CHAPTER IV
PASTORALISM, AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND COMMERCE

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

Land Revenue System:

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


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

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

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

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

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

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

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{4} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{5} J. C. White, \textit{op. cit.} p. 26
\item \textsuperscript{6} Thutob Namgyal, \textit{, op. cit.} p. 32
\item \textsuperscript{7} Charles Bell, \textit{Tibet: Past and Present}, Delhi, 1992 (reprint), p. 254
\end{itemize}
6 per year. According to him, “… They were also liable to some other demands, both in kind and service, however, the latter was occasional and not very heavy”.

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

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

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8. J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.*, p. 4
9. Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet, op. cit.* p. 301
10. *Ibid*
13. As informed by Dr. M. P. Kharel, Age-56, Principal, Sikkim Government College, Gangtok, on 28th December, 2012
the hills and by the use of plough. The lands began to be classified according to the fertility and produce per seeds sown and they were classified as first, second and third class land. The first class land was the land on which in average years four *manas* or less of seed produced one *murhi* of paddy. Second class land was the land on which in average years between four and six *manas* of seed produced a *murhi* of paddy and the third class land on which more than six *manas* of seed were required to produce a *murhi* of paddy. However, the taxation was still based on the quantity of seeds sown and not the produce of the land. It seems that the land revenue was fixed at the time of sowing seed and not during the harvest of the crop.

**Table: 4.1**

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<tr>
<th>12 Manas</th>
<th>1 Pathi</th>
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<tr>
<td>20 Pathis</td>
<td>1 Murhi</td>
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Later in the nineteenth century, the *kazis* became the landlords and owner of the crown lands by virtue of deeds of grants. These *kazis* appointed subordinate officers from among the Limboos and Nepalese. Later on several Bhutias and Lepchas also held small plots of land in perpetuity under deeds of grant from the *Chogyal*. Under such lands these *kazis*, landlords, officers and even the Bhutia and Lepcha cultivators granted lands to minor cultivators. These minor cultivators were the Bhutias, Lepchas and the Nepalese and were later commonly referred to as *raitis*. They cultivated the fields of

16. Appendix-C, p. xxxii, *Man* is the smallest unit of measurement of seed having a conical shape of approximately six inches in height and the upper circumference of fifteen inches and circumference of almost half at the base.
18. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* p. 103
19. The *raiti* is equivalent to the *ryot* a term commonly used to refer to a cultivator in India at that time. It came to Sikkim through Nepal and most commonly referred to as *raiti*. Maharaja Thutob Namgyal and Maharani Yeshey Dolma have described these cultivators as *raiyats* in their work *History of Sikkim*. 
the landlords under conditions of *adhia* and *kut*. *Adhia* meant cultivating land on the condition that the produce would be distributed equally between the landlord and the cultivator. *Kut* meant an amount of produce to be paid to the landlord which was prefixed before the settlement. Both *adhia* and *kut* were to be paid annually in kind. One difference between it was that the amount of *kut* to be paid annually was fixed and no relaxation was made during crop failure due to natural calamities and *kut* was renewed in every agricultural year. However, in case of *adhia* the produce was distributed equally between the cultivator and the landlord and relaxation was granted during crop failure. The *kutdars* or the cultivators who paid *kut* to the landlord had to work in the fields of landlords and during festivals they were required to present gifts to landlords and to the Chogyal. The system of presenting gifts was known as *theki-bethi* or presents in the form of milk and its products, meats, eggs, fruits and grains.20 The *adhia* system was same as *che-she*, the term used by the Bhutias and Lepchas in Sikkim before the entry of the Nepalese. However, the condition was same as *adhia* and was paid in kind.21

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

22. The *thikadars* were the revenue contractors and this *thikadari* system entered Sikkim with the coming of the Newars, a community of Nepalese in the 1860s. The Bhutias and the Lepchas also acquired these rights afterwards.
state. However, the *adhia* and *kut* was the internal agreement between the cultivator and the contractor which went directly into the pocket of the latter, and the agreement was always verbal.

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

\(^{24}\) *Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the year 1932-1933 to 1933-1934*, pp. 28-29
\(^{26}\) Appendix-C, p. xxxii, A *ser* is approximately equal to 900.50 grams.
state. It was reallocated to any other fresh settlers on the usual payment of *chardam.* In an interview with Parshuram Neopaney, he said that his grandfather, Chandrakhar Neopaney got a land at Rumtek, East Sikkim, from Entchey *kazi* after the payment of *chardam.*

**Other Taxes:**

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

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

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28. He is the father-in-law of the researcher.
31. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* p. 32
These consisted of herds of yaks which were looked after by their own drokpas. These drokpas moved up to Chumbi in Tibet during summer and came down to Sikkim in winter.\footnote{35} The people of Sikkim and Tibet living on the borders paid grazing tax to Sikkim in the form of sheep skins and barley in case of cultivable lands. The kalons and the dzongpons settled these taxes and the amount to be paid by the people living on the borders. Charles Bell who succeeded J. C. White as the British Political Officer of Sikkim remarks that most of the time the terms of negotiations was sent to the ruler and only a small amount to the Namgyals as annual revenue derived from the people of the borders on account of grazing tax.\footnote{36} Apart from paying pasturage tax the drokpas were required to work in the private estates of Sikkim Chogyal at Chumbi for four days in a year.\footnote{37} However the migrant Tibetans were asked to pay it in the form of ghew. The herdsmen from Sikkim moving to Chumbi paid their taxes in ghew and churpi to the ruler during the latter’s stay at Chumbi itself.

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

**Income from Darjeeling rent:**

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

\footnotesize{35. Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet*, op. cit., pp. 59-60
36. Ibid. p. 68
38. As informed by D. K. Rai, Age—56, OSD, Land Revenue and Disaster Management Department, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok, on 20th February, 2012}
1846 the sum was increased to Rs. 6000 per year.\textsuperscript{39} The grant was stopped in 1850 as a punishment to Sikkim due to the imprisonment of two British officers by the officials of Sikkim at Sikkim-Tibet borders. In 1862 the payment of Darjeeling rent was renewed and was increased to Rs. 9000 per year, and in 1873 it was further increased to Rs. 12000 per year.\textsuperscript{40} The rent from Darjeeling was a great income to the Namgyals since 1841. Thutob Namgyal was so depressed when the British stopped the payment in 1886 due to his failure to reconcile the Tibetans for a trade mission to Tibet and was so much impoverished that he was unable to manage his household affairs.\textsuperscript{41} The administration of Sikkim was brought under direct control of British and the annual rent of Rs. 12000 was withheld and was paid to the Political Officer on account of his salary.\textsuperscript{42} The Maharaja was paid Rs. 500 per month for his maintenance.\textsuperscript{43}

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

\textsuperscript{39} C. U. Aitchison, \textit{A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries, Volume II}, Calcutta, 1909, p. 312

\textsuperscript{40} H. H. Risley, \textit{The Gazetteer of Sikkim}, Calcutta, 1894, p. 22

\textsuperscript{41} Thutob Namgyal, \textit{op. cit.} p. 96

\textsuperscript{42} C. U. Aitchison, \textit{op. cit.} p. 317

\textsuperscript{43} Thutob Namgyal, \textit{op. cit.} p. 104

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 64-66
Rs. 46000 annually in cash and kind.\textsuperscript{45} The revenues from the plains were lost when British Government of India confiscated Morung and plains in 1850 due to the ill treatment meted out to Dr. Campbell and Dr. Hooker by the \textit{dewan} of Sikkim during their visit to Sikkim.\textsuperscript{46}

**Land Revenue system under Monastic Lands:**

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

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

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Ibid}.  
\textsuperscript{46} Sir Richard Temple, \textit{op. cit.} p. 169  
\textsuperscript{47} As informed by D. K. Rai, \textit{op. cit.}.  
\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Report of the Committee on Land Reforms, op. cit.}, p. 22  
\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the Year 1914-1915}, p. 2
conditions. The dutchi was to collect dues from them and kept the records of the revenue thus collected.

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

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

50. Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the Year 1925-1926, p. 4
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid. p. 27
54. Ibid.
cultivators to increase the productivity of the land they cultivated. The contractors and the middlemen preferred to grant lands on *kut* rather than *adhia*. If any of the *raiti* assured to pay more *kut* than the previous *kutdar*, then the *kut* was settled with the new *kutdar*. Thus this uncertainty over land haunted the minds of the *raitis* of Sikkim.\(^{54}\)

**Agriculture:**

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

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

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\(^{54}\) *Ibid*. p. 23

\(^{55}\) L. S. S. O’Malley, *Darjeeling District Gazetteers*, Calcutta, 1907, p. 65
spade called *jama* brought from Tibet and large clods were broken with hoes made up of oaks. The crops like buckwheat, barley and wheat were grown in the *lek* lands and mustard, rice and maize were grown in the *awal* lands. Rice were sown however it was not irrigated owing to the dampness of the climate.\(^{56}\)

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

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

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\(^{57}\) L. S. S. O’Malley, *op. cit.*, p. 44
\(^{58}\) H. H. Risley, *op. cit.* p.76
husking was done by each house as required and was carried out in primitive manner.\textsuperscript{59} The Nepalese taught the art of threshing by erecting a pole and let the cattle go round it.

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

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

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., p. 74
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., pp. 74-75
vessel along with hot water and was sipped with the help of bamboo straw or *pipsing*. It was also crushed with hot water in a vessel and then strained with the help of a bamboo strainer called *chapani* and then the liquid was drunk. Due to its refreshing quality it was preferred mostly by the Sikkimese and also formed an important item of barter in Tibet. The crops were also grounded occasionally for making *chapattis* and consumed with tea. Barley and wheat were grown in small quantities and mustard was grown in the lowlands. The Sikkimese collected the barks and stem of plants and was boiled along with Tibetan brick tea and consumed after churning with butter. Tea was grown in small quantities on the slopes and its tender leaves were collected and dried in the sun. However, no systematic cultivation was resorted before the British occupation of Darjeeling.

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

**Cattle Rearing:**

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

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61. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 76
62. Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet, op. cit.*, pp. 32-33
63. J. C. White, *op. cit.* p. 296
did not move to highlands. The Nepalese _gothalas_ also did not move to high lands as they did not find enough pasturage for their cows.

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

Three kinds of cows viz. _ba-glang_ or Bhutia cow, _nam-thong_ or the Nepalese cow and _thang_ or plains cow were reared in Sikkim. The _ba-glang_ owned chiefly by the Bhutias and the Lepchas were considered to be the best breed in those days on

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64. H. H. Risley, _op. cit._, p. 76
65. Ibid.
66. Charles Bell, _People of Tibet, op. cit._, p. 25
67. H. H. Risley, _op. cit._, p. 78
account of the quality of milk fat and could be driven up to 14,000 feet for grazing. This was reared by the *beek drokpas* and later by Nepalese *gothalas*. As per the calculations of Risley, that in the late nineteenth century a cow of this breed could cost Rs. 30 to Rs. 45. *Nam-thong* was a smaller breed owned mostly by Nepalese and fetched Rs. 15 to Rs. 25. *Thang* was the cattle of the plains and was considered of a low quality fetched only Rs. 12 to Rs. 15 each.  

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

**Trade and Commerce:**

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

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69. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 78
which formed a good item of barter.\textsuperscript{70} They used to go in a group during summer when
the snow melted and bought salt for a year and came back before the onset of rains.
With the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty the people of Sikkim started having
close interaction with Tibet. The Namgyal rulers went to Chumbi in summer in order to
avoid summer heat in Sikkim; along with them moved the herdsmen called the \textit{drokpas},
the \textit{lamas} and other officials, the traders. These \textit{lamas} and the officials used to take
articles like rice, butter, grains and fruits with them to pay tributes to the Namgyal ruler
and also to exchange these with their necessary articles.\textsuperscript{71} They exchanged their articles
for yak tails, gold dust, salt, wool and blankets and took them up to the plains in winter.
J. D Hooker says, “From Tibet these items were brought on yaks and from Sikkim to the
plains it was carried on men’s back.”\textsuperscript{72} Other items of import by these traders consisted
of gold and silver in lesser quantity. Yak tails and ponies were brought and sold in the
borders of Nepal and Bhutan.\textsuperscript{73} The \textit{lamas} and the officials had a number of \textit{drokpas}
under them and they virtually started monopolizing trade activities between Sikkim and
Tibet. They stored items such as rice, dyes called \textit{manjeet}, oranges and cotton from the
plains and moved to Tibet. The ordinary \textit{drokpas} went to Tibet along with their herds of
yaks and sheep during summer and came down to Sikkim before winter started.\textsuperscript{74} They
had their own sheds in the hills who took rest there on their way up and down. They
moved along with their families. The ordinary \textit{drokpas} used to carry their articles, salt,
tea and woolen blankets, on their pack animals and they exchanged with the Sikkimese
for food grains for their use while in Tibet during summer. The favourable month for
summer trade was from March to May and came down to Sikkim in September.\textsuperscript{75} With
these growing contacts of Sikkimese herdsmen with the Tibetan merchants a sort of
trade and commercial activities started in Sikkim during the early years of Namgyal rule.

\textsuperscript{70} Clements R. Markham, \textit{Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet and of the Journey of
Thomas Manning to Lhasa}, London, 1876, p.168
\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 402
\textsuperscript{73} Clements R. Markham, \textit{op. cit.}, p. cxix
\textsuperscript{74} Thutob Namgyal, \textit{op. cit.} p. 24
\textsuperscript{75} Charles Bell, \textit{The People of Tibet, op. cit.} p. 123
and these merchants went up to Lhasa. They took with them items like wooden planks, beans, rattans, ghev, churpi, munjeet, rice and some dyestuff. These items were exchanged with Tibetan rock salt, tea, woolen blankets, yak skins and tails and wool.\textsuperscript{76}

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

\textsuperscript{76} A. Campbell, \textit{Diary of a Journey Through Sikkim to the Frontier of Tibet}, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1840, p. 18
\textsuperscript{78} Clements R. Markham, \textit{op. cit.}, p. liv
\textsuperscript{79} Sarat Chandra Das, \textit{Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet}, Bibliotheca Himalayica, New Delhi, 1970 (reprint), p. 3
\textsuperscript{80} Clements R. Markham, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 316
From the north western borders of Sikkim the traders exported broadcloth, indigo, pearls, conch shells, spices, tobacco and cotton clothes which were procured from Bengal. A considerable amount of *argeli* plant for making paper was exported through this route. However the traders from Nepal exported readymade papers made from the barks of *argeli*, popularly known as *paharia kagaz*, the importance of this plant as an item of trade was gradually lost. It was conveyed into Tibet through Morung along the banks of Tambur River where Nepal government had established a trading mart called *golla* at Mai, where the Sikkimese exchanged rice and *tsampa* and other items brought from Bengal with salt, yak tails, wool, gold dust and blankets.  

The use of coins of Nepal was noticed in this area. Due to the absence of mint in Sikkim and Tibet the returns were made in small bulses of gold dust or the coins of the rulers of Nepal.

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

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84. Sarat Chandra Das, *op. cit.*, p. 8
85. Clements R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. xxvii
The other items brought to Sikkim from Tibet included musk and gold. Musk deer were found abundantly in Tibet and its supply was very large. Tibet was very rich in gold mines and most of the monasteries in Tibet were adorned with gold. They were found abundantly in the form of gold dust in river beds. Tibetans collected these and casted some rude ornaments and also exchanged with Sikkimese herdsmen who in turn exchanged with copper vessels with the Nepalese traders. These Nepalese traders came to lowlands of Sikkim along with their porters called bhariya during winters when these herdsmen of Sikkim returned from Tibet along with the items like gold and salt and exchanged copper and brass vessels. Sometimes the traders of Sikkim exchanged these vessels with yak tails and musk which was very profitable as these found ready a market in the plains and Nepal. The herdsmen from Sikkim went to Lhasa with murwa, maize and other food items in exchange with gold and salt. Some of them went to Tibet to work as porters and brought back Tibetan rock salt and gold. These porters sometimes worked under Tibetan herdsmen and Tibetans paid them in gold however, the amount paid to them is unknown. They bought salt from their wages and the gold were later sold in Sikkim and Nepal.

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

86. Sarat Chandra Das, op. cit, p. 66
87. Macaulay, Colman, Report of a Mission to Sikkim and the Tibetan Frontier, 1884, With a Memorandum on our Relations with Tibet, Calcutta, 1885, p. 82
88. The abundance of gold and salt in Tibet is supported by fact that during three days’ tiwar festival, the Nepalese belonging to the Hindus go around the villages and sing songs in praise of Lord Rama, the Hindu pantheon. This tradition is popularly known as dewsi in Nepali language. These people are granted some money and food stuffs by the owner of the house where these group play dewsi. At the end the singers offer blessings to the owner of the house as: “Lhasa ki suna Bhota ki nuna yehi gara bharun”, which means that, “Let this house be filled with the gold of Lhasa and the salt of Tibet.” During earlier periods the Nepalese referred to Tibet as Bhot. The other fact that supports the abundance of gold in Tibet is the popular proverb among the Nepalese, “Bhot ma sun cha kaun mero buchhai”, which means, “There is gold in Tibet however, my ear is without an ear ring.”
89. Mahakavi Laxmi Prasad Devkota, Muna Madan, Kathmandu, 1938, p. 2
their trade marts in Shigatse. Thus the traders of Sikkim started selling their items in cash as well in the form of barter and the value of these items were calculated in terms of Nepalese money. They sold murwa at Chumbi at the rate of six rupees per maund and bought salt which were later sold in the markets of Darjeeling. The rate of murwa at Gangtok was four rupees and eight annas per maund. The price of salt per maund at Chumbi is not available from any sources however it was sold at the rate of eight rupees per maund in Darjeeling in the 19th century. The Tibetans found salt a very convenient commodity to exchange for murwa, rice, dyes and other foodstuffs of Sikkim as the Tibetan government levied no duty of the former item. The people of Sikkim living on the borders also sold jerked meat of sheep in Tibet. They also sold sheep wool for the manufacture of carpets and rugs at Kamba in Tibet. Young lamb skins were sold in Shigatse by the Tibetans at the rate of four annas which were bought by Sikkimese for making linings of coats and trousers and was mostly used by rich merchants and officers both in Sikkim and Tibet.

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

90. Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet*, op. cit., p. 124
91. J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.* p. 32
92. Colman Macaulay, *op. cit.* p. 97
93. Sarat Chandra Das, *op. cit.* p. 67
94. *Ibid.* p. 159
imported from China and it was preferred by the people of Sikkim. It found a ready and profitable item of trade due to its universal consumption. Later, it was available in Darjeeling due to its large scale plantation by the British.\textsuperscript{95} The Darjeeling tea was cheaper as compared to Tibetan tea however, reason for the people of Sikkim to prefer Tibetan was due to the convenience of storage as the Tibetan tea was in the form of bricks and the other reason was that the Tibetan tea was lighter as compared to strong and loose tea of Darjeeling.

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

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{95} J. W. Edgar, \textit{op. cit.} p. 46
\item \textsuperscript{96} Clements R. Markham, \textit{op. cit.}, p. cxix
\item \textsuperscript{97} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 183
\item \textsuperscript{98} R. B Pemberton, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 243
\item \textsuperscript{99} Asley Eden, \textit{Political Missions to Bhutan}, Bibliotheca Himalayica, New Delhi, 1972 (reprint), P. 57
\item \textsuperscript{100} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 59
\item \textsuperscript{101} J. D. Hooker, \textit{Himalayan Journals}, Vol. I, op. cit. p. 74
\end{itemize}
Bhutias and Tibetans were afraid of the heat of the plains the trade was carried by their agents who were Nepalese and few people from the plains.

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

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

became bankers, moneylenders and cloth merchants and were shrewd men of business.\textsuperscript{104}

**Trade Routes to Tibet:**

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

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

\textsuperscript{104} Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet*, op. cit. p. 118
\textsuperscript{105} J. D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals, Vol. II*, op. cit., p. 278
\textsuperscript{106} Clements R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. 128
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., p. xxxvii
\textsuperscript{108} J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.* p. 35
was evidently done to avoid taxes imposed by the frontier officials of east and north Sikkim in form of salt. On the north-western border they had to pay a custom duty called *chua*, both in kind and cash in Tibetan *tanka* to the border officials of Nepal. Three *tanka* was equivalent to one Indian rupee. This was a great hit in the pockets of ordinary Sikkimese. They crossed Kanglanamo pass from Yuksom which was less frequented full of jungle. They used this route during April and November. However due to heavy snowfall it was difficult to cross over to Tibet. Due to heavy duty and the remoteness of northern and eastern pass the people of west side of Sikkim were compelled to pay a heavy amount for salt.

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

110. Sarat Chandra Das, *op. cit.*, p. 39
grazing and the grazing was poor in Phari and Gyantse.\textsuperscript{113} Besides these, porters were also engaged in carrying the loads.

**Mining and Coinage:**

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

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

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

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\textsuperscript{113} Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet, op. cit.*, p. 114-115
\textsuperscript{114} J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.* p. 75
\textsuperscript{115} *Family Papers Motichand Pradhan*
\end{flushright}
without any delay. Luchmidas and his brother Chandrabir Pradhan extracted some thousand mounds of copper at Turuk and Pacheykhani and the amount of copper extracted is unknown. From 1883 they became the minters of Sikkimese coins. The coins had handwritten endorsement of “Sri Sri Sri Sikkim Sarkar”. Being the first and the only minters of coins in Sikkim these two brothers were known as taksaris.

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

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

116. Ibid.
117. Appendix-C, p. xxxii
118. Family Papers of Chandrabir Pradhan
119. Family Papers of Motichand Pradhan
120. Ibid.
121. J. W. Edgar, op. cit. p. 75
caste from Nepal to Sikkim. This was the reason behind the closure of export of copper from Sikkim to Nepal.\textsuperscript{122} To prevent further emigration of the Magars and Kami caste, the government of Nepal put a ban on the import of Sikkim copper, besides restricting the entry of Sikkim coins. The emigration of these service castes to Sikkim caused great difficulties for similar works in Nepal. Thutob Namgyal granted the title of \textit{taksari} to Luchmidas Pradhan, Chadrabir Pradhan, Jitman Singh Pradhan, Mardhoj Gurung and Pratap Singh Chettri and brought the minting of coins to close.\textsuperscript{123} Later during British administration the mining business was granted to Messrs. Burn and Company, a Calcutta based company of London.\textsuperscript{124}

**Money Lending:**

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

\textsuperscript{122} H. H. Risley, \textit{op. cit.} p. 66  
\textsuperscript{123} Family Papers of Daya Prasad Pradhan  
\textsuperscript{124} Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the Year 1909-1910, p. 5  
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{126} Sarat Chandra Das, \textit{op. cit.} p. 85  
\textsuperscript{127} J. W. Edgar, \textit{op. cit.} p. 56
Later the direct British administration in Sikkim led to the development of Gangtok as a modern town and with this Gangtok saw the settlement of Marwaris and plainsmen. These Marwaris established themselves as bankers, money lenders, businessmen and shop keepers at Darjeeling and Kalimpong before they settled down at Gangtok. Earlier the people of Sikkim used to borrow money from these Marwaris at Darjeeling and Kalimpong at the rate up to twenty four percent per annum. These Marwaris who settled down in Sikkim carried their flourishing business in money lending. They also went to villages to lend money and to collect their biyaz or interests. They even held agricultural lands in villages which were probably acquired from the peasants on account of interest on debt. This gave birth to a system in Sikkim called dadani. It was a system or a means by which a cultivator used to borrow money from a money lender where the borrower, probably the cultivator sold the produce of any land belonging to him in consideration of cash or kind. The price or the quantity of the produce was prefixed. It was a system by which a cultivator was compelled to sell the product of his land below the market rate at the price fixed by the money lender. The money lending further gave birth to a system called masikata, by which a borrower mortgaged his fields to the creditor who enjoyed the produce of the field as an annual installment towards the repayment of loan.

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

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

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128. Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet*, op. cit. p. 118
129. *Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the Year 1912-1913*, p. 3
130. *Sikkim Darbar Gazetteer*, No. 6, Gangtok, dated 23rd September, 1966
131. *Notice No. 794-94/G*, Sikkim State, General Department, dated 13th May 1933
from Sikkim to Tibet. The first British trade mission to Tibet was sent by Warren Hastings in 1774 under George Bogle through Bhutan.\(^{132}\) It was the beginning of British commercial interest towards Tibet. However due to the reluctance showed by the Bhutanese *lamas* and officials to open the doors for Europeans the mission did not bring any desired results. They did not want to lose their profit by allowing entry to the foreigners.\(^{133}\) Earlier the trade between Tibet and Bengal was conducted through the passes of Bhutan where the Bhutanese officials themselves were the carriers of trade within their territories. Nepal on the other hand was not having good relations with Tibet.\(^{134}\) So the British government chose Sikkim as reliable ally in this new venture. In 1873 J. Ware Edgar was sent on a mission to Tibet for opening up of trade relations with British India via Sikkim.\(^{135}\) Edgar also had to face difficulties in the initial stage, the Sikkimese officials and the *lamas* objected his visit on the pretext that it would annoy Tibetan and Chinese governments. However, the reason was otherwise, the Sikkimese officials and *lamas* feared the loss of their profit and the Tibetans too had no concern for opening a new source. They also feared the entry of Christianity into their country and were satisfied with earlier route of trade between Patna and Tibet via Kathmandu. The fear of smallpox, a dreaded disease was another factor reason for their objection as they were ignorant of the proper treatment of this disease. Edgar was able to sort out these difficulties and came back from Tibet with valuable information on future trade prospects with Tibet and proposed the British Government to open up roads to Tibet through Sikkim.\(^{136}\) Another mission on trade with Tibet through Sikkim was sent by the British Government of India under Sir Richard Temple in 1875. The result of the mission of Sir Richard Temple was the opening of road from Darjeeling to Jeylep in 1877.\(^{137}\) In 1881, Sarat Chandra Das, Head Master of the Bhutia School at Darjeeling

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132. Clements R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. v
133. Ibid., p. 201
134. Ibid., p. 17
135. Ibid., p. 11
136. Letter of J. Ware Edgar to the Commissioner of Cooch Behar, dated 20th January, 1874
137. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.* p. vi
was deputed by the Government of India to establish friendly contacts with the *Panchen Lama* of Tashi Lunpo. The Minister of *Panchen Lama* showed his concern for the establishment of trade relations with British India.\(^{138}\) This was the beginning of British trade relations with Tibet through Sikkim.

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

\(^{138}\) *Macaulay’s Memorandum to the Government of India on British Relations with Tibet*, F. S. E., May 1885, no. 752
\(^{139}\) *Ibid.*
\(^{140}\) Colman Macaulay, *op. cit.* p. 105
\(^{141}\) C. U. Aitchison, *op. cit.* p. 317
\(^{142}\) *Ibid.*
\(^{143}\) *Ibid.* p. 333
through Sikkim. Sikkim’s position was strategic in the sense that the way from Sikkim to Tibet was the shortest.

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

**Table: 4.2**

**Exports from Sikkim to Darjeeling**

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

**Source:** compiled from Annual General Administration Reports of Darjeeling District (1886-1894)
Table: 4.3
Imports to Sikkim from Darjeeling

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

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

From the above tables it is noticed that there was a satisfactory increase both under exports and imports. Sikkim exported coal, cotton piece goods, pulses, copper and hides among which pulses showed an increasing trend. However imports in Sikkim were higher than what she exported. Demand for European cotton piece goods was very high. Demand for rice also increased and it was due to the settlement of large number of Nepalese population in Sikkim. Imports of tobacco increased due to its availability at Darjeeling and increase in its consumption. By far the imports of salt shows an increasing trend due to its availability in stores at Darjeeling and the people being relieved from its import from Tibet. The opening of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway
brought these items within a week from Calcutta so the people of Sikkim need not travel to Tibet for procuring them.

**Economy of Sikkim under British Administration:**

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

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

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

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144. J. C. White, *op. cit.* p. 28
146. *Ibid.* p. 294
commercialization of these products did not achieve expected success due to the non-availability of open markets. Due to the bad condition of routes and the absence of markets the cultivators had to travel long distances.\textsuperscript{147} Mr. J. C. White enhanced the revenue of Sikkim by bringing more lands into cultivation. For this purpose he encouraged immigration of people from Darjeeling and Nepal. More road connectivity were brought out and bridges were laid. A basis of taxation was established and revenue was raised. Gangtok developed into a modern market and the new capital of Sikkim.\textsuperscript{148}

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

\textsuperscript{147} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid. p. 26-27  
\textsuperscript{149} Thutob Namgyal, op. cit. p. 104-106  
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid., p. 141