CHAPTER V

RELIGION AND PRACTICES

Buddhism in Arunachal Pradesh

The mainland India is considered to be the birthplace of Buddhism from where it spread into different parts of the world through China, Sri Lanka and Tibet. There is no reference of Buddhism in the early history of Kamarupa (Assam). When Huien-Tsang visited Kamarupa, he did not mention of existence of Buddhism. However, during Sankerdeva period there was a reference of practice of Tantric form of Buddhism in Assam, which was not popular among the native. Hence, one can assume that, Buddhism was unable to spread into North-east India from mainland India. Interestingly in Arunachal Pradesh, the Buddhism came through Tibet and Burma (now Myanmar). Arunachal Pradesh is a lone state in Northeast India, where the followers of all the three vassals of Buddhism viz, Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana are followed since many centuries.

The Khampti and Singpho Tribes of Lohit and Changlang District follow the Theravada form of Buddhism in the eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh. The Khampti tribe who migrated into Assam in the 18th century A.D, when the independent of kingdom of Pong in Burma (Myanmar) ceased to exist and ruled by delegate from

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Ava. They were allowed to settle in the valley on the river called Tenga-pani by Assam Rajahs. Later on pushed on to Sadiya during the time of Rajah Gaurinath Singh’s rule in 1794 A.D. In 1839 A.D, the Khampti rebelled against the British Government and killed Colonel White, as a result they were expelled from Sadiya and were compelled to scatter on the frontier (Arunachal Pradesh). They profess the Theravada faith of Hinayana vassal after the Burmese tradition.

The Singpho had migrated into Arunachal Pradesh through Patkai ranges from Hukang valley in Burma (Myanmar) in 18th century. Unlike their immediate neighbour Khampti who follows Buddhism, former were originally a follower of animism. However, in later period when they gradually came under the dominating influence to Khampti culture, they began to adopt Buddhism as their religion.

The Monpa and Sherdukpen of Tawang and West Kameng District, Nah of Upper Subansiri District, Membas and Khambas of west Siang and Upper Saining Districts, follow the Tibetan form of Mahayana and Vajrayana form of Buddhist in western part of Arunachal Pradesh. The earliest evidence of introduction of Tibetan form of Buddhism in Arunachal Pradesh is in 11th to 12th century A.D, during which Nying-ma-pa and Kah-dam-pa sect was flourishing among the Monpa in Tawang.

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7 Ibid, p. 92-93.
9 The Nying-ma-pa sect means the old sect and popularly known as red hat sect. The sect had established particular worship of the Dorjee or Vajra (thunderbolt), which they believed to be decedent from heaven and fell upon earth at Sera in Eastern Tibet. The sect is recognized for its practice of extensive tantrika mysticism.” See in L Austin Waddell, *op.cit.*, p. 73.
10 Dromton who was one of the chief disciples of Atisa founded the Kah-dam-pa sect. The Kah-dam-pa means those bounded by orders or commandments of strict Monastic discipline. The sect identifies
However, in 17th century A.D, Ge-luk-pa became popular and dominant sect among the Monpa. The Sherdukpen on the other hand follows Nying-ma-pa. The Memba and Khamba of West Siang and Upper Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh also follow the Nying-ma-pa sect.

The Nah is a sub-tribe of Tagin who speak language similar to that of Tani ethnic group of Arunachal Pradesh. They live in southern most part of Upper Subansiri District bordering with Tibet. The Nah follow the Tibetan form of Buddhism of Nying-ma-pa sect. Besides being following Buddhism they also practice animistic ritual side by side. It might be possible that the Buddhism was introduced to them in 17th century A.D or in 18th century, when Takpa Siri pilgrimage place was discovered and visited by a Tibetan Buddhist Lama.

Buddhism among Memba

The Memba are the followers of Buddhism and comes under Nying-ma-pa sect of Vajrayana or Tantric form of Buddhism of Tibet. They come under Dorje-
tak-pa, a sub-sect of Nying-ma-pa sect because of the geographical location of Menchuka nearer to Dorje-tak monasteries near Sam-ye in South-eastern Tibet.\textsuperscript{18}

According to a tradition of the Membas, an unknown Lama came to their earlier place of inhabitant in Tibet and converted them into Buddhism. Before the introduction of Buddhism, their religious was animism called Bon.\textsuperscript{19} Though Bon religion was completely abandoned by Membas, but some of its elements such as local deity, demons can be seen in their Nying-ma-pa tradition. Besides, some of the sacrificial ritual developed from Bon practice, which was not followed by most of the Buddhist sect in Tibet was practiced by Nying-ma-pa sect and can be witnessed among the Membas. It was Guru Padmasambhava who synthesised the already existing Bon belief of the Tibet, which was not under any circumstances a part of Gautam Buddha teaching with Buddhism through tantric doctrine to bring the people under the new religion. Thus Guru Padmasambhava in obliged to spread the Buddhism in Tibet, borrowed host of devilries from India and from the old indigenous religion of Tibet to fight the Bon with their own weapon.\textsuperscript{20}

The legend of Membas claims that Guru Padmasambhava came to Menchuka and hid many of his ter-ma here, so that in future Buddhist religion will spread in this place by the ter-ma reveller. After him, another Lama named, Lorde Gyatso came, but during his visit, Membas yet not had migrated to Menchuka. It was during the visit of Lama Yap-mein-poh Dorjee and later by Lama Cheoje Lingpa that Membas people started migrating to Menchuka in 16\textsuperscript{th} -17\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. The

\textsuperscript{18} L. Austin Waddell, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 73.
\textsuperscript{19} “Bon is a primitive religion of Tibet culturally based on nature worship.” For detail see Geoffrey Samuel, “Revisiting the Problem of Bon Identity: Bon Priests and Ritual practitioners in the Himalayas”, \textit{Journal of the International Association for Bon Research}, The International Association for Bon Research, Montreal, vol. I, 2013, pp. 77-81.
\textsuperscript{20} Alka Chattopadhyaya, \textit{Atisa and Tibet}, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1981, pp. 236-238.
Migration led to the establishment of Buddhist religion in the Valley as predicted by Guru Padmasambhava.

The introduction of Buddhism helps in the development of hardworking, genre and peace loving personalities among the Memba people. Their belief in the doctrine and teaching of Buddha gave them idea to live a life away from all the unwanted activities so that they would be bleesed for higher realm.

The impact of Buddhism can be witnessed in their every day life, where they manage time to offer lamp, water and incense in the prayer room of their house. The old member of the community regularly holds their rosary and prayer wheel by chanting religious prayer. The institution of Lamaism and monasteries play a vitual role in their activities.

**Lama**

The *Lama* is a word used by Memba for referring the Buddhist priest in their community. The *Lama* is considered a teacher, who is the manifestation of Buddha to guide them towards enlightenment. The *Lama* system followed by the Memba like their Tibetan counterpart is a continuation of the tradition of India’s Great Vehicle, where they place the place of teacher at the core of spiritual exercise. The importance of *Lama* in Memba community can be undestood from their history of introduction of Buddhism to Memba by *Lama* and again in the history of their migration to Menchuka, where *Lamas* plays a leading role. The presence of *Lamas* is

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21 The word “*Lama*” means “superior” and is pure Tibetan. It should properly be applied only to heads of monasteries and priests of the higher ranks. But it has come to be used loosely as a general appellation for all the members of the monastic order.” For detail see Willaim Carey, *Travel and Adventure in Tibet*, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 2002 (reproduced), p. 71. And see D.K. Dutta, *The Memba of Arunachal Pradesh*, Director of Research Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar, 2006, p. 90.
required in every important events from happy to sorrow in a Memba household. Besides this, the system of sending their eldest son to become Lama itself defines the important of Lamaism in Memba society, though it is no longer a compulsion these days. To become a Lama, the person has to undergo education training under the guidance of senior Lama, the detail of education is given in the first chapter. Anybody in the community can become Lama if capable to do so. The dress of Lamas is different from that of a layman. Their dress consists of hat, gown, inner vest, trousers and cloak all red in colour. They also wear Tibetan shoes and carry rosaries in their hand.

The Lama of the community is classified into two groups called Drup-da Gaih Lama and Tachok-Gaih Lama.\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{Drup-da Gaih Lama}

Those Lamas who are fully ordained monk and forbidden to marry is called Drup-da Gaih Lama. This group of lama always stays in Gomp or in a cave and adopts permanently hermit life seeking tantricism power. It was compulsory for this group of Lama to keep their head bald and wear monastic dress all the time.

\textbf{Tachok-Gaih Lama}

The Lama who can get marry is called Tachok-Gaih Lama. This group of Lama stays in their home with their family. Some of the lama even had more than one wife. The Tachok-Gaih Lama can be also called priest Lama for performing Tantric ritual for the villagers in their house and in return receives alms for their service. They gives the share of the alms they receive to Drup-da Gaih Lama. During early period, these Lamas used to keep their hair long but now they keep

\textsuperscript{22} Lama Pema Chonga Kigar, \textit{op.cit.}, date 02-4-2014.
short hair. They are allowed to wear casual dress of layman when they were free from monastery or practicing tantric ritual in the village.

At the time of Lama Ter-ton Cheoje Lingpa who came to Menchuka from Khamba area (Tibet), Menchuka had sixteen Lamas under him. Out of which eight were Drup-da Gaih Lama who were always busy in meditation in the eight caves located at Pema Ziling and another eight were Tachok-Gaih Lama. However, later the people stopped joining Drup-da Gaih Lama and as result now one can only find Tachok-Gaih Lama in Menchuka. At present Menchuka, have more than 200 Tachok-Gaih Lamas.

The Lamas had to follow certain rule and regulation in their daily life. They had to rise early morning and wash their face and mouth. After it they prepare for the prayer in the Cheoi-sum (prayer room in the house) for which they had to offer incense, butter lamp and sacred food to the Gods and demons. Next, they take breakfast with butter tea and prepare for the services if requested by any villagers for tantric ritual or will do personal work like a layman. In the afternoon, they take meal of millet powder or rice. After that, they continue the work undertaken. In the evening at six o, clock they will take dinner and retire to bed. The Lamas in Memba community had no restriction in taking any kind of meal. Their diet mostly consists of millet, rice, corn, butter, tea, milk, mushroom, soup and any vegetables available. They even consume large amount of meat and alcohol. Before taking any meal or drink, they always performe grace by chanting and pouring out some tiny portion of it as thanks giving to Gods and for cleansing sin for eating flesh-meat.

The Lamas practice meditation regularly and goes for Cham (hermitage meditation) at regular intervals. They considered hermitage as essential part of the
routine to gain more tantric power. They considered it as the highest teaching of Buddha Shakyamuni and Guru Padmasambhava. The Lamas practiced hermitage for three days to four months. The first type of hermitage is called Chak Bhum or tap-drok. In it, Lamas practice hermitage for two months and fifteen days. During this period Lamas had to repeat the spell required number of times and had to chant prayer with prostrate in the ground for 110,301 times. The second type of hermitage is called Samgey, Yig-dak, man-dhal and Lah-me-Nehjor. They practice this hermitage for a period of two months or more. The difference between them is the prayer and spell they chant during hermitage. The third type is called Poha, practiced for a period two to three weeks. The forth type is called Lama-Yidum-Khandu, which they practice for a period of three to six months. The repetition of spell, chanting prayer and prostrate is increased or decreased according to the time period of the hermitage.

To achieve enlightenment sooner, the Lamas practice retreat hermitage. The purpose of hermitage is to concentrate all activity towards dharma. They practice it to experience wisdom by maintaining the mind in its natural state. In order to have perfection in meditation one should seek supports through joyful effort, mindfulness, devotion, concentration and wisdom. During hermitage, no one is allowed to meet the Lama without permission and only one of his disciples who assists him with shopping and cooking is allowed to enter the room. The selected disciples should be very positive towards him and his doings, and he should have a good relationship with this disciple. If groups of Lamas are performing it jointly, then they do not include the people with whom they cannot get along. The Lama tries to refrain from

24 Ibid., pp. 65-68.
following their regular thoughts of worldly pleasure. They only take breaks for two to three times a day for fifteen minutes to one hour, during which they allow visitors accepted by the Lama to meet.

Besides performing religious duty, they also engaged in agriculture, painting, handicraft and trading activity. Every year some of the Lamas visit Tibet and neighbouring tribes for trade purpose. Some of the reputed Lamas also play the role of intermediaries for the settling of dispute within the member of the community.

**Ane (Nun)**

The practice of women becoming nun is not popular among the Memba society. However, they speak of visits of nuns from Tibet and know about the role of nuns in Buddhist community. A nun is called *ane* in Memba language. The name of Khandu Yeshi Chogey (Yeshe Tsogyal) and Leh-Lung Ane Pem-Chom is popular among the Memba people. The Ane Khandu Yeshi Chogey was one of the nine heart students of Guru Padmasambhava, who attained enlightenment in one lifetime. She along with Guru Padmasambhava had hidden *ter-ma* treasures that include texts and ritualistic objects in Tibet and in surrounding Himalaya zone in the 8th century A.D. She also accompanied Guru Padmasambhava to Menchuka, where they hides many *ter-ma* for the future generation.

The reference of Ane Pem-Chom from Leh-Lung in Tibet is found in the story of the migration of Memba. She accompanied Lama Yap-meh-Pao Dorjee in Menchuka. She was blessed with power of predicting the future and hence her advice

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was sought before the conduction of any further activity. She was also credited for opening of holy pilgrimage of *Sekar-Dorjee tsomo Neh* in Menchuka.  

**Administrative setup of Lamas**

The *Lamas* has their own system of administrative organisation, which helps in ensuring discipline within the *Lamas* and helps in checking their activity of misuse of their tantric power for evil purpose. The hierarchy chart of *Lamas* organisation is classified into three groups. On the top of the hierarchy chart is head *Lama* called *Renpochee*, next are a group of senior *Lama* called *Draba-Gempa* and last one is a group of Junior *Lama* called *Chunga*.

There is a system of appointing executive members to run the organisation. The executive members are appointed for certain period of time from among the *Draba-Gempa* and *Chunga*. The executive members carry out all the major policies and function of the *Lama* organisation. The following are the executive posts appointed by the organisation:

**Rinpoche**

*Rinpoche* is the head of the *Lama* organisation. The post remained permanent for the *Lama* who had been appointed in it until his death. The duty of *Rinpoche* is to guide all the *Lamas* according to the rule and regulation. His presence is required as head priest in all the important ritual in *Gomp*. During the pilgrimage, the presence of head priest is must in the pilgrimage site to lead the ritual. If for some reason, he could not attain then another *Lama* appointed by him had to perform the rite on his behalf.

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27 Lama Pema Chonga Kigar, *op.cit.*
28 Ibid.
Cheiso

It is a post of General Secretary and second in command after Rinpoche. The Cheiso is responsible for maintaining of all the records and proceedings of the organisation. The Lama for the post of Cheiso is selected from Draba-Gempa. The Lama appointed holds the post for a period of ten to twelve years.

Ger-Keoi

It is a post of Assistant General Secretary and second in command of General Secretary. The Lama for the post of Ger-Keoi is selected either from Draba-Gempa or from Chung. After every one year, a new Lama is selected in this post.

Umtse

The Lama who holds the post of Umtse is in charge of starting the ritual. The Lama is selected from among the Draba-Gempa. The post keeps changing every year.

Nyar-pa

It is a post similar to finance secretary. Nyar-pa (Nyar-ba) is in charge of management of fooding, lodging and ritual material for other Lamas during special function or meeting of Lamas. Nyar-pa is responsible for record keeping and maintaining of all the financial transaction of the organisation, which they received in the form of donation and offering by the people. He had to produce annual report or quarterly report of the account at general council meeting of the organisation. The Lama from Draba-Gempa or Chung is selected and holds the post for a period of one year.
Choi-pen

They appoint five to ten Lama for the post of Choi-pen. The Lama holding this position has to perform the duty of preparation of prayer and ritual material such as statue making, preparing offering and making lamp in the Cheoi-sum (prayer room) of any individual where the ritual will be perform by the Rinpoche, Umjeh and other senior Lama.

From the time of their history of their migration, the Memba community of Menchuka Valley had lineage of eleven numbers of Rinpoche (Head Lama). The first Rinpoche who established Lamaism in Menchuka was Lama Lorde Gyatso in sixteenth century A.D. The second lineage was passed to Lama Yap-meh-pao Dorjee, who is said to be the reincarnation of Lama Lorde Gyatso. He was born in a royal family of Gaza province in Tibet. The third lineage passed to Lama Ter-ton Cheoje Lingpa (see Plate XXXVII). He was born in a place called Pha-yul in Tibet. He founded the first Sam-ten Yamchak Gomp of Nying-ma-pa near yargup-chu River in Pema-Ziling. After him the fourth in lineage passed to another Lama of same name Lama Ter-ton Cheoje Lingpa, who came from khamba place (Tibet). The fifth in lineage line was Ling Lama from khamba in Tibet. After it the sixth in lineage was Lama Tah-Lung Ngawang Drakpo, who came from a place called Tah-lung in Tibet. The seventh in lineage line was passed to Lama Dondup, who was credited for founding of Lhar-tse Gomp at hill top of Pema-Ziling. It is believed that when Lama Dondup died, Mencuhka Valley remained without any Rinpoche for many years. During this period the Lama organisation were under the temporal leadership of Cheiso. The next eight in lineage line passed to Lama karma and then ninth lineage passed to Lama Passang.
Again, after the death of Lama Passang, the Menchuka remained without any Rinpoche for a period of more than fifteen years and was under the leadership of Cheiso named Lama Chiso Chombey Goiba till the appointment of next Rinpoche. After him, the lineage of Rinpoche passed to Lama Kunsang Dache Randol Rinpoche (see Plate XXXVIII) in the year 1952 as tenth Rinpoche of Menchuka. He was a man known to be of extraordinary talent. He was credited for founding of many figures of Gods, Goddesses and deity painted in colours in Menchuka. He also knew the art of mask making. He lived for thirty-two years as Rinpoche and breathed his last in 17th July 1983 A.D at 14:20 hours in Mohanbari in Assam. The next in lineage line passed to his son named Lama Dongse Thinley Norby Naksang (see Plate XXXIX) as eleventh Rinpoche on 23rd August 1983 A.D and is still running, guiding as religious leader of the Lamas in particular, and Memba people in general. During the intermediate period and upto 1963 many Lama of the rank of Rinpoche from Tibet named Lama Chedak Gyapo, Sher Lama, Tel Rinpoche and Lama Ayong Rinpoche from Kyogi in Tibet visited Menchuka and guided them. Most of them came during 1950-1963 A.D, when Tibet was invaded and occupied by the Chinese People’s Liberation Army.

There is no particular specific system for the Lamas in Menchuka to determine the appointment of Rinpoche. It has been noticed in the Lama Organisation of the Memba community, that they follow four types of system of passing of lineage of Rinpoche. The first one is the passing of lineage through the method of theory of reincarnation. This was followed in case of Lama Lorde Gyatso and his reincarnation Lama Yap-meh-pao Dorjee. The second system is by passing of lineage from teacher to student. The third system is of arrival or appointment of reputed Lama from Tibet. The fourth and last system followed is a passing of lineage
from father to son, which can be seen in the case of Lama Kunsang Dache Randol Rinpoche to his son Lama Dongse Thinley Norby Naksang.

Table No. 5.1: Lineage Chart of the Rinpoche of Menchuka.

Lama Lorde Gyatso (17th Century A.D)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lama Yap-meh-pao Dorjee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pha-Yul Lama Ter-ton Cheoje Lingpa (17th -18th century A.D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khamba Lama Ter-ton Cheoje Lingpa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ling Lama</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tha-Lung Lama Ngawang Dagpu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lama Dondup</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lama Karma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lama Passang</td>
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<tr>
<td>16th Ter-ton Guru Choewang Kunsang Dachen Randol (1952-1983 A.D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lama Dongse Thinley Narbu Naksang (1983 A.D-present)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Field study. 29

29 Lama Pema Chonga Kigar, op.cit.
The activity of the *Lama* organisation is bounded by the *Cheoi-Tumh* (rule and regulation) written in *Cheik* manuscript, which contains the lists of rules and regulations to be followed, to which they had taken allegiance before admitting into the *Lamaism*. If any *Lama* found doing any kind of felony, the organisation punishes and fines him as per the rule. Following are some of the punishments given to *Lama* for offence:

a) If any *Lama* found drunk and involved in a quarrel or violent activity, then they summon him before the executive council. As punishment, the council orders him to do one hundred *cha* (prostrate) in the ground asking for forgiveness. He had to present one *Khada* to God, *Rinpoche* and executive council members. They also impose him with fine in the form of one or two Tibetan silver or brass coin. He had to promise before the head *Lama* and the Council for never to repeat the mistake and at the same time he ask for forgiveness so as not to repeat the same in near future.

b) If any *Lama* found absent from the ritual performance without any valid reason, where his presence was required, then the *Lama* had to offer one *Khada* each to God, *Rinpoche* and to *Cheiso*. He was made to do three *cha* and ask for forgiveness before the Council for being absent.

c) Any *Lama* doing offence regularly without listening the organisation, then they ask him to pay heavy fine and they remove the person name from the organisation through the process of impeachment and consider him no longer as *Lama*. During the impeachment of the offended *Lama*, the *Lamas* present in the Council adieu him by clapping their hands three times called *Dupa*. The *Dupa* symbolise a bad gesture towards the impeached *Lama*. They forbids impeached *Lama* from practiseing and providing ritual services within the Menchuka area.
They also forbid him to use religious flying flags in his house compound. The organisation gives strict order to other Lamas not to provide any kind of religious service in his house.

**Monastery**

Monastery is called Gomp in Memba, a vulgarly of Tibetan name Gon-pa or Gom-pa.\(^\text{30}\) Gomp plays a very important role in the religious life of Memba community. It is a symbol of religious pride of the community. It is the main place of worship where every Memba family pays a visit to offer prayer to their Gods by raising their clasped hand high above their head and then bringt them down slowly in front of their face, then holding them in front of their chest. The prostrate is done for three times. They generally constructed it in an isolated place some distance away from the village. So that the Lamas can study, learn and practice hermitage without any interruption from the outsiders. Before the construction of any Gomp, The head Lama takes consultation from an oracle to find out that the location selected is auspicious or inauspicious. If oracle tells that the place as inauspicious, then they sought remedy in the form of ritual to castaway the hurdle that might in the form of demonic disturbances. After the oracle consultation, they ask all the villagers to contribute donation in the form of cash or kind to start the work for the construction. After the collection of donation, on a fixed date the entire Lamas gather in the site selected for the Gomp construction. A deity who acts as the proctector of the Gomp against demons and spirits is selected, followed by rituals of offerings and prayers. The ceremony of laying of first foundation pillar or stone is performed where they recite prayer for the prosperity and safe development of the Gomp. During the laying

of foundation, they put various relics, amulets and other sacred objects of religious importance inside the structure. The village people voluntarily provide helping hand in the construction of *Gomp*, which indirectly helps in the saving of the expenditure of Labour force by the *Lamas*. Adjacent to *Gomp* they also constructed an additional house for cooking, resting and hermitage house.

In the early days, before the development of *Gomp* in Menchuka, the *Lamas* lived in a small cave in which they used to have hermitage. The head *Lama* used this cave to preach his student by sitting on a large stone slab. The eight numbers of caves and remain of the stone slab can still be seen in *Pema-Ziling*. Gradually with the passage of time, the area where caves were located led to the development of first *Gomp at Pema-Ziling* in Menchuka.

At present Menchuka have five *Gomp* located in villages of East Dezing-tang, Dorjeeling, Yorni, Menchuka HQ (see Plate XLI) and Pema-ziling area. All the *Gomp* excluding one at *Pema-Ziling* is constructed after 1960s. Before the independence of India in 1947, Menchuka had only two *Gomp* of which only one is still surviving.\(^{31}\)

**Sam-ten-Yamchak Gomp:**

The *Sam-ten-yamchak Gomp* is the first *Gomp* constructed in Menchuka. It is located at *Pema-Ziling* at a distance of 6 Km from Menchuka town near Shaegong Village. To reach the site of *Gomp* one had to cross *Yargup-Chu* river with the help of a cable bridge. The Memba constructed *Sam-ten-yamchak Gomp* during the period of III\(^{\text{th}}\) *Rinpoche*, *Pha-Yul Lama Ter-ton Cheoje Lingpa* in early 17\(^{\text{th}}\)-18\(^{\text{th}}\) century A.D. It is believed that before him *Lama Yap-meh-pao Dorjee* tried to construct the

\(^{31}\) Lama Pema Chonga Kigar, *op.cit.*
Gomp in Pema-Ziling area but the demon and evil spirits always put hurdles in his way and he constantly gave up the idea of constructing the Gomp. However, his successor Lama Cheoje Lingpa with his power subdued the demon and constructed the Sam-ten-yamchak Gomp.

During the times of Vth Rinpoche Tha-Lung Lama Ngawang Drakpo the Gomp was almost in the verge of destruction caused by heavy landslide that had occurred from water flowing from the stream of Shinjong Mountain, the water over flowed towards the Gomp premise leading to soil erosion. The Rinpoche performed many rituals to alter the problem but could not succeed. Then he consulted an oracle and accordingly, he went to Tibet to find an instrument required to curtail the deeds of the demon that was causing the water to overflow. After few weeks, he returned from Tibet and brought one bowl made out of human skull of a person who had died of leprosy. Next day he performed the ritual and hanged the skull in the source of stream from where water was flowing towards the Gomp. Then automatically the skull made the stream water to divert towards underground and finally saved the Gomp from destruction.

Soon after the death of Rinpoche Tha-Lung Lama Ngawang Drakpo, the demon again started to disturb the Gomp and it ultimately led to evacuation of the Gomp by Lamas. The ruins of Sam-ten-yamchak Gomp can still be seen in the Pema-Ziling (see Plate XL). The native still believe the Gomp to be haunted as told by the Rinpoche Lama Dondup. He also declared the Gomp to be inauspicious for the people in the future. With this belief, the Lamas residing there evacuated the Gomp listening the Rinpoche’s advice.
By examining the ruin of the *Gomp*, it can be assume that the *Gomp* was of single storied and it consist of two rooms each measuring 5 x 6 meter\(^2\) approximatly. The second room was a prayer hall. The entry and exit door of the *Gomp* faces toward west side. The material used for the construction of *Gomp* was stone slab of square shape of various sizes, found in abundance in nearby river and hill. They used mud mixed with animal dung as a paste material between the stone slabs. The roof of the *Gomp* was most probably made from wooden planks that were available in abundance in Menchuka. Nearby the *Gomp*, in a distance of about ten to fifteen meter away there is an *asan* (place to sit) made of stone slab where *Rinpoche* used to sit and taught his disciple.

*Lhar-Tshe Gomp*

As sited earlier, the *Sam-Sen-Yamchak Gomp* was considered ill-fated, therefore, proposal for the construction of a new *Gomp* in another suitable location was made by *Lama Dondup* after consulting an oracle. The new location selected is situated at the hilltop of Mountain of Pema-Ziling at a distance of about forty-five minutes or one hour on foot from the site of *Sam-ten-yamchak gomp*. The *gomp* thus constructed was named *Lhar-Tshe* (see Plate XLI). However, there was no source of water supply in the location, where the *Gomp* was constructed. It is believed that the VII\(^{th}\) *Rinpoche Lama Dondup* with his power made the water to come out from underground to solve the water problem. Even now, the water source can be seen, little distance away from the *Gomp* and is still in use.

Unfortunately, *Lhar-Tshe gomp* also did not remain without untouched by catastrophe. The *gomp* was destroyed three times caused by natural calamity. The first one struck in the year 1925 A.D when the premise of the *gomp* caught fire by
the lightning of thunder and got destroyed completely. The second catastrophe came in the year 1948 A.D, in which due to heavy snow falls the roof of the gomp collapsed. The third catastrophe came in year 1950 A.D in the form of earthquake. It was the year when Arunachal Pradesh and some part of Tibet were shocked by earthquake. The magnitude of the earthquake was so strong that it completely destroyed the gomp. The destruction was so extensive that it almost destroyed the figure of Gods, Goddesses and instrument present in the gomp. Only one figure of Lama Cheoje Lingpo managed to survive in the catastrophe. It is said that one Ter-phur, one Ter-Dorjee, two number of Ter-Dungar, conch shell, Cheik and Neik of religious importance which they normally keeps inside the Gomp was luckily never been kept in the Gomp during the three catastrophe and was kept under the possession of senior Lama in their home and was survived. In the year 1952 A.D a Lama named 16th Ter-ton Guru Choewang Kunsang Dache Randol arrived in Menchuka and became Xth Rinpoche. Under his instruction and guidance, they reconstructed the destroyed gomp in the year 1952 A.D.

During the time of VIIth Rinpoche Lama Dondup the material used for the construction of Lhar-Tshe Gomp is of wooden planks and bamboo sheets. Here one can notice the changes in material used for construction from the earlier constructed Sam-ten-yamchak Gomp. The reason was the scarcity of stone slabs in the hill tops and again it take lots of hard work to carry heavy stone slabs from lower belt to construction site. On the other hand bamboo in a large quantity can be easily carried to the construction site. The tree which is in abundance near the construction site became another favourite material for the construction. The wooden planks had been used for the wall and bamboo in the form of sheets was used as roof. After its first destruction same material was used for the construction and same was used after
second destruction. However, when the Gomp was reconstructed in the year 1952, the bamboo was replaced by new material in form of metal tin sheets provided by Indian Government for roofing the Gomp. They also constructed one large kitchen house consisting of two rooms and one small house used for hermitage by Rinpoche in the Gomp premises. The Gomp and the other entire house in Gomp premise has been constructed at one or three foot above the ground.

The present Lhar-Tshe Gomp is of two storied building. The entry door to the Gomp faces south direction approached by small steps. The Gomp consist of number of sculpture of Gods, deity, masks and paintings of religious importance. The ground floor consists of six rooms. The first room is a place where entry door to the Gomp is located. This room is used as a depository for belongings of devotees before entering the prayer room. The second room is a main prayer hall called Du-Khang. Here one can see the Image of Guru Padma Sambhaba, Hidam Guru Dakpa, kandu Sin-dong, Guru Raksha Taden Tshl and Lama Cheeje Lingbo (see plate LI & LII). In the opposite of the statue, there is one large asan (Throne) for the Rinpoche where no other lama other than Rinpoche is allowed to sit. The third room, which is in ‘L’ shape consists of a small prayer room and library where religious literature Tanjur and kanjur is kept. Here one can see the statue of Chabjuk Rahula, Sangdak Chakna Dorjee and Lumo Dungdong Karmo (see Plate LIII). Few meters away from it again their consist statues of Tanden Chejik Chane, Phagba Jambey Yang and figure of founding Lama of three great Monastries of Sera, Ganden and Drepung in Tibet (see Plate LIV). The fourth room is a small storeroom called Chim-La Gang, where material of religious importance and prepared lamp is kept that is to be used during worship. The fifth room is a small room where the figure of deity named Shungb-Khang, Tadin Yabyum, Aapo Dorjee Dakchen and Rah-ri Hupe Gebu is kept and
worshiped by the *Lamas* (see Plate LV & LVI). The last and the sixth room on the ground floor is a place used by *lamas* as a resting place.

The way to first floor is through staircase located on both east and west side of *Du-Khang*. The first floor only consist a large single prayer room where sculpture figure of *Gautam Buddha*, two oldest figures of *Guru Padma Sambhaba* and *Chatung-Chantung* is kept. The first floor also had library where religious literature *Tanjur* and *Kanjur* are kept at the centre of the hall.

The western side of the outside wall of the *Gomp* is inserted with roles of prayer barrels that are turned by devotees by sweeping their hands while chanting hymn “*Om Mani Padme Hum*” when proceeding through that area. On the same side, there is one *Chorten*, which was constructed in the memory of *Lama Kunsang Dache Randol Rinpoche*.

**Gomp Sources of Earning**

The administration of the *Gomp* is managed by the *Lama* organisation as per *Cheik* manuscript. Beside this, they also appoint one caretaker or housekeeper called *Konyar* from among the village. The function of *Konyar* is to look after the *Gomp* by cleaning the *Gomp* premise, offering lamp and incense every morning to Gods. He also has to perform the duty of nightwatch in the *Gomp*. In lieu of his service to the *Gomp* they pay him with money and some shares from the offering given to the *Gomp* by the devotees as payment. He is also given certain right to collect forest material from the *Gomp* premise for his household purposes.

The earning or revenue of *Gomp* comes from the donation given to it by the Community. They generally use these earning for the expenditure of the ritual and
religious festival performed in the Gomp by the Lamas for the community. It is believed that during the initial period when Sam-ten-yamchak Gomp was constructed the earning of the Gomp came from the community service provided by the people. Once in a year representative from every house was asked to do cultivation of millet in the Gomp agriculture land. If any members from the particular household were absent from the work then the house hold member was punished by making them performing extra service towards the Gomp in coming year. The millet harvested from that land is then grinded to form Khodo (millet flour), considered to be one of the important material required for the ritual practice in Gomp and also taken as meal by the Lamas in the Gomp.

However, during the time of Lama Cheoje Lingpa, he noticed that the system of compulsory community service through cultivation and gathering material for the Gomp was unpleasant and not a people-friendly. Especially for those families, who had less family member. It became difficult for them to render service to the Gomp as well as looking after their own field at the same time. Many a times it so happens that they have to miss their own cultivation production of that particular year. Thus, in order to give relief from such practice, Lama Cheoje Lingpa introduced a new system of donation collection called Dratsang-Senyom, there by replacing the previous one. According to this system, the people of Menchuka had to donate one or two bowl of Khodo (Millet flour) once in a year when a group of Lamas visit their house. This visit was made during the time of pilgrimage at Karte-Neh in the month of January. The millet collected was then stored in a wooden box in a Gomp kitchen.

The system of collecting millet once a year continued till 1951. But in the year 1952 when Lama Kunsang Dache Randol Rinpoche became the head Lama, the system of collecting Khodo as Dratsang-Senyom was changed. He along with Deb T.
Tsering who was an Assistant Tibetan Agent, Sher Lama and GaonBurah, appointed by government of India decided that since the donation of Khodo (Millet flour) was not sufficient to fulfill the requirement of the Gomp and decided to introduce new system of donation in the form of cash. According to the new system, each household was made to donate cash as per their earning and capability. The household who earns more was made to donate high donation and the household with less earning was made to donate less amount of cash. The amount of cash to be donated as Dratsang-Senyom was fixed from ten paisa to five Rupees. At present, the cash is fixed between fifty Rupees to five thousand Rupees by the Lamas. Beside this, the contribution of voluntarilty donation was offerd to the Gomp by well-to-do families.

Other than above mentioned source of earning, large tract of forest and agriculture land located at Pema-ziling and its nearby surrounding was owned by the Gomp. This forest, pasture land and agriculture lands also contribute in the source of earning for the Gomp. The people who do not have sufficient land for animal rearing and cultivation take permission from the Gomp authority to do so in the Gomp area and in return, he had give certain share of the production to the Gomp as tax. In case of animal rearing the person, give some quantity of butter as tax to the Gomp. Beside this, every year during the birth anniversary of Guru Padma Samhava, a representative from the house of Lamas gathers in the village Gomp and collects firewood from the forest owned by the Gomp. They use the firewood for cooking as well as in ritual practice for the rest of the year.
Stupa

A Stupa is solid geometrical shape masonry of stone or brick work mounded with soil. Stupa in Memba is called Chorten. The history of culture of Stupa is believed to be started by the Buddhism in India. It is said that when Buddha died, those who receive the divided ashes of Buddha built a numbers of Stupa. Buddhist monk took the concept of Stupa into Tibet and from since then the structural design of Stupa as Chorten has undergone considerable modification and became very important monumental structure in Tibetan Buddhist society. From Tibet, the Memba later brought the concept of Chorten with them to Menchuka valley. They erect Chorten for various religious purposes. The basic idea for the erection of Chorten was meant to hopper the relics of either Buddha or the Bodhisattva to show devotion paid towards Buddha and his doctrine. Beside the man-made Chorten there is a belief of existence of Chorten made by God himself. This type of Chorten is generally a stone structure formed naturally in a structural shape like Chorten. The Chorten also serves as repositories of relics, manuscript, sacred objects where it is buried underneath and prays by devotees. Like their Tibetan counterpart, they erects some of the Chortens in memory of renowned Lamas and Rinpochee whose ashes or bones are collected in a small container and put them beneath the place where Chorten is to be constructed. Many of the Chorten in Menchuka was made to please the local deity for their blessings. Beside these, they also construct Chorten in memory of their loved ones by the family members.

33 A.L. Basham, op.cit., p. 351.
34 Emil Schlagintweit, op.cit., pp. 192-196.
Chorten is considered so sacred that before its construction an oracle is consulted for the selection of a site. Lots of preparation is required in the collection of sacred material needed for the construction. A ritual is performed at the site where Chorten is to be constructed and sacred material and ashes or bones of person for whom it is to be constructed is prepared for burial in the Chorten. Some also prefer offering of gold, silver, large Tibetan bowl, ornaments, Tibetan gun and weapons for the burial. After that, they start the construction of Chorten. The material used for the construction of Chorten in early days was rough stone and mud. The use of bricks, concrete and cement also can be noticed in present day.

The construction of Chorten requires huge investment and time taking. It is not possible for a common person to bear the expenditure. Hence, only people who acquires huge wealth in his possession is in position to construct individual Chorten in memory of their loved one. In case of religious importance, they collect common donation from the villagers for the construction of the Chorten.

One can witness number of Chorten decorated and surrounded with Darjo in Menchuka, but all of them has been constructed after 1970 A.D. Only the ruins of some of the early Chorten in deteriorating condition still exist in Menchuka are.35

Sada Bumba Chorten

The Sada Bumba Chorten also commonly called Karte Chorten (see plate XLII) by layman is believed to be the first Chorten constructed at Menchuka. It was constructed during 17th century A.D by Lama Lorde Gyatso himself while on his stay at Karte after returning from Rirak. The remains of the Chorten can still be seen

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35 Lama Pema Chonga Kigar, op.cit.
today where small clay pot brought from Tibet. The Pot was filled with sacred relic or object and was kept inside the chorten by Lama Lorde Gyatso.

The material used for the construction of Chorten is of rough stone of square shape and clay for plastering. The causes for the ruin of Sada Bumba Chorten is due to regular soil erosion for many centuries and with constant flooding of the nearby water stream. The ruin of Chorten is still worshiped by the devotees. The Memba have also constructed one new Chorten in the same place, just few meter distance away from the old one with bricks, concrete and cement.

**Dewa Renchin Bumpa Chorten**

The Dewa Renchin Bumpa Chorten was constructed in the same period during the time of Lama Lorde Gyatso. The Chorten is located in Lha-Lung village. It was constructed for bringing good luck to the people of Menchuka Valley. By observing the ruins of Dewa Renchin Bumpa Chorten, it can be said that the material used for the construction is same as that of karte Chorten.

**Lung-chu Chorten**

The Chorten is located in Lah-Lung village (see Plate XLII). The Chorten was known by this name because of its location near the stream called Lung. It was also known as Chandan-takpa Chorten because of its location near Chandan-takpa, a place where Lama Lorde Gyatso stuck his sandal wood stick in the ground leading to the growth of sandal wood tree out of the stick. The Chorten was constructed to cast away the feeling of enmity among each other and to pave the way for the existence of everlasting friendship and harmony within the community.

By observing, the ruins of Lung-chu Chorten it can be said that the material used for the construction are rough stone slabs of square shape and soil was used as pasting material. The Chorten must be of the shape of plainly pyramidal type
consisting of five to six steps out of which three steps of pyramidal is still visible in standing position.

*Loy-hak Chorten*

This *Chorten* is located in Singbir village. The *Chorten* was constructed to bring good harvest. The Memba society during those days was based on agriculture and good harvest of crops was must for them to sustain their family and to pay the revenue to the authority. The failure of crops brings famine like situation on one hand and on another hand due to unable to pay the tax, the people had to bear the double burden with extra duty of revenue as fine to be paid in next year. So *Loy-hak chotren* was constructed to ensure the continuity of good harvest every year.

*Tatum Lagang Drashi Chorten*

This *Chorten* is located in Singbir village. The *Chotren* was constructed to destroy the enemy. Neighbouring tribes who were not in friendly terms often conduct raid in Memba territory causing destruction of property and loss of life. The enemy also comes in the form of evil spirit to causing harm to the people. So in order to save themselves from such incident and to cast away the enemy both in human and demonic form such type of *Chorten* was constructed.

*Chukba Gong Hogh Chortens*

The *Chukba Gong Hogh Chortens* is a name jointly given to the two *Chorten* standing side by side to each other located in Menchuka village (See Plate XLIII). It is popular that once upon a time there use to live two wealthy people in the village of Menchuka and were neighbours. Both men hated each other. Both of them considered themselves to be superior and wealthier than another.

One day one of them in order to show his richness decided to build biggest *Chorten* in entire Menchuka. Within few weeks, the construction of *Chorten* was
completed and in order to show his achievement he organised grand feast where he declared that no one in Menchuka is capable of building such a big Chorten and boasted himself.

Next day the other rich neighbour was furious when he heard the news. Infuriated, he also declared that he will build much bigger Chorten than him. Within a few weeks, he constructed Chorten much bigger and taller than the earlier one. In the same manner like the first person, he organised grand feast to boast his achievement. It is believed that because of this kind of attitude and thinking at the time of construction of Chorten they were cursed and as a result both of them died without leaving any offsprings. After their death, Menchuka Deb gave their property to another person.\footnote{Mapor Goiba, 40 years, Menchuka village, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, interviewed on 10-4-2014.}

Unlike other Chorten of this period Chukba Gong Hogh Chortens are almost in good shape. By thoroughly examining the ruin, the material used for the construction was of the same material as used during early period. But the two Chortens constructed were bigger in size than the others found in Menchula Valley. The Chorten constructed by first person was of cupola shape at the top with base having cube shape. It was about five to six meter in height. The second Chorten constructed was of plainly pyramidal shape consisting of seven steps. It measures about seven to eight meter of height above the ground. Beside these, both the Chorten contains stone engraving art where picture of Bodhisattva and prayer hymns were engraved.
**Dyu-Dail Chorten**

This *Chorten* is located in Dorjeeling village. It was constructed during the time of *Lama Kunsang Dache Randol Rinpoche*. The *Chorten* was build to help those people who do not follow Buddhism. So that, they may develop faith in Buddhism and follow its path. The Dorjeeling village was also inhabited by Ramo, who practice animism. It was the reason for the selection of construction of *Dyu-Dali Chorten* in this village. It was during this period that *M.M. Dhasmana* had noticed that many of the *Ramo* people of Dorjeeling village had constructed outhouse, which contain idols of Buddhist Gods, where in every morning they burn aromatic leaves in these outhouse.\(^{37}\)

**Rang-jan Chortens**

This *Chorten* is located in Sekar village. The *Rang-jan Chorten* is a two small *Chorten* standing side by side of 30-35 cm of height (see Plate XLIV). One is called *Pho* and the other *Mho*, which means that one of the *Chorten* is husband and another is wife. This *Chorten* was formed naturally from a stone, which Memba believed that *Guru Padma Sambhaba* himself discovered it. Both of them are of pyramidal shape.

**Lamba-Bomche-Choepangka Chorten**

The *Lamba-Bomche Choepangka Chorten* is located in Sekar village. The *Chortan* is believed to be founded during the time of *Lama Yap-meh-pao Dorjee*. Every Memba house members were required to visit this *Chorten* once in a year during the first week of month of March. In which they had to offer *Choejang Duche*, one *Khada, Peah* and *Darjoo*.

Lama Kunsang Dache Randol Rinpoche Chorten

This Chorten is located in a Lhar-Tshe Gomp (see Plate XLIV). They constructed the Chorten in memory of Lama Kunsang Dache Randol Rinpoche. For the first time the new materials were used for the construction of the Chorten. The materials used for the construction were bricks, iron rod, sand and cement. The structure of Chorten was somewhat like a cube in the base of the ground and while moving upwards its slightly pyramidal in shape with four steps followed by bell shaped projecting at top, with a small hollow core kept as a space for the offering. Above it, there was pointless tower of disc shaped spiral of thirteen steps followed by the figure of the half moon and the sun.

Mani

A Mani is monumental figure of a rectangular or cylindrical structure where one will find numbers of Buddhist prayer such as “Om mani padmi hum” engraved.38 The Mani is originally a Sanskrit word meaning “precious stone”.39 Later the word was taken by the Tibetan and used it to define the present monumental practice. The purpose of mani in any form is to draw attention of pulling the mind of devotees back to the spiritual sphere of life.

The rectangular structure of mani is made generally with loose irregularly rectangular stone slabs. At the upper part and corner of rectangular structure, they kept flat stone slab in which they engrave Buddhist prayer inscription. The height of the structure is about one to two meter above the ground and length of about five to six meter. The Memba generally erect it in the route used by them for travelling

39 Emil Schlagintweit, op.cit., p. 196.
distant places for pilgrimage or for trade purpose and on the track between villages. When they passes through this mani they pass from left side of the mani or right hand side to follow the series of the letters of the prayer inscription engraved in it (See Plate XLVI). The building of mani requires huge sum of investment. For its construction, a proper ritual is followed and the Lamas experts in engraving are called upon to perform the engraving part of the work. In the Menchuka Valley, there was scanty of people expert in such engraving and hence to fulfill the requirement they engage artist from Tibet by paying hefty sum of amount in the form of cash or kind. One could find the ruins of such rectangular stone structure of mani in the village of Lha-Lung, West Deching-Tang and East Deching-Tang.

The mani at Lha-Lung is located near Lung-chu Chorten or Chandan-takpa Chorten (see plate XLII). This mani is one of the earliest in Menchuka Valley erected during the time of Lama Lorde Gyatso. The mani in East Deching-Tang is located in a left side of the road from Menchuka near the village Gomp (see Plate XLV). The period of the construction of mani is not determined, but is believed to be more than 100 years old. The expenditure for the building of mani in East Dechang-Tang was bore by the villagers through general donation and offerings. In west Deching-Tang village, there are two numbers of mani located in right side of the road from Menchuka (see Plate XLV). An individual family constructed both the mani, dedicating it in the name of their respective family members to ensure their prosperity and to pave way of the door of heaven or for good birth again as human for the deceased member. Pema Philley constructed one of the mani in the year 1908-1910 A.D, when he was the Deb of Menchuka Valley.40

40 Tashi Philley, op.cit., date 22-6-2014.
The cylindrical barrel structure is another type of mani widely used in Memba community. In the western world it is known by the name Prayer wheel. It is believed to be invented in Tibet and gradually spread to all over the region where Tibetan form of Buddhism flourished. The mani of this type is of cylindrical shape to make it rotate when turned with a belief that when it revolves the prayer written in it will spread to far-flung area spreading the message of Buddha. The inside of the cylindrical barrel is filled with religious manuscript, prayers and hymns. The turning of cylindrical mani is to remind the Memba people about the turning of wheel of the Dharma by Gautam Buddha and other Bodhisattvas. The circular movement of mani while rotating always move in clockwise direction. The prayer engraved must be chanted repeatedly every time before a mani is turned until the end of the rotation in the belief that fortune shall favour the person.

For the making of a mani they first prepare wooden barrel of cylindrical shape of required size. The outside and inside of the cylindrical wooden barrel is polished for smoothening. After polishing they paste fine quality animal skin or brass frame in the outer layer of the cylindrical wooden barrel. In case of the use of animal skin, it is first painted with white colour and let it dry for a while. After that they write down the prayer “Om mani Padmi hum” using red or yellow colour. In case of pasting brass frame outside the barrel then they simply engrave the prayer on to it. The cylindrical barrel is then connected with wooden or metal shaft through its centre. Next, they put religious prayer and hymn written in a paper with religious manuscript prepared by the Lamas inside the cylindrical wooden barrel and it is ready for the use of people.

There are two types of rotating mani used in the Memba community. The first one is the large one that rotates by gently swaying hand and second one by the
hydropower. The large cylindrical mani, who rotates simply by means of gently swaying, is laying hanging in a large quantity on the outer wall of the Gomp. The devotees who visit the Gomp use their right hand to gently swaying in order to create circular movement and at the same time chants the prayer “Om mani padmi hum”. After completing the swaying of all the manis, devotees then enter inside the Gomp to offer prayer.

The Memba use waterpower not only for grinding grains but also for the purpose of rotating mani (see Plate XLVII). The large cylindrical mani, which rotates with the help of waterpower is placed on the course of stream. A large cylindrical mani is positioned inside the small house in a standing position. The house is constructed one or two meter above the ground. The turbine made of wooden frames called Droh is placed below the house, connected with wooden shaft called Phang coming from inside the house through house floor. The wooden shaft is further connecting to the large cylindrical mani. The water from the stream is diverted towards the turbine through a canal or drain. The water flowing through canal or drain makes the turbine to rotate, thus making the connected the wooden shaft to rotate. The wooden shaft in the same manner makes the large cylindrical turbine to rotate in a clockwise direction. By the use of waterpower, they make the large cylindrical mani to rotate whole year or for lifetime with proper maintenance time to time. Individual Memba families mostly build this type of rotating mani with the help of waterpower. One can find waterpower-rotating mani in East Deching-Tang village and on the way between Menchuka town and Yorko village.

The second type is a small one enough for hand holding rotating mani (see Plate XLVII). In this mani, a pin is stucked loosely into the handle with a ring of shell or metal between cylinder and handle. A small heavy ball is attached to the side
of the cylinder by a chain or cord. This chain or cord attached with small ball is to give a centrifugal momentum, when mani is turned on its axis. The device, which maintains the momentum of the rotating hand that hold mani is called as ‘governor’ in modern technological term. This was the device, which is said to be taken by western technicians in 1420 A.D to invent a solution for conducting mechanical crank motion over the “dead spot”.41 Lamas and old village folk carry this hand held rotating mani rotating it regularly and chanting prayer. Beside this type of mani carried by individual, there is another hand held rotating mani, which is quite bigger than the normal one. It is used by the Lamas while performing rituals.

**Prayer Flags**

Flags filled with religious symbols and prayers are one of the important components of socio-religious life of the Memba community (see Plate XLVIII). The practice of using prayer flag is considered efficaciously for preventing evil spirit or demon, bad omen, illness and problems. There is popular belief that continuous flattering of prayer flags bearing religious symbols helps in spreading the religious message in the entire Menchuka through wind as the medium. These flags are mainly made of five colours that are considered sacred, viz., white, yellow, green, blue and red. The prayer flag is commonly called darjo by the Memba, it can be seen dangling outside the compound of a Gomp, pilgrimage place, top of the mountain, route, in the vicinity of bridge, mani and Chorten. Every Memba household also hangs darjo in front of their house. Every year new darjo is usually replaced during the Lossar festival or at the time of any religious events. A darjo can be divided into three groups according to their size. The first on is the large one called darsing darjo. The

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*darsing darjo* is a single large flag of rectangular shape that is hanged in front of the *gomp* and house. The post in which it is attached is of considerable height of various meters. In the early days, the pole to be used for the flags was collected from the nearby forest with lots of hurdles and difficulty because of the lack of modern means of transportation. It takes more than twenty to fifty men to carry such pole.

The second type of flag is called *dargyu darjo*. This *darjo* is of a single large cloth of rectangular in shape attached to smaller pole as compared to *darsing darjo*. This *darjo* is dangled in *gomp*, pilgrimage place, house, top of the mountain, near *mani* and *choriten*. It is also used for deceased people. White colour *darjo* is used for deceased person, where the prayer and symbol required for prosperity of the deceased one is written on it. They usually hangs the *dargyu darjo* for the deceased person in a place where there is a continuous blowing of wind for flattering of *darjo*, such as a place like top of the mountain, near bridge, river and in cremation place.

The third type of prayer flag is called *Lharg-yang darjo*. This is a small *darjo* measuring 30 x 20 cm² approx or 20 x 10 cm² approx. Several numbers of such *darjo* is attached together in a single rope and dangled in a religious place like *gomp*, pilgrimage place, mountain top, *choriten* and *mani*. All the five colours used for *darjo* is attached serial wise alternatively on a string of rope. They also hang same type of *darjo* called *mani Lharg-yang darjo* in memory of deceased person of the family. Here again white colour is only used as *darjo* for the deceased person and hanged in the place where *dargyu darjo* for the deceased one is hanging.\(^{42}\)

\(^{42}\) Phurba Tsering Naksang, *op.cit.*
**Arts and Craft**

The art of any community is an important manifestation of its culture. Art represents the community’s tradition, belief and heritage to a very large extend. In Memba society, the art of statue making, stone engraving, musical instrument and painting is associated with the Buddhist religion without which the art may not have prevailed in the Memba society. The *Lamas* who excel in art making are mostly of the religious nature. The practice of making of such arts is limited to the *lamas* only. The practise is due to belief that the only *Lamas* are capable of practicing prayers and ritual which is the main theme required for the manufacture of such arts. The arts made by *Lamas* in Menchuka are of highly developed style, manufactured with great purity and skill. However, unfortunately most of the early arts are destroyed and lost to the time. Some of the detail of the Memba Buddhist arts has been described under the following headings:

**Statue**

The statue, which is worshiped as an idol is an image of various Buddhist deity, Buddha, *Bodhisattvas* and demons that are considered to have posses spiritual qualities and power. Since, the statue which represents various Buddhist figures bears a religious importance, the preparation of which requires following of certain ritual without which the image will be considered merely as an object of no religious importance and spiritual power. The material used for the making of statue are soil, animal skin, ashes of burned incense, wooden frame, grass, gold, silver, religious manuscript, prayer written in a paper and colour for painting.

For the statue making, firstly all the materials needed are collected together. A wooden frame is used to construct five different layout for hands, head, below the waist part and for neck to waist part. The wooden layout will function like a bone to
give support to a finished statue. They then covered it with grass to function as muscles of the figure. Then the animal skin mostly of cow, which will be used as glue, is deep boiled in water till it softens enough to produce glue when mashed. The prepared glue is then mixed with soil and ashes of burned incense, to make the five parts of the statue. After the completion of the structure, they bring it into a place such as *gomp* or house where the statues will be kept for worshipping. Then *Lama* with his assistant will perform the ritual required for the assembling of the different parts of the statue. During the process of ritual, the lower waist part consisting of legs and upper waist part up to shoulder is joined together. After it an offering of gold, silver, religious manuscript and prayers are kept inside the joined part of statue of the shoulder. Finally they assemble the hand and head part to complete the statue and is kept to dry. Next, the statue is painted using brass or hands. The colour used for the statue is prepared from the natural elements like soil, rocks, coal and plants.

The statue of *Lama Ter-ton Cheoje Lingpa kunda* in a sitting position made by a *Lama* is the oldest statue in the Valley. The two statues of *Guru Padmasambhava* and of *Chatung-Chantung* made by *Lama Thaden-Calden* from Tibet are amongst the oldest statue that still survives and is preserved in *Lhar-Tshe gomp* (see Plate XLIX). There are also numbers of small statues of *Gautam Buddha* and *Guru Padmasambhava* of early period made by an unknown *Lama* in the *Gomp*. Beside this most of the statue kept in *Lhar-Tshe Gomp* and village *gomp* is made by the 16th *Ter-ton Guru Choewang Kunsang Dechen Rangdol* after his arrival in 1952 A.D. The large nine to ten meter statue of *Gautam Buddha* located in a village *gomp* of Darjelling is one of the most magnificent statues made by him.\(^3\)

\(^3\) Ibid.
Stone Engraving

Several works of engraving art in stone before 1947 A.D have been located in the Menchuka Valley. Most of which have been imported or produced by Lamas from Tibet in those days and still survives. These engraved stones are found mostly in places where mani is located. The engraving is done with the help of small iron tools of a pen like shape. The engraving is done in fine quality stone slab. They mostly engrave Buddhist prayer like “Om mani padmi hum”. They painted some of the prayer engraved with black and red colour to have a clear view while reading. This type of early-engraved stone slab painted in red colour is found in some of the caves of Pema-Ziling, which are still in good condition as compared to one that is found near mani. Besides engraving prayer in stone slab, engraved images of Gautam Buddha and Guru Padmasambhava can also be seen. One of such engraved stone has been located near the Chukba Gong Hogh Chortens in Menchuka village. The earliest of such engraved images in stone slabs of Buddha are kept in Lhar-Tshe gomp. They discovered these engraved slabs accidently while developing the soil of Lhar-Tshe gomp area. The workers while developing road unknowingly dug the place where Tha-Lung Lama Ngawang dakpu is cremated and led to the discovery of these slabs.44

Mask

The use of mask can be witnessed in many community of the world from ancient times. The masks of various kinds have been used by the African tribes to perform various religious rituals as a medium of communication with Gods or spirit. In Indian sub-continent, the use of mask can be witnessed in the Trans-Himalayan region where Tibetan Buddhism is followed. The Memba tribes also like their

44 Lama Pema Chonga Kigar, op.cit.
counterpart who follows Tibetan form of Buddhism use mask in their religious ceremonies (see Plate LVII). They perform drama in the form of dance depicting various stories related to their religion by wearing mask of various Gods, Goddesses, layman and demons in religious ceremony. The mask dance is performed to show the malignant effect of supernatural power to human beings about the life after death according to their deeds or *karma*. The mask also helps in imparting knowledge for understanding theme of religious belief and practice associated with it. The mask dance is considered so sacred that person participating in it had to follow certain taboo till the completion of the ceremonies. The *Bardo* pantomime\(^\text{45}\) and *Yak* pantomime\(^\text{46}\) is a performance of drama with dance where they wear mask of various deity performed in a *gomp*. The types of mask used by the people during the mask dances are:-

**Chenji**: God of heaven. The face of the mask is painted with white colour dressed in a silk cloak.

**Lhakarpo**: Head deity of heaven. The mask of *Lhakarpo* is also of whitish colour. The person wearing this mask also wears white cloak made of silk, a white wrapper, shoe made from cloth, holds a small rotating *mani* in his right hand and prayer bell in his left hand.

**Choijegepu**: Record keeper deity, who keeps the record of every human activity and their deeds in his record book. It is under his direction a faith of the soul of dead person to the road to heaven or hell is decided. The person wearing this mask has to

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wear trousers, silk cloak having beautiful design, shoe, sword made of wood in his left hand and wooden disc to represent record book in his right hand.

**Denakpo**: The Denakpo considered to be the head deity of hell. His mask is of dreadful look showing gnashing teeth and flowing tresses of black colour to represent devil. The performer had to wear trousers, silk cloak, one *khada* around his neck and carries dagger in his right hand. Numbers of demon as his escort follows the arrival of Denakpo.

**Pemalingpa**: Considered to be an evil spirit. The mask of pemalingpa is of human skeleton form and the body of a person wearing it is painted with white colour to represent skeleton figure in his body and carries phallus made of wood in one of his hand.

**Phodong Langdong**: Considered to be one of the demonic troops who escort Denakpo. The masked figured is of bull or yak head. The person wearing this mask wears red silk cloak, *khada* around his neck and carry long rope in his right hand. The rope is carried to tie the spirit of dead person.

**Modong Langdong**: She is a female pair of Phodong Langdong. The mask figure is same as bull or yak head. The performer wearing this female mask also wears silk cloak of blue in colour, *khada* around her neck and carries a long rope in her right hand.

**Truidong**: The Truidong consists of two male pair of demonic troops. The mask is of monkey figure. The persons performing it wears silk cloak and carries weighing scale in their right hand. The scale is used to measure the weight of person’s sins against good deeds.

**Tadong**: The Tadong also consists of two male pair representing demonic troops. The mask image is of tiger head. The person wearing this mask paints their body
with yellow colour with black strips to represent tiger figure and holds a pen made of bamboo sticks in their right hand.

_Duidong_: It also consists of two pair of performers wearing a mask image of serpent. The cloth they wear is to resemble serpent and carry wooden disc in their right hand. The disc is used as record book where the activity of the human deed is recorded. The _Duidong_ only keeps records of the bad deed of human being, so that punishment will be given according to their deeds when they go to hell.

_Sendong_: The persons performing _Sendong_ act wear mask image of lion head. The actors wear dress to resemble the lion image and carry axe in his right hand. The _Sendong_ also consist of two male pair.

_Domdong_: The actor acting in _Domdong_ act wear mask of bear head. The act requires two pair of _Domdong_ carrying bellows in their right hand. The bellows is carried to show the symbol of instrument used for igniting fire of blaze in hell, where sinners will be thrown down and left for burning as punishment.

_Phadong_: It also consists of two pair of actor wearing mask image of boar and dressed with rough silk cloth. The _Phadong_ carries a sword in their right hand and escorts _Denakpo_ along with other deity.

_Chungdong_: The _Chungdong_ also consist of two pair of actor wearing mask image of bird with horn on their head. They carry a sword in their right hand.

_Dikchung_: The mask depicts spirit of sinful dead person who had followed the occupation of hunting and fishing to sustain his family. The mask image is of human figure of whitish colour. The _Dikchung_ is depicted by wearing dresses of black silver cloak that carries lump of meat, a quiver and haversack on his back, bow and arrow in his hand.
**Brakpa:** The spirit of a father of Dikchung. The mask image is of a human figure showing two teeth depicting an old Memba folk. The character wears normal Memba dress and escorts his son Dikchung in stages of after life.

**Gomchen:** The spirit of a wisdom person who had followed the path taught by God in his lifetime. The mask image is of human figure painted with whitish colour. The Gomchen is depicted by wearing white silk cloak with silk sash as belt around the waist, carrying blowing horn instrument in his waist, some religious manuscript under his pocket, a small rotating mani and a rosary in his right hand.

**Drapa:** The spirit of a young boy who is a disciple of Gomchen. The mask image is of a young boy wearing Memba dress. During the mask pantomime he escorts along Gomchen.

**Lhamo:** A female deity in yak pantomime. She is depicted with very beautiful mask of female wearing rich silk cloth *en suite* with ornaments.

**Apa-oh:** The father of yak keeper. The mask image is of an old man wearing Memba dress.

**Ojo Gen:** The elder brother of yak keeper. The mask image of Ojo Gen is of an adult man wearing Memba dress.

**Ojo Chung:** The younger brother of yak keeper. The performer of this role wears a mask image of young and healthy person. The Ojo Chung is also depicted by wearing a Memba dress.

**Jhe-bin:** The real owner of yak. The mask image of Jhe-bin is of a healthy man wearing fine quality Memba dress and ornaments symbolising richness.

**Jhe-yo:** The yak-keeper who looks after the yak for Jhe-bin. The performer of this role wears a mask of a poor man wearing normal quality Memba dress.
**Naba:** The person who attains enlightenment and became Buddha. The mask image of a person is of a Buddha wearing a monk dress and carrying religious instruments.

**Shan-ba:** The Shan-ba is a name of a bird. The person performing this role wears mask image of a bird and depicted with dress resembling the body of the bird.

**Painting**

*Tangka* painting occupies a special position amid the arts and crafts in a Memba culture, which grew along with sculpture, particularly in mask making (see Plate LVIII). It is used as religious object where painting of sacred portraits of deities with their gestures and attribute the symbols for the purpose of worship. *Tangka* is considered a crucial medium through which the highest ideas of Buddhism among the Memba are evoked and brought alive.

*Tangka* is mainly done by the *Lamas* when approached by a layman. They generally prepare with a belief that it will remove suffering and physical obstacle, that stands as hurdle in their path. It also helps to establish path for long, healthy and prosperous life. The regular possession of *Tangka* having image of deity, as an object of worship will also bring merit and raises future benefits. They also commissioned some of the *tangka* in the name of deceased person to create necessary favourable condition for the rebirth in human form. It provides the people an opportunity to accumulate further virtues required for spiritual advancement and the desire to attain enlightenment.

The early *Tangka* painting art could not survive among the Memba people. Though, the *Tangka* painting made during late 19th century A.D by 16th *Ter-ton Guru Choewang Kunsang Dechen Rangdol* is preserved in *Lhar-Tshe gomp* kept under a glass frame to protect it from dust. Or else, like earlier *Tangka* painting, this
one may too might have destroyed with the passage of time. The material used in his
Tangka painting is made of fine quality indigenous paper.

Most of Tangka painting made by 16th Ter-ton Guru Choewang Kunsang Dechen Rangdol depicts forty-two numbers of Gods of heaven called Shiba Sibchu Tani and fifty-eight numbers of demons of hell called Tha-tung Ngub Ch-jabge to which each individual is bound to encounter during Bardo stage after death. Beside this, he also made Tangka painting of Sangdak Chakna Dorjee (serpent king) and of Guru Padmasambhava in his various manifestations.47

Musical Instrument

According to traditional Tibetan Buddhism, music plays an important role in the process of inner transformation towards enlightenment. They consider music as one of the path through which one could discover the truth of absolute reality and supreme bliss of wisdom and compassion.48

The Lamas of Memba community plays various types of musical instrument such as drums, trumpets, flageolets, conch, bells and gongs made of wood, metal, animal body, conch shell and human skeleton. These musical instruments are mainly used for performing prayer service and rituals rather than for singing purpose. They brought most of the musical instruments from Tibet, except for few instruments made of bamboo, animal body and human body part that are made locally by the people (see Plate LIX).

47 Lama Pema Chonga Kigar, *op.cit.*
The flageolet is a small flutelike instrument made of a single bamboo tube with four finger holes on the top and two thumbholes below. They use flageolet during the initial stage of learning before knowing how to play and blow trumpets by the Lamas. The trumpets consist of carved tube that is wide at the end made of wood and bronze. The trumpets with different size decorated with brass rings and with fine quality of semi precious stone can be witnessed.

The gongs consist of two brass disc with a turned rim, that produce resonant note of gong when struked. The conch is made of a White Sea shell, which produces sound similar to trumpets when blown. The conch shell is neither a native product of Menchuka nor its Tibetan counterpart. It was supplied to Tibet by India or China and finally to Memba region via Tibet. They also use small bell of hollow metal object, which produces sound when struked with clapper fitted inside the bell. The top of the bell is fitted with a handle to able to hold in the hand.

Drums are of two types- large and small one. The large one is of a barrel shape covered with animal skin hanged upon a wooden frame of about three feet long or in a ceiling with the help of a rope. Some of these drums are also fixed with wooden handle. These large drums are beaten with cane stick to produce sound. The small drum is made from two hemispherical wooden bowl joined together on their convex side. The base part is covered with snake skins and decorated with colourful ribbon strips at the joint. In order to play it, two leather ball or cloth ball is attached to a rope long enough to reach the base of the drum and fastened to the centre of the joined convex. This drum when shaken with the help of hand will cause the leather ball attached with rope to swing and strike the skin cover to produce sound.

49 The argument was based on the theory that conch shell can only be found in sea, which can be reached through India, China and Myanmar.
The Memba Lamas also plays a small hemispherical drum made of human skulls and trumpets made of a human thigh bone (see Plate LXI). The instrument made of human skull is considered to contain special power to summon demon during the performance of a ritual. For the preparation of such instruments, they follow certain kinds of taboo. In the preparation of skull drum the skull of those person who have died at the age of sixteen years are preferred and in case of thigh-bone trumpets the bone of dreaded criminals or those who have died by violence was preferred. However, before taking their bone, permission of their family member is sought. In most of the cases, the family members give the permission with a belief that the deceased soul will get the blessing of God and will have a favourable rebirth. In order to prepare instrument from human bone a special elaborate incantation is done, otherwise the sound produced from such music would consider insufficiently powerful to summon the demon.\textsuperscript{50}

**Pilgrimage**

Pilgrimage has long been an important religious practice among the Memba and those having Tibetan culture in the region across Asia. Pilgrimage in Memba context is a circumambulation of holy places known as Neh (Ne). The Neh includes man-made site such as Gomp and Chorten, natural sites such as mountains and lakes which have perceived as the residence of deities blessed by former religious masters. Many of the Neh is believed to contain holy footprints of Lamas and their accompanied domestic animals, self created images of object of religious importance and sanctified tree. Most of the Neh is associated with Nying-ma-pa sect who advocated that Guru padmasambhava had concealed many Ter-ma in various

\textsuperscript{50} Lama Pema Chonga Kigar, *op.cit.*
location in Trans-Himalayan zone later to be discovered by *Ter-ma* reveller called *ter-ton* and hence also reputed for visit of supernatural *ter-ton* Lama. The *ter-ton* is a person having very special power, often had special dreams, even as children, in which they receive blessing and teaching directly from *Guru Padmasambhava* and *Ane Yeshe Tsogyal*.\(^{51}\) These *ter-tongs* are able to find the treasures and bring them out of their hidden location without any difficulty. The place where *Ter-ma* is hidden is also considered to be a place where devotees can have direct meeting with deities residing and can make petition, prayers and offering to them. It is believed to be place having quality of sacred energy or empowerment associated with Buddhist deity.\(^{52}\)

In order to guide the pilgrim there exists written records in the form of manuscript. This manuscript is the text written by Buddhist *Lamas* on their pilgrimage to holy places such as *Chorten*, sacred place where secret object and images are formed. This description of naturally formed holy places also illustrate the former presence of religious saints who consecrated the site with their imprints and also of deities and Buddhist religious symbol that are believed to be have spontaneously formed.

The earliest known pilgrimage guide in Menchuka is an indigenous manuscript text called *Naik* believed to be written by *Ane Yeshe Tsogyal*, as instructed by *Guru Padmasambhava*. The text is a record of a hidden place where *Guru Padmasambhava* has concealed his *ter-ma* located in Menchuka. Based on the record of this manuscript, the *lamas* of Menchuka follows the route leading towards pilgrimage place. The work is considered to be a description of the religious history

\(^{51}\) Binder Schmidt (ed.), *Advice from the Lotus Born*, Rangjung Yeshe Publication, Hong Kong, 1994, pp. 1-10.

\(^{52}\) Lama Pema Chonga Kigar, *op.cit.*
of sacred places and geographical location in Menchuka region of Arunachal Pradesh. Since the Chinese took the original manuscript of this guide during Indo-China war (1962 A.D). The current text present in Menchuka is a copy of original text quoted in Deb-ther.53

The copy of manuscript recorded centuries ago still plays an important role for Memba pilgrimage to recognise the place as sacred and worthy of worship. The detailed description mentioned in the manuscript helps them to find and identify the route and place located in Menchuka Valley. Most of the common Memba people are illiterate and have not directly read the text, considered to be a sacred text to be read by Lamas only. The knowledge of pilgrimage place is widely passed to them through oral tradition through family member or from those who made pilgrimages earlier and from Lama who had read the Naik manuscript and translated to them.

Almost all Memba men and women along with their children from all kinds of social background undertake pilgrimage at some point of time in their lifetime. Usually, they visit once or twice a year in pilgrimage place located within Menchuka area. When the time of pilgrimage arrives, they start preparing the material requirements such as incense, khada, darjo, prayer written in paper, lamp and other items of offering. They also practice a custom of offering and serving chang in the pilgrimage. It is a ritual to take bath before starting any pilgrimage in order to purify ones body. They do the purificatory bath one day earlier in order to avoid cold in early morning of Menchuka. Moreover, it also saves time, which can be utilised to prepare meal and chang necessary for the journey. After preparing the meal they carry it to their journey towards the pilgrimage place. It takes almost one to three

hours on foot to reach the holy place. There they will select one favourable place to setup the camp for resting and starts by putting darjo in the surrounding area.

Besides this, in some pilgrimage site the Memba also select eight to ten numbers of volunteers amongst the community called Jinda to serve the pilgrims. The person who accepts to become a Jinda has to bare the expenditure of meal to be provided to devotees who participate in the pilgrimage for a period of one year. The Jinda person also takes the responsibility of decorating, clearing bushes and shrubs in the holy site for the devotees. The Jinda party have to reach the pilgrimage place three days before the date of pilgrimage to make necessary preparation. During these three days, they take shelter in the cave where they stay and sleep till the completion of pilgrimage. They opt for cave or favourable place, which will provide shelter from rain and cold. There they make room for kitchen where they prepare snacks, butter tea and meal for the pilgrims. The Jinda party are escorted by one or two Lamas who stay with them, who performs the rites and prayers required for entire people for joyful journey towards the holy site without any hurdle. During the time of pilgrimage, they serve with their full dedication to pilgrims. When pilgrim’s starts arriving in the holy place, the Jinda party welcome them and offer them chang, butter tea with snacks as refreshment. They also provide meal to those pilgrims who did not bring meal with them (see Plate LXV). At the end of pilgrimage the process of selecting Jinda party for next year starts. The present Jinda group offers anyone from the community to become Jinda for next year by offering khada and if any one accepts the khada then he or she will become a Jinda party for pilgrimage of coming year. In some cases, if the holy place is located within the village boundary then the village people do the management of the pilgrimage for pilgrims.
The presence of the Rinpoche in the pilgrimage place is must for the success of ritual ceremony. Some of the Memba claims that in the earlier period the presence of Lamas from Goiba clan was also necessary without which the pilgrimage was considered unsuccessful. The practice was developed when Menchuka was without any Rinpoche and the head Lama from Goiba clan named Chiso Lama Chomby Goiba was appointed as caretaker Lama from the Lama organisation and hence all the pilgrimage rites during those intermediate period was performed by Chiso Lama Chomby Goiba. The Rinpoche with his disciple or assistant sits in one place where the pilgrims deposit their offering like snacks, chang and butter in front of him. The offering is offered with the belief that Rinpoche with his ritual will offer it to the Gods on their behalf. They also offer hundred to thousand numbers each of small conical mounds made from boiled rice, millet flour and corn flour in the pilgrimage for the recently deceased member of the family to the Gods for favourable rebirth and blessing of the deceased soul.

The pilgrims on the other hand after depositing their offerings in front of the Rinpoche for blessing, starts circumambulation the place by visiting the holy site located in a place by reciting prayer and makes full length prostration. In order to show their respect they offer khada, incense and lamp made from radish in front of alter at the holy site. They also put Lharg-yang darjo and prayer written in paper to the surrounding area of the holy site. The circumambulation to the pilgrimage is followed in a clockwise direction. In most of the pilgrimage place, the circumambulation is done around the mountain where holy place is located. At the time of visiting the holy site, they practice ritualistic collection of water, herbs, minerals and other materials at certain location. The collection of drinking water

54 Lama Pema Chinga Kigar, op.cit. and Tashi Philley, op.cit.
from the nearby stream believed to contain medicinal qualities to eradicate diseases. They also collect thin bamboo sticks (see Plate LXVII) and climber shrubs from the pilgrimage place believed to be blessed by Gods that contain special medicinal quality to eradicate disease if worn as amulets. The collection of this material from pilgrimage place is also associated with the belief that it not only contains medicinal value but also possess supernatural power of the deity residing in the holy place. These amulets are further carried off for later use and for distribution. They also use some of these amulets for trade purpose. They sell it during their visit to Tibet where they use it for bartering meal in exchange. After the completion of circumambulation, they took meal and starts singing folk song. In the mean time Rinpoche complete his ritual and the offering of the ritual is distributed as Prasad among the pilgrims. Next after receiving Prasad and singing the pilgrims starts departure to their village.\(^5\)

Besides visiting all the pilgrimage sites within the Menchuka area, they also go for pilgrimage in distant holy places located in Tibet and in a nearby neighbouring area within the time period of twelve years or more. The pilgrimage performed by Memba can be divided into two groups called Popular Short Pilgrimage and Long Pilgrimage. The Popular Short Pilgrimages are those pilgrimage which is performed by Memba every year and long pilgrimage are those pilgrimage which is performed after certain period of time such as once in a twelve years or once in their lifetime. Following are some description of pilgrimage place. They are:-

\(^5\)Lama Pema Chonga Kigar, *op.cit.*
**Karte-Neh**

The *Karte-Neh* pilgrimage is organised in the fourth or fifth week of January month every year. The place contains numbers of holy sites called *Sada Bumba Chorten* built by *Lama Lorde Gyatso*, foot prints of *Lama Lorde Gyatso* and his horse, *Ba-Chu Lansa, Shing-Yong Masar* and *Dutse-Lansa* (see Plate LXII).

The *Ba-Chu Lansa* site is located on the left side of River Yargap-chu. It is a huge stone having number of wells or bowl shaped structure where rain water is deposited. They consider it sacred water of medicinal value. It is believed that if any one suffering from goitre diseases drinks this water are cured. The *Dutse-Lanse* on the other hand is located on the right side of River Yargap-chu. The *Dutse-lanse* is a large stone structure, which contains prints of bowl made of skull and holy water called *amrita*. They use holy water collected from *Dutse-Lanse* for ritual ceremony. The *Dutse-Lanse* is believed to be guarded by a female deity disguised in the form of a bird. Hence, one could see one bird always sitting in *Dutse-lanse*. It is believed that before the great earthquake of 1950 A.D., the two sites were located on the opposite side of the present location but after the earthquake, the location was changed. Besides, this there is also a structure of a small well naturally carved in a large stone. In this well one can pick up fortune stone to know about one’s fortune. The process is done by putting two black and white stones of three to four numbers each in the well. If the person picks up the white stone it indicate good fortune and if the black stone is picked it indicate ill fortune for the person. There is also a belief that bamboo found in the *karte-Neh* contains magical power for healing diseases and are collected by Memba to make amulets.
During pilgrimage, they perform sacrificial ritual by offering one hen in favour of local deities named Dorjee Barwa Sungma, Lha-diu-Chenm and Zingkyong-Yab-yung. The ritual is performed in the site where Sada Bumba chorten is located. If the hen sacrificed is in favour of deity and fall towards the stream it symbolise that Menchuka Valley will be prosperous on that year. On the other hand if the牺牲的 hen jumps towards the land it symbolise that the deity is unhappy and will bring catastrophe. In order to avoid the wrath of the deities the required ritual of sacrifice is performed again. The system continues till the sign of favourable condition is not indicated by the deity.

The beliefs of such practice reveal that, when Guru Padmasambhava visited Karte, he encountered the deities of the area. These deities were non believers of Buddhism and very powerful and cruel in nature. They ate human flesh and always harass the humans by spreading diseases. Guru Padmasambhava requested the deities to follow the path of Buddhism, but instead of listening, they rejected the request and instead tried to harm him. Thus, in order to bring them under the umbrella of Buddhism, Guru Padma Sambhana performed tantric ritual and ordered them to follow his command or face his wrath. By seeing the tantric power, the deity accepted the order, but they requested Guru Padmasambhava to provide them with some other alternative in order to make them not harm any human being. Since, they could not survive without consuming flesh and blood, Guru Padmasambhava brought up the practice of sacrificing hen once in a year for these deities in return for doing no harm to human and to follow the path of Buddhism.

Karte-Neh pilgrimage begins by visiting Sada Bumba chorten and ends with the collection of holy water from Dutse-lanse. The lamas first visit Sadha Bumba chorten and perform the religious ceremony. On the second day, the pilgrims begin
their visit to the site. It was after this pilgrimage that the *Lamas* on the third day leaves *Karte-Neh* and start visiting every village or *Chim* where they perform *Lama-Regtsen* or *Tse-dup* ritual for one day and collect donation called *Dratsang-Senyom* from every household. The practice of collecting *Dratsang-Senyom* starts from Kardasila and Sekar village and ends at Lha-Lhung village in Menchuka.

**Sekar Bumchoe-Neh/Lame-Nego Neh**

The pilgrimage held in the thirty-seventh day after *karte-neh* in the first week of March every year. The pilgrimage is located in the surrounding area of village of Dorjeeling and Sekar. This pilgrimage consists of sacred sites called *Lame-Nego*, *Ugin Dru-puk*, *Pukpa-kanakpo* (*Yesar-Pukpa*) in Dorjeeling village and Sekar *Dorje Tsomo* and *Lamba-Bomche Choepangka Chorten* in Sekar village.\(^{56}\)

The sacred site of *Lame-Nego*, *Ugin Dru-puk* and *Pukpa-kanakpo* (*Yesar-Pukpa*) is a small cave where *Guru Padmasambhava* had concealed the *ter-ma*, which was later opened by *Lama Yap-meh-pao Dorjee*. The sacred site of Sekar *Dorjee tsomo* dedicated to a female deity was opened by *Leh-Lung Ane Pem-Chom* who arrived at Menchuka with *Lama Yap-meh-pao Dorjee*. In this place *Lamba-Bomche Choepangka Chorten* is also located which was made during the time of *Lama Yap-meh-pao Dorjee*. Every year during the time of pilgrimage one member from every house-hold from the village has to offer *khada*, lamp and incense before the *chorten*. If any house-hold fails to perform this ritual of offering then one member of the house-hold is made a serf for carrying goods to be deposited as revenue in Tibet for that year as punishment by the *Deb* of Menchuka. Nevertheless, this system is not in practice now a day.

\(^{56}\) See Plate LXIII.
Neh-Pema Shel-phu/Neh-Sarm

This pilgrimage is held in ten days after the end of Sekar Bumchoe-Neh in the third week of March every year for two days. The pilgrimage consists of sacred sites of Pema Shel-phu, Khandu Sanglam Bardo Diaulom, Du-karna Thasum, Droz Namjam Trieuz, khandu-Drup-Khang, Neh-Sarm and Tseri-phu where Memba pilgrims pay a visit during the pilgrimage.\(^{57}\) The Memba believed that the Guru Padmasambhava along with three other companion namely khandu Yeshi Chogey (Yeshe Tsogyal), Menmo Tashi Chorden and Nyamde Ara-Sale while visiting Menchuka to spread Buddhism took refuge in a cave. While meditating in the cave a tiger appeared in order to disturb them. By hearing, the sound of approaching tiger the party jumped from their position in the cave, which resulted in the formation of prints of the hat worn by them in the upper part of the cave. Then Guru Padmasambhava used his magical power to drive away the tiger. The sign of the print of the hat left in the cave is said to substantiate the actual visit of Guru Padmasambhava in Menchuka where he subjugated the opposing force. The cave is recognised as Guru Padmasambhava meditation place and known by the name Pema Shel-phu.

Few meters below the Pema Shel-Phu one will find khandu Sanglam Bardo Diaulom site also known by the name Nyao-Tharlem. It is a huge vertical stone about three to four meters high. There is a large crack in the stone forming passes, through which person can enter from one side and exit from another point. This pass between the stone is believed to be opened by khandu Yeshi Chogey, wife of Guru Padmasambhava. The stone is identified as a rock which facilitates as the door or path to reach heaven. It is believed that when pilgrims enter the passes in the stone

\(^{57}\) See Plate LXIV.
the pilgrims with good morals would pass through it easily no matter his or her size. However, pilgrims with bad morals would have difficulty coming through it no matter his or her size. Near khandu Sanglam one will also find Du-karna Thasum. It is a large stone where there is a naturally formed small hole, which looks like a well. The well believed to be a place of fortune telling where one can find how pure his or her heart by picking up stone of white or black colour from the well. White colour stone symbolise purity of heart whereas black colour stone symbolise impurity of heart.

Next to khandu Sanglam Bardo Diaulom and Du-karna Thasum comes a waterfall called Chauz Shea (holy water) also known by the name Dorjee Namjum Tiu-chu. The water from the fall is believed to be holy and when pilgrims pass beneath the fall, those suffering from any type of disease are cured and wash off his or her sins. Besides this, a small bamboo called Dushi found in entire Pema Shel-Phu to Dorjee Namjum Tiu-chu area is considered to be of spiritual value containing magical power is collected by Memba to make tung (amulets).

Between Pema Shel-Phu and Dorjee Namjum tiu-chu there is a place called Khandu Drup-Khnag under a huge rock. The place is used by the Jinda party to perform ritual and for shelter during their stay till the completion of pilgrimage. In early days the Jinda party having eight members were selected from Lha-Lung village, but at present any Memba from the Menchuka Valley are selected to become a Jinda.

The Neh-Sarm and Tseri-Phu Neh (Cheri-Phu Neh) are another two important holy sites visited by pilgrims during this time of pilgrimage. The Neh-Sarm is a holy place opened by Lama Dondup. Opposit to it is Tseri-phu Neh. It is a
two-storied cave where the figure of a human skull bowl is found in a stone. Inside the bowl there is a picture of lamas offering prasad to devotees. On first day of the pilgrimage a pilgrim arrives at *Pema Shel-Phu* where they gather and halt for the night. Next day early in the morning they march toward *Neh-Sarm* and *Neh Tseri-Phu* and return to *Pema Shel-Phu* where on the same day they start flying and hanging *darjo*, hanging prayers written in a locally made paper, offering to God, performs ritual ceremony and organise cultural programme.

**Pema-Ziling Neh**

The *Pema-Ziling Neh* pilgrimage is organised for two times a year (see Plate LXVI). The first is held on the first or second week of April and the second is held on second week of October of every year. The place is located between Lha-Lhung and Deching-Tang village. The pilgrimage consist of holy places of *Sam-ten-yamchak gomp, Lhar-Tshe gomp, Saija Phupa* and the foot print of *Lama Lorde Gyatso*, his yak and horse.

This pilgrimage site holds very important place in the history of migration of the Memba of Menchuka. It is said to be a place where *Lama Lorde Gyatso* with his *Shapji* (assistant) meditated during their stay at Menchuka. During his visit to *Pema-Ziling*, his foot impression along with the foot impression of his yak and a horse were left in a stone in a place called *Narbu-Chulung* near River *Yargap-Chu*. Interestingly the foot impression of the *Lama* and his horse face towards the Menchuka while on the other hand the foot impression of the yak faces towards Tibet. The direction of the foot impression symbolise the return of yak to Tibet while on the other hand the horse escorted the *Lama* further into Menchuka Valley. Before him another *Lama* named *Kardu Sagya Rinpoche* visited *Pema-Ziling* and meditated...
in a cave called Saija Phupa. Besides this the place also consists of numerous small caves having large stone slab to sit and sleep used by Lamas for hermitage and also a throne made of piles of stone from where Lama Yab-meh-pao Dorjee taught his disciple. The two earliest gomp constructed in Menchuka by Pha-yul Lama Ter-ton Cheoje Lingpa and Lama Dondup, which symbolise the spread of Buddhism in Menchuka, is located in Pema-Ziling Neh area.

**Chandan-Takpa/Lung-chu Neh**

This pilgrimage is held on the second week of September every year. The pilgrimage area is located in Lha-lhung village. It consists of sacred site of Chandan-takpa, Lung-chu Neh, Lung-chu chorten and mani, and Dewa Renchin Bumpa chorten.

The Chandan-Takpa is located in the northern side of Lha-Lhung village. It is a place where there is a large sandal wood tree, believed to have grown out from the sandal wood stick dug into the soil by Lama Lorde Gyatso during his visit to Menchuka. Lung-chu Neh is located few meters away from Chandan-Takpa Neh. It is a holy water believed to be of medicinal value, which flow underground the mountain and comes out in Lung-chu Neh.

Adjacent to Lung-chu Neh is Lung-chu chorten and mani, founded during the time of Lama Lorde Gyatso. The Dewa Renchin Bumpa chorten is located on the southern side of Lha-Lhung village.

**Tse-da-Sha**

The place is located near Molo at Tibet. The Tse-da-Sha holds an important holy place among the Memba because it is the place where Lama Lorde Gyatso
breathed his last after his departure from Menchuka and one chorten have been erected there in his name. There is no particular time period for Memba to visit this site but whenever they go to Tibet they visit the site where they offer khada, darjo, lamp and incense to the chorten of Lama Lorde Gyatso.

Tsari Neh

The pilgrimage in Takpa Siri (Dakpa Sheri) area is held once after every twelve years of Tibetan Monkey year. It was the longest pilgrimage performed by Memba people along with their Tibetan counterpart. The Memba people called the pilgrimage as Tsari Neh. This twelve-year cycle pilgrimage to Tsari Neh is called Rongkor Chenom by Tibetans. Geographically the place comprises of Northern part of Upper Subansiri district in the west and south part of Menchuka Sub-Division of West Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh in the east bordering Tibet and in the northern side comprises of southern parts of Tibet bordering Upper Subansiri district. Nah and Tagin tribes earlier called it as Loba by Tibetans and Chaptang Loba by Memba, inhibits most of the Tsari-Neh area located inside Arunachal Pradesh. The Tsari-Neh comprises of three important pilgrimage sites called Neh-Tsari Ning or Neh-Tsari Ningma (old pilgrimage place), Neh-Tsari Sarma (new pilgrimage place) and Neh-Tsari Tsokas (white Lake). Geographically Neh-Tsari Ning is located in the western side of or left side of Yargapchu River, while on the other hand Neh-Tsari Sarma on the eastern side or right side of Yargapchu River.

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58 Tony Huber, op.cit., p.39.
60 Tashi Naksang, op.cit., date 23-6-2014
61 Tony Huber, op.cit., p. 127.
63 Tony Huber, op.cit., p. 47.
Neh-Tsari Tsokas is located in between the two holy sites. The water containing supernatural power from lake flows into the Yargapchu River.

In every monkey or ape year of Tibetan calendar the male members of the Memba community goes for Tsari Neh pilgrimage. The pilgrimage is a long and perilous one and hence excluded taking women and the childrens. The Central Tibetan Government and aristocracy were the direct patron and logistical supporter of the pilgrimage. Every year prior to arrival of Tsari-Neh pilgrimage, two government officials of which one was designated as a “monk official and other as a “lay Tibetan official” are appointed by Tibetan government in Lhasa to organize the pilgrimage in progress. For the pilgrimage, Memba along with Tibetans pilgrims first gather in a place called Longju, a small village located in Tibet near Takpa Siri. From Longju, they cross MacMahon Line and follow Tsari-Chu towards Upper Subansiri. During which the pilgrims had to circumambulation the Takpa Siri ranges and end their pilgrimage in Chame district of Tibet. During this pilgrimage they had to pass through the area inhabited by Loba in Upper Subansiri. Among the Loba groups, the Tagin were considered to be more ferocious. There were constant cases of raid and attack made by these hostile Loba groups to the pilgrims. Since much of the pilgrimage route passes through territories that was either used or occupied by these Loba group. Hence, the appointed Tibetan authorities in order to safely pass the route were obliged to make an agreement with the Tagin and Nah. According to the agreement, a particular quantity of goods was fixed to pay as tribute or as toll tax in exchange of safe passes for all the pilgrims through their territory. The Tagin and Nah on the other hand agreed to these terms and promised to provide them with escorts and others services such as clearing the path and constructing bamboo or cane bridges, steps for climbing stiff route for the pilgrims. The system of paying
such tribute is called *Lodzong* (barbarian tribute). Most of the tax they paid as tribute came from the collections made by Lhasa administration, beside these some came from individual donation by wealthy Tibetan nobles.

The common Tibetans and Memba pilgrims also deposited cash or kind as a *Lodzong* (toll tax) to Tagin and Nah to the Tibetan authority one year before the arrival of the pilgrimage time. The collected materials for *Lodzong* were accumulated at local monasteries and the nearby government administrative centres. After collection of *Lodzong*, the Tibetan authority every year before the starting of the pilgrimage make payment of *Lodzong* to *Loba* group in a place called *Tsari Kyingkortang* (*Tsari mandala Plain*) probably in the tenth month of Memba calendar of sheep year. The Tibetan authority then sends a translator from Lo Mikymdun village in Tibet who could speak *Loba* dialect, and was send down to the *Loba* areas passing through a thick forest to invite the *Loba* groups for the tribute ceremony. During the tribute ceremony formalities of tribute payments was executed and after paying it, the *Loba* were made to pass through a ritual gate constructed by *lamas* where they are asked to take an oath of allegiance to maintain the peace agreement.

The participated pilgrims are organised into numbers of groups called *Sho*. Each *Sho* was placed under a leader called *Tongpon* (masters of thousand) provided with arms to escort and guard the *Sho* during pilgrimage. After the formation of *Sho*, each *Sho* was dispatched one by one at the beginning of each day for pilgrimage. The basic idea behind such practice was to leave sufficient gap between each *Sho*, in order to allow them time for avoiding any natural calamities and crowding, which
would delay the pilgrims. It almost takes six to ten days for completion of Tsari Neh pilgrimage.64

The Rongkor Chenom of Tsari-Neh pilgrimage was stopped after the 1959 due to Indo-China war. Before that, the last such pilgrimage held was in the year 1956. Though after 1980, the Chinese government has permitted for short Tsari-Neh pilgrimage through Tibetan side, but Rongkor Chenom pilgrimage could not possible because of the boundary dispute between India and China.65

Religious Ceremony

The Memba celebrate various religious ceremonies every year. In such ceremonies, they pay homage and prayers to their Gods and Goddesses. Some of the ceremony is followed with amusement. The ceremony also provides opportunity in bringing the community together. The religious ceremony follow by them are:66

Sonam Losar

Before the approach of the days of Sonam Losar, every household in the community clean their house and surrounding area. They prepare for the ceremony by collection of millet, meat, chang and other necessary food item, which is in abundance due to agriculture harvest. They also go to the forest to collect pole for erection of prayer flags. It is during this period that people get available free time. They continuously celebrate the ceremony for three days, during which they perform religious rite. The first day of the festival is dedicated to Lamas called as Lama Losar. On this day, all the young Lamas pay a visit to the house of all the senior

64 Ibid, pp. 130-170.
65 Ibid, p. 29.
66 Lama Pema Chonga Kigar, op.cit.
Lamas of the community and pay their homage by presenting khada. On this day the people stays indoor in their respective house and in the prayer room, where they pray for the well being and long life of their family members and the community. The prayer is performed until sunset and after which the family member receives prasad and few drops of holy water to be consumed for longevity of life.

The second day of the ceremony is dedicated to the general people called Tum-reh Losar. The people visit each other’s house and wish each other. They serve their guests with butter tea, snacks, food, meat and chang. The visiting of the house is followed by entertainment such as dancing and singing among the people, which last for the whole night.

The last day of the Sonam Losar is followed by a ceremony called Dene-zin Losar, dedicated to the parents and Gods. During this day, people pray for their father, mother who gave them birth, and ask for their prosperity and longer life. They also hang darjo in the compound of the house and in the top of the village hill or hilltop owned by the family. The prayers written in the darjo is believed to be carried by winds and helps to spread the message of peace and non-violence taught in Buddhism across the entire world and saves the human kind.

**Tse-Chu**

The Memba community observe Tse-Chu in the tenth day of fifth month of Dawa-Dukpu of lunar calendar as anniversary of the birth of Guru Padmasambhava in Lhar-Tshe gomp premise continuously for three days, during which Lama chants prayer from the manuscript. On the first and second day, the people visit Gomp, where offerings of butter lamp, incense, fruit and edible item before the figure of
Guru Padmasambhava and they ask for blessing for all living being of the universe and for good harvest.

On the last day of the ceremony, the Lama performs special rites for the people, prepares sweet round prasad by mixing millet and sugar or brown sugar and distributes it to the devotees. They also prepare holy water, which they keep in a human skull and serves to the devotees. At the end of the ceremony, the head Lama gives his blessing to the devotees by touching their head with an instrument called cha-gong.

Beside this, the tenth day of every month of lunar calendar is regarded as sacred and auspicious called Tse-Chu. During which Lamas offer prayer to Guru Padmasambhava. On the tenth day of Dawa-Sambu (third month of Tibetan calendar) of every year, Lamas and their family members conduct social service for one day in the Lhar-Tshe gomp in which, they collect and gather firewood from forest owned by the Gomp. Some of the family members prepare lunch for the participants in the Gomp kitchen and the expenditure of which is borne by the Nyarpa. The firewood is stocked in the Gomp compound and later use it in religious ceremony and rituals conducted in the Lhar-Tshe gomp by Lamas and the people for the whole one-year cycle.

Saga Dawa

On the full moon day of the fourth month of Dawa-Ngabu of lunar calendar, the Saga-Dawa ceremony is celebrated. It is the day when Gautama Buddha took birth, attained enlightenment and went into Nirvana. During this auspicious day, Lama performs religious rites in Samden choye-ling gomp. They make offerings to Gautam Buddha and pray for his blessing for the entire human kind. Unlike Tse-Chu
ceremony, the Saga dawa ceremony is not popular ceremony among the Memba people.

**Khandu Chokor Duchen**

The ceremony is celebrated in the fourth day of sixth month of Dawa-Dindu of lunar calendar. During this a religious rite is performed in Lhar-Tshe gomp, where thirty numbers of Lamas chant the whole content of Tanjur for one week. The volunteer are selected from among the community who renders service of cooking and serving in the gomp for these two days. Every elderly person of the community donates for the expenditure of the ceremony. It is a ceremony to celebrate Buddha’s first sermon at Sarnath.

Beside this the whole month of Dawa-Dindu is considered as sacred and auspicious. During this whole month, the Memba community, especially Lamas are forbidden to eat meat and drink chang.

**Saga-dah (Shibh-Sakdah)**

It is held for two days in the fourth month of Dawa-Ngabu of lunar calendar. The ceremony is performed for chanting the whole content of Bhum part of Tanjur literature. The ceremony is organised by the committee appointed from among the community. Each household donates some amount of money and material in the form of butter, grain and firewood. It is the duty of the committee to provide three meals a day to the Lamas. Besides this, they also serve butter tea and snacks to Lamas at constant intervals during the chanting process.

The whole month of Dawa-Ngabu is considered auspicious and the peoples are forbidden to kill any animal and involve in any kind of sinful act. A single
misdeed committed in this month is considered equal to one hundred sins committed on other days of the year.\textsuperscript{67}

\textit{Gaden Ngachen}

On the twenty-fifth day of the tenth month of \textit{Dawa-Chuk-Chib} of lunar calendar, the Memba people celebrate \textit{Gaden Ngachen} ceremony. It is celebrated to mark the death anniversary of \textit{Lama Tsongkapa}. During this day, every Memba family commence by preparing butter lamp during daytime, and lightening it in and around of every \textit{gomp} and household after sunsets. The lamp is burnt in honour of \textit{Lama Tsongkapa} and before having dinner they perform thanks giving prayer to the Gods.

\textit{Torgya}

Unlike Monpa tribe who performs Torgya ceremony in the month of dawa-chung-nyib (Dawachukjipa),\textsuperscript{68} the Memba performs the same in the tenth month of \textit{Dawa-Chuk-Chib} of Lunar calendar. It is celebrated in the \textit{gomp} premise for three days, during which they perform a mask dance called \textit{Bardo} pantomimes for the general people (see chapter.2). The \textit{Lamas} perform grand fire ritual called \textit{zansak Torgya} inside the \textit{gomp}. In the fire ritual, they offer large quantity of butter, oil, rice, millet, wheat, corn flour and herbs into the fire in the name the God \textit{Pal Chan Dorjee Chunap}. They keep numbers of figure made from millet flour called \textit{torma} inside the \textit{gomp}. The ritual is to save the Memba people from evil spirit and harmful forces.

\textsuperscript{67} Pema Kandu Naksang, 46 years, Assistant teacher, Deching-Tang West, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, interviewed on 4-6-2013.

\textsuperscript{68} Guptajit Pathak & Raju Gogoi, \textit{Cultural Fiesta in the \textquotedblleft Island of Peace\textquotedblright} Arunachal Pradesh, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 2008, pp. 27-29.
At the end of the ceremony, the *Lama* brings the *Torgya* out from the *gomp* and throws it away. It is believed that the thrown *Torgya* takes away all the harmful forces and evil spirit with them. Beside this, they also perform individual *Torgya* ritual in their respective home on the advice of the *Lama* at any time of the year.

**Rituals**

The Memba community practice and follows many rituals during their lifetime. The rituals are the only medium through which man can contact the spirit and deities living in this universe. It is a practice where religious actions are performed for their symbolic value. The Memba peoples believe that, they live in a world tamed with malignant, aggressive and violent spirits who if not dealt properly can cause great misfortune. For which they have to be placated by countless offerings and rituals to protect individuals or the community from wide range of misfortune.

In early days before the introduction of modern medicine, the Memba people did not believe in the notion that illness or accident has a natural cause. They considered it the work of evil spirits or deities who want to exert control upon them. In order to ward away the evil spirit or deity one had to appease the deities through worship and ritual. In the Memba community the *Lamas* plays a vital role of a *shaman*. He acts as a medium through which the ritual can be successfully achieved. Only a *Lama* has the knowledge of communication with the spirits that share the natural surrounding with man and his environment. When a family member happens to fall ill, they consult the *Lama* to determine the cause of the misfortune. The *Lama* with the help of the sorcerers, oracle and astrology tries to locate the source of the
trouble and then suggests remedies required. In order to avert the trouble, the ritual is considered the most effective means of solving it.

The Memba rituals include offerings of symbolic offering of blood, using effigy representative of an objects, food, water, chang, butter lamp, incense and redeeming animals from slaughter. They use effigy made of dough from millet called torma to use as a source where a person sins are to be transferd. This effigy is stumped in dough with the help of wodden carved effigy. This effigy represents human figure, deity, spirit and animal, stuffed with reproductive organ and red juice to symbolise blood. The red juice is prepared from mixing red colour with melted butter. The torma is considered incomplete until their consecration ceremony to animate it with life is preformed. The theory behind the offering of torma as alternative to sacrificial ritual is to ransom it in place of a dying or ill person. The torma is supposedly considered superior to any human body. The torma is thrown away at the end of the ritual or at constant intervals. They also use sacred religious instrument of bells, drum, trumpets, conch, Dorjee (vajra), Phurpa, rosary and weapons, used vigorously for successfull performance of the ritual.

The rituals take two days to three weeks to complete and require presence of more than three Lamas for the practice. On the first day of the ritual, the assistant Lamas called Choi-pen prepare all the material required for the ritual like torma and butter lamp. After the materials required have been prepared, the senior Lama consecrated the torma. With the consecration, they start the rituals. During the rituals, the Lama and his assistant stay in the person house until the final completetion of the ritual. They also perform various rituals for the construction of

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69 See Plate LXVIII.
house, for departed member of the family, for wealth, harvest, passage of lifecycles like birth and marriage. The various ritual practiced by Membas are:70

**Chok-kor**

This rite is performed for a maximum of seven days to Goddess Gelium Dorjee Phagmo. The rite performed in order to ask for the forgiveness of the sins of the deceased person’s soul. In this rite, one has to prepare hundred to two hundred numbers of small conical structures each from rice, millet flour and corn flour called Chog for offering during pilgrimage or in the Gomp. The ritual is also practiced for the deceased person after forty-nine days from his or her date of cremation.

**Men-Drup**

The ritual is performed for the longevity, well being and purifying of sins of the village people. It takes one to three weeks to complete the ritual. In this ritual the Lama, use two human skulls, one of a male and another of a female, kept one above other to use it as an instrument for controlling evil spirit.

**Yang-dup**

This ritual is done to bring goodluck in the family, it is performed in favour of Goddess Jambala (fortune) for one week. During this ritual, a torma called Yang-dup is prepared with a mixture of butter, sandal wood powder, brown sugar, honey, dezard (scent), and powder of gold, silver, brass and iron. At the end of the ritual, the Yang-dup is kept locked in a shelf inside the prayer hall for two years. At the end of the two years, it is taken outside to see its condition and performing of ritual for new yang-dup begins.

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70 Lama Pema Chonga Kigar, *op.cit.*
**Lho-dyu-kurum**

The Memba community perform *Lho-dyu-kurum* once in every year for three to seven days. The time and date of ritual is fixed according to the horoscope of the person and family members. They perform this ritual to avert the ill affect, as predicted according to the horoscope.

**Lhu-tor**

This ritual is performed when disharmony is brought about in nature by human activities like hunting, fishing, cutting forest products, digging in the ground, which anger the forest deity called *Lhu*\(^71\), causing person to suffer from illness and bringforth misfortune in the family. During this ritual the family members with the help of *Lama*, construct artificial house or *mani* with the help of stone for *Lhu* called *Lhu-Bub* (see Plate LXXII) in a place where the incident occurred and prayers are offered to the *Lhu* for asking for forgiveness. The family members have to follow certain taboo during this ritual, where they are forbidden from consuming *chang*, *ko-zong* (onion), *gokph* (garlic) and *shah* (meat). The house of the person is required to be kept clean from dust throughout the process of ritual.\(^72\)

**Chok-Bum**

If a person gets sick and could not be cured by medicine and other rituals, then the family performs *Chok-Bum*. The ritual is to ask for forgiveness from the Gods and deity for the bad deeds that the person might have conducted in the past or...

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\(^{72}\) Interview with Tseden Dorjee Goiba, 40 years, Bomjipanga village, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, interviewed on 12-3-2015.
at present. In this ritual, one has to offer one lakh numbers of *chog* each prepared from rice, millet flour and corn flour, one lakh butter lamp, one lakh of incense and *chog-je* (edible item) before the God and deity during pilgrimage or in a *Gomp*. The preparation of such large number of material requires huge investment. If the individual or his family is not in a position to manage the investment, then a system called *Chiram*, where relatives and community voluntarily come forward and gives donation to share the expenses. The ritual is also practiced for the deceased member of the family.

*Torma-gyacha–chotor*

This ritual is performed in favour of deity called *Hidak*, to whom the dead person is believed to encounter during the *bardo* stage. It is performed to avert the death of a person when *Lhu* curses him or her or had bad dreams related to death. In order to get his blessing the person has to offer the deity *torma* made from millet, brown sugar, honey and water.

*Sa-yar*

This ritual is done for asking permission from the land deity for the construction of a new house (see Plate LXIX). During this ritual, they hung prayer flags in the four corner of the boundary with one flag of white colour at the centre. In this ritual presence of only one *Lama* is required.

*Jhagan-Lhasang*

It is a smoke ritual, which is performed at the end of every ritual, ceremony and festival. The ritual is to purify the people and house from evil spirit.
**Darshe**

The Memba practice this ritual during marriage ceremony, where *Lama* blesses the bride and bridegroom. During this, the bride and bridegroom are offered *khada* and *Lama* tells them about the importance of *khada* in Memba life.

**Tse-dup**

This ritual is for the well-being of a sick person and his or her family member in general. It is performed in favour of *Sange-Tsewa-Meh* (deity of longevity), for a maximum of three days.\(^{73}\)

**Torgya phur-dokh**

This ritual is performed in favour of *Yidam-Guru-Dakpo*, a manifestation of *Guru Padmasambhava* for a period of three to seven days to counter the powerful demon and evil spirit (see Plate LXIX). This ritual is performed to clear any obstacle and to increase the longevity of the sick person. Unlike Monpa tribe of Tawang who performs *Torgya* ritual once in a year collectively in the *Gomp*, the Memba community practice this ritual individually in their home if *Lama*, advice them to do so. The main components of this ritual are *torma* figure of *Guru-Dakpo* and of demon named *Sinmo-Sorlam*. The demon is the one who guides the other demon and evil spirit towards the door of the *torgya*. Besides this, they also prepare a *torma* figure of nude female deity who helps the *Lama* to find and open the door towards *torgya* and number of *torma* figures representing evil spirit called *Kak-li*. There is also one large *torma* figure of mountain called *Linkha*, which is a place where demon resides. In this *torgya* ritual, when they throw away the *torma* where evil

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\(^{73}\) Tenzin Sharjo, 56 years, Chorling village, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, interviewed on 12-3-2015.
spirit is captured, the male member of the family carrying bow and arrow, gun, sword and spear, escorts the torma. While throwing the torma, they shout and shoot their weapons towards the torma in order to warn the evil spirit not to return in their house.74

Any Torgya ritual is considered very powerful, if not properly practiced then the ill effect of the wrath of the evil spirit and deity will become more dangerous, and will affect the Lama who performs it. Because of dangers of retaliation, most of the Lamas avoid practicing Torgya ritual. At present in the Memba community, there are only two Lamas named Lama Dongse Thinley Narbu Naksang (Head Lama) and Lama Sange Lera Philley, who are capable of performing this ritual.

Torgya Zansak

In this torgya ritual, a fire prayer is performed where offerings of butter, incense, sandalwood, millet, rice, corn, oil and herbs are offered in the fire. They perform it in favour of Pal-Chan Dorjee Chunap. The Zansak is the most powerful torgya ritual practiced by the Memba. It is performed at the last stage of the torgya ritual.

Torgya Mamu-Dokpa

This ritual is performed in favour of a female deity named Mamu-Dokpa. The reason for performing this is same as other torgya ritual.

Chok-puk

Unlike other ritual Cho-puk ritual is performed for the destruction of one’s enemy. The Lamas being religious priest are forbidden to practice this ritual. If any

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74 Pemba Naksang, op.cit., date 17-3-2015.
*lama* practices it then his journey towards attainment of enlightenment will be curtailed. So far there is only one such incident that had occurred in Menchuka, in which one *Lama* named *Lama Phinjo Sarjo* is said to have performed this ritual. As per the story narrated, the *Lama* was away from home for two to three days meditating in a *Gomp*. In his absence, some Ramo people attacked his house where his wife was staying alone. They chopped off her hand and took it away with them, his wife was left behind and ultimately she bleed to death. When *Lama* returned from *gomp* and found his wife dead. This incident saddened him so much that he decided to avenge his wife’s death and performed the *Chok-Puk* ritual. As a result, the entire family of the Ramo person perished and survived by a lone member of the family.

**Yaksha**

This ritual is performed in order to subjugate and destroy a demon. It is performed when a demon refuses to accept the offerings given in the rituals.

**Aapo Dorjee Drakchen**

This ritual is performed in favour of demon named *Aapo Dorjee Drakchen*. They perform it once in every year in a place called *Tsensi-gang* in Menchuka village. Every year a black coloured chicken is sacrificed in the name of the deity. A chosen *Lama* performs the ritual. Earlier in Menchuka, a *Lama* named *Lama Thupden* performed it. After his death, the ritual was continued by *Head Lama Dongse Thinley Narbu Naksang* until the reincarnation of *Lama Thupden* named *Lama Dorjee Phurpa Buru* took charge. It is believed that if the sacrificial offering is not performed then the Memba people would have to face the wrath of *Aapo Dorjee Drakchen*. 
The story behind this ritual is that, when Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) was given the task of the construction of Buddhist Monastery in Samye and Buchu Targo-Lhagang in Tibet. He called upon all the deities and demons of Tibet to follow Buddhist path and to help in construction of the monastery. Every one accepted his request except for Aapo Dorjee Drachen and instead started to create hurdles in the construction process. He was a very powerful demon and all lived in fear of him. This action of him angered the Guru Rinpoche and in order to punish him performed Yaksha ritual to destroy the demon. The demon became afraid and requested Guru Rinpoche to stop the ritual and promised to obey his order. Aapo Dorjee Drachen also pleaded that he could not live without eating human flesh and requested Guru Rinpoche to provide some alternative. Guru Rinpoche accepted his pleading and said, “in return of your service towards Buddhism, the people of Tibet will sacrifice one chicken once a year in his favour.” Hence, the Nyingmapa sect of Tibetan Buddhism continues to follow the ritual practice of sacrifice for Aapo Dorjee Drachen till today.  

Birth Ritual

This ritual is associated with delivery of a baby. The people practices it when there is a sort of complicacy in delivering of baby. They follow two system of practicing this ritual, one is a sacrificial ritual called Morjuae and the other is a service ritual. Morjuae is performed, when there is any complication related to the delivery of baby, where they slaughter one black colour chicken and then they removes its skin. The slaughtered chicken is then hung outside the compound of the

75Lama Dorjee Phurpa Buru, 28 years, Menchuka HQ, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, interviewed on 16-3-2015.
entry of the house, erected with the help of pole as offering for the demon. The
demon causing the obstacle is offered chicken in exchange for the mother and baby’s
life for a safe delivery.

The second system of service is performed when there was no improvement
in the condition of the delivering even after the Mortjuar ritual. In this system, the
family member goes into a nearby stream looking for blockade and if found then it is
cleared immediately. Thus, helping the water deity and in return expects for a normal
delivery of baby. The ritual is another example of Bon practice followed by Memba
people.

Bardo Ritual

It is a death ritual performed by the Memba for any deceased member of the
family. According to Memba belief when a person dies, he stays in unconscious state
but after three to four days he regains consciousness and fails to understand the
plight and sorrow of his family members. He also wonders as to what had happened
to him. The soul will feel very strange about all the happenings. It is behind that the
soul of the dead person tries to tell his loved once that he is still alive and is present
in their midst, but they fail to hear him this makes him angry. Eventually, when the
soul walks towards the sun, he fails to find his shadow and this makes him realise
that he has been dead and this realisation saddens him and he becomes sorrowful.

When the dead body is taken away to be cremated it will realize that he needs
another body and begins to search for one. Rebirth in the human form is considered
most favourable and a blessing for the soul of the deceased. This intermediate period
of transmission stage between the death and rebirth, known as *bardo*. It is during this stage that the spirit requires help of the family and *Lama* to perform various *bardo* rituals for his rebirth as a human being. The ritual lasts for forty-nine days. The *Bardo* rituals start with *Shendey* rite, which is performed three days after the burial, during which a white *darjo* is placed in the burial place. After every seven days from the time of burial, they perform a rite called *Dungi* and after the end of forty-nine days, *Geyo* ritual is performed. Besides this *bardo* ritual, they also perform *Lomgee* rite for the dead ones after one year of his death.

**Sangway-lah**

This is a secret *Tantric* ritual associated with orgasmic bliss and sexual pleasure, which is performed by a *Lama*. The word *Sangway-Lah* means a secret and hidden ritual. The ritual is based on the teaching of *Guru Padmasambhava*. According to which, sexuality is considered a human energy per excellence and provides special opportunity for enlightenment. It is a stage where there is the dance between separation and union, fire and water. When having sexual intercourse, desire and concept associated with it arises: this is experienced as the creative energy of pristine awareness. Without desire, the involvement in the bliss conscious will be minimal, and thus requires use of the art of love making and so forth, to enhance the process. If one does not know this, it is just attachment. The practice helps energizing flow of separation and union, enabling to find a balance between ascetic denial and destructive excess, to truly enjoy life without compulsive attachment. It

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77 *Phurba Tsering Naksang, op.cit.*
also helps to harmonize the power of the phases, increase their active energy and prevent illness from arising.\textsuperscript{78}

The ritual takes \textit{Lama} into the \textit{tantric} understanding of the body and to put this into practice. It helps to maintain vitality and experience enlightenment through the body. There are two ways for performing this ritual; the first one is through increasing the creative potency without sexual partner and second one is through increasing the creative potency with a suitable partner.

\textbf{The Ramo Difussion}

The Ramo, the immediate neighbour of Memba is animistic believers by religion. Many of the Memba people took the help of the Ramo priest for detection and curing of the diseases when they are ill. The help was sought when the rituals performed by \textit{Lamas} does not help to cure the ill. The ritual was popularly practiced in the areas where Ramo and Memba live together.\textsuperscript{79}

The Ramo on the other hand was also influenced by Buddhism and observes invocation of both the religion. There is a folk story of one Ramo person named Tachng Tamang who observed a Buddhist ritual. However, in spite of being a Buddhist he observed a local Ramo ritual of selecting the \textit{Lama} by conducting the egg test. The egg test did not favour \textit{Lama} Sange Chaumbe and Dao Tsering Sharjo. The test showed ominous sign for priest Dao Tshring Kigar and he was approached to conduct the Buddhist invocation.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{79} Pema Chukla, \textit{op.cit.}, date 22-6-2014.
\textsuperscript{80} M.M. Dhasmana, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 261-262.
**Instruments used for Rituals**

While performing any rituals the Memba use various types of instruments, which are considered important as the image of deities in whose service they are employed. These instruments are prepared from metals, human bones and woods frequently imbued with magical power and potency. The details of the instruments used by Memba while performing their ritual are:

*Dorjee*

The *Dorjee* or *Vajra* is a thunderbolt weapon possessing unbreakable and indestructible power.\(^1\) It is the most important ritual implement and symbol of Memba Buddhism. The importance of which can be seen in the pantheon of Memba deities carrying *Dorjee* and having *Dorjee* prefix in their names. While performing ritual it is normally paired with a hand bell carried in the right hand while performing ritual.

*Hand Bell*

The hand bell is the most common musical instrument used in Memba Buddhist ritual.\(^2\) The sound of the bell is as if those produce by drums and trumpet. It is regarded as auspicious and posses power to drive away evil spirit by sending message of warning to them. While performing a ritual the hand bell is always carried in the left hand.

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\(^{1}\) See Plate LXXI.  
\(^{2}\) Ibid.
Phurpa

*Phurpa* is considered a form of magical dagger having triple blade in its sides.\(^{83}\) The triangular shape of the *Phurpa* is to represent the element of fire and symbolizes wrathful activity. It is used in ritual for conquering evil spirit and to destroy obstacles.

Kapali

*kapali* is a bowl made from oval upper section of human skull.\(^{84}\) It is used to serve sacrificial offering to wrathful deities or fruits and other edible item to the peaceful deities. It is used by *Lamas* to serve *prasad* and holy water to the devotees. For obtaining kapali bowl, selection of suitable skull is of immense importance for the success of the ritual. Skull of a person who lived for hundreded years or more is preferred. The skull of such person is believed to possess great *tantric* power. Besides this, they also take the skull of a person who has died from disease for making of a bowl. The skull of a person who died at the age of sixteen years is used for making hand drums. Before taking, the skull of any such person the consent of their living family member is sought.

Besides, above mentioned instrument they also use various weapons such as chisel-knife, spear, hunter, club, sword, dagger, hammer and iron-chain carried by various deities while performing ritual.

Pantheon

The Memba Pantheon consists of a large number of deities whose origin can be invariably traced to India, China, Tibet and Menchuka itself. Though the entire

\(^{83}\) Ibid.
\(^{84}\) See LXIX.
ranges of these deities are not available in an organised form, the Memba have a collection of divine and divinities, which is represented on *Tangkas*, blocks of woods and idols. In Memba religion, in addition to worship of Buddha in a variety of form, they also worship Metaphysics of Buddha and *Bodhisattvas*, local deities and demons.\(^85\)

The Pantheon can be classified into five classes. The first one is Buddha in the form of *Sakyamuni* (Gautama Buddha), *Avalikotsav*. The second one is Metaphysics Buddhas and *Bodhisattvas*, among whom the most worshipped is *Guru Padamsambhava* and his eight manifestations of *Guru-m Tsho-skyles rDorjee*, *Guru Padma Byung-gnas*, *Guru Seng-gergra-sgrogs*, *Guru Dorjee Drolod*, *Guru Padma Gyal-po*, *Guru Nyima Od-zer*, *Guru Shakya Senge* and *Guru Blo-Idan chog-sred*. The *Chatung-Chantung* (*Avalokitsvara*) and his manifestation the *Dalai Lamas*. The Memba also believed in the pantheon of female Metaphysics Buddha and *Bodhisattvas* such as *Tara*\(^86\) and *Sang-Tsewa-Meh*.

The *Bodhisattvas* are those, who had attained enlightenment in their life and had become Buddha by their *karmic* action. In this group, one can find the names of *Lama Lorde Gyatso*, *Pha-yul Lama Ter-ton cheeje Lingbo*, *Khamba Lama Ter-ton Cheeje Lingbo* and 16\(^{th}\) *Ter-ton Guru Choewang Kunsang Dachen Randol*. All these *Lamas* even after the attainment of enlightenment decided to take rebirth to guide the people.

Beside these pantheons of various Buddha and *Bodhisattvas*, they believe in the existence of various demons and local deities, which comes under last three

\(^{85}\) Lama Pema Chonga Kigar, *op.cit*.
classes of wrathful deities, tutelary deity and local deity. The deities, which come under the wrathful and tutelary classes, are those enlightened beings who take on deity form in order to lead sentient beings to enlightenment. It is an alternative manifestation of Bodhisattva. In Membra art, these deities are represented as fearsome, demonic beings adorned with human skull and other ornaments made of bone. The difference between them is that, the wrathful deities are representative of negative karma and whereas tutelary deities are representative of positive karma.

The Membra also worship local deities and demons. These deities and demons believed to be residing in Menchuka and claim to be the owner of particular Mountain, river and forest. These local deities and demons are non-Buddhist in character, but later on under the pressure and teaching of Guru Padmasambhava came under the umbrella of Buddhism. For some of these local deities and demons they also perform sacrificial ritual to please them. The following are some of the details of various forms of deity and demon pantheon followed by the Membra:

**Wrathful Deities**


**Tutelary Deities**

Jambey Yang (deity of science), Tarche Geipo (protector deity of Lhar-Tshe Gomp), Gonpo-maning Nakpo (king of protector deity), Chak Zhipa (four head deity), Zha Zhunu, Ne-zhing Tsetamarpo, Palden-mak-thue Gyalmorama-Tae, Pal-chan Dorjee Chunap and mamu-Dokpa (female deity).

Local Deities and Demon