CHAPTER III

SOCIETY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

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

1. Sarat Chandra Das, Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet, Bibliotheca Himalayica, New Delhi, 1970 (reprint) p. 63
2. H. H. Risley, Gazetteer of Sikkim, Calcutta, 1894, p. 27
society and social system was the result of the assimilation and adaptation to suit the need of the people.

**Composition of the society:**

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

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

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

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7. Ibid., p. 32
8. The Treaty of Lho-Men-Tsong-Sum, Appendix No. B (Part-I & III)
10. Appendix no. B (Part-III)
Limboos after Kasi (Benaras of India), which was the main centre of Hindu pilgrimage at that time; the section of Limbuwan who retained Buddhism as their religion claimed as Limboos tracing their origin in Tibet. Later on the Tsongs merged with the Limboos and all of them came to be known accordingly.

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

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

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11. H. H. Risley, op. cit., p. 27
to the Newar community of the Nepalese to work out minting and copper extraction in Sikkim. This community brought a number of workers and service castes such as Brahmins, Khsatriyas, barbers and artisan castes such as Kamis (smiths), Damais (tailors), and Sarkis (cloggers). The British occupation of Darjeeling in 1835 was an important factor leading to the migration of the Nepalese to Darjeeling and then to Sikkim. By far the greatest role in settling the Nepalese in Sikkim were played by the British Political Officer, Mr. J. C. White who encouraged their settlement in the name of bringing a large area under cultivation thereby raising the revenue of the state. Thus the Nepalese community outnumbered the already existing population and started influencing the society on religious and social fields.

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

**Social Stratification:**

**Chogyal:**

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

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

Kuchap:

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

15. Ibid. p. 61
16. Thutob Namgyal, op. cit. p. 48
17. Ibid. p. 49
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid. p. 27
expenditure were kept by the kuchap. He could grant lands to the monasteries with the order of chogyal. He was also responsible for the demarcation and grant of lands to the officials. Later in the 19th century kuchap also acted as an envoy or ambassador of the Sikkim ruler to the British at Darjeeling and came to be known as vakeel. His duty was same as earlier i.e. the grant of lands and keeping of records however, with the grant of Darjeeling they acted as the mediators and interpreters.

**Lamas:**

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

20. C. U. Aitchison, *op. cit*, p. 312
according to the rule of the state the *lamas* could trade and possess property. They held lands under their possession either by purchase or donated by proprietors and were not entitled to pay taxes of any kind. They were free to marry, held ranks and wealth, their marriages, however, were looked upon with disfavour. Influential *lamas* had large tracts of lands under their possession. One Cheeba *Lama* had lands under his possession measuring 49 sq. miles bordering Nepal in west Sikkim before the grant of Darjeeling to British. Those who lived with the court or with the officers were fed by the state while who lived in the *gonpas* supported themselves from rent free lands. The charity given by the ruler or the devotees were shared by them.

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

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Kalons and Dzongpons:

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

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

29. Sikkim – A Concise Chronicle, Gangtok, Royal Wedding Committee, 1963, p. 4
31. Sir Richard Temple, op. cit., p. 164
33. J. W. Edgar, op. cit., p. 62
“There are twelve kazis in Sikkim, and several other officers of various names exercise jurisdiction over specific tracts of lands. Each of these officers assesses the revenue payable by all the people settled on the lands within his jurisdiction.…”

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

34. Ibid., pp. 62-63
35. H. H. Risley, op. cit., p. 23
**Thikadars:**

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

**Tumyang or Tassa:**

In the villages the village headman was the supreme head. They were called *tumyang or tassa* and in the villages having mixed population they were selected mostly from among the Lepchas. The *tumyangs* and the *tassas* were the headmen of the villages of hills and of the plains respectively. Later with the coming of the British administration they came to be known as the *mondals*. In the early period of Namgyal rule a village in east and north Sikkim generally consisted of ten to twenty houses and in the west and south ranging from forty to fifty houses. The village headmen were in charge of villages, collected taxes from the crown lands and acted as middlemen.
between the *kalons* and *dzongpons* and later *kazis* and *thikadars*. They were responsible for allotting new lands to the cultivators in the name of the landlords and the ruler. It was their duty to provide workers and labourers for the state as well as the officials if needed. If an official desired to build a house in village for stay during his visit then the headman had to provide skilled labourers for its construction. Porters were to be provided for carrying loads and asked the villagers to serve them by turns, provide fodder to their mules in the form of grains. He was to inform the villagers that what sort of salutations should be offered during their visit. Sometimes the officials themselves come to villages to collect taxes and in such a case the headman had to keep the details of the revenue collected and to arrange porters for carrying loads to the district or to the capital. The village headman also dispensed justice and tried cases of both civil and criminal. He was assisted by a village *lama* in solving criminal cases and was generally referred to higher *kalons* and *dzongpons* to try them. The civil cases were solved by imposing fines and the amount collected was to be sent to the higher officials. The headmen lived in villages and depended on agricultural labour. Hence they also came under the category of cultivators however they had a good social position being the headmen of villages.

**Singpo:**

The majority of Sikkimese population consisted of the ordinary villagers of the cultivators who cultivated lands under their possession. They cultivated the lands of the *chogyal, kalons* and *dzongpons* being granted to them by the village headmen in the name of the state. The Bhutias and the Lepchas called them *singpo* or the people who work in fields and live in villages. Later with the settlement of the Nepalese they called them as *bustiwallas* and *raitis*. The Lepcha and the Limboo cultivators, since remote past, used to practice shifting cultivation and moved from a place to another in search of new soil for cultivation on regular basis. With the formation of the state and monasteries in different places of Sikkim, the Namgyal started settling some cultivators on particular
areas to cultivate there as the monasteries were maintained by the villagers themselves. The rulers and lamas of the monasteries depended on them for food and their agricultural and dairy products for performing religious rituals. The dependency of the state as well as the monasteries was responsible for coming up of some settled agricultural areas.

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

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

With the settlement of the Nepalese and later with the coming of the British singpos came to commonly referred as bustiwallas and later as raitis. However, a raiti was a cultivator possessing a landed property under his possession. The other categories
of cultivators, found during this time, were *adhiadars*, *kutdars* and *pakhurays*.\textsuperscript{43} *Adhiadar* was a cultivator settled in the lands of the landlords who was required to pay half of the produce to them on whose lands they had settled.\textsuperscript{44} A *raiti* could also grant lands to an *adhiadar* if he had a large extent of lands. However, a *raiti* could also become an *adhiadar* if he desired to cultivate the lands of the other landlords on the condition of dividing equal produce between them. The other group of cultivators was the *kutdar* who were settled on the crown and the lands of the officials on the condition of paying certain amount of produce per year.\textsuperscript{45} The cultivators also kept a number of workers to help them in cultivating activities imitating those of the landlords called *pakhurays*. They were fed by the cultivators, and sometimes, were granted a small portion of land ranging from two to three terraced plots and the produce of which was *pakhuray*’s personal property. These *pakhurays* worked for the *raitis* and the landlords as and when required. Sometimes the *raitis* were required to work for the village headman, or the officials and these *pakhurays* substituted the *raitis*.\textsuperscript{46}

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

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{43} Report of the Committee of Land Reforms, op. cit., pp. 13-14
\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid. These lands were leased out to the *thikadars* by the *Durbar* after British administration and the then *Durbar* consisted of the *Chogyal* and the Advisory Council with the British Political Officer.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Report of the Committee of Land Reforms, Government of Sikkim, Department of Land Revenue, January 1975, pp. 13-14
\item \textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the year 1912-1913, p. 1
\item \textsuperscript{48} Report of the Committee of Land Reforms, op. cit., p. 13
\item \textsuperscript{49} Sarat Chandra Das, op. cit., p. 184
\end{itemize}
Tibetan system, it seems, was transplanted by the Namgyal rulers in Sikkim and was made mandatory for the raitis. Later on, it was given a new term of jharlangi by the Nepalese. It became a common practice in Sikkim and later kazis and the thikadars frequently used the service of jharlangi by taking advantage of their position. The failure to attend jharlangi was punished with flogging. The reform in the social status of the common people was a great challenge to the British administrators in Sikkim.

Drokpas:

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

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

50. Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the year 1918-1919, p. 3
Jharlangi became a burdensome practice in the twentieth century that the people of Sikkim agitated against it. Finally this system was abolished by Tashi Namgyal.Appendix-B (Part-IX)
ghew and churpi, as revenue, to the ruler of Sikkim and to the government of Tibet in case of their movement in the latter country, through their respective dzongpons. In occasional cases they were liable to supply these items however it was not very heavy.

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

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

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

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52. Appendix no C, p. xxxiii
altitudes the herdsmen kept their cattle in their fields or nearby to the village and practiced cultivation, sold dairy and animal products or exchanged them for meeting their daily needs. The yak herders however could not move to the lower regions as yaks prefer cold climate and survives in snow. They moved down to villages along with yak skins, ropes made from yak’s hair, yak tails, churpi and Tibetan rock salt to exchange with grains and wooden tolung for churning ghew and tea and other commodities for their use during their movement to higher regions during summer.

Zimchungpas:

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

Birth and Death rituals:

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

53. Appendix-C, P. xxxiii
54. J. W. Edgar, op. cit., p. 104
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
and the birth of healthy child. In most of the cases child birth was assisted by a mid-wife called *sudeni*. After birth the umbilical cord and placenta called *sathi* was removed and the child was thoroughly washed. The *sathi* was put inside a bamboo pot and either hanged on a tree or buried. The mother and the child were kept in the kitchen to provide warmth till a month. The child was named on the third day in case of a girl and the boy child was named on the seventh day after birth. A drop of *murwa* was put into the mouth of the child by the elderly lady of the house or of the village and it was believed that the child was accepted in their society.\(^\text{57}\) The child’s name was chosen by their parents or by the elders of the society. Later with the entry of Buddhism they employed the *lamas* to ward off evil spirits and naming of the child with consultation of Buddhist horoscope.\(^\text{58}\) Among the Nepalese the shamans and their local faith healers performed the service. However the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and the Newars employed Hindu priests to name the child. The girl child was named on the seventh day after birth and eleven days in case of boy. The name was given after consulting a handbook having details of dates and the position of stars called *patro*.

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

\(^{57}\) As informed by Phur Tshering Lepcha, Age- 78, *ex-ndonal* of Marchak, East Sikkim, on 16\(^{\text{th}}\) March, 2011

\(^{58}\) Charles Bell, , *The People of Tibet, op. cit.*, p. 197

\(^{59}\) As informed by Phur Tshering Lepcha, *op. cit.*

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

61. Ibid., p. 185
62. Sarat Chandra Das, op. cit., p. 256
63. J. W. Edgar, op. cit. p. 57
64. Ibid. p. 58
occasions is sometimes enormous, in proportion to the means of the people; but there is a universal custom which somewhat lessens the burden. When a member of a family dies, all the relations, friends, and dependents, send presents to the survivors, as a help to the deceased on the journey to the other world; and of course all these offerings go to the Lamas.”

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

Marriage:

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

65. Ibid. p. 59
66. Administration Report, 1910-1911, p. 1
68. Ibid. p. 2
Among the Bhutias marriages were arranged by the parents by consulting the horoscopes of both boy and girl by the lamas. If it matched, the parents of both boy and the girl exchanged silk scarves called khada and fixed the date on which the bride would leave her home. On the day of marriage the groom was required to give presents to the family and the relatives in the form of ornaments and animals. After reaching the bride’s house the groom was to serve murwa, meal and rice which lasted for a month. With the passage of time a few changes took place in marriage customs among the Bhutias. After the horoscopes of bride and bridegroom were matched the latter had to give presents to the maternal uncle of the bride which included murwa, clothes, yak meat and khada. The serving of murwa was known as kha-chyong. After it was over the bridegroom had to work in the house of the bride for three years. Only after the period of probation finished the consent for final marriage was given. On the day of marriage he was to reach the bride’s house with the marriage procession called gyampu kyundae along with his parents, elders and the lamas. The bridegroom’s parents were required to provide rice, murwa and live bull for feast. The headmen of the village as well as the lamas were to be invited who witnessed the occasion and blessed the couple. The bride price was again to be paid in the form of rice, a milch cow with a calf and other presents. The Namgyals and the kalons used to give a number of presents and a plot of land to their daughters as marriage gifts. However, the lands of the princess were confiscated by the state after her death.

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

70. Charles Bell, The People of Tibet, op. cit., p. 181
71. Ibid., p. 185
73. Administration Report, 1912-1913, p. 3
The disputes regarding the children of the marriage were settled either by a comparison of the features of the child with those of its several fathers or left to the determination of the mother. It was generally practiced by the herdsmen and the cultivators of the two communities and later it was made permissible in Sikkim. The Namgyals too practiced such system once in an exceptional case on dispute over the throne. Thutob Namgyal and his half-brother Tinle Namgyal married one common wife in 1881 to claim the latter’s right of succession as it was a rule that only brothers from same parents could marry a common wife.

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

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

74. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.* p. 55  
75. Clements R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. 123  
76. C. U. Aitchison, *op. cit.* p. 316  
77. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* p. 82
wife was purchased by service rendered to the future father-in-law. According to the prevailing custom the father of the boy along with his maternal uncle asked for the hand of the girl and the decision of the maternal uncle of the girl was regarded final. After it was finalized the parents of the boy were required to pay two pots of *chang* or *murwa* called *bong-chh*. The groom was required to pay a live bull, pig and fowl as bride price and if he was unable to pay these he had to serve the bride’s parents for some years. When the service expired the marriage was confirmed. After this was over they could marry any time by eloping and the groom’s parents were required to report to the bride’s family and a date of formal marriage was fixed. On the prescribed day of marriage the groom was required to bring marriage procession along with the bride and his relatives to the bride’s house and was called and *bhri-da*. They had to pay bride price in the form of meat and were asked to pay a single yak or a bull to the bride’s family and ate together during the marriage ceremony.

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

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

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

80. As informed by Uday Chandra Basistha, Age- 73, retired officer of Education Department, Government of Sikkim, on 9th, October, 2012
81. Ibid.
Bhutias believed themselves to be a superior community among the Sikkimese and the other two as the superior castes of the Nepalese.

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

**Marriage by eloping:**

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

82. Ibid.
83. J. W. Edgar, op. cit. p 4
parents and if they agree the day for marriage was fixed by them after consulting the elders and relatives. Sometimes the girl’s parents disapproved such marriage however it depended on the representative to convince them by requesting to accept it. If it was inter-community marriage the girl’s parent imposed fines to the boy’s parents in the form of additional *murwa*, meat, live bull or a pig and ornaments more than what they usually asked in the case of marriage between their own communities. This was *jat-danda* or punishment for taking a girl by a different community. If the boy or a girl happened to be the relatives then the parents and elders tried to separate them and if they did not agree then they were banished from the society. They were socially boycotting and no one was allowed to meet and sit together with them. Even the children born out of them were looked upon with disfavour. Among the Nepalese Brahmins and Kshatriyas marriage by eloping was not approved and if the boy of these communities married a girl of other communities then the parents of the boy did not eat food prepared by the daughter-in-law belonging to another community.⁸⁴ In case of a girl marrying to the boy of another community they were happily accepted by the parents of the boy as they have found a daughter-in-law hailing from a higher caste than that of theirs. However, the parents of the girl had to perform *chandrayan* or declaring their daughter to have died by shaving their heads and offering donations to other Brahmins.³⁸⁵ However, if the boy of these communities married a girl belonging to Kamis, Damais and Sarkis belonging to lowest strata of Nepalese community then the parents of the boy had to perform *chandrayan*. The other communities were also asked by them not to drink water offered by such couple.

**Divorce:**

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

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

**Position of women:**

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

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86. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.* p. 53
87. Ibid. p. 54
88. *Administration Report, 1932-1934*, p. 2
89. *Administration Report, 1918-1919*, p. 5
90. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.* p. 38
relief. Some of the Sikkimese women became Buddhist nuns and lived in monasteries. However, they had no say in the administration and adopted such lifestyle for the attainment of salvation. Those who preferred to become nuns were also given a share of landed properties and in the event of their death it was granted to the gonpas to which she belonged. The lamas of that particular gonpa performed the death rituals of the nuns belonging to the royal family and those of officials. Among the common people too women were the owner of lands and other movable and immovable assets. They were the head of the family after the death of their husbands and were much respected.

**Food habit:**

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

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92. *Administration Report, 1918-1919*, p. 10
93. Clements R Markham, *op. cit.*, p. 86
the Nepalese. It was a large, flat and coarse grain, and often pink when cooked.\textsuperscript{95} It was eaten with boiled leaves of wild nettle. However, eating of rice in Sikkim was the privilege of the wealthy as the cost of its production was high and formed an important item of revenue and trade. The Nepalese lived in the lowlands and had better meal as compared with the people living in the highlands as they practiced both agriculture and cattle rearing. Their diet consisted of agricultural products mostly maize and rice. They also consumed \textit{tsampa} however the common name for it was \textit{saatu} and was made of wheat and maize flour. The Nepalese belonging to Brahmins and Kshatriyas were vegetarians.\textsuperscript{96} Almost all the people of Sikkim were fond of dairy and its products in the form of \textit{ghew} and \textit{churpi}.

**Tea and beverage:**

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

\begin{flushleft}
95.  J. D. Hooker, \textit{Himalayan Journals}, op. cit., p. 92
96.  Administration Report, 1918-1919, p. 10
97.  Ibid.
98.  Administration Report, 1930-1931, p. 15
\end{flushleft}
ganja also became popular in Sikkim after the British occupation of Darjeeling. These items were available in Darjeeling through stores. However, opium consumption was confined mostly among the kakis and the nobility.\textsuperscript{99} Altogether the foods consumed by the Sikimese were simple in nature.

**Dress:**

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

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.
with a long cloth called *patuki*. Sikkimese women were fond of ornaments which were made up conch shells, precious and semi-precious stones and animal bones. The women belonging to royal family and the *kazis* wore ornaments made of turquoises and rude gold.\(^{100}\) The common women preferably adorned themselves with the ornaments of animal bones, conch shells and bamboos.

**Health care:**

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

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100. Sir Richard Temple, *op. cit.* p. 197
101. Appendix-C, p. xxxi
shikari, masan and shi-hae. Shikari was the spirit forest which even caused death by vomiting blood. Masan was both spirits of rivers and forests causing headache and stomach pain. In both cases fowl and eggs were sacrificed and offered to the spirit. Shi-hae was said to be the cause of some minor diseases such as mild headache or pain in the body and eggs were offered to satisfy it. It was also believed to be the spirit of those who died of unnatural death. In such a case a black fowl had to be sacrificed and dhami called the spirit and let speak through him. The dhami later conveyed the message to the members of the family that what desires the spirit had before his death. After satisfying the spirit the dhami used to kill the shi-hae by chanting some hymns and offerings so that such death was not repeated in the family. Among the Nepalese such treatment of diseases was very elaborate. The dhami had a very different dress and beads of animal and human bones which he wore during performing oblations and sacrifices. It was called chinta and he danced around the altar and if needed in the courtyard and round the house, beating a drum made of animal skins and plates of bell metal. Such event was attended by the villagers to witness the prowess of the dhami and if the patient recovered then he was renowned as a powerful faith healer. Sometimes the faith healers were also said to be the carriers of evil spirits and sent to those houses causing harm to the members of that family. In such a case the patient hardly recovered if the same faith healer did not treat the patient.

The Buddhists performed certain puja or ceremonies in their houses and in the monasteries with the help of the lamas to ward off the evil spirits. They also believed in ghosts and called them dae, mon salang and aijo-ana and lamas were employed to ward them off. The lamas worshipped the images of these ghosts on a paper and after the ceremonies were over it was either burnt or buried. The other way was to make a figure with wheat or barley floor and kept on the pathway. Besides treating diseases with the help of shamans and the lamas, Tibetan medicine were also used in Sikkim.
under the guidance of Tibetan doctors or the *amji*. The Nepalese took the help of *baidang* who were experts in treating fractures of bones.

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

\(^{102}\) Sarat Chandra Das, *op. cit.*, p. 258
\(^{103}\) Ibid., p. 260
\(^{105}\) *Administration Report, 1910-1911*, p. 5
\(^{106}\) Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* p. 71
Crimes and punishments:

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

Religious beliefs and festivals:

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

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid. p. 49
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109} Clements R. Markham, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 327
\textsuperscript{110} J. W. Edgar, \textit{op. cit.} p. 62
happy and satisfied.\textsuperscript{111} Among the Lepchas the worship of mountains, lakes and forests were called *bon* and *mun* and were performed by the *bongthings* and the shamans called the *bijuas* and *bijuanis*. However they did not pay heed to the good spirits as they believed that it did no harm to them. To the bad spirits, they believed that they dwell in every rock, cave and mountains and to them they prayed because it would hurt them. The *bijuas* and *bijuanis* and *bongthings* were employed for prayers and invocations. The *zingchungpas* and the *chakereys* were supposed to be the carrier of evil spirits and were asked to work of fetching water, fuels and sweep the yards.\textsuperscript{112}

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

According to the tradition that during the creation of the universe a violent earthquake

\textsuperscript{111} Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* pp. 12-13
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid, p. 31
\textsuperscript{113} Uday Chandra Basista, *Sikkimka Chadparva, op. cit.*, p. 7
\textsuperscript{114} J. D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals, Vol. I*, p. 225
shook the world and several rivers were created which resulted in flooding of these rivers. In Sikkim too the Teesta and the Rangit rivers devastated their country and it was covered with water. In order to save themselves they climbed the Tendong hill which was untouched by the waters. After several days of prayers to their creator the flood subsided and their people remained safe. To show their respect and gratitude for being safe the Lepchas started to worship the Tendong hill by called it *Tendong-lo-rum faat.* It is noticed that the Buddhist form of worship was modified in Sikkim and the invocation of the spirits of woods, mountains and water did not form the part of their earlier worship. The *lamas* modified their practices to suit their requirements thereby formally recognizing the spiritual supremacy of Buddhist faith in Sikkim. The *lamas* acknowledged the worship of Kanchandzonga mountain by the Lepchas by recognizing it as a festival of the Buddhists thereby accelerating the process of the conversion of the Lepchas to a new faith. However they did not altogether leave their old practice and continued the worship of mountains, lakes and rivers in the modified form.

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

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115. Uday Chandra Basista, *Sikkimka Chadparva, op. cit.,* p. 50
116. J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.* p. 70
117. Sarat Chandra Das, *op. cit.,* p. 6
With the consecration of the Namgyals a number of gonpas were built for the propagation and conversion of the people towards Buddhism.\textsuperscript{119} The Bhutias and the ancestors of Namgyals had already adopted Buddhism under the patronage of Guru Padmasambhava in Tibet. Later with the patronage of the three lamas who installed Phuntsog Namgyal on the throne of Sikkim worked extensively for propagation of this faith. The Lepchas and a few Limboos adopted this faith and became Buddhists.\textsuperscript{120} The lamas performed the religious ceremonies and chanted hymns and prayers in the monasteries and were engaged in chasing evil spirits.\textsuperscript{121} The other religious festivals celebrated by the Bhutias and the Buddhists in Sikkim were Saga Dawa, Drukpa Tseshi, Lhabab Duchen and Kagyat. Saga Dawa was celebrated on the full moon day of the fifth month of Bhutia calendar in memory of Buddha’s birthday, his enlightenment and his parinirvana. The first sermon given by the Buddha to his disciples at Sarnath was celebrated in Sikkim by the Buddhists as Drukpa Tseshi. It falls on the fourth day of the sixth month according to the Bhutia calendar. During this day the Buddhists lighted butter lamps in their houses. On the twenty second day of ninth month of the Bhutia calendar Lhabab Duchen was celebrated in memory of return of Buddha from heaven after meeting his mother. During this day the lamas read holy books in the gonpas and worshipped Buddha. A religious dance was organized in the gonpas to impress eight kagyats or tantric deities and pray them to ward off evil spirits responsible for human sufferings.

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

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid. p. 19
\textsuperscript{120} J. W. Edgar, \textit{op. cit.} p. 70
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Family papers of late Nandalal Upadhaya Brahman}, possessed by his grandson Mr. Dharnidhar Khatiwada Brahman. Appendix B (Part-VII)
be traced in the early 1770s during the reign of Prithvi Narayan Shah of Nepal who had united his country under the banner of one ruler and one religion *i.e.*, Hinduism. During this period the borders of Sikkim touched Morung in the plains of Nepal and the unguarded frontiers of Sikkim in the west was the entry point of this religion in Sikkim. In the 18th century the frequent wars with Sikkim and Nepal led to the occupation of certain portion of Sikkim in the west. The Nepalese settled down as common people and were able to influence other people in these areas, religiously. These people were Hindus and influenced the Limboos and Magars of Sikkim who started worshipping the nature in the form of female Hindu pantheons namely, Durga, Devi and Chandi. These female deities were worshipped in the form of nature by erecting stones under a big tree, on a hill top, cave or a gorge. Long bamboo poles were erected tied with red, white and yellow clothes as flags. These poles and flags were changed every year during *Baisakhi purnima* or the full moon day of *Baisakha* month of Nepalese calendar. On this day the people of the village gathered on the particular place of worship and prayed together by offering milk, *ghew* and some of them sacrificed goats and chicken to the deity; and prayed for good harvest, to save them and their animals from natural calamities and for good progress. Among the Hindu male pantheons were Shiva was worshipped in the form of *lingas* or conical stones and as Mahadev, Mahakal and Kirateshwar. Stones were erected depicting this deity and were worshipped on *Shivaratri*. In the middle of the nineteenth century Laxmidas Pradhan, the Newar trader, built a Shiva temple at Rongli in East Sikkim, by bringing workers and bell metals from Nepal. Rama, the incarnation of Hindu pantheon Vishnu was worshipped and on the ninth day of Nepalese calendar of *Chaita* his birthday was celebrated as Ramnawami and *chaite dasai*. In the month of *Aswin* the Nepalese celebrated *bada dasai* as the killing of Ravana, the king of the devils or *rakshasas* of Hindu mythology by Rama. It was also celebrated as the victory of Hindu goddess Durga over Mahisasur, a devil. It was celebrated to enjoy victory of good over evil. When this month approached they cleaned their houses and painted with red and white mud. During this festival the elders bless
the young members of their families and younger relatives by putting tika or the rice moisten with curd on their forehead. Some of them even sacrificed goats and buffaloes to goddess Durga and asked for power. The return of Rama, the Hindu pantheon from fourteen years’ of exile was celebrated for three days as tihar during the month of Kartika of Nepalese calendar. The first day was of tihar the Nepalese women roamed in the villages in the night singing vailini and men enjoyed deusi i.e., songs in praise of lord Rama.

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

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

123. Albert Craig, *A Scot in Sikkim*, date and publication not mentioned, p. 6
124. Uday Chandra Basista, *Sikkimka Chadparva*, op. cit., p. 28
they stored grains and visited gonpas to witness religious dances performed by the lamas to ward off evil spirits and pray for good year ahead.\textsuperscript{125} The common Nepalese non religious festivals were \textit{magh sakranti}, \textit{asar pandhra}, \textit{sawney sakranti}. The Nepalese celebrated \textit{magh sakranti} on the first day of the tenth month of their calendar. On this day fairs called \textit{mela} were organized and people rejoiced by visiting these places. Yams of various kinds called \textit{tarul} were eaten by the people. During \textit{asar pandhra} the Nepalese celebrated the end of sowing rice during rainy season. They celebrated this day on the fifteenth day of the third Nepalese month of \textit{Asar} by eating beaten rice with curd to relieve them from the restless work. The first day of the fourth month of \textit{Sawan} was celebrated as \textit{sawney sakranti}. On this day firewood were thrown in their agricultural lands believing that it would keep them free from skin diseases.\textsuperscript{126}

\textbf{Recreation:}

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

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid. p. 58
\textsuperscript{127} The Sikkim Code, \textit{op. cit.} p. 20
\textsuperscript{128} Sarat Chandra Das, \textit{op. cit.} p. 1
\textsuperscript{129} H. H. Risley, \textit{op. cit.} p. 48
\end{flushleft}
Sikimese. Khopi, the common game of mere skills, was common among the Nepalese. The playing of dice and gambling was socially permitted during festivals.\textsuperscript{130}

Dances:

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

\textsuperscript{130} The Sikkim Code, \textit{op. cit.} pp. 5-13
\textsuperscript{131} Appendix-C, p. xxxi
\textsuperscript{132} Uday Chandra Basistha, \textit{Sikkimka Chadparva, op. cit.}, p. 28
\textsuperscript{133} As informed by Phur Tshering Lepcha, \textit{op. cit.}
feta. Dhan naach also known as ya-lak was mostly performed by the Limboos. Sangini was the common form of dance performed by the Nepalese Brahmin and Kshatriya women preferably when the young bride was about to leave her parents after the marriage ceremony at her house was over. Selo was performed by the Nepalese beating a small drum like instrument called damphu. The other common musical instruments used by the Sikkimese during festivals and dances were drums made of goat skins called chabrung and madal, a stringed instrument made up of bamboo called tungna, a violin like instrument with the strings made up of mule’s hair called sarangi, binayo and murchunga made up of bamboo sticks.

**Educational System under the Namgyals:**

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

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134. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* p. 19
135. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.* p. 11
136. *Sikkim – A Concise Chronicle*, *op. cit.* p. 4
language he invented alphabets for the Lepcha. Chagdor Namgyal became a progenitor of Buddhist learning in Sikkim.

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

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

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

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138. Ibid.
139. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 257
140. *Administration Report, 1933-1934*, p. 45
142. Ibid.
learnt to the interested devotees. Under this circumstance, only a few people received the education of ritualistic practices.\textsuperscript{143} This was the beginning of education in Sikkim.

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

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

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{143.} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 3
\textsuperscript{144.} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 1
\textsuperscript{145.} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 4
\textsuperscript{146.} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{147.} H. H. Risley, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 294
\end{flushright}
The boy was to be escorted by the tutor inside the hall where the monks were assembled. The tutor was required to state the parentage of the boy and other details and he had to ask the permission of elder monks to take the boy as a pupil. When it was approved by the Head lama the boy was taken a probationer.148

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

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

148. Ibid., p. 295
149. Ibid.
150. Ibid., p 297
151. Ibid.
young monk had to prepare feast for the monks and gifts in the form of flesh of pig and bulls were to be given to all *lamas*. The wealthy parents had to give presents to one hundred and eight *lamas* in cash. The poor parents were also required to give cash to these *lamas* however, the amount was subsequently lower. The young monk’s admission could not be confirmed if the presents in form of money and flesh were not made to the institution.\textsuperscript{152}

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

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

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., p. 298
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., p. 299
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid.
Monks were prescribed certain duties to perform. *Tormas* had to be prepared for offerings to gods and demons. He had to blow conch shells, copper trumpets and had liberty to opt himself as a teacher. He was then allowed to sit and recite the verses with his teachers making a row according to their position.\(^{156}\) The monks were required to take subjects like Tibetan astrology, medicine and painting but the majority of the new monks were content with the position of ordinary monk. To become a successful chaplain or family priest he had to recite by heart all the litanies and other sacerdotal ritual without consulting their books. After the completion of the course the monks were permitted to reside in their villages as village-priest for the convenience of people. They were to return to their parent monastery at definite intervals and monastery kept rolls of all its members and were punished if they remained absent for long periods.\(^{157}\)

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

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\(^{156}\) Appendix-C, p. xxxii
\(^{157}\) H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 302
\(^{158}\) J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.*, p. 59
\(^{160}\) *Ibid.*, p. 66
religious career when they grew older. The reason was they did not want to become priests as they were unable to follow or practice the strict discipline of the order.\textsuperscript{161}

**Composition of monastic institutions:**

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

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

**Monastic administration:**

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

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\textsuperscript{161} Charles Bell, \textit{The People of Tibet}, Delhi, First Indian Edition 1992, p. 201
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., pp. 215-216
\textsuperscript{164} As informed by Lama Dup Tshering, Age-72, \textit{Dorje Lopen} (Head Lama) of Old Rumtek Monastery, on 16\textsuperscript{th} February, 2011
an incarnation or *avatara* of earlier *kubgen lama*.\(^{165}\) He had the honour of anointing with holy water to the reigning ruler of Sikkim.\(^{166}\) The *dorje-lopen* upheld the dignity of religion by meditating and did not take part in secular matters.\(^{167}\) Next in the order was *um-dse* who was the Principal and Chief Celebrant and supervised the whole establishment of the monastery and controlled the discussions. He could rise to the position of the *dorje-lopen* and if the *dorje-lopen* did not retire or the post did not remain vacant then the office was held for life.\(^{168}\) However, *um-dse* was always more learned of the two and enjoyed almost equal rank with that of *dorje-lopen*. *Chor-tim-ba* was the next post which was tenable for one year and was the Provost Marshal and was appointed by the vote of the *tapa* or the group of learner *lamas* of the monastery. The office of *chor-tim-ba* required the qualities of pre-eminent learning, popularity, tact and the ability to enforce discipline and respect. He was the in-charge of library and to read out the *Cha-yig* constitution to the assembled monks. He was the recognized head of the monks and their spokesman and was appointed for one year and could be reappointed for more than one term. The next office was that of the *chi-nyer* who had the power to hear complaints from the *tapas* and communicated to the higher officers and was to communicate the order to the *tapas* after consultations. *Chi-nyer* was the Commissariat Manager for three years. After completing the stage of learner an *u-chho* was selected from *ku-nyer* and was the Head of Religion and for the laity he was *ya-pa* or the Reverend Father. The *u-chho* from Pemayangtse Monastery used to act as the family priest to the Sikkim *chogyal* for few years. The next post was that of *ku-nyer* and he was in-charge of image care-taker and additional charge of dusting and arranging the objects on the altar and making the offerings of water, lamps, sacred food and the removal of the same. He was promoted to that post after working as *chhab-dren* or pourer of holy water for one year. *Chab-dren* was the pourer of holy water who was promoted from

\(^{165}\) Sir Richard Temple, *op. cit.* p. 176  
\(^{166}\) H. H. Risley, *op. cit.* p. 258  
\(^{167}\) *Ibid.*, p. 304  
\(^{168}\) *Ibid.*, pp. 303-304
ordinary learner lamas after two to three years of learning. The lowest grade was that of the conch shell blower or the tapa and a tapa was an ordinary monk or the learner. However, the three posts namely the ku-nyer, chab-dren and tapa were regarded jointly as the learner stage. Almost all the lamas of Sikkim had to pass through the stage of a learner to attain higher post.

**Education under the British Administration:**

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

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

169. J. C. White, *op. cit.*, p. 95
170. *Administration Report*, 1908-1909
Christian Missionaries also played an important role in the development of modern English education in Sikkim. Vok mission school was the first Mission school in Sikkim which was established in 1881. Later the Scottish Universities Mission opened up schools in Sikkim along with their missionary activities. The schools were opened at Daramdin, Sadam, Temi, Pakyong, Chakung, Soreng, Dentam, Namthang, Rhenock, and a lace school at Vok. Scandinavian Missions opened up two schools at Mangan and Song. With the missionary activities modern education started in Sikkim which got support from the first British Political Officer. Weaving schools came up in north Sikkim and later a school for girls was opened by Mary Scott at Gangtok. It was possible for the Scottish Missionary, Mary Scott due to her cordial relation with the queen Yeshey Dolma.

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

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173. Administration Report, 1922-1923, p. 17
174. J. C. White, op. cit., p. 32
175. Charles Bell, op. cit., p. 204
176. Ibid., p. 205
Sikkim came to know the value of modern education which had a tremendous effect in the democratic movement that took place in Sikkim in the later years.