcha shamanism and Tibetan Buddhism, other religions and folkloristic traditions from Tibet, Bhutan and Nepal may also have influenced Lepcha literature and Lepcha oral traditions. The precise nature of the influence of all of these traditions on Lepcha literature is yet to be studied in detail.

The entire complex of Lepcha myths, legends, fables and fairy-tales that has been orally transmitted throughout the centuries is known as ལུང་སུང་ *lúngten sung* ‘mythology, legends’. Traditional Lepcha narratives contain views and statements on fundamental matters of life and are aimed at the survival of the traditional values of the Lepcha community that they reflect. Some of these accounts deal with universal issues like the origin and destiny of the human world or with matters of life, death and the afterlife. Many myths contain religious truths or explain different aspects of religious teachings, such as the functions and tasks of gods and goddesses. These narratives are sometimes closely related to religious rituals, but not all myths are of a religious nature. Some myths may attempt to explain the history of the

Lepcha community, their ethics and moral philosophy, their places of pilgrimage and traditional Lepcha customs, such as family laws, marriage customs, hunting techniques and dietary proscriptions.

In the titles of Lepcha texts we often find an indication of genre, such as ལུ སུང *sung* ‘story, narrative’, འ ཇོ *cho* ‘book, learning, doctrine, dharma, religion’, མེལ་ལྟོགས་ *munlóm* ‘prayer, blessing’, or རྩོམ་མཁའ་ *námthár* ‘legend, biography’. A book referred to as འ ཇོ *cho* typically conveys a canonical message, whereas a མེལ་ལྟོགས་ *munlóm* is usually a prayerbook of some kind. A རྩོམ་མཁའ་ *námthár* is generally a text containing a sacred legend, some chapter of native lore or a hagiography about the life of a saint or miracle-worker. The term ལུ སུང *sung* ‘story, narrative’ is used specifically for traditional stories that were originally not written down, but transmitted orally. In a broader sense, ལུ སུང *sung* refers to narratives or stories in general. We find the term ‘*sung*’ in the titles of many well-known Lepcha texts, such as the text entitled མེལ་ལྟོགས་ ལུ སུང་ *tashe sung* ‘The story of Lord Tashe’. The latter text can be considered to be the pivotal masterpiece of Lepcha literature, and it has been transmitted in many different versions, oral as well as written. The title མེལ་ལྟོགས་ ལུ སུང་ *tashe sung* is also used for fragments of the complete story of Lord Tashe. In fact, the genre names are not always used in a consistent fashion by the Lepcha. For example, the text མེལ་ལྟོགས་ ལུ སུང་ *tashe sung* is also referred to as མེལ་ལྟོགས་ ལུ རྩོམ་མཁའ་ *tashe sung sá námthár*, མེལ་ལྟོགས་ ལུ འ ཇོ *tashe sung sá cho*, and མེལ་ལྟོགས་ ལུ མེལ་ལྟོགས་ *tashe thínɡ sá munlóm*.

An excellent account of traditional Lepcha stories was published by de Beauvoir Stocks (1925, 1926). René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1953) wrote an article on the Lepcha ‘legend of the tower’, providing both the original Lepcha text of the legend as well as a translation into German. Several Lepcha legends are described in the publications of Geoffrey Gorer (1938: 485-491), Matthias Hermanns (1954: 30-96), Amal Kumar Das (1978: 216-233), and George Kotturan (1983: 122-124, 1989). The monograph of Halfdan Siiger and Jørgen Rischel (1967) includes descriptions of various Lepcha myths, as well as transliterations, analyses and translations of over 40 short Lepcha texts. In Arthur Foning’s *Lepcha, My Vanishing Tribe*, we find a translation and discussion of various important Lepcha legends (1987: 85-109, 265-280). Of particular value are publications such as Khárpú Támsáng’s books on Lepcha mythology (1996, 1997), which capture traditional Lepcha stories in the Lepcha language. This brief discussion of Lepcha writings would not be complete without mentioning the series of illuminating articles by Richard Keith Sprigg on early written documents in Lepcha (1983, 1995, 1997a, 1998b, 1998c, 1998d). The

present author has published a catalogue describing the unique collection of Lepcha manuscripts kept in Leiden, the world's largest collection of Lepcha texts (Plaisier 2003). This catalogue also contains an introduction to Lepcha literary history and a survey of the smaller collections of Lepcha manuscripts in London, Gangtok and Vienna.

Whereas the literary language used in books such as ཨཱེ་ལཱ་ *tashe sung* is laced with Buddhist terminology and loans from Tibetan, the language used in Lepcha folk songs — of which there are many — is usually less influenced by Buddhist vocabulary. Lepcha songs are discussed in some detail in the publications of Waddell (1899), Das (1978: 233-234) and Chattopadhyay (1990: 68-102). Several Lepcha song books have been published, e.g. by ལཱ་ཤེ་ལཱ་ལྷོ་ཨཱེ་ལཱ་ Sonám Tshering Tamsáng (1986). René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz collected some wedding songs during his stay with the Lepcha people, which he later published and discussed (1952). Lyángsong Tamsáng (1998) devoted an informative article to the highly specific genre of the རྩལ་ལྷོ་ཨཱེ་ལཱ་ *ʔápryá vâm* 'hymn, classical song'.

From this brief introductory article, it will be clear that further research into Lepcha literature would benefit from careful translations and analyses of important traditional Lepcha texts as well as from written versions of indigenous songs, myths and stories that are as yet to be committed to paper.

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RITUAL AND IDENTITY IN THE DIASPORA:
THE NEWARS IN SIKKIMBAL GOPAL SHRESTHA
*Leiden University**Introduction*

The Newars are the original inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal. The word *Newar* is derived from the name of the country *Nepal* itself. Despite the 1769 Gorkha conquest of the Nepal Valley and their subjugation by the state, the Newars managed to maintain their distinct arts, crafts, culture and traditions. Their culture has remained highly influential throughout the history of Nepal (Toffin 1984 and 1993; Levy 1992; Gellner 1996). The Newars are also considered to be a skilled and successful trading community, and their involvement in trans-Himalayan trade was already well established many centuries ago. They have succeeded in maintaining this image in Sikkim also (Subba 1989: 134; Sinha 1981: 192). As an educated community, the Newars also occupy many important administrative posts in both Nepal and Sikkim.

The Newars of Nepal have been widely studied (e.g. Nepali 1965; Toffin 1984, 1993; Levy 1992; Gellner 1996; Shrestha 2002). Ample literature exists on the Nepali diaspora both in India and Bhutan (Subba & Datta 1991; Timsina 1992; Hutt 1994, 1997) and on Sikkim as a state (Temple 1977; Nakane 1979; Jha and Mishra 1984; Bhasin 1989; Subba and Datta 1991; Dhamala 1991; Lama 2001 and Sharma and Sharma 1997). However, no research has yet been carried out on the Newar diaspora in Sikkim. This is partly due to the fact that Sikkim remained largely closed to outsiders even after it merged with India in 1975. In fact, little research has been carried out on the Newar diaspora in general and the few studies which exist refer to the Newar diaspora inside Nepal (Lewis & Sakya 1988).

Although the Newars of Sikkim are numerically very few they have played an important role in ethnic politics and are active in trying to promote their language, culture, rituals, traditions and religions across Sikkim. At a time when Newars in the homeland are facing various problems including threats to their language and culture because of state negligence and globalisation, the Newars of Sikkim are actively preserving their cultural heritage and language. In 1998, the

State Government of Sikkim introduced several laws and sanctioned state budget lines to facilitate the promotion of the languages and cultures of the Newars and other groups (Pradhan and Josee 1998). The school curriculum now includes the Newar language, and language interpreters are employed in the State Legislature to translate speeches delivered in Newar into other languages. In 2003, the State Government of Sikkim also recognised the Newars as an Other Backward Class (OBC), for whom a percentage of jobs and higher studies are now reserved. It is notable that in their homeland, Nepal, Newars and other ethnic groups have so far achieved very little recognition of their cultural and linguistic rights (Kraemer 1996; Gellner 1997; Shrestha 1999). Against this background the Nepalese minorities' achievements in Sikkim are significant.

From January to March 2004, I travelled to and resided in Sikkim and Kalimpong to conduct anthropological research on the Newars of India. During my stay in Sikkim, I was able to gather a wealth of information on various aspects of the Newar diaspora community resident in the state. More specifically, this fieldwork gave me a good opportunity to meet members of the community who were active in reviving their language, culture and rituals. I was permitted to observe their religious and ritual activities and to experience how the diaspora Newars are determined to revive and preserve their heritage. My findings are presented in this paper.

Historical background

Although the question of early migration is still to be addressed by historians, it is believed among Newars of Darjeeling and Sikkim that some of their ancestors began migrating to the region soon after the Gorkha conquest of Nepal in 1769. Tanka Subba writes: 'a few family histories of the Newars of Sikkim reveal that their ancestors migrated to Sikkim at the time of consolidation of Nepal by the Gorkha King Prithivi Narayan Shah' (1989: 1). This suggestion remains problematic because the Gorkhas had not entered the south-western regions of Sikkim until the first Gorkha-Sikkim war of 1788-1789. They were further made to evacuate following the Anglo-Gorkha Treaty of Sugauli (1815).

Many have suggested that with the arrival of the legendary Laksmidas Pradhan (Kasaju), a Newar from Bhaktapur, in Sikkim, many other Newars migrated there also. There are a number of stories in circulation about how and when Laksmidas left Nepal. While some

suggest that Laksmidas escaped from the Nepal valley to save his life right after the Kot massacre of 1846, others believe that he left Nepal long before this incident. According to Bhuvan Prasad Pradhan, Laksmidas and his family had already moved from Bhaktapur to Kathmandu and were engaged in business there when he escaped from Nepal (Pradhan 1993: 4-5), but Cakraraj Timila believes that Laksmidas and his family were living in the Inaycho quarter of Bhaktapur at the time of his departure.¹ Both Cakraraj and Bhuvan Prasad provide vivid accounts of Laksmidas' tribulations after he left home and before he ended up in Sikkim. According to Cakraraj, Laksmidas first began his trade in Darjeeling by selling *gundruk*, a form of dried and fermented vegetable. Bhuvan Prasad Pradhan (1993: 9) writes that the location where Laksmidas used to sell *gundruk* is still known as Gundri Bazaar to this day. Only later did Laksmidas succeed in establishing himself as a successful businessman in Darjeeling.

On 1 February, 1835, the East India Company took over Darjeeling, ending Sikkim's control of the area. While in 1839 Darjeeling was home to only 100 people, within ten years its population had reached 10,000. In the following thirty years, Darjeeling saw a rapid population growth with the continuing influx of Nepalese migrants. In 1901, the Newar population of Darjeeling was 5,880 of a total population of 249,117 (O'Malley 1907: 43). The British government also made Laksmidas the first Municipal Commissioner of Darjeeling.

Daya Prasad Pradhan writes that Laksmidas and his brother Chandravir arrived in Sumbuk around 1850 (1997: 2). Similarly, Pranab Kumar Jha states: 'Laksmidas Pradhan with his uncle Keshav Narayan came to Darjeeling in 1853 from Nepal and probably no other Newar had come to Darjeeling before them' (1985: 130). He further suggests that they settled in Sikkim in 1867 in order to work at the copper mine in Tukkhani in South Sikkim and went on to work in a number of other copper mines later. Some Newars of Sikkim have suggested that the then king invited Laksmidas to Sikkim to act as the collector of land revenues, as Laksmidas had become famous in Darjeeling as a successful businessman.

After the 1861 treaty was signed between British government and Sikkimese authorities, the British began to encourage Nepalese settlers

¹ In 2004, noted Nepali folklorist, Kesar Lal Shrestha kindly supplied me with an unpublished family note written by Cakraraj Timila.

in Sikkim.² Some ministers, Lamas and Kazis, including Chebu Dewan as well as Maharaja Sidkeong Namgyal and his sister, were opposed to Nepalese settlers in Sikkim. However, Pranab Kumar Jha writes, in 1867, during the reign of Maharaja Sidkeong Namgyal the Sikkimese authorities accorded a formal lease grant to Laksmidas Pradhan. In an appeal to the Government of Bengal to protect his land rights and possessions in Sikkim, Laksmidas had received the lease from the Lama Shahib of Phodong and the Rajah of Sikkim.³ Lal Bahadur Basnet also mentions the formal granting of a lease in 1867 to two Newar brothers (1974: 44). Daya Prasad Pradhan has published a family note outlining the partition of the lands received in 1867 by Laksmidas and his son Laksminarayan Pradhan, Chandravir Pradhan and his son Maheshwor Pradhan, Kancha Chandravir Pradhan and his son Laksminarayan Pradhan, Lambodar Pradhan and his son Laksmidas Pradhan (1997: 37, Appendix Ka). Despite this documentation, I could not trace any formal written deeds regarding the 1867 land lease to Laksmidas.

The lease of lands to Laksmidas was continued in latter years by Khansa Dewan and Phodong Lama, both of whom were considered to be pro-immigration leaders. A deed dated 1874 states that Phodong Lama and Khangsa Dewan leased lands to Laksmidas, Chandravir, Jitman and Lambodar in exchange for payments of Rs. 500 to the Rajah and Rs. 700 to Lama and Khangsa Dewan. The area of land mentioned in the deed was as follows:

Boundary of land on the North of East from Rooe Naddi to its confluence to the Tista River, on the East South all along the Tista river, on the South and West all along the Burra Rungit up to its suspension Bridge over the Rungit river, on the North-West from the Rungit suspension Bridge along the old road up to Pukka village along the Government Road to Koolow Ektompani, from the Jhora of Koolow Ektorppani up to the Manfur river, on the East from the North of Manfur all along the Manfur Jhora up to its source.⁴

² The 1861 treaty obliged Sikkim to comply with British wishes relating to internal and external affairs. See Basnet (1974: 192-98), Appendix 'B', for the full text of the treaty.

³ The letter was dated 20/10/1889, but there is mention of a land lease received about 22 years earlier. See Jha (1985: 56 & 128) Appendix I. See also Sharma and Sharma (1997: 13) Vol. 1.

⁴ See Jha (1985: 55-7 & 128-29) Appendix II and III. See also Sharma & Sharma (1997: 13-14) Vol. 1.

The deed also authorised the Newar settlers to investigate and fine criminal acts according to Nepalese legal custom, with the exception of murder cases. The Newar migrants in Sikkim were also responsible for introducing a range of new technologies and crops in the agricultural sector in Sikkim.

Laksmidas invited his brother, Kancha Chandravir Pradhan (Kasaju), from Nepal to assist him as his own responsibilities increased. There are a number of stories in circulation about this Chandravir. According to Bhuvan Prasad Pradhan, Chandravir was a wrestler and to this day, people in Sikkim tell of how, with this great physical strength, he overpowered individuals who went against the rules, denied paying revenues or even attacked Nepalese settlers.

As the head of Nepalese settlers in Sikkim, Laksmidas began inviting hundreds of Nepalis to Sikkim to look after the lands under his control, including Magars from the hills and Newars from Bhaktapur of a variety of different castes. In this manner, a large number of Newars were migrating to and settling in Sikkim by the beginning of the 1870s.⁵ Quoting a passage from the *History of Sikkim*, Chie Nakane confirms that Sikkim saw an influx of Nepalese Gorkhalis from 1871 (1966: 251).

In the 1870s, mining copper was added to the responsibilities held by Laksmidas. The Sikkimese court was divided on the issue of Nepalese migration. On account of these divisions, Jha writes, trouble and riots sometimes broke out between Laksmidas Pradhan, the head of the Nepalese community, and Lasso Kazi, the Sikkim Vakeel in 1872 (1985: 56). A document dated simply as 3rd day of the 3rd month of the Tibetan year Iron Dragon (1880?) under the king Thutob Namgyal, describes a riot in Rhenock between pro- and anti-Nepalese groups. The same document also mentions the fines slapped on those who disobeyed the Newar leader given authority to collect taxes and govern.⁶

The exact date of the birth and death of Laksmidas remains unclear. His son Lambodar owned the largest landed property in Sikkim and the British honoured him with the title Rai Saheb for his service and loyalty to the colonial authorities. Quoting family papers, Jha offers the following copper mines as ones in which Laksmidas and his family worked in: Tuk Khani near Turuk in South Sikkim, Rinchi Khani in Rinchinpong in West Sikkim, Bhotang Khani near Rangpo

⁵ See Jha (1985: 130-32) Appendix IV. See also Kotturan (1983: 82)

⁶ See Sharma and Sharma (1997: 53-55) and also Basnet (1974: 46).

Bazar in East Sikkim, Pachey Khani near Rhenock in East Sikkim and Rathok Khani in Namthang in South Sikkim (1985: 130).

In the past, traders in Sikkim had practiced the barter system. The British authorities later granted them permission to use Nepalese currency in Sikkim as some Nepalese traders requested for it to be permitted in 1849 to ease their trade.⁷ In 1881, following a request from Nepalese traders, the king of Sikkim formally sought approval from the British authorities in India to begin minting Sikkim's own coins. On 4 June 1881, the Bengal Government replied granting the Sikkimese authority to mint their own currency (Sharma and Sharma 1997: 45-47). Subsequently, on the 3rd day of the 10th month of the Water-Sheep year in the Tibetan calendar, the Palace in Sikkim wrote to Laksmidas granting him permission to start minting. The relevant portion of the text translated from the original Tibetan is provided below:

Be it known to all the Monks and laymen residing within the Kingdom in general and those led by the Newar trader Lakshmidar in particular that in accordance with their request made in the petition submitted by the latter requesting for permission to mint coins (*doli*) we had written to Lord Eden Saheb through the Political Officer and obtained his concurrence. In pursuance thereof order has been issued to Lakshmidar, the Newar Trader, and others communicating grant of permission to mint coins.⁸

In 1883, having been given the contract to mint for five years, Laksmidas introduced the first Sikkimese coins into the market.⁹ The mint did not last long: it was ended in 1887.

There are also a number of stories about Chandravir Pradhan (Maske), another Newar in Sikkim, who is also believed to be one of the earliest Newars to settle in the kingdom. According to Daya Prasad Pradhan, Chandravir Pradhan came from Nepal to Darjeeling with his father at the age of five in 1830, and later moved to Sikkim for business in 1845.¹⁰ He cooperated with Laksmidas in various contracts (*thekedārī*) and they also collaborated in mining copper and minting coins for the Sikkimese government. The title of *taksārī* 'minter' was bestowed by the Sikkimese government on Laksmidas, Chandravir

⁷ See Jha (1985: 130) and Sharma and Sharma (1997: 56).

⁸ The text is reprinted in Sharma and Sharma 1997: 49.

⁹ See Bhattacharyya (1984) for more on coinage in Sikkim.

¹⁰ See the genealogy published by one of his descendants in Pradhan (1997: 1).

Kasaju, Chandravir Maske, Jitmansing Pradhan, Marghoj Gurung and Pratapsing Chetri for their contributions in minting coins for the state.

British officers found Laksmidas, Chandravir and their families to be extremely reliable partners. There are a number of testimonials written by British government officers to Laksmidas and Chandravir dated between 1875 and 1895. One such testimony dated 31 May, 1875, states that the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal was satisfied with Chandravir's performance at the copper mines of Katong Ghat in Sikkim. A similar testimony dated June 1895 praises Laksmidas for his contributions in road construction in Sikkim.¹¹

Laksmidas was also engaged in lending money to government officers in Sikkim. A handwritten document dated 1882 preserved by Mrs. Kalpana Pradhan of Tadong tells that a person named Yamthang Kaji, a high-ranking Sikkimese government officer, borrowed money from Laksmidas and did not pay him interest nor return the money he had borrowed. In a formal letter, Laksmidas requested the then king of Sikkim to take the necessary steps to arrange for the loan to be paid, including the accrued interest.

Laksmidas and his family owned many estates in Sikkim. Jha provides the following list of their holdings in 1913: Kitam, Chidam, Namthang, Singtam and Chakung owned by Rai Saheb Lambodar Pradhan; Pakyong, Rungpo, Pedang, Rigoo, Pathing and Temi owned by Rai Saheb Laksminarayan Pradhan; Ney and Broom owned by Suriman Pradhan; Pachey Khani and Taza owned by Dalbahadur Pradhan; Rhenock owned by Ratnabahadur Pradhan and Marming owned by Sherbahadur Pradhan (1985: 132).

Many of the descendants of Laksmidas, Chandravir Kasaju and Chandravir Maske received the prestigious title of Rai Saheb from the British administration. They were also renowned as landlords (*zamindar*) or contractors (*thekedār*). One among them was Rai Saheb Balkrishna, popularly known by the name 'Baburam', and the grandson of Laksmidas. He built the famous *baunna dhokā darbār* 'the palace with fifty-two doors' in Namthang. The then king of Sikkim found this construction embarrassingly ostentatious, as it was only fitting for kings of Nepal to make palaces with fifty-two doors. Consequently, Baburam was fined a rupee, a large amount for the time. Baburam, however, being a wealthy landlord, chose to rather pay one thousand rupees and close one of the doors of his palace (Pradhan 1998: 55).

¹¹ Family documents in the possession of Mrs. Kalpana and Mr. Deepak Pradhan of Tadong.

Baburam's historic mansion still stands in Namthang, where his grandson Dharma Pratap Kasaju and his family now reside. It is interesting to note that the Chief Minister, Pawan Kumar Chamling, inaugurated the first Institute of Newar Language and Culture in Sikkim at this very site in 2000. Local Newars tell that whenever Baburam left his house a band would accompany him and that any British officers who visited the area were also received with a band. A song was even composed with his name: *kasko bājā, kasko bājā, Bāburāmko bājā* 'Whose band is it? Whose band is it? It is the band of Baburam', and is still popular among the people in Sikkim.

A house similar to the Palace in Namthang was also built in Pachey Khani by one of Chandravir Pradhan's descendants. A Newar styled *jhingate ghar*, a house with a tiled roof, was also constructed by the descendants of the late Chandravir, but the historic building is now in a dilapidated state. The chairman of the Sikkim Newar Organisation has suggested that the building be renovated as one of the important Newar heritage sites.

Several of the descendants of Laksmidas, Chandravir and Chandravir Maske also built temples, health centres and schools in different parts of Sikkim. Nowadays, the descendants of Laksmidas, his brother Chandravir and Chandravir Maske, who can be found across Sikkim, are still considered to be quite socially well-to-do.

In the course of my research, it became clear that the Nepalese migration to Sikkim continued through the twentieth century. An unpublished family genealogy which I received from Dhruba Pradhan Bhansari tells that his forefathers moved to Sikkim from Boya Bikhumca in eastern Nepal in 1870. In a brief unpublished memoir, Chakraraj Timila, who has now returned to Nepal and lives in Bhaktapur, writes how his grandfather, father and uncle left Bhaktapur to set up grocery shops in the Tista area in 1917. In 1918, his father and uncle married the daughters of Sikkimese Newars, and then settled down there. For some people it is still a living memory. For instance, the 63-year old Mr. Maniklal Pradhan of Tashiding told me that he came to Sikkim with his father when he was only five years old. For a period, he remembers travelling back and forth to Nepal to his ancestral home in Banepa. Others, however, do not remember when their ancestors moved to Sikkim and from which part of Nepal they came. Many have just a vague sense of which part of Nepal their forefathers inhabited before coming to Sikkim, and they have never returned to their ancestral homeland in Nepal.

The Newars of Sikkim appeared engaged not only as traders and landlords but also as officials in the Sikkimese government, serving at the Palace and the royal court in Gangtok since 1910. Some Newars became magistrates of towns and villages, with the authority to adjudicate in dispute settlements. A few also became councillors, a post similar to that of Minister during the rule of the Chogyal.

After the merger of Sikkim with India, a few Newars succeeded in occupying ministerial positions in the State Government of Sikkim. Other Newars are also known as social reformers and educators in Sikkim. To honour such individuals, the Government of Sikkim named roads after them, for instance, the Kashi Raj Pradhan Marg (Road) in Gangtok, named after Kashi Raj Pradhan who is remembered across Sikkim as a reformer and an educator.

The 1891 census of Sikkim returned 727 Newars out of a total population of 30,558 Sikkim.¹² In 1994, the total population of the Newars was 20,000 while the present Newar population is estimated to lie between 30,000 and 35, 000.

Socio-economic position

The Newars of Sikkim are engaged in various occupations, including governmental service, politics, teaching, agriculture, trade and business. According to Keshav Chandra Pradhan, from the 1910s until the 1980s, Newars occupied many important administrative posts, but the figure has been dropping steadily as members of other groups have gradually replaced them. At present, Mr. Rajiv Shankar Shrestha and Mrs. Jayshree Pradhan serve as Principal Secretaries, and are among a handful of Newars still occupying high-level posts in the Sikkimese administration. During my field research, two Newars were present as elected members of the 32-seat Sikkim Legislative Assembly. Both were members of ruling Sikkim Democratic Front, and for some time one had been a cabinet minister. In the May 2004 election, however, only one of them was able to contest the election and was returned as a MLA from the constituency of Gangtok.

The Newars are still renowned as traders and remain engaged in diverse businesses and industries. Many are engaged in tourism, hotels, handicrafts, bakeries, transport and the publishing media. Among them, the Bhansari family's Tripti bakery is one of Sikkim's most prominent industries. Similarly, Babu Kaji Shakya, a Gangtok-based sculptor, has

¹² This was the first census conducted in Sikkim, see Risley (1972: 27).

won many prestigious Indian national awards for his contributions to the handicraft industry of Sikkim. Shakya produces traditional Nepalese-style Buddhist and Hindu images, statues and jewellery. He owns a workshop in Rumtek and has a showroom in Gangtok, and one of his sons is following in his father's footsteps. A few Newars, such as R.K. Pradhan of Rhenock, are engaged in the film industry.

A number of Sikkimese Newars have made their reputation in the garden nursery business. The late Chandravir Kasaju's son Rai Saheb Ratnabhadur initiated a nursery in Rhenock under his father's name, which is still known throughout Sikkim as the 'Chandra Nursery'. Already in the middle of twentieth century, some Newar traders had begun exporting flowers, plants and fruits from Sikkim to India and other countries. Some such entrepreneurs, such as Keshav Chandra Pradhan, a former Chief Secretary of Sikkim are world-renowned in the field of plant husbandry and have won international awards from Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States and Japan for their work in this field. Pradhan is now retired and grows many varieties of orange and hybrid flowers in his well-tended garden.

Newars are also found in the grocery business in many settlements across Sikkim, while others are engaged in agriculture. Newars were the first to introduce cardamom farming in Sikkim, now one of Sikkim's most popular cash crops. Ganesh Kumar Pradhan of Rhenock is well known for his antique collection. Through personal initiative, he has gathered old coins, notes, historical documents, manuscripts, books, driftwood and drift stones. Mr. Pradhan also grows bonsai and hybrid plants in his family garden. His contributions have not only won many prizes but also admiration and praise from all over Sikkim. During my fieldwork in 2004, I had the good fortune to view his archival collections. The Newar community of Sikkim are rightfully proud of Mr. Jaslal Pradhan, who participated in the Olympics as a player and boxing coach for India.

Data from 1989 would suggest that 27% of the total Newar population of Sikkim own less than 5 acres of land, while 66% are landless and that only 10% of Sikkimese Newars possess assets in urban areas (Shrestha 1996: 8). This survey, conducted among 7,025 Sikkimese Newars in 1994, revealed that 33% percent were illiterate and only 5% had a graduate qualification. Educated Newars are for the most part concentrated in Gangtok, the state capital.

While many believe that most of Newar society is rich and as some individuals occupy high government posts, the reality is quite different. According to former chairman of the *Sikkim Newāḥ Guthi*, Mr. Keshav

Chandra Pradhan, less than 5% of the Newar population in Sikkim once served at the Chogyal's court, have high government positions or run business houses that can be considered to be affluent. The rest are comparatively poor. Analysing demographic data for Sikkim, Bhasin and Bhasin showed that 40% of the Newar population lived on less than 500 rupees income per annum and that only 4% had an annual income of between IC 20,001 and 25,000 (1995: 119).

Within the Newar community, then, there is a genuine schism between the wealthy and the economically depressed families. To a certain extent, there is little mutual trust between these two classes. One of the aims of the *Sikkim Newāḥ Guthi* is to help the poorer sections of Newar society through financial assistance and other means. However, despite the best efforts of the *Sikkim Newāḥ Guthi*, very little sign of cooperation between the poor and affluent Newar communities is noticeable. As one of my informants put it, "Unlike other communities in Sikkim, the Newars lack a feeling of mutual cooperation, instead they envy each other's success". While other communities in Sikkim generally view the Newars as a hard-working people, some portray them as oppressors, since during the time of the Chogyal they worked as contractors and landlords and used harsh measures to collect revenue and were authorised to whip people who failed to provide forced labour (*jhārā*). Older people such as Daya Prasad Pradhan dismiss such claims and suggest rather that Newars, in their capacity as contractors and landlords, were responsible for much development, such as opening schools and health centres, constructing roads and making rest places.

Newar castes

Traditional Newar society in Nepal is a complicated structure with caste divisions and internal hierarchies. The nineteenth century chronicle, the *Bhāṣāvamśāvali*, credits the fourteenth century king Jayasthiti Malla with introducing the caste system to the Nepal Valley (Lamsal 1966: 37-50). In Nepal, caste discrimination is still felt in all traditional Newar settlements and Newars still use their caste or occupational names.

Against the background of Nepal, the disappearance of caste hierarchies among Sikkim's Newars is remarkable and may be the single most salient feature of the diaspora population. With a few exceptions, all Newars in Sikkim are now called Pradhan. The term *Pradhan*, the family name of one caste of Nepal's Newars, has come to stand for all Newars in Sikkim and Darjeeling. At certain period, this

was not without controversy. During a dispute between two rival groups in Darjeeling, each claiming higher status over the other, the Nepalese authorities wrote a letter stating, 'Pradhan is among the highest classes of the Newars' (Singh 1991: 102). According to Bhuvan Prasad Pradhan (1993: 13), the British Government in India awarded the title of *Pradhan* to Laksmidas for his excellent service in 1913. Laksmidas later asked for all Sikkimese Newars to be permitted to use this title as their family name to prevent caste divisions within their community. A different interpretation is advanced by Khagendra Pradhan, who believes that Laksmidas ordered all Sikkimese Newars who had escaped Nepal to exclusively use Pradhan as a surname to protect their lives after the 1846 Kot massacre, thereby helping them hide their actual identity (1998: 57).

Changing all Newar surnames to Pradhan helped to eliminate caste hierarchies among the Newars of Sikkim. During my fieldwork, when I asked about their former castes divisions and names, many did not know as they had lost contact with their relatives in Nepal. However, some of the Newars who continue to have regular contact with their relatives in Nepal were aware of having caste names other than Pradhan. Among them, I recorded Vajracharya, Shakya, Tuladhar, Shrestha, Kasaju, Maske and Karmacharya, among others. Some have also adopted the word 'Newar' as their family name, particularly in Kurseong, where all Newars seem to call themselves Newar. Recently, even though a few families in Sikkim have begun tracing their former caste names, and some Shresthas, Shakyas and Tuladhars have started to use their family names, it does not seem likely this will revive the caste hierarchies which were so effectively eliminated among the Newars in Sikkim.

It is interesting to note that while caste hierarchies have all but disappeared among the Newars of Sikkim, the term 'Pradhan' has become a new caste in Sikkim's existing ethnic hierarchy. Pradhans have acquired a high status alongside Bahuns and the Chetris and it is widely believed that the political association between the Bahuns, Chetris and Newars of Sikkim is a long established one, predating the famous NBC (Newar-Bahun-Chetri) political grouping under the Chief Minister, Nar Bahadur Bhandari.

Guthi: socio-religious associations

The system of *guthis*, or socio-religious associations, is one of the most important components of Newar society.¹³ In the traditional context, *guthis* are responsible for organising the religious and ritual activities of a community. In Nepal, Licchavi inscriptions from the third to eighth centuries refer to *goṣṭhī*, the Sanskrit word from which *guthi* is derived, carrying out rituals and social work. Many inscriptions from this period describe *goṣṭhī* financial arrangements and their tasks. It appears from these inscriptions that such associations were important not only from the viewpoint of establishing and maintaining the temples, monasteries, shrines and rituals but were also instruments of development in the fields of water supply, agriculture, health and public entertainment. Among the *guthis*, the *sī guthi*, the funeral association, is most important because membership in this *guthi* determines the local affiliation and social position (in particular caste status) of a person. The *sī guthis* are a unique institution of Newar society. The main function of a *sī guthi* is to carry out funeral processions when a death occurs in the house of one of its members.¹⁴

When migrating to Sikkim, the Newars brought their religion, culture and rituals with them. Daya Prasad Pradhan (1997: 2) mentions the formation a *guthi* in Sumbuk when the Newars settled there around 1850, but he does not elaborate on it. Historical evidence shows that Rhenock, a small town in East Sikkim, was one of the earliest Newar settlements in the region. In the past, Rhenock was considered to be a gateway between Kalimpong and Nathu-la pass, as it lay on the trade route to Tibet. The Newars who settled in Rhenock established a traditional *guthi* before 1900. This *guthi* consisted of eighteen household members at its initiation and its main function was to gather at a Shiva temple every evening where devotionals songs (*bhajan*) were sung. The Rhenock *guthi* also organised performances of *lākhe* dances and the worship of Krishna every year during the *gāi jātrā* festival. Most significantly, members of the *guthi* were obliged to help others when someone in their family died, which is also the main feature of a Newar *sī guthi* in Nepal. It is the task of the eldest member of the *guthi* to inform all the members as soon as someone dies and then all are obliged to attend the funeral procession. On the fourth day after death, members must bring certain foodstuffs and a specific amount of money to the bereaved family. *Guthi* members also assist the grieving family

¹³ See Gellner (1992: 235-47); Nepali (1965: 191-7); Regmi (1967: 2) and Shrestha (2002: 32-35).

¹⁴ See Toffin (1984: 209-13); Quigley (1985: 30-49) and Ishii (1996) for the functioning of *sī guthis* in Nepal.

during the *gāi jātrā* festival when a cow procession in the name of the recently deceased person is organised. Those who fail in fulfilling their *guthi* duties are penalised. Rhenock is the only place in Sikkim where the Newar *sī guthi* is kept alive. However, unlike the *sī guthis* in Nepal, the Rhenock *guthi* does not restrict membership to one caste but rather includes all the Newar families in Rhenock.

In January 1990, the Newars of Rhenock restructured their *guthi*, introducing new regulations such as financial support for the bereaved families of dead members and providing interest-free monetary loans. At the same, the *guthi* is committed to reviving Newar culture and language in the area and has been involved with religious activities and traditional dances. Unlike the first Newar *guthi*, the revived *guthi* also now functions as a branch of the *Sikkim Newāh Guthi*, which means that it has become active in the process of achieving ethnic rights for Newars.

After the formation of the *Sikkim Newāh Guthi*, in all settlements where a branch office of the organisation exists, financial contributions by *guthi* members to the family members of the dead for the funeral costs have been made mandatory. It is notable that when a death occurs in a Newar family in Sikkim, all the neighbours and friends come forward, without caste or ethnic restriction, and provide physical comfort and financial support to the grieving family. This tradition of supporting bereaved families already existed among the Bhutia and Lepchas, and its adoption by Newars may be taken as a sign of their effective integration in Sikkim. The financial contributions to bereaved families may be quite substantial: one such family told me that they had recently received a total of IC 150,000 (about US \$3000) from their relatives, neighbours and friends.

Aside from the example at Rhenock, there is a notable absence of traditional Newar *guthis* in Sikkim. Particularly surprising is the absence of *sī guthis*, the funeral associations, not only in Sikkim but also in other parts of India. The only exception appears to be Kalimpong. According to Yogvir Shakya, Newars who settled in Kalimpong for trade with Tibet initiated a funeral society (*bicāh guthi*) around 1930. This *guthi* included all Newar castes and the organisational minutes were written in the Newar language.¹⁵ While a minute dated 1955 shows that there were 43 members in the *guthi* at the time, nowadays the organisation consists of only eighteen members. Other local Newars, who also called themselves Pradhan, do not

¹⁵ See Kesar Lal Shrestha (2004: 3) for more on this *guthi*.

participate in this *guthi* but have rather established a Kalimpong branch of the *All India Newar Association*.

The Newars of Darjeeling never initiated a *guthi* as such but rather a *Newāḥ Samāj* or Newar Society back in 1921. Although the *Newāḥ Samāj* did not carry out the task of a Newar *guthi* or *sī guthi*, it was nevertheless active in social and religious work. A decade after its foundation it was renamed *Nepāli Asamartha Sahāyak Samiti*, or the Committee to Help Deprived Nepalese, but since the 1970s it returned to its original name of *Newāḥ Samāj*. Its members regularly gather to sing devotional Newar songs (*bhajan*) and have helped destitute Nepalese in Darjeeling on several occasions. The Society has also organised the celebration of Newar festivals such as *Mha pūjā*. In 1991, when it celebrated its 75 anniversary, *Newāḥ Samāj* invited a large number of Newar artists from Nepal and organised a Newar food festival in Darjeeling. The organisation built a house of its own at Chandmari in 1965 and since then has been providing meeting space to Newars as well as members of other communities. In June 1993, aiming to promote Newar language, culture and rituals, the Newars of Darjeeling established a new organisation called *Darjeeling Newar Sangathan*, which succeeded in opening twenty branches in West Bengal by 1998. It has now been renamed the *All India Newar Organisation* and has established branches across India in many of the settlements where a sizable number of Newars reside. Since 1997, the Kalimpong branch has been publishing a news bulletin known as *Sukundā* (a traditional oil lamp used in Newar rituals) under the editorship of Yogvir Shakya, a local teacher and a social worker. In 2004, *Sukundā* was turned into a news bulletin of the *All India Newar Organisation*.

Religions and rituals

Though there are a few Newar Christians and Muslims, Newar society in Nepal can as a whole be considered a Hindu-Buddhist mix. In Sikkim, however, there are a fair number of Christian Newars alongside Newar Hindu and Buddhist practitioners. The mixture or blending of Hindu and Buddhist religious features is prevalent among the Newars in Sikkim as it is among the Newars of Nepal. The majority of Sikkimese Newars nevertheless identify themselves as Hindu. The process of Hinduisation has a long history among the Newars of Nepal, particularly after the implementation of the 1856 legal code, the Muluki Ain. Although most lay Newars practice both Hindu and Buddhist

rituals without making much distinction, they prefer to be referred to as Hindu because it is the religion officially propagated by the state in Nepal. It is likely that the Newars may also have followed this same trend in Sikkim. The adoption of 'Pradhan' as a surname, even though the name used by both Hindu and Buddhist Newar families in Nepal, is particularly prominent among the Hindus, and may have helped the Newars to label themselves as Hindu in Sikkim. Newars with a Buddhist priestly background, however, such as a family I met in Pakyong, despite using Pradhan as their surname define themselves as Buddhist because their ancestors were Buddhist Vajracharya. Similarly, most Shakya families in Sikkim and Kalimpong practice Buddhism and refer to themselves as Buddhists.

Christian Newars do not practice any Hindu or Buddhist rituals or traditions, but are nevertheless proud to call themselves Newar. Rather, they follow the life cycle and death rituals according to the Christian traditions. In certain cases, when a Christian Newar is married to a Hindu Newar they follow some of the Hindu rituals along with their Christian rituals. Since all the Newars once were Hindu or Buddhist, even if they later converted to Christianity, some are of the view that Christian Newars should return to the Hindu and Buddhist religious path. So far only a few have done so. Catholic and Evangelical Christians whom I interviewed said that they were not inclined to discard their present religious affiliations and adopt Hindu or Buddhist practices. Both were born into Christian families as their grandfathers had already converted to Christianity. The Newar organisation in Sikkim is flexible enough to include all religious denominations in its membership. Only at one location did a Newar activist tell me that their branch office did not extend membership to Christian Newars.

The religious and ritual life of Newars in Nepal is guided by calendrical festivals, and many spend a good part of their time participating in feasts and organising festivals. Newars in Nepal observe one or another festival, feast, fast or procession of gods and goddesses almost every month. A common feature of all Newar cities, towns and villages is that they are home to a specific annual festival or procession (*jātrā*) of the most important deity of that particular locale. Besides such observances, and making pilgrimages to important religious sites, another important feature of Newar society is the masked dance portraying various gods and deities.

In Sikkim, however, aside from a few places such as Rhenock, the Newars have lost most of their rituals and traditions. While major festivals such as Dasain and Tihār are celebrated with much fanfare,

many small festivals are no longer followed, and the feasts and festivals which have survived have been fundamentally transformed. In fact, one could say that they are not celebrated according to Newar tradition. Unsurprisingly, those Newars who are in regular contact with their relatives in Nepal and who continue to visit Nepal from time to time follow the calendrical festival cycle more rigorously, in line with Newar practices in Nepal. Such families are, however, very few in number.

What remains of the Newar ritual calendar in Sikkim is not particularly different from the one used in Nepal, even if Sikkimese Newars do not observe many of the festivals and rituals. *Mha pūjā*, the worship of the self, is one of the most important Newar festivals in Nepal, but has been largely forgotten by the Sikkimese population. Only since 1995, with the aim of promoting Newar religion, has the Newar Association of Sikkim, the *Sikkim Newāḥ Guthi*, started to celebrate *Mha pūjā*. Since 2000, the *Sikkim Newāḥ Guthi* has also revived festivals such as *Indra jātrā*, another important Newar event.

Daya Prasad Pradhan of Tadong, aged 86, remembers dragging away a straw effigy of Gathe Magar (*gathāṃmugaḥ*) together with a sweeper in Pakim and even seeing month-long *lākhe* dances when he was a young boy (Pradhan 1997: 30). The tradition of dragging away of effigies of *gathāṃmugaḥ* together with a scavenger is still a living tradition in Kathmandu.¹⁶ Most of the Newars I interviewed in Sikkim, however, did not remember celebrating the festival of *gathāṃmugaḥ*, even though they do celebrate *guṃpunhi* or *janai pūrṇimā* by drinking *kvāti*, an special soup made of different beans. Aside from Rhenock, there is no other place in Sikkim where the traditional cow processions in the name of recently deceased relatives still takes place during *gāi jātrā*.

While many Sikkimese Newars know about father's day and mother's day, only a few families celebrate these events as they are followed in Nepal. The festival of *pañjāraṃ*, when alms are given to Buddhist monks, is not practiced in Sikkim. Most of my informants did not know of the festival of *cathā*, during which the crescent moon and Ganesh are worshipped, even though the tradition of *svarha srāddha*, the sixteen days dedicated to offering ritual food to deceased ancestors, is still widely observed in Sikkim. Except for one or two families I met, the tradition of offering lights to the heavens during the month of *kārtik*, a ritual known as *ālamata*, is not observed.

¹⁶ See van den Hoek (2004: 23).

Very few Newar families in Sikkim still observe all the Newar feasts and festivals, but *Ghyocākusalhu* (*Māghe Sankrānti*), the eating of molasses and ghee in January, *Śrīpaṃcamī*, the beginning of spring and the worship of *Sarasvatī*, the goddess of knowledge in January/February, *Shiva Rātri* (*Silācarhe*) in February, *Holipunhi*, the festival of colour in February/March, and *Caitradasain* and *Rāmanavamī* in March/April are still celebrated by many. Large portion of the Newar community of Sikkim do not celebrate the festival of *Sithinakhaḥ*, the worship of the lineage divinity, but some still do. Some are even said to sacrifice a goat during this festival. When an animal is sacrificed, the division of the head of the sacrificed animal into eight parts and its distribution among the elder members of the household is an important ritual element for Newars in Nepal but in Sikkim is unknown to almost all.

As in Nepal, Bhimsen is considered to be one of the main gods for Sikkimese Newars and many worship him as a lineage deity. Other Newars regard Durga or Buddha as their lineage deities. As a part of some rituals, the Newars in Sikkim worship the mountain deity Kanchenjunga. All those who consider themselves to be Sikkimese recognise and worship Kanchenjunga in some form.¹⁷ Religious Newars may also go on pilgrimage to the sacred sites of Sikkim, such as to the Kheocheplari and Tsomgo lakes.

Now that many are searching for their Newar identity, Sikkimese Newars are keen to revive traditional festivals. Alongside cultural promotion by the *Sikkim Newāḥ Guthi*, there are some impressive individual initiatives such as that launched by Suryavir Tuladhar who is building a remarkable Newar temple.

The temple of Svayambhū Bhimākālī

As stated above, the mixture of both Hindu and Buddhist religious features is prevalent among Newars in Sikkim as it is among the Newars of Nepal. In this regard, the establishment of a Svayambhū Bhimākālī temple in Gangtok is noteworthy. This temple is famous for its presentation of features of Newar religion, but is also filled with all manner of deities including a statue of Sāi Bābā, a modern living god in India. People from all Sikkimese communities and from further afield visit this temple. Mr. Suryavir Tuladhar, the founding priest of the

¹⁷ Balikci-Denjongpa has elaborated secular and Buddhist perceptions of the mountain deity Kanchenjunga among the Lhopos (Bhutia) of Sikkim (2002: 31).

temple, is one of the most active Newars in Sikkim promoting Newar culture and language. He is also one of the few Newars in Gangtok who actually speaks the Newar language. For a period, the temple grounds were used to teach the Newar language as well as Nepalese *carya* dances. Suryavir's combining of Newar Hindu and Buddhist religious practices including Tantric and Tibetan Buddhist (Lamaist) forms all in one temple is particularly unique.

As a Newar, Suryavir's aim was to decorate the temple with Newar features. Being born into a Tuladhar family, he was not supposed to perform any priestly duties at the temple, but succeeded in turning himself into a priest because there were no other Newar priests in Sikkim. This should be seen as a significant departure from the traditional concept of priesthood as practised among the Newars of Nepal and can be understood as the invention of a religious identity in a diaspora community. Most interesting is the mixing up of Hindu (Śaiva, Vaiṣṇav), Tantric, Newar Buddhist and Tibetan Buddhist practices in Suryavir's way of worshipping the deities. In this regard, the structure of the temple is very inventive, with a pagoda-styled roof, enshrined Svayambhū Caitya and a temple altar with images of Śiva and Kālī beneath the Caitya.

Every morning, the priest performs a *nitya pūjā* for more than two hours as a form of daily worship at this temple. Some of his followers live there as his pupils, including a girl who becomes possessed by a divine serpent every morning and every day treats a number of patients while possessed. The priest Suryavir himself is also a faith healer and treats patients after completing his daily worship. He is believed to have the power of communicating with the gods.

Among the Newar population of Nepal, animal sacrifice during festivals and rituals is common, particularly at the temple of Kālī. In Sikkim, however, animal sacrifice is rare and is virtually forbidden at most temples in the state. Vegetarian offerings, replacing of animal sacrifice with fruit or coconuts, have become common in Sikkimese temples. Similarly, no animal sacrifice is permitted at the temple of Svayambhū Bhimākālī.

When performing fire sacrifices, Suryavir blends Vedic, Tantric and Buddhist components, a form of performance which would be impossible in Nepal, but which is tolerated in Sikkim because the system has been created in accordance with local needs. Such creative ritual inventions are necessary and accepted, in large part because the Newar migrant populations in Sikkim lack not only the appropriate priests, but also knowledge of the traditions of rituals practice. In fact,

it is only in recent years that Sikkimese of Nepalese origin have begun to reassert their ethnic identities thus compelling them to invent rituals of their own. Through the rituals that he performs at the temple, Suryavir wants to demonstrate not only a separate Newar or Nepali identity, but also to prove that the Nepalese of Sikkim are flexible, tolerant and ready to adopt elements from all other religions. Such invention is necessary to attract devotees from all communities, since Sikkim is home to many Nepalese communities as well as to its original inhabitants, the Bhutias and Lepchas.

Devotees from all communities regularly visit the temple to pay their respects to gods and goddess. The priest states he exists in order to perform righteous (*dharma*) tasks and thus serve disadvantaged people.

Life cycle rituals

The diffusion or erosion of language and culture are some of the most challenging problems faced by minorities in any multinational or multicultural society. In the case of migrants, such challenges are all the more pronounced. I discovered that many life cycle rituals observed by the Newars have all but disappeared in Sikkim. Only a few people, whose regular contact with ancestral relatives in Nepal remains uninterrupted, have maintained all the Newar life cycle rituals. Otherwise, the Newars of Sikkim are completely dependent on the Parbate Brahmins for the performance of life cycle and death rituals. Consequently, we may speak of a major ritual transformation. It also appears that there are not a sufficient number of Parbate (Hindu hill dwellers) Brahmins working as priests in Sikkim, so most of them are actually invited from Nepal. Some of these Brahmin priests remain in Sikkim for years while their families stay in Nepal, with the result that the priests travel back and forth a great deal. Because of the policies of the State Government of Sikkim, these Brahmin priests are not permitted to receive Indian citizenship.

In their attempt to reintroduce Newar life cycle and death rituals, the Sikkim Newar Organisation is considering inviting Newar Brahmin and Vajracharya priests from Nepal. How feasible such a plan is, and how soon they will be able to do so, is still unclear. All over India, Newars are facing the same problem. In the recent past, in their attempt to revive life cycle and death rituals, Indian Newars have not only consulted experts from Nepal, but have also translated ritual manuals from Newar into Nepali, the *lingua franca* among the Newars in India, in order to facilitate distribution and comprehension within their

communities. In this context, the publication of the books *Newar Jāti* (the Newar Nationality) by Bhaichanda Pradhan (1997) and *Janma-dekhi Sījyāsammako Saṃskār Paddhati* (A Manual of Lifecycle and Death Rituals) compiled by the Indian Newar Organisation, Central Committee Darjeeling (2003) are particularly noteworthy.

While life cycle rituals are still very important to some Newars in Sikkim, they do not follow the rituals in the manner of Newars in Nepal. For instance, some do observe *Macābu Byaṃke*, the birth purification rite, *Macā Jaṃkva*, the rice feeding ceremony, *Ihi*, the ritual marriage for female children, *Bārhā Tayegu*, the twelve-day confinement for girls, *Busaṃ Khāyegu*, the shaving of heads, and *Kaytā pūjā*, the worship of loincloth. In most cases, however, the rituals performed during these ceremonies no longer follow the Newar tradition because Parbate Brahmins are employed as priests, who simply do not know about Newar rituals.

After childhood and adolescent rituals, marriage is the most crucial series of life cycle rituals in Newar society. Similarly, the *Burā Jaṃko*, an old age ceremony, is very important ceremony for Newars. It can be observed many times: first, when one turns 77 years, 7 months, 7 days, 7 hours and 7 minutes; the second time when one reaches the age of 83 years; the third when one turns 88 years and 8 months, and so on. This old age ceremony has long been abandoned by Newars in Sikkim. Most recently, in 2000, the *Karunadevi Smārak Dharmārtha Guthi* attempted to revive this tradition by observing the *Burā Jaṃko* of Mr. Jay Shankarlal Shrestha in Rhenock, when he turned 83. The *Jaṃko* was observed as a public ceremony for three days with various programmes attached, and the event was widely publicised across Sikkim so that others would think of following suit.¹⁸

Death rituals

In Newar society, rituals are as important for those who have died as for those who are alive. In Sikkim, even after death, the Newars employ Parbate Brahmin priests. Funerals may take place on the day of death, but in most cases occur the following day. As far as possible, sons of the deceased must bear the dead body to the cremation ground, but relatives and neighbours may also help to carry the body. At the cremation ground, the chief mourner lights the body and it burns down

¹⁸ See the *Smārikā* (2000) published on the occasion.

to ashes. The chief mourner and any other sons then shave their heads and bathe in the river.

Returning home, sons of the deceased keep their distance from others for ten days during which time no one can touch them. They also cook their own food. Every day for ten days, they may perform *śrāddha* at a nearby river. On the tenth day, a purification rite is performed and close relatives may also shave their head. On the eleventh day, 365 floating bowls made of leaves (*khochi bagāune*) are prepared. On the twelfth day, *piṇḍa* are offered to the deceased. On the thirteenth day, a *śrāddha* is performed, and beds, sheets, dresses and utensils (*saryā dāna*) are given to the priest in the name of the deceased. Those who joined the family in the funeral procession and extended their condolences must be invited for a feast meal on this day. All of these visitors give the family an amount of money as a gesture of their support. Such a feast may not contain meat. Nowadays, many stop wearing the mourning dress on the thirteenth day, but some continue to wear mourning clothes until they perform a *śrāddha* on the 45th day. Monthly *śrāddha* is no longer common, but most Newars in Sikkim do perform a *śrāddha* at sixth months and a year after the death. Wearing white for the whole year has now become a rare practice. Such rituals performed after death in Sikkim, as expected, do not match to the rituals performed by Newars in Nepal.

Newar ethnic identity in Sikkim

While the Newars of Sikkim feel themselves to be distinct from other ethnic groups because of their separate culture and language, as has become clear from the discussion above, most have failed to maintain their language, culture, rituals and traditions.

Only in 1982 did a group of Newar youngsters, led by Rajiv Shankar Shrestha, for the first time take the initiative to establish a *Sikkim Newāḥ Guthi*, an Association of the Newars in Sikkim, with the aim of achieving ethnic rights for the Newar community residing in Sikkim. This earliest attempt at organising the Newars of Sikkim for the pursuit of ethnic rights faced some initial obstacles and thus ended without any success. A few years later, in 1990, several planning meetings were held at the residence of Mr. Daya Prasad Pradhan (Maske) in Tadong culminating in a large meeting at the auditorium of *Sikkim Sāhitya Parisad* on 3 October 1993, at which an *ad hoc* body of the *Sikkim Newāḥ Guthi* under the chairmanship of the late Mohan Pratap Pradhan (Kasaju) was formed. Later that year, this organisation

succeeded in turning itself into a state level-Newar association in Sikkim, the *Sikkim Newāḥ Guthi*.

The *Guthi* also launched a campaign to have the Newars recognised as an Other Backward Class (OBC), but as the 1998 OBC report prepared by the State Government ignored their campaign, they had to wait for a further five years for this recognition to be achieved. In 1996, while waiting, a group of dissatisfied members of the *Sikkim Newāḥ Guthi* formed the *Newar Kalyān Tadartha Samiti* (Newar Welfare Ad Hoc Committee) under the chairmanship of Khagendra Pradhan, even though this organisation reunited with the mother organisation, the *Sikkim Newāḥ Guthi*, in 1999. At the annual convention of the *Sikkim Newāḥ Guthi* in 2000, the organisation chose a new name: *All India Newar Organisation, Sikkim* (Akhil Bhāratīya Newar Saṃgathan, Sikkim), to link it with other Newar organisations of India of the same name. This name change aroused some controversy. Those in favour of the new name argued that it was necessary to give the organisation a broader perspective and appeal, since in other regions of India also the Newars were organised under the *All India Newar Organisation*. Those against the name change, however, argued that it was inappropriate because it discarded the word *guthi*, a fundamental term for a Newar organisation. Especially those who had initiated the *Sikkim Newāḥ Guthi* did not appreciate the new name, but for the sake of Newar unity did not openly contest it.

All Newars in Sikkim are in principle members of the *All India Newar Organisation, Sikkim*. In most places that I visited, people told me that they believe it necessary to have a national-level Newar organisation promoting their welfare and the revival of their threatened culture and language. However, some Newars I spoke to felt an ethnic organisation to be inappropriate because it would eventually separate them from other populations in Sikkim. While I was observing the *Sikkim Mahāsānti Pūjā* (Sikkim Great Peace Worship) in Gangtok in 2004 January, a Newar participant even suggested that I not disclose to others that my study was on the Newar community since the *Sikkim Mahāsānti Pūjā* was a four-day joint effort by over two dozen religiously-motivated youth clubs, trade unions, workers organisations and business houses. During this grand event, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, Sikh and Sāi Bābā followers were all actively involved. I was informed that the main aim of the *pūjā* was to showcase the religious harmony among Sikkim's peoples, and to appease wandering souls of all the beings who had died an unnatural death in the recent past. In this capacity, according to Mr. S.K. Pradhan, the

spokesman of the event, while a major objective of the *pūjā* was to bring peace to Sikkim, its ultimate aim was to bring about peace and tranquillity in the whole world. Followers of the different religions each had their own room and altar at which they could perform appropriate religious activities for their faith.

Nepali is now well established as a lingua franca in Sikkim. Among Sikkimese Newars, the practice of speaking the Newar language at home is extremely low: most use Nepali as their mother tongue. In particular, those families who have lost contact with Kathmandu Newars have completely lost the ability of speaking the Newar language. Only a few families in Gangtok, Rhenock, Namthang, Namchi, Jorethang, Legship, Tashiding and Geyzing still do speak Newar. Tashiding, a small village situated in West Sikkim, is the only place where I found several families still speaking Newar with one another. However, with the establishment of the *Sikkim Newāḥ Guthi*, Newars of Sikkim have begun to feel it necessary to learn their ancestral language. In a bid to teach Newar to Sikkimese Newars, the *Sikkim Newāḥ Guthi* started sending students to Kathmandu to learn Newar and also invited language teachers from Kathmandu to Sikkim to teach the tongue. From 1998, the *Guthi* also supplied two Newar language schoolteachers: one at Aritar in East Sikkim and another at Mallidanda in South Sikkim. Sadly this venture did not last long. In February 2000, the Institute of Newar Language and Culture was established in Namthang Kothi in South Sikkim to revive the Newar language and its culture. The government also introduced the Newar language as a subject at some schools, appointed Newar language teachers and published course books in the Newar language.

The *Newar Organisation of Sikkim* is also keen to maintain cross border contact and cultural exchange between the Newars of Nepal and Sikkim. Prominent Newar leaders, such as Padma Ratna Tuladhar, Malla K. Sundar, Naresh Bir Shakya and Laksmidas Manandhar have been invited to Sikkim to participate in their programmes. On occasion, cultural teams from Nepal, and well-known Newar language, dance and music teachers, have also been invited. Similarly, Newar leaders in Sikkim have visited Nepal to participate in programmes organised by the *Newar National Forum* (Newāḥ De Dabu) and the *Newar Association* (Nepālbhāṣā Mamkāḥ Khalah) of Nepal.

The emergence of the *Sikkim Democratic Front* (SDF) as the largest party in the Legislative Assembly of Sikkim has played an important role in empowering the state's ethnic groups. The SDF government introduced various regulations in favour of the different

ethnic groups of Sikkim, including giving equal rights to all languages spoken in the state. In 1994, the local government designated Newar to be a state language along with all other languages spoken in Sikkim, and further introduced a regulation permitting Newar to be spoken at meetings of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly (SLA). In this regard, since 1994 the SLA has employed a Newar language translator and editor and has been publishing proceedings of parliamentary meetings in the Newar language using Newar scripts. I was able to collect a *Proceedings of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly* translated into the Newar language using the Newar script, an important document because it speaks of the Sikkimese government's practical commitment to supporting languages from different communities. Sadly, no other Newar language proceedings have been published since. *The Sikkim Herald*, a government weekly, is released in Newar and other official languages of the state, another example of Sikkim's liberal policy towards minority languages.

In 2003, the Sikkim government included the Newars in the Other Backward Class (OBC) category, together with Bahuns, Chetris, Sanyasi and Jogis. This means that the government now reserves a total of fourteen percent of jobs and seats for higher studies for these groups. While the State Government of Sikkim has now recognised these groups as OBC, the Central Government of India has yet to do so.

Concluding remarks

I have found the people of Sikkim to be generally happy about the State Government's policy towards their languages and cultures, and most believe that this policy has increased mutual understanding between Sikkim's different ethnic groups. At first glance, one notices peaceful and harmonious relations between the different ethnicities in Sikkim, but competition and envy among these groups can be sensed as soon as one delves a little deeper. Almost all communities in Sikkim have their own ethnic organisations and are actively organising themselves to struggle for their rights.

Some are of the opinion that the policy of empowering small communities with rights to their languages and cultures is divisive. They believe that the Nepalese communities of Sikkim were for a long time seen as one group but are now fragmented because each one is seeking a separate and distinct ethnic identity. Only politicians, they argue, benefit from such a 'divide and rule' policy. Kumar Pradhan, a prominent Nepalese scholar in India expresses a similar opinion about

Darjeeling (2005: 24). The majority of Nepalese in Sikkim are nevertheless pleased with the State Government's policy towards their cultures.

Nepalese populations in Sikkim, who have been living there for almost one and a half centuries, believe themselves to be no less indigenous than those officially declared as indigenous. The Bhutia and Lepcha populations of Sikkim are considered to be the most indigenous and the Indian government has consequently accorded them the status of Scheduled Tribes meaning that a higher percentage of government jobs, higher studies and political seats are reserved for them. All the Nepalese communities, such as the Bahuns, Chetris, Rais, Limbus, Tamangs, Gurungs, Magars and Newars are generally considered to be outsiders, despite their long term residence in the state. Consequently, a division between the Nepalese communities and the Bhutias and Lepchas can be felt, and the Nepalese communities feel themselves to be somehow closer to each other than to the Bhutias and the Lepchas. Not everyone agrees with such a perception, and some Newars suggest that their food habits are much closer to those of Bhutias and Lepchas than to a traditional Bahun or Chetri diet.

The Newars in Sikkim are proud to be referred to as Newar. With their long history of a distinct culture and language hailing from the valley of Nepal, the Sikkimese Newars want their heritage to be accorded due respect wherever they live. While they are legally Indian, Sikkimese Newars are culturally Newar and since the 1990s have been actively researching their roots and are presently striving for a reinforced sense of their Newar identity.

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A HISTORY FROM THE HIDDEN LAND:
SOME PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON A SEVENTEENTH
CENTURY SIKKIMESE CHRONICLE

SAUL MULLARD
University of Oxford

*Introduction*¹

The focus for this article is a rare seventeenth century document, which provides a student of early Sikkimese history with a number of interesting insights into events, chronology and religious influence in seventeenth century Sikkim, and one which differs greatly from orthodox historical interpretations. Using information gathered from this source, alongside other seventeenth century documents, this article sets forth a number of initial thoughts regarding the formation of the Sikkimese state. Included in this discussion of early Sikkim is a brief analysis of the most prominent origin history for the Tibeto-Sikkimese² people and their first king Phun tshogs rnam rgyal. This narrative of origin is important for a number of reasons, but most pertinent to the study of early Sikkim is the way in which this myth was used to legitimate the construction of early state apparatus and the expansion of territory. Alongside an account of this origin tale, the text refers to a number of hitherto unknown events and actors. Throughout the commentary, I locate these events and their actors within the chronology of early Sikkim, and provide a more probable, though far from conclusive, account of Sikkim in the seventeenth century.

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² For this period of study, we are faced with the problem of choosing suitable ethnonyms for the major ethnic groups of early Sikkim. This is especially the case for those groups of Tibetan origin who are now known by the various designations of *IHo po*, *Bras ljongs pa*, *Bhutia*, etc. Throughout this paper, I have referred to these people as ‘Tibeto-Sikkimese’, a term which reflects both the origins of the early ‘Tibetan’ settlers and their political status during the growth of the Sikkimese state. While not ideal, the term ‘Tibeto-Sikkimese’ is preferable to using other designations which are inextricably linked to later political and historical developments.

This article raises questions for further research concerning the social and religious systems introduced into Sikkim. These systems include the adoption of the Tibetan religio-political theory of state and political power, as represented by *lugs gnyis*, a system based on the unification of the secular/political sphere with that of the religious/spiritual. Tibetan influence is not limited to the religious world, however, but is also identifiable through the introduction of economic practices such as land ownership, structures of taxation and a form of stratification based on the principles of Tibetan land economy. In short, it is my hope that this article may clarify a number of issues relating to early Sikkimese history, and serve as an introduction to the events surrounding the formation of this former Himalayan kingdom.

The text and its author

Since I have been unable to view the original document, the translation presented here is taken from a *'khyug yig* copy found in the Barmiok collection in 1972 by Gung rdo rje.³ It appears that the entire document, which is forty-five folios in length, is actually a compilation of four separate documents written at different times⁴ copied and compiled by Gung rdo rje into a single volume entitled: *sBas yul 'bras mo ljongs kyi gnas yig dang rgyal rabs mdor bsdus bzhugs so*.⁵ The first document of this compilation (folios 2.a to 7.b line 1) is of interest to the student of early Sikkimese history and is therefore reproduced and translated here in full: *sTeng phyogs lha nas babs te nang tshan [mtshan] rgya dkar [kar] shar phyogs brgyud nas 'ongs [ong] te khams phyogs mi nyag a'o ldong drug spun gsum gyi byung khungs lo rgyus bzhugs so* (hereafter referred to by the abbreviation *PSLG*).

This document, written by Karma tshang bsam bskal bzang blo ldan, gives a short overview of how Sikkim was settled by a Tibetan descendant of Khams Mi nyag in alliance with a *mon po* (Lepcha) chief

³ I offer my thanks to the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology for allowing me to view this text. Special thanks must be extended to Tenzin Thubten and Sonam Thinley for their assistance in deciphering many of the *bsdus yig* transliterations of the text and for many valuable comments and corrections on earlier translations. Further thanks also to Dansong Namgyal for assisting in proof-reading the Tibetan typescript.

⁴ For details on the other documents contained within this compilation see the bibliography of this paper.

⁵ 'A concise compilation of royal historical works and pilgrimage guide books to the hidden land of Sikkim'.

of *mon yul*.⁶ From folio 5.a to 7.a the text provides details of how Tibeto-Sikkimese ascendancy was established—the battles fought, territories conquered, taxes levied and the laws introduced to govern the ‘non-Tibetan’ Lepcha (*mon pa*)—information which is conspicuously absent from later historical works such as *‘Bras ljongs rgyal rabs* (hereafter *BGR*).

The colophon of the text provides us with important information about the possible connection of the author with the royal family. Accordingly, the location of the estate of bKra shis dpal ‘byor is identified as the place where *PSLG* was written and, according to *BGR* (2003: 25), this is acknowledged to be the Palace of La sogs—the first residency of Phun tshogs rnam rgyal. Provided the information in *BGR* is correct, which is by no means certain, the author bsKal bzang blo ldan may be considered to have had royal connections. This royal connection may be a relation of blood or one of marriage, for it is noted in the colophon that *PSLG* was written in the house of the author’s daughter. It is therefore probable that this text was written at the request of the royal family. Even if this is discovered not to be the case, the text is still vulnerable to bias in favour of Phun tshogs rnam rgyal and his early reign. Bearing this caveat in mind, *PSLG* enables a historian to gain at least a glimpse of the mechanisms and national ideology of the state at that time, if not a better understanding of the events that led to the establishment of the Sikkimese royal dynasty.

⁶ The term *mon* is generally used to define non-Tibetan populations south of the Himalaya and around the borders of Tibet. However, it also conveys the derogatory meaning of ‘barbarian’ (see Pommaret 1999: 52-53 for a more detailed discussion of this term). Whereas the term *mon yul* usually denotes Bhutan, in this text the name applies to the land of *mon* (i.e. the land of the *mon* people). However, the use of *mon yul* in connection with ‘Seng lding’ could also refer to the hidden land of Seng ge ri in Bhutan (see Ehrhard 2003: 659-667, for details of the discovery of this sacred site). In this context, *mon* and associated terms are more likely to refer to the people that resided (and continue to reside) in Sikkim prior to the migration of the Tibetans, namely the Lepcha. The origin of the Lepcha remains unclear, but they speak a Tibeto-Burman language.

*The Tibetan text with translation*⁷

(folio 2.a)

ལྷོ། །སྤོང་ཕྱོགས་ལྷ་ནས་བབས་ཏེ་ནང་མཚན་རྒྱ་ཀར་ཤར་ཕྱོགས་བརྒྱུད་ནས་འོང་ཏེ།
ཁམས་ཕྱོགས་མི་ཉག་ཨའོ་ལྷོང་དུག་སྤུན་གསུམ་གྱི་བྱང་ཁྲུང་ས་ལོ་རྒྱུས་བཞུགས་སོ།

The chronicle of the three brothers of the *A'o* sub-division of the *ldong drug* clan¹¹ of Khams Mi nyag (whose ancestors) descended from the heavenly realm and came via the eastern area of India.¹²

(folio 2.b)

ལྷོ། །ཁ་མོ་བརྗོད་བྱ་རུ་རྒྱ་ཡེ། བསྐལ་པ་རྒྱ་མཚོར་ཚོགས་གཉིས་ཡོངས་ཁྲུང་བྱང་
རྒྱུ་རྒྱ། ལྷགས་གྱི་དགོངས་པ་ལེགས་བསྐྱེད་ནས། འཛམ་གླིང་སྤྱི་གུའི་¹³འགོ་རྣམས་
འདྲེན་ཕྱིར་དགའ་ལྷན་ལྷ་ཡི་ཕྱོང་གི་རབ་བཞེངས་ཏེ། བཞེགས་པས་འཁོར་ལོས་བསྐྱར་
རྒྱལ་ཟས་གཙང་སྤུང་འཁྲུངས་མི་ལོ་བཅུ་གཉིས་བསམ་གཏན་མཉམ་པར་བཞག།
རྫོགས་སངས་རྒྱས་ནས་ བདུད་དང་སྤྱི་གསུངས་རབ་བཞུགས་ནས། ཚོས་ཕུང་བརྒྱུད་གྱི་
བཞི་སྟོང་ལ་སོགས་པ། ག་གསུང་དབྱངས་ཡན་ལག་དུག་ཅུའི་ཚོས་འཁོར་བསྐྱོར།

⁷ The text contains many spelling errors which I have attempted to correct. Any remaining errors are an oversight on my part.

⁸ Recte. *tshan*.

⁹ Recte. *dkar*.

¹⁰ Recte. *'ongs*.

¹¹ In Tibetan, this section reads *a'u ldong drug*, which makes reference to the six proto-clans of Tibet. According to legend, these are said to descend from the children of the union between a monkey and a rock demon. These six proto-clans of Tibet are listed in Ramble 1997 (republished in McKay 2003: 70) as: *dbra, ldong, 'bru, lga, dpa'* and *mda'*. I am unsure whether *a'u* is a later division of the *ldong* proto-clan or whether *ldong* in this case is used to represent all six clans as suggested by *drug* following *ldong* in the Tibetan. Riskey, quoted in Balikci-Denjongpa 2002a, states that Kham Minyak Andong was a principality of eastern Tibet 'situated to the west of Ta-t sien-loo, between Litang and Dirghe'. However, it seems more likely that Riskey has mistakenly combined two separate terms; that of the *a'u ldong* division of the *ldong* proto-clan and the political region of Khams Mi nyag.

¹² Following this sub-title there is a section dedicated to the praise of the Buddha.

¹³ Recte. *rgu'i*.

ཞིང་ཕར་ལ་བསྟན་འཛིན་ཀུན་གྱི་གཙུག་གི་ཚོར་བུ་མཚོ་ག། ལྷ་གྲུའི་འབྲུང་གནས་ཐུབ་
དབང་ཚེན་པོ་ས་གསུམ་འགྲོ་བའི།

Na mo vajra guru ratna ye!

In the state of Enlightenment, which resulted from the accumulation of merit and wisdom during countless aeons, he generated the proper wish and intention; and in order to liberate all sentient beings of the world (he) ascended to the throne in the divine palace of dGa' ldan (Tushita) heaven and by his all seeing power was born as the son of Zas gtsang (who was like a) universal king (Cakravatin) and remained in the equanimity of contemplation for twelve human years. After (achieving) perfect Buddhahood he vanquished all evil and enemies of the Dharma (lit. heretics) and taught the eighty-four thousand approaches to the Dharma in sixty melodious speeches. Praise to the crown jewels of all the protectors of the victorious teachings. Salutations and praise to Shakyamuni who is the one of the promise to all sentient beings and is the most powerful throughout the three realms

(folio 3.a)

ཁོ་མིག་གཅིག་དམ་པ་དེར་འདུད། གང་གི་དགོངས་གསང་ཟེར་ལྷ་འབྲུག་པའི་སྲོང་།
དབྱིངས་རིག་དོན་རྗེའི་མཁའ་གསང་ལས་འཕྲོས་པའི། མཚོ་སྐྱེས་དོན་རྗེའི་རང་བྱུང་སྐུ་ལ་
པའི་སྐྱ། སྐུ་ལྷ་ལ་བསྟན་འགྲོའི་སྲོག་ཤིང་དེ་ལ་འདུད། ཟ་དམར་སེར་ལི་གྲིའི་
མདངས་ལྷན་སྲིང་¹⁴ རལ་འཛིན། མཐོན་མཐིང་རལ་པའི་ཐོར་གཙུག་ཅི་བྲན་ཅན། ལྷ་
ཚོགས་བརྒྱན་མཛོས་གསུང་དབྱིངས་ཚོས་སྐྱ་ཡིས། འདྲིན་མཛད་འཇམ་མགོན་ལྷ་ཡིས་
ཤིས་པ་སྐྱོལ། ལ་བདེ་ལྷན་ཞིང་ན་ཚོས་སྐྱ་འོད་དཔག་མེད། རི་བོ་རྒྱ་ལར་འཕགས་
མཚོག་སྐྱན་རས་གཟིགས། ལྷང་ལོ་ཅན་དུ་གསང་བདག་དོན་རྗེའི་འཛིན།

Hail to the one who is the life-tree of all living beings and the teachings of the hidden lands, the self emanated mTsho skyes rdo rje (Guru Rinpoche) who emanated from the five light rays (of the wisdom of the

¹⁴ Recte. *glegs*.

five Buddhas), which mixed together in space and which arose from emptiness and awareness as the unification of the *vajra* and *bhagha* (of the Dakini).¹⁵ Hail to the Auspicious Manjushri who is the holder of a sword and book, whose body is an orange red colour and is endowed with a crown (in which) his blue hair is tied in a top knot and who guides by means of the melodious voice of the dharma and various other qualities. I pay homage, without difference, to the three: Dharmakaya Amitabha in Sukhavati, Avalokiteshvara in Potala and in IChang lo can rdo rje 'dzin.

(folio 3.b)

ཀླུ་གསུམ་གཡེལ་¹⁶ མེད་ཆེན་པོར་བདག་འདུད་དོ། ལ་རྒྱལ་ཀུན་ངོ་བོ་སྐྱུ་གསུམ་དོ་རྗེ་
 འཆང། བགྲིན་སུམ་ལྡན་ཅུ་བའི་སྐྱེ་མ་མཚོག་ གསང་ཆེན་བསྟན་པའི་སྦྱིང་པོ་འོད་པོ་
 ཆེ། བདག་གི་སྦྱི་བོར་པརླའི་གདན་ལ་བཞུགས། ཅ་བསྟན་བསྐྱུང་¹⁷ དམ་ཅན་རྒྱ་
 མཚོའི་ཚོགས་སྦྱི་དང། བྱུང་པར་གངས་ཆེན་མཚོ་ད་ལྔ་ལ་སོགས་པ། ཡུ་བར་མདའ་
 ཡི་གནས་བསྐྱུངས་¹⁸ གཞི་བདག་སོགས། རོར་ལྷ་གཏོར་བདག་རྣམས་གྱི་ཤིས་པར་
 མཚོད། ཞེས་མཚོད་པར་བཟོད་པའམ་¹⁹ ཡངས་པར་བྱས་སོ། བྱུང་པར་མོན་གྱི་ཡུལ་
 འབྲས་ལྗོངས་མཐེལ་དུ་མི་ཉག་ཨ་པོ་སྦྱང་གི་བརྒྱུད་ལས་ཐོན་པའི་རིགས་གྱི་བསྟན་པ་རིམ་
 ཆགས་རྩལ་འདི་ལྟར་རོ། །དེ་ཡང་སྐྱས་ཡུལ་ཀུན་གྱི་གཙོ་བོ་འབྲས་མོ་ལྗོངས་འདི།
 མཁན་སྦྱོར་ཚོས་གསུམ་རྩུ་འཕུལ་²⁰ གཞབས་བཅགས་ཏེ། བྲག་དཀར་བགྲིས་སྦྱིང་གི་འི་

¹⁵ This refers to the practice of sexual union which appears as part of the method of uniting wisdom *bhagha* 'vagina' and means *vajra* 'penis'. In the secret consecrations of the tantric disciple, the Bodhicitta (thought of enlightenment) represented as the semen of the master is accepted by the disciple. The above example alludes to the endowment of the disciple or tantric practitioner with the wisdom of the five celestial Buddhas during the process of consecration which is completed by the unification of the disciple with the essence of wisdom, through tantric sexual practices.

¹⁶ Recte. *dbyer med*.

¹⁷ Recte. *srung*.

¹⁸ Recte. *srung*.

¹⁹ Recte. *brjod pa'i lam*.

²⁰ Recte. *rdzu 'phrul*.

དབུས་ཉིད་ནས། རྟེན་འབྲེལ་གནས་ལུགས་མ་ལུས་བསྟན་ལ་བབས།²¹ སྐུ་ལ་པའི་
རྣལ་བྱོར་ཚེད་བཞིའི་²² ལུང་རྒྱ་བསྟན།

Seated on a lotus throne on my own head (is the one who is) the great essence of the secret teachings, is the most sublime root teacher and is endowed with the three types of kindness, who is the essence of all three Buddha bodies: Vajradhara. Thus (I) request all auspicious deities such as the treasure holders, the gods of wealth, the four guardian deities of the upper, middle and lower areas, the universal oath bound dharma protectors and especially Gangs chen mdzod lnga.²³ Here ends the salutation to the deities. Thus have the extensive prayers been completed.

Herein follows an account of the way in which the Buddhist teachings of the people from the lineage of *a bo sdong*, developed in the centre of this barbarian Land of Sikkim. In a pure vision, Santarakshita Guru Rinpoche and Khri srong lde btsan set foot in this rice valley, the highest and most sacred of all hidden lands and from the same central throne of Brag dkar bkra shis lding established without exception the fundamental nature of auspicious omens. (They also) prophesised the coming of the four saints.²⁴

(folio 4.a)

། །ལུལ་འདིར་ཚོས་སྲིད་རྒྱལ་སྲིད་གཉིས་སྐྱོང་བའི། ལས་ལྷན་མི་རིགས་རྣ་
ཚོགས་འོང་²⁵ གསུང་བའི། སྟོང་ལྷ་རུ་དེ་ཞེས། སྟོང་ཕྱོགས་ལྷ་ནས་བབས་ཏེ། རང་
མཚན་²⁶ རྒྱ་དཀར་ཤར་ཕྱོགས་རྒྱལ་ཕྱན་གྱི། རྒྱུད་ལས་འོངས་ཏེ་ཁམས་ཕྱོགས་མི་ཉག་
རིགས་ཨའོ་སྟོང་གི་བརྒྱུད་དུ་འབྱོར་པ་ཡིན། སྐུ་ཚན་ནང་ནས་ལས་འབྲེལ་སྟོན་མཐུན།

²¹ Recte. *gtan la phab*.

²² Recte. *rnal 'byor mched bzhi 'i*.

²³ For the importance of the Gangs chen mdzod lnga cult among the different ethnic and religious groups in Sikkim, see Balicki-Denjongpa (2002b).

²⁴ Namely, Phun tshogs rnam rgyal, lHa btsun chen po, mNga' bdag sems pa Phun tshogs, Ka: thog ku tu bzang po.

²⁵ Recte. *sna tshogs 'ongs*.

²⁶ Recte. *nang tshan*.

ཁམས་ནས་ཐོན་ཏེ་ལྷ་ལྡན་དབུས་སུ་འབྱོར། གནས་རྣམས་མངལ་ཞིང་རིམ་ལམ་བཤག
 ལོ་མ་ལུང་སློབ་སློལ་ལོ་ཞིག་ངལ་བའོ་བརྟེན། ཡར་འབྲོག་སྐྱང་བརྒྱད་ལོང་ཏེ་རྒྱུང་ཚེར་
 འབྱོར། དེ་ནས་རིམ་བཞིན་དུས་ན་ལམ་བརྒྱད་པག་རིར་སློབས། ཁམ་བུར་ཕལྷག་
 ཟང་ལྷ་རིང་མཚོད་ཡོན་མངལ། གཡོན་དབང་ལོ་ཚོག་རིགས་རྣམས་²⁷ རིམ་གྱིས་
 རྒྱུངས།²⁸ གནས་ཀྱི་ཕྱི་སློབ་ལ་ཁ་ཚུ་ནས། ཚུ་མོ་གཤང་དང་ཚུ་བི་རིམ་ཆགས་ཏེ།
 ཚུམ་འབིར་རེ་ཞིག་སྲོད་ཀྱང་སྲིད་མ་འཕེལ། །དེ་ནས་མོན་ཡུལ་སིང་ལྷིང་བུ་བ་ན།

It is said (in the prophecy) that a scion who has descended from Khams Mi nyag of the *a'u ldong* clan, whose ancestors originated from an eastern province of India and who in turn are descended from the heavenly realm known as sTong lha ru re, will come and, being endowed with fortuitous Karma, rule this sacred land in accordance with the dual laws of religion and politics.

From amongst the brothers (there was one) whose prayer and Karmic connections were in harmony,²⁹ left from Khams and arrived in Lha sa of the central province. Having contemplated a pilgrimage he gradually stepped out the path and once he arrived in Gro ma lung³⁰ he took rest for some time. He reached rGyal rtse via the province of Yar brog sgang and then gradually made his way to the road that leads to Phag ri. In Kham bu, he met with the benefactor Zhag zang lha ring. Gradually he ruled over these people of the *shi chog* clan.

From Phro la kha chu, which is the outer door of this place (i.e. Sikkim) the places of Chu mo gshang and Chu bi were gradually

²⁷ I am not entirely certain as to what *shi chog rigs* refers; the most likely rendering is 'the caste of those who perform death rituals'.

²⁸ Recte. *bskyangs*.

²⁹ It is generally recognised that among the three brothers, who were considered chiefs of Khams Mi nyag, only the middle one, Gyad, was prophesised to enter Sikkim (see *Bras ljongs rgyal rabs* 2003: 11). However, in the various oral traditions of Sikkim we find the hero figure migrating to dBus from Khams Mi nyag with his father and three brothers, from whom the four major Sikkimese clans are said to be descended.

³⁰ Gro ma lung is located near the present border of Sikkim and Tibet at a distance of about ten kilometres from the modern town of La chung.

established and despite residing in Chum 'bi for some time (they) were unable to increase their dominion.³¹

(folio 4.b)

མོན་པ་ཉེག་ངལ་བཟའ་ཚང་ཡོད་པ་ཡི། སྲིད་ཀྱི་རྟེན་འབྲེལ་འགྲིག་པ་ཤེས་ཟེར་ཐོས།
 ཀུན་གྱི་སྲི་མིས་གྲུང་པ་འབྲུམ་བསགས་གྲིས། ཆས་འོངས་མོན་ཡུལ་སླེབས་སྤེལ་³² མོན་
 དང་འཕྲད། མོན་པས་དོན་བྱེད་ཅི་ཡིན་སྲི་³³ བ་བྱས། གྲུང་པས་མོན་པའི་གཏམ་ལན་
 བཏབ་པ་ནི། སིང་སྲིད་ཡུལ་དུ་ཉེག་ངོག་བྱ་བ་ཡོད། དེའི་སར་འགྲོ་རྒྱུ་གར་ཡོད་ཤེས་
 སམ་བྲིས། མོན་པས་དེ་ནི་ཤེས་སོ་ཟེར་ནས་སོང། གྲུང་པས་མོན་པའི་རྫོས་
 སུ་གཉག་སོང་པས།³⁴ བྲིམ་སར་འགྲོར་སྐབས་ཉེག་ངང་ཡིན་པར་འདུག། ཉང་དུ་
 བོས་ནས་ཆང་བྲིན་གཏམ་དྲིས་བྱུང། གྲུང་གྲིས་ལན་བཏབ་པ་ན་ལ་སྲིད་མ་འཕེལ་སྲིད་
 ཐབས་རྟེན་འབྲེལ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཤེས་ཟེར་བས། འོངས་པའི་དོན་ནི་དེ་ཡིན་སྲིད་འཕེལ་གྲིས།
 བཅོས་ཐབས་གང་ཤེས་བྱེད་ཀྱི་བྱ་བར་དྲིས། གྲུང་པས་ལབ་པས་མོན་གྲིས་ལན་བཏབ་པ།
 ལུ་མེད་བཅོས་ཐབས་ཤེས་ཟེར་ཁས་ལེན་བྱུང།

It was then heard that in a place known as Mon yul seng lding there lived a Lepcha couple named Teg and Ngal who were capable of bringing forth good luck in worldly affairs. So Gyad pa 'bum bsags, who is the master of all, departed; and when he arrived (in that country) he met with a Lepcha person. The Lepcha asked him for what reason (he was there). Gyad pa responded to the Lepcha's question (in the following way): 'In the country of Seng lding there reside a couple called Theg and Ngal'. And he asked the way to their place. Upon hearing these words the Lepcha fled. However, Gyad pa pursued the Lepcha, and upon reaching the Lepcha's house (he realised) that he was none other than Teg himself. Once Teg had called him into the house he served him chang and made some enquiries to which Gyad responded: 'It is said that when one is unable to increase their dominion

³¹ Namely, they were experiencing problems conceiving.
³² Recte. 'phral.
³³ Recte. dri.
³⁴ Recte. rje su bsnyags song pas.

(the couple). Teg announced that the son would have many descendants and he held a large feast (in their honour).

Also (at that time) the son was given the name of Brag btsan dar.⁴² By the power of Teg and Gyad's karmic connections and by the power of auspicious karma both Teg and Gyad 'bum became friends. It was said that all the male descendents (of Teg and Gyad) would be considered as their own sons and whatever female descendents were arranged close to daughters.⁴³ With both their mutual consent, they resided in the country of Rong spogs⁴⁴ and the male line of their descendants increased without interruption.

(In order) to prepare for the taking of an oath of allegiance live wild animals were slaughtered. Many cattle, sheep and wild animals were butchered and their hides were spread out as seats. They then placed their feet in a tub of the animal's intestines.
(folio 5.b)

བྲག་བཙན་དར་གྱི་མ་ལས་རིགས་རྒྱུད་གྱིས། ཕོ་ལྷ་གྲ་⁴⁵ ལྷ་འགོ་བའི་ལྷ་ལྷ་དང།
 བཞུགས་བསྐྱེད་ཡུལ་ལྷ་གཞི་བདག་དཔང་དུ་བཙུག། ཉེག་གི་མོན་ལྷ་གང་ཡིན་དཔང་དུ་
 བཙུག། ཡང་མོན་པ་གཉིས་ཁ་འབྲེལ་བའི་མནའ་ཆེན་རྒྱུ་བ། བྲག་བཙན་དར་གྱི་རིམ་
 གྱི་ཡུལ་བཙན་ནས། ཉེག་གིས་རིགས་སུ་ཉི་བ་དགའ་ཞིག་བཏང། སྒྲ་⁴⁶ ཉོག་ཟེལ་
 རོན་རྩེ་ལ་ཡུལ་ཆགས་སོ། །སློབ་དཔོན་ཆེན་པོ་པདྨ་འུང་བསྟན་ལ། མི་ཉག་ཨ་བོ་
 བཏུང་གི་རིགས་བརྒྱུད་གྱིས། བཞུགས་ཡུལ་ས་འདི་སྐྱོང་བའི་ལུང་བསྟན་བཞིན། སློན་
 ལམ་དུས་བབས་མངའ་ཐང་ཇེ་མཐོར་ཡོང། དེ་ནས་ཉེག་གི་ཉི་རིང་གང་ཡིན་དང།

⁴² Brag btsan dar is actually the collective term for the four main Sikkimese clans and hence makes up the first division of the *stong sde (sdus) ru(s) gshis 'babs mtshan brgyad*, i.e. the four clans and eight names (possibly sub-divisions of the four clans) of Sikkim.

⁴³ This passage probably means something on the lines of: 'whatever sons or daughters that were born to either lineage were considered by both the maternal and paternal line as being their own children/descendants'.

⁴⁴ Located at a distance of 3-4 kilometres from Kabi in north Sikkim.

⁴⁵ Recte. *sgra lha*.

⁴⁶ Recte. *sgang*.

གཞན་ཡང་ཐབས་གྱིས་མཐའ་དག་འཁོར་དུ་བསྐྱུས། ཐོག་མར་མོན་པའི་ནང་ནས་སློ་
 འཁོལ་བའི། ནང་ཟན་བྱ་དང་བྱུང་མིང་བསམ་འབར་བྱུང། དེ་ནས་རིམ་བཞིན་ཁ་
 གཏད་བྱུང་རིགས་རྣམས།

The local deities, protector deities, *pho lha*, *gra lha* [*sic*: usually *dgra lha* or *sgra bla*], the five primary deities of the clan of the mother of Brag btsan dar were taken as witness and Teg made whatever *mon* gods existed bear witness. Furthermore, both the *mon pas* took the great oath of connection.

Thereafter Brag btsan dar gradually took control of the land and some relatives from the clan of Teg were sent and on top of the peak of Zil gnon a town was established. Thus the way in which this sacred land was ruled, by the descendents of the clan of *mi nyag a bo*, was in accordance with the prophecy made by the great master Guru Rinpoche.

At the time of offering prayers the power of the kingdom increased. Furthermore by certain means those, whether related to Teg or not, along with others were all assembled as subjects (to the king). First of all those who were trustworthy amongst the Lepcha were considered as one's own sons. However, when conflict or opposition gradually arose

(folio 6.a)

ལྷོ་ཁོལ་གང་གཡོག་ལ་སོགས་གལ་ཆེ་བའི། མགོ་ཆེངས་ལས་དཔོན་སོ་སོར་
 བཀོད་ནས་བཞག། དེ་རྗེས་བགྱིས་སྤོང་ཁའི་མོན་རིགས་བྱུང།⁴⁷ སང་ལྷིང་མོན་པ་

⁴⁷ This section has been reproduced almost verbatim in the *Bras ljongs rgyal rabs* (2003: 36): *de nas bkra shis sdeng kha'i mon rigs dang sing ldeng mon pa rnam rim bsdus kyis tshang mar las byed mon pa zhes ming btags/ thugs blos khel min gyi rigs la tshong skyel mon pa zhes phyi g.yog des skyel rkang 'gro dgos rigs dang / lag 'don/ bzo lum/ dbyar mjal dang / thog gsar sogs chad med sgrub rgyu'i tshong khral bkod bzhag mdzad pa'o//*. This has been translated in the English edition as: 'Gradually as the Lepchas of Tashi teng kha and Seng deng also came under the direct influence of the chief, they were called the ministerial Lepchas (Monpas). Those not so much in the chief's favour were employed as traders to carry goods and were called Tshong kyel Monpas, and employed in outdoor services. They were also expected to strike or kill anyone if necessary, in building and handicrafts. Besides they were to contribute the summer Nazar (tax) in the shape of newly gathered crops,

རྣམས་ཀྱི་རིམ་གྱིས་བསྐྱུས།⁴⁸ ཚང་མར་ལས་བྱེད་མོན་པ་མིང་བཏགས་སོ། དེ་ལྟར་
 བཀའ་སློན་ལ་ནི་སློམ་ཁེལ། གང་ཡིན་མཐའ་དག་ཚོང་སློལ་⁴⁹ མོན་པ་ཞེས། མྱི་
 གཡོལ་དོས་སློལ་⁵⁰ ཀྱང་འགྲོ་དགོས་རིགས་དང། ལག་དོན་བཟོ་ལུས་དབྱར་མཇལ་
 དགུན་གསར། ཆད་མེད་སྐྱབ་པའི་ཚོང་སྤལ་བཀོད་ནས་བཞག། དེ་ནས་གནས་ཀྱི་
 མཐེལ་དུ་ཆགས་ཚུལ་ནི། །སྤྱལ་པའི་ནལ་འབྱེད་ཆེད་བཞི་⁵¹ ལུང་བསྟན་བཞིན། །རྩ་
 ཏྟ་༡༦༧༧འཚོས་རྒྱལ་ཕུན་ཚོགས་རྣམས་རྒྱལ་བྱོན། རྒྱལ་ཁྲིམས་མངའ་གསོལ་དགའ་སློན་
 རྒྱ་ཆེན་མཇེད། གནས་འདི་ལུགས་གཉིས་ཁྲིམས་ཀྱི་རྩ་ཆེན་སློབ། བསྟན་སྲིད་
 སྤེ་རྒྱལ་གུན་གྱི་རྩེ་བོར་བཀོད། དེ་ནས་བཀྱིན་ཆེ་བ་པ་མས་ནི།

only the dependable and trustworthy servants and others would be given important work and they were placed under a head man and work leader. Thereafter the *mon* of the caste of bKra shis steng kha and the Lepchas of Seng lding were gradually subdued.⁵² Thereafter they were given the title of the ‘Lepchas officials’ (*las byed mon pa*).

Likewise, as for the rule of the ministers, ministers that were untrustworthy, whoever they may have been, were known as the *mon pa* that conducted trade. These external servants carried out the introduction of a taxation system on the produce of the autumnal harvest and (wealth accumulated) through continual trade of the servants who were obliged to act as porters and messengers and those involved in the production of goods.⁵³

grains and fruits and they were also to carry grains etc to any markets for trade and barter’ (1908: 15). There are slight differences between the 1908 translation and the Tibetan republication.

⁴⁸ Should read *seng lding Mon pa rnam rim gyis bsdus*.

⁴⁹ Should read *skyel*.

⁵⁰ Recte. *des skyel*.

⁵¹ Recte. *rnal ‘byor mched bzhi*.

⁵² This either implies the growth and expansion of the areas of influence under the leadership of the Tibeto-Sikkimese or the subjugation of areas rebelling against Tibeto-Sikkimese dominance.

⁵³ Presumably goods such as handicrafts, utensils and equipment.

Then as for the way in which the centre of this place was established it was in accordance with the prophecy of the four reincarnated saints. In the year of the water horse, 1642, Chos rgyal Phun tshogs nam rgyal ascended the throne, instituted great festivities throughout the kingdom and in this kingdom the laws of the dual systems of religion and politics were proclaimed. The religious and political order was established and he was inaugurated as the ruler over the whole territory. As for the great and kind ancestors,

(folio 6.b)

།ལྷ་དབང་བསྟན་འཛིན་ལྷ་དབང་བཀྱིས་ཚོགས། སྒང་ཉོག་ཟེལ་ཚོན་ཅེ་ལ་ཡུལ་སླེབ་ཏེ།⁵⁴
 གནས་གྱི་མཐིལ་དུ་རྟེན་འབྲེལ་མ་སློག་ཞིང། ཐོག་མར་མོན་ཕུ་བཀྱིས་འཛོམས་དུ་ཚགས།
 ཡུལ་བབྱང་གཞི་བཅའ་མོན་རིགས་དབང་དུ་བསྐྱུས། ལོ་འགའ་སྟོད་ནས་སྐས་ཡུལ་
 མཐིལ་དུ་སླེབས། ལ་སོགས་འབྱོར་ནས་ཚོས་རྒྱལ་ཉིད་དང་མཇལ། མཇལ་ཀ་ལྷུས་
 དས་དགེས་པའི་སྐང་བ་སྐྱུལ། བྱི་ལོ་ནང་དུ་ལ་སོགས་རྫོང་རྒྱབ་དཔས། ཚོས་ཕ་རྒྱལ་
 བསྟན་བསྐྱུང་⁵⁵ རྣམ་རྒྱལ་འདི་ན་འབྱུངས། སྒང་གི་ལོ་ལ་རབ་གདན་ཅེ་བཞེངས་སོ།
 ཡུག་མཐིང་ལྷ་དབང་བཀྱིས་བཞེངས་པ་ཡིན། ས་གཞི་བབྱང་ནས་རྟེན་འབྲེལ་⁵⁶ གཉིས་ལ་
 བསྐྱིག། རིམ་གྱིས་ཡུག་བསམ་མོན་པ་འགའ་ཞིག་དང། ཚོང་བསྐྱུལ་གཡོག་བཅས་
 རྫོན་ལམ་འབྲགས་གྱིས་འཛོམས། དེ་ལྟར་གནས་གྱི་ཕོ་ཉར་མངའ་བ་ཡི། ཕུ་མའད་
 བར་གྱི་མོན་པ་གང་ཡིན་རྣམས།

the two groups of lHa dbang bstan 'dzin and lHa dbang bkra shis arrived at the settlement on the peak of Zil (g)non and since in the centre of this place auspicious circumstances could not be arranged, they first settled the *mon pa* in bKra shis 'dzom. The region was occupied and the *mon* were conquered. After residing there for some years they arrived in the centre of the hidden land. Upon reaching La

⁵⁴ Recte. *slebs te*.

⁵⁵ Recte. *bsTan srung*.

⁵⁶ Recte. *rtan 'brel*.

sogs they met with the king and on account of being granted an audience (with the king) they were filled with happiness.⁵⁷

In the year of the dog (1646) the castle of La sogs was built and in this castle the crowned prince bsTan srung nam rgyal was born. In (1649) the year of the Ox (the palace) of Rab gdan rtse was established. Yug mthing was established by lHa dbang bkra shis and from the four directions of the occupied land the two forms of auspicious qualities were arranged. Eventually by the strength of prayer some of the Lepchas of Yug bsam united with the servants that conducted trade. So messengers of the kingdom (were sent) to all the Lepcha communities of the upper lower and middle territories (folio 7.a)

།དཔོན་གཡོག་ཇི་སྲིད་བསྐྱེད་བརྒྱུད་བྲལ་གྱི། འདུན་མར་འཇོམས་ནས་མནའ་དང་དག་
 པས་བཅིངས། རང་འགོས་དག་ཐོས་པོ་བྱིར་མོ་བྱིར་སྟོན། རང་གི་མོན་པ་པོ་ཡིན་ན།
 བུ་རྒྱམས་གང་ཡོད་རང་གིས་ཐོབ། བུ་གཅིག་ཡིན་ན་པ་ཚབ་བཞག། རང་གི་ནག་མོ་
 ཡིན་པ་ལ། བུ་མོ་གང་ཡིན་མ་ཡི་⁵⁸ ཐོབ། བུ་མོ་གཅིག་རང་ཡིན་ན་མ་ཡི་ཚབ།
 མོན་པོར་བུ་མེད་གཅིག་ཡིན་ན། དེ་དག་གཞན་གྱི་ཐོབ་རིང་ཡིན། དེ་ལྟར་མངོན་
 གནས་ཐག་ཚོད་དོ། དཔོན་གཡོག་རིགས་བརྒྱུད་ཚུ་མེད་ཀུའི་གཞུང་ལྟར་གནས། ལར་
 རྒྱུར་པམ་སྲིར་མ་དེབ་འདིར་གསལ་བ། དེ་ཡང་སྟོད་འབྲེལ་ལས་བོད་སྐད་དུ་སེར་འཕུར་
⁵⁹ ཞེས་པ། མི་བུ་ལོ་དུས་འཁོར་བའི་སྟོན་འབྲིང་བྲུམ་སྟོད་ཉ་བ་བུ་མེད་ཀྱི་མ་ལ་སྟོད་པ།
 རྣལ་འབྱོར་བརྒྱུད་པ་གཟའ་དཀར་ཚེས་⁶⁰ བྲངས་འབྲོད་སྟོར་བཀྱིས་

⁵⁷ The two groups mentioned here, i.e. the ancestors of lHa dbang bkra shis and lHa dbang bstan ‘dzin, were probably other Tibetan migrants or, as this text suggest, distant relatives of Phun tshogs nam rgyal that had settled in the area around bKra shis ‘dzom in the past and had established a centre of local power in the region. The audience mentioned here may in fact describe a union between the areas controlled by Lha dbang bstan ‘dzin and bKra shis and Phun tshogs nam rgyal, who, on account of an expanding state, was becoming too powerful to ignore.
⁵⁸ Recte. *yis*.
⁵⁹ Recte. *‘phyang*.
⁶⁰ Recte. *skar tshes*.

to assemble a council and (to designate) the relationship between servants and masters for as long as a hundred Kalpas and (after this council) they were bound by truth and oath..... If the Lepcha, who is under your service, is male you (will) obtain whatever sons he has. However, if your servant has only one male descendent that son must remain in the household of his father and act as the guardian of the family. Your wife will obtain as servants whatever daughters the Lepcha has. If there is only one daughter she will act in a similar way to the mother. If the Lepcha is without male issue he will be entitled to receive one from another person. This is what was actually decided. This relationship between lords and servants will remain forever like a great flowing river. In order to highlight the benefits of this system it has thus been mentioned here in this source. Thus in the estate of bKra shis dPal 'byor, in my own daughter's house, this document has been accurately prepared and compiled (based on what has been) seen by me Karma tshang bsam skal bzang blo ldan

(folio 7.b.1)

པའི་ཉི་མ་ལ་སོགས་བགྲིས་དཔལ་འབྱོར་གཞིས་ཁར་བདག་མིང་ཀམ་ཚང་བསམ་སྐལ་
བཟང་སློབ་ལྷན་དུ་གྲགས་པས་མཐོང་བསྐྱིགས་ཡང་དག་ཏུ་བྱས་པས་དགོ་ལེགས་སུ་གྱུར་ཅིག།

on this exact date which is the auspicious day of *rnal 'byor brgyad pa* in the autumnal month of September / October of the Fire Bird Year (1657), which is known in Tibetan from the *Collected Praise* as *gser 'phyang*.⁶¹ And so may virtue prevail!

Myth and history: some remarks on the origins of the Tibeto-Sikkimese

Following the eulogy to the Buddha, Guru Rinpoche, Bodhisattvas and local deities, the history begins in earnest from folio 3.b. onwards. The account opens with the semi-legendary story of the migration of Tibetans to Sikkim, focusing on two major actors—Gyad and Teg—and their wives Jo mo Guru and Ngal respectively, and the son of Jo mo Guru and Gyad, Brag btsan dar. Brag btsan dar was conceived only after the intervention of Teg who used his healing and spiritual powers to aid the couple. The story then continues with the oath of allegiance being sworn by Teg and Gyad. This myth of origin is well known in

⁶¹ The term given to the thirty-first year of the Tibetan cycle (*rab byung*).

contemporary Sikkim and has been celebrated with the construction of the *Unity Statue*, depicting the first meeting of Gyad and Teg, in the old children's park in the centre of Gangtok.

Like many oral histories and folk stories, this particular narrative has merged semi or possible historical material with mythical and legendary elements; so much so, in fact, that it is difficult to determine what is historically viable and what is mythical.

Bearing this caveat in mind, oral and folk history may still prove valuable to the study of Sikkimese history and to the story of Gyad 'bum sags. First, it appears that Gyad 'bum sags leaves his home in Khams Mi nyag for Lhasa, from where he begins a 'pilgrimage' to the central provinces of Tibet. When his pilgrimage comes to a halt he settles around the Phag ri / Kham bu area in the north of the Chumbi Valley, and perhaps with the help of Zhang zang lha ring, he begins to carve out a territory which he begins to rule. This territory gradually expands to include the southern part of the Chumbi valley and borders on the outer ranges of Sikkim. Perhaps it was the expansion of the territory under his control that brought him into contact with the Lepcha chief of the area named in *PSLG* as Mon yul seng lding. *PSLG*, however, gives another reason for this first contact with the Lepchas of Sikkim; it states that Gyad 'bum sags was having problems increasing his 'dominion', i.e. *srid*. Gyad then hears that there is a Lepcha couple who can help him with his problem so he heads for Sikkim, supposedly in search of the couple.

He finally reaches Sikkim, but the man he is looking for avoids contact by fleeing their first meeting (probably due to the armed guard that would be accompanying any local ruler through unknown, and therefore possibly hostile, territory). Gyad follows the man and realises that the person he was tracking was indeed the Lepcha chief he had wanted to meet. Teg then agrees to help Gyad and after some time Gyad's wife, Jo mo guru, becomes pregnant and Gyad returns to Sikkim to thank Teg for his help at which point they swear an oath and Gyad's son is allowed to settle in Sikkim. While the author of *PSLG* would like us to believe that this first contact between Tibetans and Lepchas was a peaceful one, we have little evidence of this first meeting and the historical existence of Teg and Gyad is still shrouded in mystery.

This account is interesting less for its historical validity and more for the way in which these two figures are said to have united. First, a pattern of dual or parallel inheritance appears to have been established. Goldstein has noted this practice in Tibetan political and economic

structures in which Tibetan *mi ser* were tied to their lord through the practice of parallel descent, i.e. sons were associated with their father's lord and daughters to their mother's lord (Goldstein 1971a: 1-27). In this particular passage it is not the relation between lords and tenants that is highlighted (although we do find this relationship in a latter passage of *PSLG* folio 7.a), but rather it is part of the oath of friendship. In short, we witness the unification of two separate families into a single relation or kinship network. This unification of two distinct families closely resembles the coming together which takes place during marriage.

In Lepcha marriage customs the marriage does not symbolise the union of two individuals but signifies a contract between two kin groups. It is common for this contract to be maintained even after the death of the husband. Gorer noted that it was common for the wife of the deceased man to be re-married to another man from the same kin group, but that she cannot be re-married to a brother of the deceased husband if that brother has married a sibling of the widow (1996: 156-163). The reason for this is that both women share the same mother, and thus the brother is already connected to the mother through marriage to the widow's sibling. It has been suggested by Sardar-Afkhami (2001: 142) that this event (as well as the fact that Gyad and his wife were having problems conceiving) marks the offering of a Lepcha wife to Gyad. This alliance, which would have been of crucial importance to the early Tibetan settlers, was further strengthened through a series of oaths and animal sacrifices, similar to those that took place in the period of the Tibetan empire. Stein (1972: 199-201) notes that during the swearing of treaties and oaths during that period, Buddhist and local deities such as *dgra lha* and *klu* were taken as witnesses and that the participants anointed themselves with the blood of sacrificed animals.

While this folk history is certainly interesting and requires a more detailed study than the overview that has been presented above, there still remain a number of historical uncertainties which need to be clarified. Despite the attempts that have been made to locate Gyad 'bum sags and Teg in history (see Yeshe Dolma and Balikci-Denjongpa 2002: 299-305), there is still no historical evidence at present to confirm their existence. Balikci-Denjongpa's work on the possibility of migrations (both to central Tibet and Khams Mi nyag) caused by the Mongol destruction of the Xi xia kingdom (Mi nyag) is interesting in that the *ldong* clan was also dominant in that area of the Tibetan plateau, and after the Mongol invasions descendants of Mi nyag are to

be found governing the region of Byang in gTsang (Ramble 2003: 7-75). Moreover, Balikci-Denjonpa argues that the events that surrounded the re-organisation of eastern Tibet by Kublai Khan (c. 1260s) may have caused further migrations from Khams Mi nyag to central Tibet and beyond. While this argument is certainly plausible, there is not enough evidence to come to a satisfactory conclusion and many areas of enquiry remain open which may help to bring us closer to understanding Tibetan migration patterns.

The similarities found in some of the origin myths of other 'Tibetan' groups of the southern Himalayas may provide some possible answers to the migration conundrum of the Tibeto-Sikkimese people. In the Sherpa history *Shar pa'i chos 'byung*, it is mentioned that the *ldong* clan migrated to Khams Mi nyag and after some time made their way to Khumbu in Nepal which is now the region most commonly associated with the Sherpa (Ramble 2003: 75). The *ldong* clan also figures largely in the origin myth of the Tamang people, as the ancestors of the Tamang are said to originate from the eighteen sons of one lDong chen po dpung grags. It appears highly unlikely that such similarities amongst 'Tibetanized' groups, which reside in relative proximity to each other, are merely coincidental. Indeed such similarities may indicate either a shared origin for these communities or a trans-Himalayan myth tradition originating through cultural and physical contact between these groups after their arrival in the southern Himalayan region.

PSLG brings together the possible historical figure of Gyad with Phun tshogs nam rgyal and the lineage of the *ldong* clan from Khams Mi nyag. This is done through the appropriation of the collective noun for the four main Sikkimese clans, Brag btsan dar, in order to conform with the religious prophecies prevalent in seventeenth century Sikkim. Thus the historical questions of whether Gyad 'bum sags existed, or whether he was part of the migration of eastern Tibetans to central Tibet after the Mongol invasions of 1227, are, for the study of seventeenth century Sikkim, irrelevant. The most pertinent historical question is why this lineage and story is so important for seventeenth century Sikkim.

This section of *PSLG* (folios 3.a. to 5.b.) follows an interesting pattern: in essence it can be broken down into three parts. First, it opens with a statement to the effect that the text describes an account of the way in which Buddhist teaching were brought into Sikkim in accordance with the prophecy of Guru Rinpoche, Khri srong lde btsan

and Santarakshita.⁶² The key point here is the reference to the prophecy of *rnal byor mched bzhi* which is further developed in the following folio (4.a.). Here the author gives a short overview of the main details of this prophecy:

1. There exists a prophecy which was pronounced by *mkhan slob chos gsum*, while they were in Sikkim.
2. In this prophecy it is stated that there will be a man who belongs to the *ldong* clan and who will be born into the kingdom of Khams Mi nyag.
3. This man's karma will lead him to Sikkim, whereby his descendents will settle and rule the country by the laws of *lugs gnyis*.

The reason for this focus on the 'historical lineage' of the royal family of Sikkim (which makes up the majority of *PSLG*) was most probably necessitated by the political events of seventeenth century western Sikkim. The tale of Gyad links three important points for legitimating the state of Sikkim under the control of Phun tshogs. First, the association of the new state with a lineage that descends from a royal dynasty (which was retrospectively associated with the Tibetan empire, despite the problems of clan association). Second, the formation of a relation of unity and sameness between the Tibeto-Sikkimese and the Lepcha populations. Third, the religious prophesies which act as the ultimate legitimation and justification for the establishment of a new and centralised Sikkimese state. The only thing that holds these three different levels of legitimacy together is the figure of Gyad 'bum sags, who has been aligned with the lineage of the Tibetan kings, through the association of his lineage with the *ldong* clan⁶³ of Khams Mi nyag. Similarly, Phun tshogs is associated with Gyad through the name of Gyad's son, which as has been noted earlier is the collective noun of the four major Sikkimese clans (from which Phun tshogs rnam rgyal

⁶² For an introductory survey of the prophesies credited to Guru Rinpoche, Khri srong lde btsan and Santarakshita see bKra Shis Tshe ring (2003: 8-11).

⁶³ In '*Bras ljongs rgyal rabs* and in some of the oral histories of Sikkim, it is mentioned that the Sikkimese kings, through the lineage of Gyad 'bum sags, can be traced to the middle son of Khri srong lde btsan, who (in the oral histories) is said to have migrated to eastern Tibet. This 'royal connection' is most probably fabricated to enhance the legitimacy of the kingdom and further attest to the Tibetan origins of the Tibeto-Sikkimese. It is unsure whether this view was commonly promoted during the seventeenth century.

descended) and through the religious prophesies of the seventeenth century.

State and politics: some previously unknown events

According to more orthodox historical accounts, as best represented by '*Bras ljongs rgyal rabs*, accredited to Chogyal Thuthob Namgyal and his wife Queen Yeshe Dolma, prior to the arrival of Lha btsun chen po, Sikkim was without major political states. Indeed they claim that Phun tshogs nam rgyal was little more than a lowly farmer from Gangtok in eastern Sikkim, who was found by lHa btsun and brought to west Sikkim to rule the state in accordance with the religious prophesies.

From folios 5.b to 7.a we learn that a basic system of social, political and economic organisation was introduced prior to Phun tshogs nam rgyal ascending the throne in 1642.⁶⁴ First, according to *PSLG* (folio 6.a), there was the division of the population into two groups: *g.yog* (servants) and *blon* (ministers). The servants were organised into various groups under higher ranking officials known as *mgo chings* and *las dpon* (headman and work leader) and the Lepchas of bKra shis steng kha and Seng lding were given the title of Lepcha officials (*las byed mon pa*) after their incorporation into the territory that Phun tshogs would rule and inherit. The ministerial group was organised according to their reliability and trustworthiness. Those who were not trusted became involved with trade or were responsible for tax collection. The fact that *PSLG* indicates that the early formation of centralised authority existed prior to 1642 leads us to believe that Phun tshogs was not necessarily the first ruler in Sikkim, but in fact inherited this position from an earlier figure (about whom we know almost nothing). Furthermore, the fact that all the events mentioned in *PSLG* take place within a twenty kilometre radius from Tashiding casts further doubt on the Gangtok origins of Phun tshogs nam rgyal.

It appears that prior to 1642, the region that would be known as Sikkim grew and expanded with areas such as bKra shis ldeng kha and Seng lding (folio 6.a) gradually coming under the control of the territory that Phun tshogs nam rgyal would inherit, rule, and in alliance with minor rulers, expand. In folio 6.b we are told of an interesting event relating to a united group of Tibetan migrants, the ancestors of lHa dbang bstan 'dzin and lHa dbang bkra shis, who attempted to settle in Zil gnon only to find that this area was not suitable, probably

⁶⁴ This date is still problematic.

because it had already been occupied or there was a high level of local resistance (described in *PSLG* as an inability to establish ‘auspicious circumstances’)⁶⁵ and then carved out a micro-state around bKra shis ‘dzom.⁶⁶ They ruled this territory ‘for some years’ until Phun tshogs rnam rgyal co-opted bKra shis ‘dzom into his realm probably through an alliance, described in *PSLG* as a royal audience. Later on in the same text we learn that the same lHa dbang bKra shis⁶⁷ expanded the territory under the administration of Phun tshogs by seizing Yug mthing.

Perhaps, then, the early reign of Phun tshogs rnam rgyal was defined by the expansion of the borders of his territory (which he had inherited) through the subjugation of other smaller Tibetan and Lepcha territories using, in some instances, military strength and in others subservient alliances.

It is useful at this juncture to clarify an issue of chronology which has until recently escaped the attention of Sikkimese and western historians. According to *PSLG* it is stated that Phun tshogs rnam rgyal ascended the throne in 1642. However, this date should be considered as problematic for a number of reasons. In an earlier article (Mullard: 2003a), I highlighted a number of problems relating to this date, the most important of which is that the so-called architect of modern Sikkim, lHa btsun Chen po, had not yet arrived in Sikkim. Until now only two possibilities had been considered: first, Phun tshogs rnam rgyal was already King by the time lHa btsun arrived in Sikkim; second, the date of 1642 was fixed retrospectively to associate the formation of Sikkim with the establishment of the dGa’ ldan pho brang in Lhasa. Until now the latter argument has been favoured. However, new information provided in *PSLG* seems to suggest that a third possibility is in fact more plausible: Phun tshogs did indeed obtain political power over an area of west Sikkim in 1642, but only in 1646

⁶⁵ *PSLG* (folio 6.b).

⁶⁶ The term ‘micro-state’ has been used here to illustrate the pattern of seventeenth century political geography in the region to the west of the Tista river. It is highly probable that in this region there existed a pattern of small independent territories under the administration of both Lepcha and Tibetan clan leaders. Gradually, these territories or ‘micro-states’ fell under the control of Phun tshogs rnam rgyal.

⁶⁷ lHa dbang bKra shis appears to have been a highly influential person in the politics of early Sikkim. He is frequently mentioned in *LTLY* by the title *jo bo* (folios 607 to 608), which is generally associated with lay people of considerable importance and can be roughly translated as ‘lord’ or ‘master’. The image of Shakyamuni housed in the Jo khang in Lhasa is known as Jo bo rin po che in which the Buddha is depicted as a prince.

or 1647⁶⁸ was he involved in an event (possibly politically motivated to display his position and regional dominance) which inaugurated him as the Chos rgyal of Sikkim. Unfortunately, the problems surrounding this chronological issue are still ignored in the works of a number of western scholars.⁶⁹

Religion and politics


Towards the end of folio 6.a we are told that the rule of Phun tshogs rnam rgyal involved the establishment of the dual system of religion and politics (*lugs gnyis*). The system of *lugs gnyis* and its associated concepts of *chos srid zung 'brel*, *tshul gnyis*, *khriims gnyis*, *mchod yon* etc. have been noted elsewhere (Cueppers (ed) 2004, Ruegg 1991 and 1997). *Lugs gnyis* is probably best understood to be a religio-political theory of state and society, in which the united territories of the political and religious worlds play a complementary, although not always equal, role in the formation and direction of policy. Thus certain guarantees and concessions are set in place, theoretically at least, to maintain the balance and stability of both social orders.

In Sikkim, the 'establishment' of this religio-political system is definitely associated with the arrival and influence of Tibetan bla ma in Sikkim and the creation of a religious historical royal lineage for Phun tshogs rnam rgyal. As such, the extent to which the system of *lugs gnyis* was established is an issue of considerable importance. Indeed, the somewhat cryptic Lung bstan shel gyi me long bzhugs so, a text within *Rig 'dzin srog sgrub* ('discovered' by lHa btsun chen po), warns that chaos and conflict will result if the dual laws of religion and

⁶⁸ 'Bras ljongs lam yig. The collected works of lHa-btsun Nam-mkha' 'Jigs-med, Vol. III: folio 556 to 557, 1974, New Delhi. *Then on the first day of dkar-phyog of the tenth month, (end of 1646 beginning of 1647) having arrived at Nor bu sgang, the centre of the treasure of the great holy land of 'bras mo gshong.... Then again, Phun tshogs rnam rgyal was enthroned as the greatest patron of the Buddhist teachings and was endowed with the seven ritual objects of the Chakravatin (symbols of royalty), as well as the eight auspicious objects and signs* (my translation).

⁶⁹ Most notably, in an article by John Ardussi on the religio-political structures of early Bhutan (2004: 45). It appears that Ardussi has relied primarily on *BGR* without realising the inherent problems of that text for the study of early Sikkimese history. A cursory glance at lHa btsun chen po's rnam thar, which he himself mentions in that article, would have revealed that lHa btsun had yet to arrive in Sikkim, making it impossible for him to have been involved in an installation in 1642.

secular affairs are not introduced.⁷⁰ Whether the *Rig 'dzin srog sgrub* had an influence on the state policies of early Sikkim is still unclear.


IHa btsun chen po (who is credited with the formation of the Sikkimese state in traditional histories) arrived in Sikkim in the ninth month of 1646 and began 'discovering' prophecies, ritual treatises and *gnas yig* which reinforced the definition of Sikkim, first articulated by Rig 'dzin rgod ldem can, as a *sbas yul* and a geo-physical .⁷¹ Both religious ideas regarding sacred geography (as found in the numerous *gnas yig* of Sikkim) and 'discovered' prophetic texts were probably employed politically, like the tale of Gyad 'bum sags, to define not only the national character of the expanding state, but as we have seen earlier, to add legitimacy and status to its ruler. This probably allowed IHa btsun chen po, his followers, and other religious practitioners, the freedom to propagate their teachings.

Perhaps this, then, is what is meant when the author of *PSLG* (folio 6.a.) states that the reign of Phun tshogs nam rgyal was characterised by the introduction of the Tibetan religio-political philosophy of *chos srid lugs gnyis*.

Rebellion and reorganisation: ethnic stratification in early Sikkim

Despite establishing himself as the dominant power in Sikkim at some point after the establishment of Rab gdan rtse Palace in 1649, there was a rebellion against the rule of Phun tshogs nam rgyal instigated by the Lepchas of Yug bsam and what *PSLG* describes as 'local traders', perhaps an early reference to the Limbu. This rebellion seems to have been subdued by 'royal messengers' who were dispatched to the

⁷⁰ *mi mthun log pa'i khrims: bsdam rgyal khrims dang: chos khrims zung du myur bar ma bsdams na: bar ched dbang byas gzhi bdag lha srin 'khrugs: (Lung bstan shel gyi me long bzhugs so: folio 3.b).* This is a particularly interesting prophecy, as the opening folios begin by describing the time of the degeneration of Buddhism in Tibet and the importance, at that time, of *sbas yul* and other areas blessed by Guru Rinpoche. From folio 3 onwards, methods and practices aimed at preserving the sacred character and blessing of the *sbas yul* are explained as well as the way in which evil and inauspicious circumstances will be prevented from entering such sacred places.

⁷¹ See Mullard (2003a), *rDo rje nyi ma'i gnas yig* (Rig 'dzin rgod ldem can - reprinted in Boord 2003) and *Brag dkar bkra shis sdings kyi sku 'bum mthong ba rang grol gyi dkar chag mdor bsdus don gsal me long zhes bya ba bzhugs so*, (IHa btsun chen po Nam mkha' 'jigs med). Other examples of the representation of the  concept can be found religio-physical geography of other *sbas yul*, such as mkhan pa lung (Diemberger 1997b, Diemberger and Hazod 1999: 41).

Lepcha strongholds throughout the kingdom and who, after the rebellion was pacified, established a royal council to ‘mediate’ and enact some form of agreement. The result of the council was the introduction of a law rather unfavourable for the Lepchas which defined the relationship between the populations of Tibetan descent and the local Lepcha groups. This law reads as follows: ‘*If your Lepcha (i.e. a Lepcha under your administrative authority) is male, his sons will belong to you (i.e. they will belong to you as servants).⁷² If the male Lepcha has only one son he will be retained by his family. Your wife will obtain whatever female Lepcha descendants that may exist, but if there is only one, she will be retained by the Lepcha family. If the male Lepcha is without male issue, he can receive a son (mag pa) from someone else.*’⁷³

The law uses the language of generalised Tibetan kinship and social customs regarding inheritance and property ownership. As noted in an earlier passage of this document, in which the female descendants of Gyad ‘bum gsags are associated with the lineage of Teg perhaps on account of a marriage alliance, the possession of ‘servants’ is aligned with gender. It should be noted that the dual ownership of both male and female ‘servants’, which implies the total ownership of all the descendants of a family grouping and this family’s responsibilities to their overlord, may be a mechanism of controlling marriage external to the (e)state or region of domicile. Whether or not this was the case will only be ascertained through further research of relevant seventeenth century material. It is also interesting to note the application of Tibetan concepts of gender division to the ‘ownership’ of Lepcha and perhaps other tenants. Whether the use of a kinship or inheritance metaphor represents an attempt to introduce a law of servitude on the basis of ethnicity without causing alarm, or whether it reflects a common

⁷² While this section of the text makes repeated reference to *mon* (Lepcha) and *g.yog* (servant or one who provides services), it may be more accurate to designate this economic group as landed tenants. Such an economic system has been widely noted in other regions of the Tibetan area, in which tenants provide domestic and other services, along with a portion of their harvest, as a form of tax to the ‘Lord’ or ‘true’ owner of the estate on which they are engaged in exchange for rights over land (see Goldstein 1971a and 1971b).

⁷³ At first I was puzzled by this passage so I asked for advice from a number of local scholars who were divided on its precise meaning. Dr. Rigzin Ngodub, Sonam Thinley, Acharya Tsultrim Lama and Acharya Dubgyal agreed with my translation, whereas Khenpo Chowang disagreed. Khenpo Chowang argued that there were many mistakes in *PSLG*. In order to clarify the issue I have included a grammatical breakdown of this passage below.

ideology of racial arrogance and discrimination which was characterised by a view of the Lepchas as a subservient racial group, is still open to speculation.

The fact that this passage begins with the statement that the council was established ‘to designate the relationship between servants and masters’ (*dpon g.yog*)⁷⁴ and the grammatical use of the genitive particle suggest a level of ownership or possession. Note the difference in meaning between *rang gi mon pa pho yin na* and *rang mon pa pho yin na*. The former, which is found in *PSLG*, reads as: ‘if the Lepcha which belongs to / associated with you is male’ or more literarily ‘if your Lepcha is male’, whereas the latter would read something like: ‘If you are a male Lepcha’. The use of the genitive particle in this case thus radically changes the meaning of the whole passage. Furthermore, if the passage had merely stated the Tibetan system of kinship practices, the whole passage would need to be ‘corrected’. If this was a rule only relating to Lepchas, there would be no need to state ‘*in the case of there being only one son he should be retained as pha tshab*’ as this is implied by the earlier statement, providing that the genitive particle in the opening phrase is removed: ‘*if you are a male Lepcha you will receive whatever sons exist*’. If the phrase is read as simply representing general Tibetan kinship practices, we are left with a rather confusing passage requiring the omission of a number of key grammatical particles. While far from conclusive, this passage may prove to be important for understanding the introduction of Tibetan land economy marked by the social distinction between land owners (*dpon*) and Lepcha tenants/ servants (*g.yog*).

This section of *PSLG* seems to suggest that during the reign of Phun tshogs rnam rgyal, a system of ethnic stratification was introduced into Sikkim based on the application of Tibetan land economy. While this document does point to such a conclusion, it should not be taken as a final point of analysis for early Sikkimese ethnic and economic relations. Indeed, the lack of consistent information regarding this period of Sikkimese history, coupled with the inherent bias of *PSLG* and some doubt caused by the errors inherent in the text call for caution in analysing such a provocative account of economic, social and ethnic relations.

⁷⁴ While the term *dpon g.yog* literally designates the relationship between servants and lords, such terminology can also be applied to the relationship between a disciple and his guru or even between two males of the same family group, e.g. father and son, or paternal uncle and nephew. For a more detailed analysis of this see Stein (1972: 94-109).

Some concluding remarks

A robust presentation of the early history of Sikkim would require detailed historical analysis, something which this paper has not attempted. However, from the Sikkimese chronicle presented here a number of important questions are raised regarding not only the formation of political structures and religious authority, but also the importance of historical legitimacy (the lineage history of the Sikkimese *chos rgyal*) and the chronology of events in the young state. Such questions, which appear to contradict more orthodox historical accounts of Sikkim (such as *BGR*), would suggest a more complicated historical process of state and religious formation, involving events, locales and figures which have yet to find their place within the orthodox historiography of Sikkim. As such, one is reminded of the necessity of adopting a more critical approach to the traditional histories of Sikkim, an approach which is already well established in wider Tibetological studies. The history of Sikkimese statehood requires detailed study, and this paper serves to draw attention to that need by introducing one such text that can deepen our knowledge of seventeenth century events.

Such studies will likely run parallel to the study of the expansion of Buddhism, its royal patronage and its position in early Sikkimese politics; an endeavour which may lead to a contrary historical view to that of the religious position of Sikkimese history. This is not to say that the position of Tibetan Lamas in Sikkim was inconsequential, since much of the Sikkimese state was inevitably influenced by wider religious ideas and the Tibetan notion of *lugs gnyis* introduced to Sikkim by seventeenth century religious figures, as illustrated by the religious references in *PSLG*. However, some of the content of *PSLG* brings into question the precise role Buddhist Lamas played during the ascent of Phun tshogs nam rgyal in western Sikkim, if the date of 1642 is accepted. While *PSLG* is of course grounded in the religious concepts of the time, it also highlights a number of political actions and events, such as the introduction of a rudimentary social order and internal alliances conducted between Phun tshogs nam rgyal and other minor political figures like lHa dbang bstan 'dzin and bKra shis. These have not been discussed in even the more recent works on Sikkimese

history (mKhan po lHa Tshe ring, 2002 and mKhan po Chos dbang, 2003).⁷⁵

The introduction of a legal code demarcating the role and position of *dpon* (lords) and *g.yog* (servants), based on wider Tibetan concepts of parallel descent, may indicate a substantial shift in the organisation of Sikkimese society from minor chiefdoms to a proto-national state based on a Tibetan model of political hierarchy. It remains unclear whether the system of stratification applied only to the non-Tibeto-Sikkimese communities such as the Lepcha (and possibly the Limbu), or whether the system was applied more generally to all ethnic populations in Sikkim. Resolving this question is crucial for an understanding of whether the immediate subordinates of Phun tshogs rnam rgyal⁷⁶ were drawn from various ethnic communities, or whether the early Sikkimese state was characterised by the rule of a Tibeto-Sikkimese hierarchy over the Lepcha and Limbu populations, and Tibeto-Sikkimese commoners.

In summary, this text highlights a number of questions relating to the various mechanisms employed by the early state to establish a wider national political formation. The primary reason for presenting *PSLG* in this paper is to initiate a discussion on these historical questions which are of crucial importance to understanding the evolution of state and society in early Sikkim and its relationship to wider Tibetan models.

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⁷⁵ Such emissions in contemporary research may be grounded more in a religio-historical world view rather than a desire to comprehend wider historical questions which may challenge pre-existing religious conceptions of the past.

⁷⁶ By this I mean those figures who held posts of high rank, as *PSLG* mentions that some minor officials were drawn from the ranks of the Lepcha, and possibly the Limbu, populations (*las byed mon pa*, etc).

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BOOK REVIEW

ANNA BALIKCI-DENJONGPA
Namgyal Institute of Tibetology

Sikkim Himalaya: Travels in the Cloud Kingdom by David Lang.
 Pomegranate Press, Lewes, Sussex, 2003, 200 pp. ISBN 0953349373.

Sikkim Himalaya by David Lang will be of interest primarily to naturalists curious about the flora and fauna of Sikkim. The book's main strength is its description of flowers photographed during the author's numerous expeditions to Sikkim between 1987 and 2001. For orchid enthusiasts, a very informative appendix by Mohan Pradhan about the extraordinary forest orchids of Sikkim will be particularly useful. The book is richly illustrated with the author's own photographs of Sikkim, although despite its title, the book somewhat confusingly opens with photographs of Bhutan.

A retired veterinary surgeon, amateur botanist and birdwatcher, Dr. Lang wrote his narrative as an illustrated journal in the style of an early British explorer showing his interest in botany and ornithology. Although this personal diary style lacks the structure and rigour of more informed texts, it does make for pleasant reading for travellers to Sikkim interested in botany and the state's northern regions. Throughout the account of his numerous expeditions to Sikkim's high altitude areas, the author introduces the names of flowers, along with when and where he encountered them. He makes use of Sir Joseph Hooker's original nineteenth century drawings of flowers and landscapes, matching them with his own recent photographs of the same.

Two introductory chapters deal with Sikkim's geography and briefly touch on the state's political history. Lang also surveys British political, scientific and mountaineering involvements in the region in greater detail. However, little or no mention is made of expeditions from other countries. Notably lacking are references to the German scientific Schäfer expedition that spent six months in Sikkim in 1938 (mostly in the northern regions) or the early research of anthropologists Geoffrey Gorer (*Himalayan Village: An Account of the Lepchas of Sikkim*, 1938) and Halfdan Siiger (*The Lepchas: Culture and Religion*

of Himalayan People, 1967), both of whom carried out extensive exploratory research among the Lepchas of north Sikkim in the first half of the twentieth century.

This same chapter contains, among various photos of Tibet, eighteen photographs taken in Sikkim between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth century. This welcome addition gives the reader a visual sense of the Sikkimese royal family, the landlords, the missionaries and the British involved in the region during this period. Given that the author attempts to cover more than Sikkim's natural environment, the book would have greatly benefited from a brief overview of Sikkimese society, its ethnic groups, origins and social classes. This would have indeed helped the reader better appreciate not only the photographs but also Sikkim's unique history as a nation and state.

To conclude, the author has shown admirable perseverance and loyalty to Sikkim and his friends in the region. With this personal narrative, then, Dr. Lang allows the reader to share his fascination with the Sikkim Himalaya, one of the earth's richest bio-diversity hot spots.

GERMAN AKAY (1915-2005)

ANNA BALIKCI-DENJONGPA
Namgyal Institute of Tibetology

Known as 'German' Akay, the last surviving Sikkimese member of Ernst Schäfer's 1938-1939 German Tibet Expedition died on May 10, 2005 in Tathangchen, Gangtok, at the age of 90.

For a Sikkimese, German Akay had an unusual life. His father had worked for the Palace and looked after the Chogyal's horses. Father and son were both tall and strong, and as a young man, Akay soon found work on three scientific expeditions.

Akay was the German expedition's hunter and Schäfer's assistant. The expedition left Germany in April 1938 intending to study the people, biology and geology of Tibet. Having spent fourteen months in Sikkim and Tibet, the expedition team returned to Berlin in August 1939.

In Sikkim, expedition members travelled to Lachen, Thangu, Lachung and Zemu Lake and illegally crossed into Tibet as far as Chorten Nyima. Having been denied permission to enter Tibet through official channels, they personally negotiated an invitation with the help of the Taring Raja, the elder half-brother of the King of Sikkim, Sir Tashi Namgyal. Armed with an official invitation, this time the group legally crossed the border into Tibet at Nathula shortly before Christmas of 1938. They arrived in Lhasa on January 19th and stayed there for two months. They returned to Sikkim at the end of June 1939.

The expedition was abruptly terminated with the beginning of the Second World War. The Germans fled British India, and Akay, as the animal keeper, was left stranded in Calcutta looking after a number of animals including Tibetan mastiffs. German Akay continued to care for his charges until the British luckily decided to take them over and sent Akay back home to Gangtok.

Other Sikkimese members of the expedition were Lazor, a Lepcha from Tumin, who was hired as the expedition cook and Kaiser Bahadur Thapa (1918-2000) who was the expedition's interpreter. K.B. Thapa and Schäfer kept in touch until Schäfer's death in 1992.

German Akay participated in two further expeditions with Francis Kingdon Ward (1985-1958), the British botanical explorer. He

accompanied Kingdon Ward and his wife on the Lohit George expedition of 1950 to the Assam-Tibet border.

German Akay also served in the Indian Army for two years, but was hit by a grenade in Burma. Receiving a pension from the army he then became a farmer.

In 2003, I had the fortune to meet Dr. Bruno Beger in Germany. Dr. Beger is the last surviving member of the German exploration, on which he worked as the physical anthropologist. Born in 1911 and with a background in anatomy, Beger also acted as the expedition doctor. In 1998 he published his personal expedition diary. When I met him, Dr. Beger kindly let me digitise a large number of his 1938 photographs of Sikkim. As soon as I returned to Gangtok, I showed these photos to German Akay on my laptop. For the first time, Akay saw the photographs of the expedition and of himself as a young man, and was able to share the experience with his family. Dr. Beger and Akay subsequently exchanged letters and gifts. Dr. Beger's photographs are now part of an exhibition at the Namgyal Institute in Gangtok, the opening of which was attended by German Akay's widow and only son.

HENRY GEORGE BAKER (1918-2006)

ROGER CROSTON

Radio Operator Gangtok 1942-45, died January 15, 2006, aged 87.

Henry Baker, who died aged 87 on January 15, 2006, was one of the last half dozen eyewitnesses who travelled to the capital city, Lhasa, of an independent Tibet, before the Chinese annexation of the country in 1950. Born into a Methodist family in Ryde on the Isle of Wight, England, on June 23, 1918, he was the eldest of seven children, having four brothers and two sisters. One brother was to predecease him by a day.

After working as a shop assistant he was enlisted for six years into the Supplementary Reserve of the Infantry of the Line, Hampshire Regiment, in Newport Isle of Wight on September 7, 1936. "One day my grandfather came to me and said, 'You are coming with me lad!' He took me down the road into a building to see a gentleman I did not know. The next thing I discovered was that I'd been signed into the army. I suppose it was one less mouth to feed."

Initially based at Winchester, because he had a private interest in radio and electronics, Baker was re-enlisted into the Royal Corps of Signals, Regular Army, on 1st December 1936 and trained at Catterick Camp, Yorkshire, before being transferred to Aldershot, and on to India in December 1938. When he joined the Royal Signals they were still kitted out in riding breeches. Baker remained loyal to his home regiment and always kept Hampshire Regiment buttons on his tunic.

INDIA AND TIBET

Upon arrival in India, Baker was immediately posted from Karachi to Bannu on the notorious North-West Frontier. A year later, he was posted to Southern Command Signal Company, Jubbulpore, as wireless operator. During this time, he made acquaintance on air with Reginald Fox a former Royal Signals man, now a civilian employed by Government of India, who had operated the British Mission's radio in Lhasa, Tibet, since 1937. This link was regarded as vital as there were rumours that Chinese troops were becoming active along the Tibetan border.

Baker's army records note that from 20th October 1941 to October 1945 he served in "Sikkim, Tibet, Bhutan for duty with British Consulate, Lhasa Mission." Mr Reginald Fox, a civilian, had taken up duty as wireless operator in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, following the establishment of the British Mission there in 1936 and was using the equipment which had been set up in the Mission's Deyki Lingka residence by lieutenants Sidney Dagg and Evan Yorke Nepean, both of the Royal Corps of Signals. Towards the end of 1941, Fox was taken seriously ill and was sent to Calcutta for treatment and had to be relieved. One of the people with whom he was in daily radio contact was Signaler Henry Baker, then serving with the Corps in Jubbulpore, Central Provinces, India. "One morning my sergeant sent for me and gave me 24 hours leave to consider volunteering to go and take over the radio station – being told if I declined that, as there was a war on, I would be posted there anyway!"

Having 'volunteered' Baker was examined by three doctors who told him how lucky he was, but who would have marked him 'unfit' had he not wanted to go. "I was given a trade test to make sure I could run the station at Lhasa. Needless to say none of the items I was tested on were anything like what I found there." On 20th October 1941, he was posted 'Destination Unknown' on what would be the greatest adventure of his life.

After collecting code and cipher books he proceeded to the Great Eastern Hotel, Calcutta, where he met the Civil Surgeon Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet, Captain Dr. Harry W.G. Staunton of the Indian Medical Service. Staunton proclaimed him "Just skin and bone," and said "You'll never survive a severe winter trek over the Himalayas" – a journey he himself had often made – adding, "We'll send you back in the morning." However, Delhi HQ informed Staunton that nobody else was available and Baker had to go. Next day the pair proceeded to Siliguri by train and from there some 70 miles by taxi to Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim, where they were invited by Sir Basil Gould – known to all simply as "B.J." – the Political Officer of Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet, to stay at the British Residency. "I was in my regular issue nailed army boots and went up the highly polished wooden stairs making a heck of a noise to be introduced to Gould in his study. He greeted me with 'What the blazes do you think you are doing! Get those things off your feet!' I apologised saying they were all I had."

Gould had led the 1936 Political Mission to Lhasa, which had established the British presence there. He had been knighted for his

good offices when attending the Installation of the current Dalai Lama in Lhasa in 1940.

Taking one look at Baker, Gould sent for the local doctor, Dr. Hendricks, who also declared Baker quite unfit. He also asked for a replacement, but General Villumy at HQ, Delhi, gave the same response as before and instructed that Baker be sent to Lhasa as soon as possible. During a three days' acclimatisation at 8,000 feet in Gangtok he met the Maharaja of Sikkim. "I still had not been given any details about getting to Lhasa, except my telegram from Delhi which said 'You will fly from Gangtok. Your luggage will go by camel caravan'. Staring at the paper, an incredulous Gould told Baker that he had been told utter rubbish and that he faced an arduous trek over the Himalayas.

Gould arranged a dinner party at the Residency. "The thing that struck me as rather funny was that the British Residency, which was located on a hill, used oil lamps and candles for lighting. It had no hot or cold running water and was approached by a dirt track. A mile away on another hill was the Maharaja's Palace, which had all mod cons and a tarred access road."

Never having ridden in his life, Baker set out on the 21-day pony trek to Lhasa. Dr. Staunton accompanied him half way as far as Gyantse. An inauspicious start was made "As my pony put his head down to drink, I promptly fell over its head into a stream." At Karponang Dak Bungalow, Staunton warned him that the next two days over the high Himalayan passes would prove if he would be going to Lhasa or back to India in a pine box. Baker was immensely impressed by the Chomolhari Mountain Range towering over 24,000 feet. "At the village of Phari, my saddle slipped and my pony suddenly took off. Staunton reprimanded me that I ought not to show off how well I could now ride. I protested that I was not showing off but that I was simply unable to stop the pony." Suffering intense cold at heights of over 15,000 feet, he survived and "With a very sore posterior reached the British Indian Army Garrison Fort at Gyantse."

"After a brief welcoming ceremony, because I was a new visitor I was invited to inspect the Indian Army Garrison's Escort Troops. After which, it was a luxury to sleep in a nice warm bedroom in a very comfortable bed. The following day, another catastrophe – I was informed that I, a simple soldier, would be playing Polo on the team of the Fort Commander! I did pretty well until it was my turn to hit the ball when I hit my pony across his front legs and down we both went. They promptly gave me a second pony and said, 'Keep going'. Needless to say, after that I kept well away from the ball."

“After several days’ rest, I travelled on alone with a young Tibetan Christian missionary and his family. No foreigners were allowed to travel beyond Gyantse without government permission. The going was very hard – breathing was difficult crossing the Karo La pass at 16,600 feet with heavy snowfall necessitating frequent dismounting to walk.” Baker found the Tibetans most friendly and he slept in village homesteads where he began to appreciate and learn more about the land, its people and their customs.

Arrangements were made for passage across the fast-flowing Tsangpo River at Chusul in yak hide coracles about ten feet square. A 15-mile trip was made downstream. Having spent the night in Nam village, a large group of Tibetan horsemen arrived to escort Baker to Lhasa, and thanks to the missionary who translated for him, he got through the greetings ceremony of exchanging long white silk scarves.

Arriving at the city’s outskirts, Baker was impressed with views of the Potala Palace and was introduced to leading government officials and taken to the Deyki Lingka, the British Mission’s residency, only to discover that the British Head of Mission, Rai Bahadur Norbhu Dhondup Dzasa, a Tibetan, was a three days’ journey away on a gambling spree. Just outside the residence, in the same compound, he was directed to the small brick building containing the radio station that was to become his home.

On the ground floor was an engine that drove the generator which charged the batteries and supplied power to the buildings and the wireless station, which was upstairs in the living quarters. “As soon as everyone had left me, I bolted the large entrance doors downstairs, went upstairs and cried like a baby. To think that I had survived the journey, that I had volunteered for it, was completely alone with no one to talk to, and now realised that the nearest European to me was many a day’s journey away. I had no idea what to do other than to keep things going and keep in contact with Jubbulpore. Each morning I transmitted weather reports and sent ciphered messages from the Head of the British Mission.”

“The large radio batteries were in a bad state – a relay in the charger had been wedged with a piece of wood and they had been overcharged, so I sent for replacements. When new ones arrived I emptied the old batteries into the garden but the acid seeped into the Kyi Chu River and killed a whole load of fish which was not a very bright idea in a strictly Buddhist country.”

I also ordered new valves but when they arrived, their cartons had been opened, and they had been replaced by stones – the Tibetans could

be terrible thieves. The Chinese also had a radio station in Lhasa, but of such antiquity, that it was a wonder it worked at all. I intercepted it and obtained and decoded their information before it had even reached China!”

Baker settled into life in Lhasa and got to know several notables including the Dalai Lama's father and the Commander of the Tibetan Army. He was kept company by various nobles who spoke English and was invited to some of the many picnics and parties in which citizens of Lhasa liked to indulge themselves. Baker also taught himself to use a 16mm cine camera that he found at the British Mission and took a reel of film of the spectacular New Year's ceremonies in Lhasa.

Eventually, Fox returned to Lhasa and Baker was posted to the British Residency in Sikkim to work the radio until the war's end, where he used his technical skills to help Gould establish both a Tibetan language broadcasting station and a Tibetan language newspaper. He would often be in radio contact with Fox in Lhasa who lived there until 1950 when he was forced to flee the Chinese.

SIKKIM

Baker was more than fortunate to receive his posting to Sikkim during the war, and lost no time to take trouble to educate himself about the people, their religion and customs as well as something of the local languages.

Although Baker's substantive rank was a corporal, the Maharaja of Sikkim would call him 'Captain' until Sir Basil Gould found out and put a stop to it. In Tibet, he had been instructed by Gould not to wear uniform as he was not to let it be known he was a serving British soldier, but Mr and Mrs Fairchild of the Scottish Universities Mission, Sikkim, wanted a photograph of him in Royal Signals uniform which Baker had taken in Lhasa. When Gould found out he was furious and told him to destroy his kit.

“On one occasion when Lady Clow was staying at the British Residency, Gangtok, Sikkim, Sir Basil Gould had her room painted and decked out in her favourite colour, purple. One morning her aide went to Sir Basil with a complaint. Apparently the cook, who was always up to some sort of trick or other, had gone a little too far this time by having the toilet rolls dyed the same colour at the carpet factory, not realising the dye would come out.”

Baker was to be invited by His Highness the Maharaja of Sikkim to a great many events and entertainments. On one occasion, he was

invited to witness the annual War Dance, peculiar to the northern Buddhists of Sikkim. A festival to celebrate the spirit of the War God Kangchen-dzod-nga when Mahakala, the Commander-in-Chief of all the guardians of the faith and overlord of all spirits, orders Dzod-nga to bring peace, prosperity and security to the people. On 1st November 1942, he was invited to the wedding of Jigme Dorje, the son of Raja S.T. Dorji, agent to the Maharaja of Bhutan, Kalimpong, to Tsering La, otherwise known as Tessla, daughter of D.D. Tsarong, Commander General of Tibet. He kept the many invitation cards, embossed with the gold crest of the Maharaja, which, framed and mounted, took pride of place in his later homes alongside a Tibetan 'Wheel of Life' thangka scroll.

He was to be given a privilege granted to a very select few – a Permanent Frontier Pass authorising him to enter Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet and he was instructed to have manufactured, and to wear, what were probably the most unusual shoulder epaulets in the history of the British Army, which had sewn into them the words "British Political Service Tibet". This was for tours of duty in Sikkim, Assam and Bhutan with Sir Basil Gould who needed mobile radio communications. Baker recalled, much to his amusement in advanced old age, that when he came to be demobbed on the Isle of Wight in May 1946 "I was struggling along with a very heavy box and was still wearing the epaulets when two burly Military Policemen caught up with me, one on either side, to ask who I was and what I was up to. Having read the epaulets, they ended up carrying the box for me!"

On leaving Sikkim on 8th November 1945, Baker received a letter from Mr S.J.L. Oliver at the (British) Residency, Gangtok. "On the eve of your departure on leave, I should like to record my appreciation of your work here; and I am sure that the Political Officer would wish to do the same were he here. To have kept the transmitter and generating plant in more or less constant operation over the last four years was a very considerable feat, accomplished in difficult working conditions and bad weather, and in the face of a perennial shortage of spares and equipment. Should regular broadcasting from Gangtok eventually be introduced, it will be on the basis of your pioneering work."

He had requested six months home leave to get demobbed and intended to accept a job as a civilian wireless operator for the government of Tibet. In 1944, the American and British Indian governments had supplied a limited quantity of radio equipment to the Tibetan Government and had planned the establishment of several wireless stations along the Sino-Tibetan border in an attempt to help

Tibet protect herself from Chinese incursion. During his leave, Robert Ford (author of *Captured in Tibet*), recently demobbed from the RAF, relieved Baker and subsequently set up a radio station in Chamdo on Tibet's eastern border. He was captured by the Chinese and held prisoner for five years.

KENYA AND USA

Baker claimed that after being demobbed he was advised by the Foreign Office not to return to Tibet, as he could no longer be offered British protection. Instead, the newly married Baker took a job at Nairobi airport Kenya, as Communications manager for the British Overseas Airways Corporation where his son was born in 1948. A former colleague relates that he was a first rate radio operator who was always one step ahead of the rest. Returning to England, his parents-in-law had decided to emigrate to the USA and his wife wished to join them so the family crossed the Atlantic.

Baker started a small business making and selling rubber stamps, later taking a job with Eddystone Radio and then Voicewriter Engineering where he worked on developing dictating machines. He moved on to another firm to develop television studio communication equipment and became a technical writer. Leaving the electronics industry Baker joined the New Jersey Police Force at Succasunna in 1963 and then the New Hampshire Police Force, in the meantime running his own electrical repair shop as a sideline. From patrolling areas of high crime he was promoted Major and became a Justice of the Peace in August 1985.

Having been overseas for many years, Baker lost contact with most of his family and in his 70s, following the death of his wife, he returned to live on the northeast coast of England. He was to eke out his final years in worsening health and deteriorating eyesight and had almost lost the will to live when in 2002 it became known to researchers that he, one of the few eyewitnesses of the old Tibet, was still alive. He was only traced after a radio ham friend from his days in Kenya, Tommy Thomlinson, responded to an article about the first British radio operators in Tibet in the Radio Society of Great Britain's magazine "RadCom".

Having been tracked down, Henry Baker was given a new lease of life and he was delighted to be visited and interviewed at length by independent researchers and academics from the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology (Sikkim), the Pitt Rivers Museum at the University of

Oxford and the daughter of his travelling companion in Tibet, Captain Harry Staunton.

Henry Baker was deeply saddened by the destruction wrought upon Tibet by the Chinese Cultural Revolution. His opinion was that the old feudal Tibet he witnessed needed to change, but to do so from within. At the end of his life he was hopeful that the progress made in recent years by China's rebuilding and restoration of much of what had been destroyed would lead to a renaissance of Tibetan culture.

Henry is still remembered by some elderly people in Sikkim. The photographs he had bought in Sikkim from Tse Ten Tashi (1912-1972) – then Private Secretary to the Maharaja's son, Prince Paljor Namgyal – during the war, where the climate has since destroyed a number of photographic prints, form part of a current photographic exhibition at the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology in Sikkim. Many people were thrilled to see long lost images of their parents and grandparents.

Following the death of Heinrich Harrer on the 7th of January and that of Henry Baker on the 15th, there are now only five living Westerners who witnessed Tibet prior to the Chinese occupation, one of whom is British, another in Germany and three more in the USA.

Henry Baker is survived by a son in the USA and three brothers in England.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

SAUL MULLARD is a D.Phil candidate at the Oriental Institute, University of Oxford, where he is currently working on his doctoral thesis on the formation of religio-political and state institutions in seventeenth century Sikkim. He is also affiliated with the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, where along with Melanie Vandenhelsken, he is co-directing a social and historical survey of Sikkimese monasticism. He is also Director of the Sikkimese Manuscript Project, a project which aims to make a large quantity of rare Sikkimese manuscripts and legal documents available to the wider academic population through the use of digital technology. He has authored two previous articles on Sikkimese history and religion in the *Bulletin of Tibetology*, Vol. 39, Issues 1 and 2.

HELEEN PLAISIER (PhD, Leiden 2006) is an expert on Lepcha language, literature and culture based in the Netherlands. Her recently-completed thesis, *A Grammar of Lepcha*, was based on extensive linguistic fieldwork in Darjeeling and Sikkim as part of the Himalayan Languages Project at the Department of Comparative Linguistics, University of Leiden. She is currently working on a Lepcha dictionary based on manuscript sources from the 1890s with the aim of annotating it and seeing it through publication.

BAL GOPAL SHRESTHA (PhD, Leiden 2002) is currently writing a monograph on Sikkim in his capacity as a post-doctoral fellow at the Centro Incontri Umani, Ascona, Switzerland. He is also lecturer at the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS), Kathmandu, Nepal. His PhD dissertation deals with Newar culture and rituals in Nepal. He has conducted extensive fieldwork in Nepal and India, and published widely in Newar, Nepali and English. His current research focuses on culture, ritual, religion, ethnicity and nationalism in South Asia, with a particular focus on Nepal and India.