CHAPTER III
POLITICAL SYSTEM

Politically Menchuka (Baechakshiri) was a private estate of Tibetan aristocratic family called Lhalu. This family was considered to be one of the most powerful, respected and come under Yabshi group in Tibet. This family was regarded as the one who had credit for producing two reincarnations of the Dalai Lama and numerous reincarnated soul boys for Tibet. Their history begins with the reigning of eight Dalai Lama in Tibet (1762 A.D-1804 A.D). Sonam Dargye, father of the eight Dalai Lama was conferred dukedom and provided with estate by central government of Tibet. Their residence lies about one Kilometer North of Potala palace in Lasha (Tibet). This family continued their activities until 1832 A.D., and discontinued for failing to produce male heirs.

Trinley Gyatso became the reincarnation of the late eleven Dalai Lama in 1857 A.D. The Tibetan central government was exhausted by allotting estates to the families of frequently changing the Dalai Lamas as they did not have sufficient financial resources left to subsidize a new Yabshi family. As a result, the family of 12th Dalai Lama was moved into remnants of the Lhalu family. Thus in a broader sense we can presume that the Menchuka (Baechakshiri) was a private estate of the

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1 Kerstin Grothmann, op.cit., p. 128.
3 M.G. Chitkara, Buddhism, Reincarnation and Dalai Lamas of Tibet, APH Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 121-122.
5 M.G. Chitkara, op.cit., pp. 137-139.
twelve Dalai Lama family in the 19th century A.D. There was a tradition of giving estate to a rich and powerful family and the Lamas in Tibet.

Geographically Menchuka was under Tibetan authority until 1914 Shimla Conference. The period 1908-1910 A.D., witnessed extensive Chinese forward policy in Tibet and was posing a real threat to British interest in the Himalaya. However, the British government under Lord Minto and Lord Morley decided to continue the British non-involvement policy in Tibet. In November 1910 A.D., Lord Hasting and Lord Crewe became the new Viceroy and Secretary of state for India. Within a month of their holding the office, they began to reassess the non-involvement policy followed by their precedent. In March 1911 A.D., the Chinese began to move their troops forward into tribal area in Assam under informal British control and by August 1911 A.D., they had established a Chinese garrison at Chikang near Rima. In the same year Noel Williamson, the British Political officer at Sadiya was murdered by Adi tribe during an expedition. The Chinese forward policy and murder of Political Officer ignited the fuelling public speculation among the British about the Chinese involvement in the incident. This new development of Chinese interference in the frontier area soon began to convince Lord Harding to worry.

Further, in December 1911 A.D., the British came to know about the Dalai Lama’s devotion towards Russia, the suspicion intensified by the intelligence report of the meeting between the Dalai Lama and Aghvam Dorjiev in June 1912 A.D.

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9 Ibid., pp. 42-64.
10 Nikolai S. Kuleshov, Russia’s Tibet File: The Unknown Pages in the History of Tibet’s Independence, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 1-10.
The report further deteriorated Anglo-Russia relation in connection with Afghanistan and the Tibetan interest. In order to solve the problem permanently the British came to a decision of concluding a treaty, which would settle the status of Tibet under international law and lead to the development of idea for the Shimla Accord.\(^{11}\)

In 1913, British sent a message convening representative from Tibet and China to participate in a conference at Shimla (India) to discuss the issue of Tibet. The Tibetan authority readily accepted the proposal. The Chinese on the other hand disinclined to accept the proposal on an equal footing with the Tibetans. However, the changing political situation in China and Tibet forced the Chinese official to accept the proposal.\(^{12}\) In this conference, British India was represented by Sir Henry Mc Mahon and assisted by Charles Bell, the Dalai Lama, Prime Minister Lonchen Shatra Paljor Dorje, represented the Tibet and Ivan Chen represented the Chinese government. In this conference, Henry Mc Mahon introduced the plan of dividing Tibetan inhabited areas into “inner Tibet” and “outer Tibet” where the former one would enjoy autonomy and later would be under the Chinese government jurisdiction. In February 1914, Tibetan representative accepted the proposal but the Chinese representative was against it and started procrastination of the proposal. Meantime, the proposed boundary line between India-Tibet was secretly in negotiation between the representative of the British and Tibet privately in the absence of the Chinese representative. The main object of this negotiation was India’s North-Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA) and Tibet. The proposed demarcated boundary between Indo-Tibet frontier was fixed in March 1914. During the finalization of the boundary, the British Plenipotentiary assured the Tibetan Prime minister that the Tibetan ownership in private estates on the British side of the

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\(^{11}\) Wendy Palace, *op.cit.*, pp. 88-91.

frontier will not be disturbed. The sacred places of Tso Karpo and the Tsari Sarpa will be included in the Tibetan territory. Thus, from here the McMahon Line became visible on a map dividing the boundary of North-East India with Tibet.\(^\text{13}\)

The McMahon Line comprises a distance of 820 miles of which 640 miles is between India and Tibet. It begins from the tri-junction of Bhutan, Tibet and Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh and ends at the tri-junction of India, Burma (Myanmar) and Tibet boundaries near the Diphuk or Talik pass.\(^\text{14}\) The conference met for six sessions over the next six month, by April 1914, Henry McMahon was forced to capitulate failure to reach any agreement. As a result, negotiation failed due to clash of interest between China and Tibet. Gradually the Chinese official withdrew from the convention on 3\(^{rd}\) July 1914 and proceeded to Calcutta en route to China. In the absence of Chinese representative, the British and Tibetan representative signed the agreement.\(^\text{15}\)

British almost forgot the McMahon Line until 1935, when various British explorers visited the area bordering McMahon Line. The reports of the exploring team troubled the Indian Government about the actual frontier boundary between the Tibet and North Eastern Frontier Agency of India.\(^\text{16}\) Under the Government of India Act of 1935, a special provision for the administration of North Eastern Frontier Agency upto international boundary was classified as excluded area and brought it

\(^{13}\) Ibid., pp. 133-134.
\(^{15}\) Wendy Palace, op.cit., p. 102.
\(^{16}\) “The McMahon line alignment from the west of Siyom basin to the Bhutanese border, the British by 1914 had no detailed geographical information and run through the information provided by Bailey and Morshead on their return to India in late 1913. The information was prepared entirely from the Tibetan side, and there were section of the McMahon alignment, which these two travelers did not see. The region where the Subansiri approached the McMahon alignment was virtually a blank on the map, and up to the end of Second World War no British officer has made his way up the Subansiri-Tsari region.” For more detail see Alastair Lamb, The China-India Border, The origins of the Disputed Boundaries, Oxford University Press, London, 1964, p. 141.
under the charge of the Governor of Assam. However due to high terrain and heavy mountain it was impossible for the administrative machinery to reach the far-flung border areas. Due to which most of the area of NEFA were unaware of the Indian government.

Based on the demarcation agreed on Shimla Convention in 1914, a small British troops led by Captain G. Lightfoot was sent to Tawang in 1938. The Captain was given the task of informing the monastery that Tawang was now an Indian territory. The message was sent to Tibet about the British activity in Tawang. The Tibet government protested and its authority was restored. The opposition of Tibet in Tawang further stopped the British policy of final demarcation of McMahon Line in Northeastern Frontier Agency. Thus, even after the 1914 Shimla Accord agreement, most of the area, which was under Tibet’s control of McMahon Line, remained under the Tibetan authority. Pachakshiri (Menchuka) was a private Tibetan State whose residents paid revenue through Gaza Deb continued as private estate of Lhalu family of Tibet. It was only in 1951-1952 when extensive tour was undertaken by the Indian government to reconnaissance the northwestern part of the West Siang and Upper Siang districts of Arunachal Pradesh and to establish administrative centers. The Menchuka administrative center was set up in 1951 and U. Hiphson Roy became first Assistant Political Officer of the centre.17

The Administration

The Lhalu Family in Lasha controlled the administration of Menchuka through the official called Deb (Kongik) from Gaza province in Tibet. The Gaza Deb further appointed Deb from Menchuka as his representative to look after the

administration of Menchuka. The *Chim* (village head) further assisted the Menchuka *Deb*.

**Deb System**

The Menchuka *Deb*, appointed by a higher authority from Tibet was responsible for overall administrative function from maintaining law and order, as the chief judge and as revenue officer on behalf of the *Gaza Deb* and *Lhalu* family. Before the appointment of Menchuka *Deb*, *Gaza Deb* would conduct thorough investigation of all the qualities of any one whom he considered deem fit for the post. A *Deb* was appointed from the person who has knowledge of all conventions, be quick in composition and have good handwriting. He should be able to read document and order. He should not corrupt the uncorrupted people of Menchuka. The required age qualification for the post was sixteen years. The qualified person was asked to attain the court of *Gaza Deb*, where he was given an official appointment letter for the post of Menchuka *Deb*. During his visit, the person also carries various items such as butter, animal fur and other edible item as a present for the *Gaza Deb*. Some of the Memba people said to have taken the post of Menchuka *Deb* by bribing the *Gaza Deb*. When new *Deb* arrives in Menchuka, a grand official ceremony of oath taking was organized in an open field called *Deching-Pang* located in Deching-Tang village. During ceremony, the official appointment letter was readout to the public as the new *Deb* took oath and flag hoisting followed by an

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18 Tashi Pilley, *op.cit.*, informed that he was appointed as Menchuka Deb at the age of sixteen years.

19 “*Deb* Ada Goiba and *Deb* Dape Sarjo alleged to have paid huge amount of material and money to get the post of Menchuka *Deb*. The bribe paid was in the form of three bags of Ghee and Butter, one fur of tiger, fur of bear, and fur of dear and Tibetan coins as money”. Informed by Tashi Pilley. *op.cit.*
During the celebration, various games were organized, where people from all walks participated. During this ceremony the handing and taking process was followed between the outgoing Deb and the newly appointed Deb. The Plate XVI, is a manuscript record of one such handing taking exchange between Deb Pema Philley and his successor Deb Tashi Onju Sona. The manuscript is a detailed account of the Deb handing over of the property to succeeding Deb. The translation of manuscript reveals that.

During handing taking ceremony one golden statue of God, two wooden bowl called pang-tang having metallic design, one golden statue of Guru Padmasambhava, one Tantra book called Songdue with some page missing, one hand mane, one prayer flag called Sangdhar, three bowl called Tsan-Phur of good quality and seven bowl of poor quality, one amulets called Ga-hu, twenty-one number of Jug called Nyong-ma of good quality and one number of poor quality, one number of bowl called Ting or Rag-ag used as water serving bowl to God, two large brass bucket in good condition and two in poor condition, two number of brass bowl used for serving God in poor condition, one brass Jug, one set of bow and arrow, one number of wooden kettle used for serving tea, one number of wooden kettle used for serving alcohol, one Tibetan gun, one arrow carrier having decoration and one number without decoration, three numbers of Iron weight used for measurement, one small iron tools used for separating reddish bark, one instrument used for weight measurement, one instrument for measuring large weight, one wooden bowl used for measurement of product, one carpet, one large carpet, one iron instrument decorated with silver used as lighter, one axe, one soldier helmet, two number of sickle, a three pointed head spade, one hammer, various size of iron instrument used for making design in wood, one iron utensil used for cooking, one furrow, four number of spear, one locker with key, one set of drum, one Tibetan bell, one large brass pot used for storing water, one small brass pot having crack in its opening, one wooden saw, one hundred thirty four kilogram millet, four hundred kilogram of powdered millet, one cow with calf, one two years old cow, one six years old cow, three numbers of silver coin, six number of each male and female sheep, two number of hare and two numbers of hen was handed over to newly appointed Deb.

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20 See Plate XV. It is a record of anthem song of Memba. All The vernacular document used in this research work has been collected from the possession of Tashi Philley, op.cit., and translated with the help of Phurba Tsering Naksang, op.cit.

21 See Plate XVI.
Literally, the post of Menchuka *Deb* was appointed for a period of three years. However, there was a case, where the person holding the said post continued to hold the position for more than three years. Until 1952 A.D. Menchuka had been administrated by twenty-three numbers of *Deb* (see table no. 3a).\(^{22}\) From among them, four of the *Debs* were Tibetans and nineteen were from Memba. As per information available, the system of *Deb* was introduced in Menchuka in the year 1866 A.D., it is believed that the area was temporarily under the administrative control of *Lamas* of Menchuka.\(^{23}\) The first *Deb* of Menchuka was *Deb* Balu, a Tibetan. The Memba were appointed to the post of *Deb* began in the year 1872, when Kunsang Philley was appointed as Third *Deb* of Menchuka. Later the six generations of Kunsang Philley had served as Menchuka *Deb*.\(^{24}\) The longest serving *Deb* among Tibetan in Menchuka was Soka *Deb* Tomden, who held the post for seven years (1887-1893 A.D.) and among the Memba was Choising Philley, who held the post for eighteen years (1925-1945 A.D.). This reflected in an official letter sent from Gaza *Deb* for the people of Menchuka for the appointment of Choising Philley. The English equivalent of plate reveals that:

*The People of Baechakshiri should hear that Choising family from many generations had rendered their services with dedication for Lasha authority. He is given further appointment as Menchuka Deb to look towards the administrative of Baechakshiri for the welfare of the people. The authority had conducted a meeting at Gaza, where various past activity of Baechakahiri has been scrutinised and discussed. Based on discussion some new law has been formulated and people of Baechakshiri are ordered to follow the rule.*

*October month of Earth-Dragon year (1928),  Seal of Gaza Deb.*\(^{25}\)

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\(^{22}\) The information has been collected and finalized after interviewing Pema Chukla, *op.cit.*, Phurpa Naksang, *op.cit.*, and Tashi Philley, *op.cit.*, interviewed on 22\(^{nd}\) to 25\(^{th}\) October 2014.

\(^{23}\) Tashi Philley, *op.cit.*, date 26-10-2014.

\(^{24}\) “Kunsang Philley, Oju Philley, Resang Philley, Pema Philley, Choising Philley and Tashi Philley are from same family lineage who had served as Menchuka *Deb.*” *Ibid.*

\(^{25}\) See Plate XXXII.
The role of Deb was to maintain law and order in Menchuka. He had to protect the Memba from the neighboring invasion if required. All the Memba people of Menchuka were bound to aid Deb, when required for safeguarding the peace and order and apprehending offenders. If any members of the community fail to do so then Deb was empowered to impose fine in the form of cash or kind. He was empowered to try any case involving any offenders as per the customary law and law provided by Tibetan authority in which the person accused was a resident of Menchuka. Any cases which could not be settled under him was referred to Gaza Deb and then to the Lasha authority. But the most important role of Menchuka Deb was to collect revenue from Memba on behalf of the Gaza Deb. Once in every year Menchuka Deb along with the potters visit Gaza to deposit the collected revenue. Gaza Deb receives it on behalf of Lhalu aristocratic family of Lasha. In lieu of his service, Menchuka Deb was provided with salary in form of kind or cash. Certain amount of material and money collected during the revenue collections were used for salary by Menchuka Deb to pay himself and his subordinate staff. The higher authority also knows everything about Menchuka indirectly through regular report made to them by Menchuka Deb.

The Menchuka Deb was also provided with one personal secretary called Dung-yek and one personal bodyguard called Gozo-Karma. The appointed Dung-yek must be a learned one who could read and write. He shall be knowledgeable about the qualities of all the items, differences in each of the products and from where it came while receiving revenue from the people. He shall know how to store each item, any losses that may occur during storage and the means of preventing deterioration during storage. The main role of Dung-yek was to maintain proper record of the day today activities of the Menchuka Deb. On the other hand to be a
The criteria of being educated was not required. He wears the Tibetan soldier dress and carries a sword and a Tibetan gun. The role of Gozo-Karma was to protect the Menchuka Deb. Both Dung-yek and Gozo-Karma escort Menchuka Deb in his tour. The Menchuka Deb had to give detail information of the happenings of Menchuka to Gaza Deb.26

Besides appointing Dung-yek and Gozo-karma, he also appointed one representative from each village under his administrative control called Chim, to assist him in proper administration of the area.

**Chim System:** Menchuka Deb directly elected the Chim from every village. The Chim literally means a village head, who under the power conferred upon him by the Menchuka Deb, an influential person in the community. Before the appointment of a particular person in the post of Chim, a proper investigation was carried out to find the qualified person. In most cases, Menchuka Deb selected the elderly person who was well respected by their concerned village people.

Menchuka had four numbers of Chims representing the four villages, of Lha-Lung, Dezing-tang, Menchuka and Galling. The last known Chim of these four villages were Khandu Dorsom, Pema Ganjen Naksang, Peje Sarjo and Dawa Tsering Sona respectively. The period for holding the post of Chim was not determined and once who held the post continued till he was physically active. The appointed Chim in any case was not allowed to disobey the command of the Deb and should not indulge in any unwanted activities in the village.

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26 Tashi Philley, *op.cit.*
The role of Chim was somewhat similar to today’s Gaon Burrah (G.B) system of Arunachal Pradesh. The Chim played the most important role in village level functionary. They were responsible for maintaining the law and order related duties in the village. Chims were the representative of the Deb in the village and were bounded by the Deb instruction issued from time to time.

The Chims were expected to maintain peace and order within their jurisdiction and discharge the duty of police in the village. The Chim were expected to watch and report any bad or suspicious character within his jurisdiction and apprehend any such person and deliver the offenders before Menchuka Deb. The Chim also played the most important role of revenue collection in their respective jurisdiction on behalf of Menchuka Deb.

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Table No. 3.1: Succession Chart of Menchuka Deb.

Deb Balu (1866-1868) → Deb Onju (1869-1871) → Deb Kunsang Philley (1872-1874)

Deb Resang Philley (1878-1880) ← Deb Oju Philley (1875-1877)

Deb Thinley Philley (1884-1886) → Soka Deb Tomden (1887-1893)

Deb Dorjee Mane (1898-1900) ← Deb Jola (1897) ← Deb Pedor Philley (1894-1896)

Deb Pedor Naksang (1901-1903) → Deb Pema Philley (1904-1906)

Deb Tacha Naksang (1910-1912) ← Deb Tashi Onju Sona (1907-1909)

Deb Lajung Sona (1913-1915) → Deb Lam Chukla (1916-1918)

Deb Dorjee Phinjo Sarjo (1922-1924) ← Deb Tashi Phinjo Naksang (1919-1921)

Deb Ada Goiba (1925-1927) → Deb Choisang Philley (1928-1945)

Deb Pemba Naksang (1949-1951) ← Deb Tashi Philley (1946-1948)

Sources: Field study.²⁹

²⁸ Deb Balu, Deb Onju, Soka Deb Tomden and Deb Jola are from Tibet.
²⁹ The chronological order and period of Deb has been fixed based on the information provided by Tashi Philley, op.cit.
Revenue

Until 1952 A.D., the Memba people had to pay revenue to the aristocratic Lhalu family of Lhasa in Tibet. The revenue was deposited to Chim of respective village. The revenue collected by the Chim was further deposited to the Menchuka Deb. The later calculated the revenue that had been collected and deposited it to Gaza Deb, who later deposited the collected revenue to the Lhalu family in Lasha. The Memba people for their stay at Menchuka Valley paid the revenue.

The revenue was paid in the form of cash or in kind once a year. The Memba had to pay three types of revenue; the first one was paid in the form of kind in the form of agricultural production, animal husbandry and gathering. Those who had agriculture land pay the revenue in the form of agriculture production, people who practiced animal husbandry paid the revenue through their product, and those who did not have sufficient agricultural land paid the revenue in the form of gathering from forest. Those who were active in trade and forest activity pay the revenue in the form of forest gathering and earnings from the trade. The craftsmen who were expert in the art of paper making paid their revenue in the form of paper that they produce.

The agriculture products that were paid as revenue are rice, millet and chilly. The gathered items paid as revenue were gyaba (animal fur), dengs (honey), cheghe (dye) and paper. A certain quantity of product was fixed as revenue for each family member (see table 4b), which they have to pay compulsory.

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30 Tashi Philley, op.cit.
31 Phurpa Dorsom, 88 years of age, Lha-Lhung Village, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, interviewed on 21-05-2015.
Table No. 3.2: List of revenue in kind paid by Memba to Tibetan authority.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL. No</th>
<th>Name of item</th>
<th>Kg per basket/container</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>20 Kg</td>
<td>1 no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Millet</td>
<td>20 Kg</td>
<td>1 no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Chilli</td>
<td>20 Kg</td>
<td>1 no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Dye</td>
<td>5 kg</td>
<td>20 no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Animal fur</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Honey</td>
<td>5 Kg</td>
<td>1 no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>5 kg</td>
<td>1 no.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Field study.32

The second type of revenue paid by a Memba was called Mebo, where a sum of money in the form of silver or copper coin weighting one gram per coin was given as a revenue. The amount of the money required to pay was based on number of persons in each household. In this system the value of revenue to be paid was one copper or silver coin per person. Therefore, a person with a large family had to bear heavy burden in order to fulfill the payment of revenue to the authority.

The third type of revenue was also paid in the form of kind. Only the residents of Lha-Lhung and Gallling village paid the third type of revenue. This revenue collected was used as salary for Menchuka Deb, Chim, Dung-yek and Gozo-karma. They conducted some short of assessment of the granted land, through which the quantity of revenue was fixed. The final assessment was properly recorded into the deed document. The English translation of one such document reveals that:

Local revenue collected from Lha-lhung and Gallling village, which is used as salary for Deb, Chim, Dung-yek, Gozo-karma and for organizing official meeting.

32 Ibid.
Deb receives Twenty Kilogram of millet from the resident who is holding highest agriculture land, fifteen Kilogram of millet from the residents holding medium agriculture land and ten kilogram of millet from the residents holding poor agriculture land.

Chim receives four Kilogram of millet from each resident as salary. Dungyek receives ten Kilogram of millet from every resident as salary. Gozo-karma receives ten Kilogram of millet from each resident as salary and for organization of any official meetings every resident had to give five Kilogram of millet.\textsuperscript{33}

However, those residents who were unable to pay the revenue to Chim were further reported to Menchuka Deb. Before taking of any action by the Deb, the resident was expected to pay the revenue. After the payment of the revenue, the Deb visited their house for inquiry, where they offered khada and chang to the Deb to symbolize their clearance of the revenue before the Chim. The translation of manuscript available concerning the system follows that:

\begin{quote}

Pema Khandu Sona and Choya Norbu Chombey have offered khada and chang as a symbol of their clearance of revenue.

Buchang Goiba and Dabo also presented khada and chang as a symbol of their clearance of revenue.

Drongme, one who lives in lower part of village and is relative of Phurpa Tsering Sona has also offered khada and chang as a symbol of their clearance of revenue.

Pema Lera Sona also presented khada and chang as a symbol of their clearance of revenue.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

The record of the above manuscript reveals that there was a proper system of record keeping of the revenue collected in Menchuka. The record of another

\textsuperscript{33} See Plate XVII.
\textsuperscript{34} See Plate XVIII, Lt. Pema kandu Sona was a grandfather of Kopu Sona (86 years), Lt. Choya Norbu Chombey was a grandfather of Mashang Norbu Chombey (67 years), Lt. Buchung Goiba was a grandfather of Dorjee Khandu Goiba (48 years) and Lt. Pema Lera Sona was a grandfather of Pema Norbu Sona. Informed by Tashi Philley, \textit{op.cit.}
manuscript gives strong support to this practice of record keeping by the Menchuka Deb. The English translation of manuscript follows:

_Tsering of Menchuka village did not pay the revenue. However, later it has been found that he had already paid the revenue. Dorjee Lera has paid the revenue, Taching has paid the revenue, Dorjee Phuntsok of Galling village did not pay revenue amounting two tumb (two coins), Yangchap did not pay the revenue, Thenga Bong has paid one tumb (one coin), Yeshi khung has paid two tumb (two coins)._35

There was also a strict rule in relation to revenue. It was compulsory for every person to pay the revenue. If anybody failed to do so, then he was asked to pay it along with the next year’s revenue. However, if anybody lapsed to pay the revenue for the second time, then Menchuka Deb had a right to arrest him. The arrested person then presented before the official called _kada_36 sent by Gaza Deb. The _kada_ then decided how much the amount would have been increased of the revenue in double quantity as penalty and in some cases the land right of the individual was ceased and given to another person who was capable of paying the revenue.

As result of such heavy burden of revenue with penalty, many persons run away from Menchuka to Tibet. Then Menchuka Deb and Gaza Deb sent message to Deb of that place for the immediate arrest of that person and to deliver back to them. Thus, there was no way for the person to abstain from the burden of paying revenue. Again, in order to make sure that he paid his revenue, the whole village were asked to pay the penalty for letting him to run away from the village. Thereby, making sure that the villagers would be vigilant and not be allowed them to flee for the second

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35 See Plate XIX.
36 “_Kada_ officer holds some short of Judge like power that hears case and gives verdict.” Informed by Tashi Philley, _op.cit._
One such incident, a Memba person escaped from Menchuka and settled in Tibet. However, in Tibet he committed the same offence and in order to abstaining to pay the revenue, returned to Menchuka to avoid the punishment. When Gaza Deb came to know about the person, a letter was sent to Menchuka Deb for immediate arrest of that person and to present him before them. But, later the person was rescued by Menchuka Deb on the request of relatives of the person. The incident occurred during the time of 21\textsuperscript{st} Deb Choisang Philley. The English translation of one of the manuscript of such information reveals that:

\begin{quote}
Doge Naksang escape from Lha-lhung village and took shelter in Shen village in Tibet. However, in few months, he came back to Lha-lhung village and the reason behind his return was due to his incapability to pay the revenue in Shen village. When Shen Choedak of Shen village came to know about it, he complains the matter before Gaza Deb. The Gaza Deb then ordered the Menchuka Deb Choisang Philley to present Doge Naksang and his wife before the court of Gaza Deb or to provide two slaves as penalty to Shen Choedak. But Deb Choisang Philley under his capability ecides to solve the case in Baechakshiri. As per decision, Deb Choisang Philley finalized to give only one slave and cash of five rupee (Goromonga) as penalty to Shen Choedak.

\begin{itemize}
\item 1\textsuperscript{st} Seal of Shen Choedak
\item 2\textsuperscript{nd} Seal of Deb Choisang Philley.
\end{itemize}
\end{quote}

The revenue was of so much importance for the Tibetan authority that, whenever there was a lapse in payment of revenue they sent a letter to Menchuka Deb for strict deposit of revenue at proper time. Since, Menchuka was the private estate of Lhalu aristocratic family, the income of the family solely depended on the revenue that was collected from Menchuka. The document of Plate XXI and Plate XXII give account of letter sent by Gaza Deb and the Lhalu aristocratic family from Lasha to Menchuka Deb enquiring about the revenue and ordering immediate

\begin{itemize}
\item 37 Tashi Philley, \textit{op.cit.}
\item 38 See Plate XX.
\end{itemize}
deposit of revenue. The English translation of correspondence letter between Gaza Deb to Menchuka Deb for Menchuka people spell out that:

During the previous year it came to notice that most of the people did not pay their revenue and many of revenue defaulters in order to abide it run away. Because of which revenue deposited here in Gaza is not up to the fixed quantity and amount. Hence, from now onwards it is for general information to the entire resident of Baechakshiri that from now onwards they are ordered to pay the revenue regularly. Moreover, if anybody failed to do so then strict action will be taken against the resident in the form of heavy fine and punishment.

Seal of Gaza Deb.\(^{39}\)

The other official letter sent by Lhalu aristocratic family from Lhasa to Menchuka Deb gives information of existence of confiscation of land by authority in case of revenue defaulter. The letter also gives us proof that Menchuka was under the control of Lhalu aristocratic family of Lhasa in Tibet. The English translation of Letter follows:

Baechakshiri Deb and his four Chim should read out this letter before the resident of Baechakshiri.

The revenue should be collected as per fixed by the higher authority and revenue collector is ordered not to collect more than the fixed revenue. The Deb is ordered not to drive away and confiscated the land of revenue defaulter. The residents of Baechakshiri are strictly ordered to pay the revenue regularly and follow the rule and regulation setup by the authority.

Date: 5\(^{th}\) January

Official seal of Lhalu family.\(^{40}\)

There was a great chance of committing corruption by the revenue collector while collecting revenue. In such case, the higher authority heavily dealt the mismanagement and corruption in the collection of revenue. They immediately removed accused person from the service. The administration directly arrested the

\(^{39}\) See Plate XXI.

\(^{40}\) See Plate XXII.
accused and sent to Lasha Court for execution. But in some cases if the accused person was financially well off, then he bribed the authority to escape the punishment. In one such case, a revenue collector from Gaza paid a hefty amount of bribe to higher authority to escape the trial. The deciphering document of such practice among the authorities reads:

*Date of the Incident Iron-Monkey year (1920 A.D.).*

*Seal of Gaza Deb.*

A revenue collector who was a relative of Phinzo Tsering of Gaza has committed mismanagement and corruption while collecting revenue. To escape the arrest and execution he escaped to Baechakshiri. Unfortunately, for him, Gaza Deb came to know about his hiding at Baechakshiri. Gaza Deb then wrote a letter to Baechikshiri Deb ordering him to arrest the person and bring him before his court. After receiving the message, Baechikshiri Deb immediately arrested the person and presented before the Gaza Deb. The accused then offered bribe to Gaza Deb to avoid execution before the Lasha Court. At the outset, he paid 80 Kilogram of fine quality wool of goat, 80 Kilogram of fine quality wool of sheep and one large brass metal bowl for storing water as penalty for his mismanagement. Next, in order to convince Gaza Deb, he gifted him one fine silk cloth of white colour, four tiger furs, one bear fur and a silver coin. The Gaza Deb accepted the offer and gave his commitment. An agreement was made with a statement that Gaza Deb would not further refer the case before the Lasha authority. If somehow the reference of incident reached before the Lasha Authority, then there will be a breach of an agreement and the accused person had to pay penalty of ten to fifteen gold coins.

*First seal is of accused revenue collector, second seal is of Wang-The as witness, third seal is of Sonam Dorjee and last one is the personal seal of Gaza Deb.*41

**Seal**

Seal was another important element in Membu political system. The seal was used for official approval or personal signature of a legal document, such as contract, official order and receipts, where the seal was stamped in the endnotes. The

41 See Plate XXXI.
custom of using seals most probably came to Menchuka from Tibet. In Menchuka where the literacy was not widespread among the common people, the use of seal was exigent whenever a document or letter had to be authenticated by the person who had it drawn up. Those who were literate used the same method for authentication. A deed of loan agreement made between the two persons as translation of the plate reads:

Passang of Menchuka Village has taken ten-Kilogram butter as loan from Dhada Choesang of Kongpo. Passang promised to return it within nine months. In addition, if he will not return the quantity of butter within the said period, then Dhada will complain it to Gaza Deb.

1st Seal of Passang

2nd Seal of Dhada Choesang.

The seal they used were made from metals such as copper, bronze, silver and most commonly used was iron. Some of the seals they used were made from animal horn and wood. Thus, the materials that they used for the seal naturally depended on the wealth of the owner. But unfortunately it is now difficult to find any such specimen of seals in Menchuka.

Every Memba officer, association and Memba family or individual of importance had a seal of its own for use in official documents. The seals contain the name of either the individual or name of the organization. The differences among the various seal can be seen from the size and shape of various seals used by Memba. While most of the individual used round shaped seals privately, but official and

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43 See Plate XXIII.
44 Tashi Philley, op.cit, & Tashi Naksang, op.cit.
45 The only specimen of seal available is under the procession of Rinpoche of Menchuka.
46 See Plate XIII & Plate XIV.
monastic seals were square shapes. The official seal, which were conferred by Lhalu aristocratic family on to various officers under their administration, were made of metal and round in shape. But, the size of the seal was larger than the round seal used by the common Memba.

At the top of the seal of Gaza Deb and Rinpoche of Menchuka bears, the sun and moon engraved above the script. These were the symbols widely used in Tibet. There was another design, which was seen in small shape seal. There above the script of the seal was composed of three dots symbolizing Buddha, Sangha and Dhamma. Besides symbolising religious importance, this symbol indicated the upper part of the seal to its user and helps them to correctly stamp the seal in a document or letter. It is very significant to note that, the Membas were always stamped in red or in a black colour ink. The official seal of Rinpoche of Menchuka was always stamped in red, and those of Lhalu aristocratic family in Lasha, Gaza Deb, Menchuka Deb and of common Memba were stamped in black colour.

Administration of Justice

The administration of justice in Memba society can be classified into two different categories, the law of state and the customary law. Buddhism being their religion, it had great influence in the legal system of the Memba as well. Interestingly, Memba though have their own script, they have no written laws. They had some traditional principles, customs and practices of the Tibet, which they brought along them during their migration to Menchuka. The case in Memba society is called denda.

\[47\text{ See Plate XIII.}\]
\[48\text{ See Plate XIV.}\]
\[49\text{ See Plate XIII.}\]
State Law

The law of state generally dealt with cases related to revenue and serious crimes such as murder, treason and arson. The case was heard before the official appointed by the higher authority. The state court again can be classified into three categories. The first one was the court of Menchuka Deb. The court convened in the house of Menchuka Deb or in the residence of the Chims. Here, only the minor cases related to revenue defaulter, thief and business deal was heard before the judge. The second was the District Court in Gaza. The matter before the Gaza court was presided over by Gaza Deb. The Gaza court undertook crimes related to murder and revenue defaulter. The matter before the Menchuka Deb and Gaza court were decided according to the rules of the area based on the tradition of the substantive customary law. If the cases could not be resolved then the matter was forwarded to higher or Supreme Court in Lhasa. The Lhasa court especially entertained the murder cases and review the cases sent by the higher authority.

The procedure of all the court was the same. It includes questioning of the parties, examining of the evidence, searching for factual consonance and factoring all the elements to determine correct punishment and compensation. Before giving any verdict of the crime, the latitude of the crime was measured by the court.\textsuperscript{50}

Customary Law

In order to avoid shame and disgrace in community the Memba adopted customary law as alternative to settle down the dispute outside the court. The customary law also helped to settle the dispute by less cost and time consuming. In the customary law, they tried to settle the case in family, community and at village

\textsuperscript{50} Tashi Philley, \textit{op.cit.}
level. The dispute arising within the family was decided among themselves by the head of the family or by friends or by a neighbor. The Memba believe that the household problem should not be exposed outside and tries to solve the problem as quick as possible to avoid ignominious feeling. At community level, the cases were settled in a village under the leadership of Chim or headmen. At village level, dispute between the various villages within Menchuka was settled under the leadership of Chims of all the villages. Under this level, the dispute of boundaries between the villages and unsettle dispute from the family and community were included. In the customary law the intermediaries played a vital role in solving the case. In both state and customary law system, the court expenses were typically beard by both the parties. Moreover, the roles of judge or intermediaries were not only confined in punishing the offenders but also one who tried to bring normalcy between the two parties.

Oath and Ordeals

When there is a problem in finding the factual consensus, occasionally the oath and ordeals are the traditional procedures, practiced to determine the truth of the case. Oath taking is used as a means where both the parties are willing to participate in the process to clear them from allegation. The Memba people often accept the outcome of the oath and ordeals. The Memba people are generally God fearing people and hence the whole idea of the process is backed by it. The system is also applicable for the witnesses. The oath and ordeal are taken in the presence of figure of God, elderly person and Lamas. This is taken by different methods.

The first method is of taking oath in the name of various Gods and its manifestation. They generally take oath in front of the prayer room in the house. In
many cases when both party compromise, they sign a document of understanding where the oath of Gods and wrathful deity is written in the agreement. The theory behind this practice is that if anyone was telling a lie then the God and wrathful deity in the coming future will curse him or her. In every hearing before the proceeding session, they ask both the offender and the accuser to take an oath in the name of Lord Buddha or Guru Padmasambhava.\(^5\)

A second method is called terih, where they allow iron metal in the form of axe or rod to heat in the fire until it becomes red hot. Then they ask the person accused or in conflict to put his or her hand in the hot iron. They practice this system with a belief that if the person is innocent then he or she will not get burnt by the hot iron. Otherwise, if he or she gets burnt injuries then the person will be declared as guilty and will be punished.\(^5\)

A third method is swearing by drinking raw blood of chicken. In this method a presence of monk is required. They generally use this method, when two or more groups agreed upon something and take an oath by drinking the blood. The idea behind this method is that if the individual or group was making a false oath then he will die of untoward incident in future. There is no particular time period for the expiration of the oath.\(^5\)

**Offences**

The violation of established customs in the community is considered an offence. The offences discussed here are of a socio-political and economic in nature.

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\(^5\) Lama Pema Chonga Kigar, *op.cit.*, date 19-3-2015.
\(^5\) Thinley Sona, *op.cit.*, date 29-10-2014.
\(^5\) Lama Pema Chonga Kigar, *op.cit.*
Murder

They consider the offence of murder as a rare event. In case such incident was committed then they used to arrest the culprit and bring him before Menchuka Deb. As a penalty all the villagers from where the offender belonged were made to deposit one silver coin each before Menchuka Deb. The penalty was taken from the villagers because of their inability to stop the person from committing the offence. From the collection of penalty, the sixty numbers of silver coins are kept for Gaza Deb and rest of the balance silver coin was given to the family member of the murdered person. The accused person was then taken to district court in Gaza, where Gaza Deb hears the case and gives his judgment accordingly. The accused person was punished with hundred whippings with heavy compensation to be paid to the family of murdered person. The accused was kept in jail until his or her family member pays the compensation money. If the family of the convicted or affected person thinks that the judgment given is not in their favour then they have the option to appeal in higher court in Lhasa.\textsuperscript{54}

Theft

Any type of stealing is considered to be an act of theft. They considered it as serious crime in the society. The case related to theft is called Kuma Denda.\textsuperscript{55} There used to be a constant case of stealing of domesticated animals in Menchuka. The theft case was usually brought before Chims and Menchuka Deb. In some cases, the help of elderly member of the community as intermediary was taken to solve the case. In this case, the accused had to compensate twice the value of what he or she

\textsuperscript{54} Tashi Philley, \textit{op.cit.}

\textsuperscript{55} Thinley Sona, \textit{op.cit.}
stole. If the accused was not in a position to compensate same stolen thing then the accused was ordered to pay double the value amount of what he or she had stolen as compensation.

**Defamation**

In Memba society if unwanted slander statement was made against anybody that tends to hurt a person’s reputation then the person, against whom it has been made, can sue a local case of defamation challenging it and claim damages.

**Women related case**

The cases related to women are called *Bome Donda*.\(^{56}\) It includes cases related to marriage and having extra marital affair. In Memba society, the marriage is a contact between two families. The process involves the bride price and gifts from bridegroom. If they find anyone from the husband or wife having an extra marital affair, then he or she faces the punishment. If the husband was found violating, he had to pay double the value of the article brought by the wife. If the wife was found violating, then she had to lose the entire article she brought with her during the time of marriage.

**Encroachment**

The encroachment of land, hunting and fishing spot of any individual or community by another is considered an offence. They decide the dispute of encroachment between the parties on the basis of evidence given by the elders. However, here in the case of encroachment they gives no punishment to the

\(^{56}\) *Ibid.*
encroacher. The case was heard in local level and encroacher was given warning not to repeat it again in the future.

**Killing of domesticated animal**

The domesticated animals like cow, sheep, horse, dogs and pigs were very precious and costly for the Memba. These animals were rich source of food, milk, cloth, manure and for transportation in the community. Whenever a domesticated animal was killed or stolen, the accused person had to pay the price of the domesticated animal and in some case double the amount. The same case was applied in case of chicken. If any of the domesticated animals destroy the agriculture land of another person, the owner of the domesticated animal had to compensate the loss of the agriculture items. In case of dog, if anyone was bitten, then the master of the dog had to pay the penalty in the form of butter, salt, domesticated animal and cloth.

**Breach of agreement**

When an agreement was done between two parties, both the parties were expected to stand in their agreed commitment. A proper documentation of deed of agreement with the seal of individual participant was prepared. The breach of any such agreement was considered an offence in Memba society and was liable to be punished before the law.

**Punishment**

There was no specific punishment for the specific offence and the sole purpose of giving punishment was to prevent repetition of crime. The most common punishment in Menchuka was compensation, whipping and labour punishment.
Compensation

The level of compensation punishment was determined through status of the victim or through the claim mad by the victim, relatives, friends or any known person of the community. In case if the convicted failed to pay the compensation then further action was taken by sending the convicted to higher court or by imposing seizing the movable and immovable property of the convicted person.

Labour punishment

The punishment was mostly adopted in the case of revenue defaulter and business deal. During this course of punishment, the convicted had to move away from his house and do farm in a plot of victim or in the private land of the people who needed help for fixed a period. If the accused person was rich, then he sends his family member, relatives or slave to perform the labour punishment on his behalf. After the completion of the punished period, the accused was free to return his home.

Whipping

The number of whipping the convict would face in his body was fixed according to the level of offences he or she had committed. Unlike the labor punishment, the family members, relatives or slaves could not face the whipping punishment on behalf of the convicted person. The whipping punishment was generally administered in public. Only the district court of Gaza and in higher court in Lhasa had the authority to give whipping punishment. In order to understand the
judicial system of Memba a few case study of pre-independent period testify their age old practice.\textsuperscript{57}

The first case is between Rinchin Lera Ongbu and his elder brother. The complaint was brought before the Menchuka Deb. The English translation of surveyed document reveals that:

\begin{quote}
The time period of the case is 18\textsuperscript{th} December of Iron-Ox year (1901 A.D).

The elder brother of the Rinchin Lera Ongbu confess that he had stolen fifteen numbers of item and not more than it from the house of Rinchin Lera Ongbu. However, in contradiction to the statement, Rinchin Lera Ongbu claims that his elder brother had stolen forty-five numbers of items from his house. Deb imposed penalty amounting ten to fifteen rupees (Tibetan money) to elder brother of Rinchin Lera Ongbu.
\end{quote}

The second case is between Sange kandu Sarjo and Philley family of Deching-tang village. The case is about the escape of a slave girl of Sange Khandu Sona who took shelter in the house of Philley family. When, sange Khandu sona came to know where about the slave girl, he brought the case before the Menchuka Deb. The English translation of document reads:

\begin{quote}
The time period of the case is 1\textsuperscript{st} February of Iron-Monkey year.

A girl slave of Sange khandu Sarjo run away from his house and took shelter in the house of Philley family of Deching-tang. When Sange khandu Sarjo came to know that the slave girl is in the house of Philley family, he complained it to Deb. Under the order of the Deb, a court was conducted under the presence of Sange Dorjee Naksang, Tanzing Chukla and Ledak Goiba of Menchuka village as witness. A final agreement was concluded between both the parties that, from now on, both the party should not have one mouth and two tongues. Both the party should not change their statement, which they had made before the court. Both the party should not bring out the case in near future. Both should not shake like
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{57}The case study is a vernacular manuscript record collected from Tashi Philley, \textit{op.cit}, and translated with the help of Phurba Tsering Naksang, \textit{op.cit}.

\textsuperscript{58}See Plate XXIV.
mountain and sea waves. Both the party should not speak out good or bad words about the incident in near future. Both the party should not speak like telling cooked meat as raw meat. Both the party should not speak by mixing right and left of the incident. In near future if they brings the incident before the court then both the party will have to pay penalty of ten to fifteen rupee value of Tibetan money for reopening the case.

Seal of Witness

1. Sange Dorjee Naksang.
2. Tenzing Chukla.
3. Ledak Goiba.\(^59\)

The third case is of a breach of deed of agreement of loan between Passang and Choisang, the translation of document reveal that:

Passang of Mallo village (Tibet) has taken twelve-Kilogram of butter, 20.2 Ngosang (money), dry chilly and one comp (small basket) from Choisang. Passang on the other hand could not return it in the promised time.

As a punishment, Passang was made to work as serfs for three months and four days in Tromoh village in Tibet.

After completion of punishment period Passang had to pay 1.8 Ngosang (money), nine Dungsang and two Kilogram of butter to Choisang within a period of thirty days.

If Passang unable to pay it within thirty days then further complain will be made to the higher authority.

Seal of Do Sa Sangmi.\(^60\)

The fourth case is of offence of theft between Dra Norbu and karma. The case was brought before the court of Menchuka Deb. The English translation of document reads:

The time period of the case is 6\(^{th}\) January of Iron Ox year (1901).

\(^{59}\) See Plate XXV.
\(^{60}\) See Plate XXVI.
On 3rd January one thief name Karma while stealing was caught red handed in the house of Dra Norbu. When Dra Norbu tried to catch him, he fought with him and destroyed the house property. Dra Norbu complaint the matter before Deb and appealed for justice.

Deb gave the Judgment by ordering karma to ask for forgiveness from Dra Norbu. He further ordered him to pay a penalty for fighting and destroying Dra Norbu property. If he does not pay the said penalty then a further penalty of five rupees will be imposed upon him.

1st Seal of karma

2nd Seal of Norney as witness

3rd Seal of Dra Norbu

4th Seal of Chim Wangdey.  

The fifth case is of defamation filed by Ada Goiba against all the resident of Lha-Lung village. The case had been placed before the local court under three intermediaries. The translation of document reads that:

The time period of the case is 7th January of Earth Mouse year (1948).

This agreement was written for safekeeping as evidence for the future. So, that the story narrated will not change.

One Dawa of Lha-Lung village informed all the resident of his village that thief had arrived in the village for stealing, which was sent by Ada Goiba.

However, when Dorjee, Tsering and Karma Dorjee inquired, they found that the information about involvement of Ada Goiba was false.

Their further inquiry found that the culprit was Kotin, Koje, Komi and Kodu. The culprit were made to give penalty of thirty numbers of cow, chang of eighty number of Khe (bowl) and millet of sixty number of Khesum (sixty bowl). They were also warned for not to repeat it in future.

In near future the name of Ada Goiba should not be mentioned further with this offence. The thieves were made to promise that from now onwards they would not repeat the same mistake in future.

1st Seal of Ada Goiba and his son

2nd Seal of three intermediaries

See Plate XXVII.
The sixth case is about one criminal offender who absconded from Gaza and took shelter in Menchuka. When Gaza Deb came to know about him, he wrote a Letter to the Chims of Menchuka. The translation of document reveals that:

_Gaza Deb ordered the Baechakshiri Chims, that one Dorjee khando has absconded from Gaza and took shelter in Baechakshiri. He ordered all the Chim to arrest him and bring him back to Gaza.

If any of the Chim found violating the order, then Gaza Deb will punished him as per the law._

_Sea of Gaza Deb._

### Relation with the neighbouring Tribes

The Memba have been maintaining a peaceful relationship with their neighbouring tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The location of Memba had been an important transit zone for the trade with Tibet for the neighbouring tribes. Hence, the neighbouring tribes were largely dependent on Memba for the supply of some of the important trade items from the neighboring state. The Memba and their neighbouring tribes of Arunachal Pradesh were not related by marriage. They lived in a harmonious life. There are references of some stray incident, which brought an environment of distrust between the neighbouriing tribes and Memba.
In the past, epidemic like Cholera, small pox and dysentery was quite common and considered deadly. The medicine available for curing was based on ritual and sacrifice of animal. There was a belief among most of neighboring tribes of Memba, that the eating of human flesh cured them from the epidemic. The human flesh was placed in alcohol, which they drank, and later the tiny piece of flesh was eaten. It is believed that this alcohol soaked with human flesh would immunize the healthy people against the epidemic. The practice is called melo panam. Most of the victim they capture for this practice was from Menchuka. Since, most of the neighboring tribes had interrelationship with each other, they refrain from killing each other and preferred from those group with whom they did not have any relation. Hence, the natural choice for the sacrifice fell on to the Memba.

**Ramo**

The Ramo community is the immediate neighbour of Memba. The Ramo people earlier settled in Manigong area alongside Bokar community. The inter-tribal feud arose between Ramo and Bokar over misunderstanding of barter trade of cow. The Ramo people out of fear of being killed were forced to escape from Manigong. The Chukla clan of Memba who had settled in Manigong helped Ramo people to escape and guided them toward Menchuka through Song Pangri track. After reaching Menchuka, the Ramo with the help of Chukla clan approached Menchuka Deb, Mane Dorjee (1898-1900 A.D) for shelter. The Deb gave them the permission to settle down in Menchuka. The settlement of Ramo people in Menchuka had opened new chapter in the political history of Memba’s relation with their new neighbour Ramo. Memba influenced the culture of the Ramo.

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64 M. M. Dhasmana, *op.cit*, p. 35-37.
65 Majority of the senior citizen of Memba confirms the story of Ramo being helped by Chukla clan to escape from Manigong to Menchuka.
The Ramo with the help of Memba constantly organised raid in Tagin area. In exchange of their help the Memba were rewarded with some captives, they captured from the raid for enslaving. Both communities avoided emergence of any kind of tussle among them. They avoided capturing one another for enslaving. However, there are numerous instances where Ramo had captured Memba women and later sold her to a Bokar community.\(^{66}\) There were also stray instances of occasional stealing of cows from Memba village by the Ramo. In later part of their history, the relation had deteriorated and events of constant occurrence of tussle began to emerge between them. In one such incident, the Ramo kidnapped Sang Sona a Memba from cowshed in Nissan-Gong area. He was later release only after the exchange of ransom of three cow and one slave boy.

In another incident, the Koje clan of Ramo of Rapum village captured one slave of Chukla clan. When the owner of the slave came to know about the incident, he along with his people started chasing Koje. When Koje saw them chasing, they ran into the jungle. From the jungle, they attacked the Memba with arrow. This lead to the death of the owner of the slave, Neema Chukla and Peeching Chukla by arrow shot from the hand of Yorsang koje.

However, it was during the period between 1910-1912 A.D, a major conflict between Ramo and Memba took place, where Ramo people raided the Deching-tang village of Memba and killed more than eighty people of that village. The reason behind the development of such incident unfolded into the realities.

The first incident is from the person whose members have been killed in the raid. According to their statement, during those days the people of Deching-Tang

were the richest and prosperous among all the Memba people. Almost all the Deb of Menchuka was appointed from Deching-tang. The Memba of other village was envious of their prosperous life. Thus, out of jealousy they ignited and invited Ramo to raid Deching-tang village. A pre-planned time for the raid was fixed. It was planned that they would raid the village when the youths were absent in the village to prevent any chances of defeat. When Ramo raided the village, only the old folks, women and children were present in the village. During Ramo raid, they killed more than eighty Memba people and burned down sixteen houses.67

The second incident is from the person who was the resident of Deching-tang, whose house was not raided by Ramo. According to their statement, they say that. Pako Kotin, a Ramo of Rapum village sent his slave named Dindu and her wife Yamin for trade in the resident of Khol Naksang of Lha-Lhung village. Unfortunately, Dindu was bitten by a dog name Kijong-Jong while he was on his trip to Lha-Lhung village. The owner of the dog was Khol Naksang. Succumbed to injury, Dindu returned to his master. Few days after his recovery, Dindu went to Lha-Lhung and demanded compensation for the dog bite. The Khol Naksang accepted the responsibility and compensated by giving one fine quality of Chuba (cloth). After receiving the Chuba as compensation, Dindu returned for his master’s house. While returning he decided to visit his master’s friend named Shang Dorjee Naksang house in Deching-tang village. While on his way to master’s friend house, he came across a barang (Cow shed), where he decided to take some rest. In the meantime, the owner of the barang named Ongdin Philley saw the chuba in the hand of Dindu. Ongding Philley thought that the chuba was stolen from his house and claimed it from him. When Dindu denied, they beat him and forcefully snatched the

67Tashi Philley, op.cit., narrated that, during the time of the raid, his father 21st Deb of Menchuka was only minor of eight years old. His father saved himself by hiding in a hay kept in a cow shed.
chuba. After being beaten black and blue by Ongding, he reached the house of his master’s friend, Sang Dorjee Naksang. When, Sang Dorjee Naksang came to know about the incident. He went to Ongdin Philley and requested him to return the chuba to Dindu. Sang Dorjee Naksang also demanded to compensate for beating Dindu. But Ongding Philley refused to compensate and returned the chuba. Dindu then returned to his master’s house and narrated him the whole story. Pako Kotin then decided to take revenge from Ongdin Philley. In next summer, Pako Kotin went to Dorjeeling where Memba people bring their domestic animals for grazing. He brought the cow of Ongdin Philley from Dojeeling to his village, and slaughtered it for meat. The incident angered Ongdin Philley and he decided to avenge for it. Opportunity came when Ongdin Philley found Pako Kotin near Amda (water wheel) in Thargelling area. The Pako Kotin was on his way towards Lha-Lhung Village. Ongdin Philley with the help of Deb Tacha Naksang arrested Pako kotin. They held Pako kotin under captive for twenty days. But luckily one night Pako Kotin succeeded in escaping from their clutches. The Pako Kotin then retaliated by attacking the Deching-Tang village with the help of Ramo people from Rapum, Rego, Puring, Hire, Gapo and Padusa villages. During their attack, they burnt down sixteen numbers of houses and slaughtered all the persons present in the house.68 After the incident, the Deb Tacha Naksang sent an emergency message to Gaza Deb requesting him to send soldiers to punish the Ramo. It almost took one year for troops from Gaza to reach Menchuka. The Memba people with the help of soldiers from the Gaza decided to attack Ramo village of Rapum at night. But because of uneven terrain and high mountain they were able to reach Rapum village in the following morning. This gave Ramo an opportunity to defend themselves as they

could see the approaching soldiers from far off distance. After getting alarmed, the Ramo people escaped towards the forest leaving behind only weak and aged person. When Memba with soldiers reached Rapum village they found only seven old folks, slaughtered and burnt down the entire village. They even waited in nearby jungle for Ramo to return. After five hours of waiting, when the Ramo people did not return, they marched back towards Menchuka. The notice was issued in the entire Menchuka area for economic blockade of Ramo, which was continued and followed for one year.  

It was suspected that some of the Memba villagers helped Ramo to attack Deching-tang and conveyed the message of arrival of Troops from Gaza. During this period, they also witnessed some short of disunity among the Memba. To bring unity and harmony among the Memba, an agreement was made involving all the Memba Village people. The agreement also provided information that in later part a conflict between Memba and Ramo had solved by organizing joint meeting. The English translation of the agreement made between them reveals that:

This oath has been taken before various deities and Gods of Menchuka. Which are Pal-Yeshi-Gonpo-Maning-Nakpo, Chak-Zhipa, Damchen-Kebu-Chenpo, Zha-Du-Rahula, Pei-Zhing-Kyong-Kunga-Zhunu, Ne-Zhing-Tsetamarpo, Palden-Mak-Thue-Gyalmorama-Tae, Dorjee-Dak-Tsen, Lhachen-Dorjee-Barwa, Gyalchen-Kunga, Tarsung-pema-Jelling, Go-Sung-Naklagang-Tsen and Nima-Tsengoue. The oath has been taken in presence of religious and political authorities of Baechakshiri.

After the Memba raid in Ramo village, the Ramo of Rapum had decided to take revenge by killing Neh-Nang people. Therefore, in order to bring peace, twenty-one numbers of houses of Ramo has made peace agreement with Neh-Nang people. During the time of agreement, they slaughtered one cow, organized feast, and promised not to engage in any war in future.

If there arises any conflict with Ramo in near future, then all the people of Menchuka will be united together to fight with Ramo. If any of the clan of the Neh-

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69 Tashi Naksang, *op.cit.*, 24-10-2014.
Nang people does not cooperate, then the deity mentioned in this document will destroy them.

Hence, from now onwards the Neh-Nang people will stand united. If problem arises in future, then all the Neh-Nang people have to pay fifteen bronze coins as penalty to witness and Intermediaries.

1st seal of Lera tsering, Sange and Choe-wang of Menchuka village.

2nd seal of Chupen, Tachak and Tenzing of Galling village.

3rd seal of Wangdan and Bachu of Deching-tang village.

4th seal of Gombu, Passang and Phakyak Topke of Lha-Lhung village.70

The second major incident took place when there was an outbreak of cholera in a Ramo village. The Ramo traditional village council decided to perform human sacrifice, but could not find suitable victim. They then decided to capture victim from Menchuka. Thus, they put on their war-dress and went to Memba area of Singbir. When they reached the Singbir, they found that most of the inhabitant of the area had escaped into the forest. The Ramo began to search every house in the area and found one female slave of Memba hiding inside her house. The Ramo broke down the door, killed her, cut off her left hand and carried it. Besides killing slave girl, they also carried away goats, cloths and many ornaments they could find. The tiny piece of the flesh is given to the afflicted persons of the community.71

Pailibo

The Memba experienced first major political activities with Pailibo72 during the time of Deb Tamden. Gaza Deb appointed him as seventh Deb of Menchuka. He held the post from 1887 to 1893 A.D. While staying as Deb in Menchuka he found

70 See Plate XXX.
that the place inhabited by neighbouring tribes was a rich source of material like animal fur, red colour creepers, bamboo and cane considered to be of high value in Tibet. He reported about his finding to Gaza Deb. The Gaza Deb allured by the report ordered Deb Tamden to bring all this tribal area under his control. He also sent one-hundred numbers of Tibetan soldiers to assist Deb Tamden in his expedition.\(^\text{73}\)

With this resource, Deb Tamden began his expedition with the help of Memba. At first, he brought the tribal people of Rego and Rapum village to accept allegiance to Tibetan Government. They were made to pay tax regularly to Tibetan Government. In return, of their acceptance he promised protection from raids from other neighboring tribes. He also warned them to face consequence if their answer was negative. Feared of being killed by soldier the people of Rego and Rapum village accepted the offer. But internally they were thinking of killing Deb Tamden and his soldiers. A secret meeting was held to discuss the plan of execution. Accordingly, a secret message was sent to Pailibo informing them Deb Tamden was shortly leaving for their area. They also offered them to provide regular information of the movement of Deb Tamden. They also suggested Pailibo that some secret pre planned arrangement should be made to kill Deb Tamden.

As soon as the Genbo of Pailibo received the message, they held a secret meeting at Tamen-pake to hatch a plan. The Pailibo decided to build a special hut for the Deb at Tamen-pake. A best quality of delicious edibles and alcohol was prepared for him and his expedition party. The Pailibo already knew about the powerful firearms of expedition team, thus, they decided to offer warm welcome.

Deb Tamden arrived at Tamen-Pake, the Pailibo people welcomed him in a special hut. They arranged for his soldiers at another large hut where all villagers

\(^{73}\)Tsering Chukla, *op.cit.*, date 24-06-2014.
could accommodate with them. They then served Deb Tamden and his soldier with strong alcohol and delicious food items continuously for three days and three nights. However, thing did not worked out as planned, the alcohol could not make him weak and intoxicated. Sensing their planning of assassinating Deb Tamden failing, the Pailibo people gave in and agreed to be under the authority of Tibet. Tamden became very happy for the successful expedition and drank more alcohol. Even while enjoying drink, Tamden was on high alert all the time by holding his gun in one hand and sword in another hand, the two assassins were afraid to assassinate him.

Ultimately, on the fourth day Deb Tamden got intoxicated. He felt sleepy and loosed the gun and dagger from his hand. The assassin without wasting any time cut off both his hand, and the other Pailibo followed the assassin by cutting off the limb one by one and thrown it into the river. This was followed by slaughtering of his soldiers. However, two or three soldiers managed to escape and fled towards Tibet through Menchuka. The assassination of Deb Tamden made Tibetan authority to give up the idea of territory expansion beyond Rerak and Rego area.74

The Pailibo like most of the neighbouring tribes of Memba organized raids in Menchuka to captured people for flesh to cure cholera. One such incident occurred in the year 1938 A.D., when there was an outbreak of cholera epidemic in Pailibo of Tato village. The village priest performed various rituals to cure the epidemics. However, he did not get any achievement in curing the epidemic. Later, in his dream, he saw that one Memba person from Lah-Lhung village would have to be sacrificed and the Pailibo of Tato village should eat his flesh. The omen from the chicken liver further directed that a Ramo person should perform the actual sacrifice. Since the

Ramo had relation with Pailibo, it was not difficult for them to convince the Ramo. As a result, on the fixed day, the Pailibo of Tato village in full war-dress took Ramo with them to Lha-Lhung village. However before they attacked the village, the Memba saw them coming and run away toward the jungle to hide. Unfortunately, a ten years old boy was unknowingly left behind in the village and they caught and killed him. They cut off the boy’s left hand and took it with them. Back in Tato the priest sacrificed the hand and laid it on the stomach of every sick person. The people made huge vat of alcohol and put the hand in it. Everyone in the village was given the prepared alcohol to drink. For three days, the men went round the village shouting, “Hee-hee-hee”. After that, all the sick people of the village were cured of the epidemic and they threw the hand away.\(^{75}\)

**Bokar**

The Memba often went to Bokar area for trade but were not always on friendly terms with them.\(^{76}\) Like other neighboring tribes, the Bokar also did not have political relation with Memba. However, they seldom organised raid in the Memba area to capture people for curing cholera. There were several instances of intrusion into neighboring areas. One such incident occurred in 1964 A.D., a cholera epidemic broke out in the Bokar area killing number of people.\(^{77}\) According to established belief, without any alternative, they decided to kill a person for the palm to make medicine to cure Cholera. The natural choice for the sacrifice was Memba. The Bokar with full war-dress marched towards Menchuka. They entered the boundary of Memba village of Kadashila. On the way, they encountered one Memba


\(^{77}\) M.M. Dhasmana, *op.cit.*, p. 83.
adult of Naksang clan, who was fishing in the left bank of Yargapchu River. They killed the Memba adult and cut off his hand. When complain was lodged before the administration, they took immediate step and the person concerned was arrested at Rego village in the Ramo area. They brought the offender before the administrative officer for hearing. They latter settled matter and the offenders were made to pay compensation in value amounting of rupees fifty thousand only to the family members of the murdered person. The Naksang clan made one golden lamp of weight 93.31 gram from the compensated money. They offered it in the old monastery of the Menchuka for the peace of the departed soul.  

Tagin

The Memba relationship with the Tagin was also of mixed nature mostly based on economy. The Tagin people regularly visited Menchuka for barter trade. The Tagin were economically poor and used to sell their family member in exchange for a sword or one load of salt with cloth to Memba. The Memba also accompanied Ramo in raiding the Tagin area for bringing slaves or hostage. Almost entire population of slave in Memba area came from the Tagin area.

The Memba people also encountered Tagin during Tsari pilgrimage. The Tagin of Tsari pilgrimage area were economically well established then the Tagin who occupied the area bordering Menchuka. Like their Tibetan counterpart, Memba had to pay tax to Tagin for allowing safe passage for the pilgrimage. The Tibetan also appointed Memba as interpreter between them and Tagin.

78 Pemba Naksang, *op.cit.*, he is from the family of the murdered person.
80 “Tsari is Tibet’s most venerated natural holy places.” See in Tony Huber, *op.cit*, pp. 1-6.