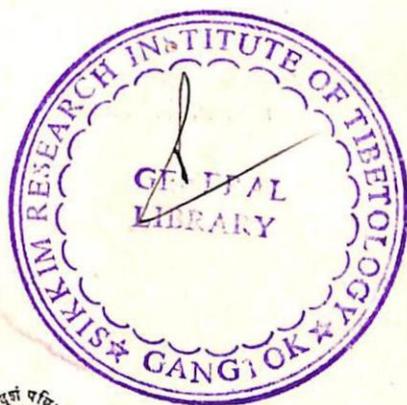


THE
HIMALAYAN HERITAGE

SIKKIM RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY

THE HIMALAYAN HERITAGE

Edited with An Introduction
by
MANIS KUMAR RAHA



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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. P.C. Datta
M.SC., LL.B., PH.D.

Director of Research, Govt. of
Arunachal Pradesh

Dr. Bhikshu Kondinya
M.A., PH.D., Acharya,
Sahityaratna, Sahitya-
lankar

U.G.C. Research Associate,
Jawaharlal Nehru University

Dr. Jayanta Sarkar
M.SC., PH.D.

Superintending Anthropolo-
gist, Anthropological Survey of
India

Dr. B.K. Ray Burman
M.SC., PH.D.

Visiting Senior Fellow, Centre
for the Study of Developing
Societies and Ex-Senior Pro-
fessor, Council for Social
Development, New Delhi, Ex-
Professor, Pallicharcha Kendra,
Visva Bharati University and
Ex-Dy. Registrar General,
Ministry of Home Affairs,
Govt. of India

Dr. S.K. Chaube
M.A., PH.D.

Director and Professor, Centre
for Himalayan Studies,
University of North Bengal

Dr. Buddhadeb Chaudhuri
M.SC., PH.D., P.R.S.

Professor, Centre for South and
South-east Asian Studies,
Calcutta University and Ex-
Reader, Deptt. of Sociology

Prof. A.C. Sinha
PH.D.

Dr. A.K. Das
M.SC., PH.D.

Dr. C.W. Brown

Prof. Allen C. Fanger
M.A., PH.D.

Shri Sunderlal Bahuguna

Shri Chandi Prasad Bhatt

and Social Anthropology,
North Bengal University

Head of the Deptt. of Socio-
logy, School of Social Sciences,
North Eastern Hill University,
Shillong, Author of 'Politics
of Sikkim'

Director, Cultural Research
Institute, Govt. of West Bengal

Department of Anthropology,
Lund University, Lund, Sweden

Professor of Anthropology,
Kutztown State College,
Kutztown, U.S.A.

Famous *chipko* Movement
Leader and Freedom-fighter of
Tehri and Uttarkashi districts,
U.P. Represented *chipko* in
different national and inter-
national forums. Author of a
number of booklets on *chipko*
and environmental conserva-
tion. Recipient of Shri and
Smt. Dashrathmall Singhvi
Memorial Award for National
Integration

Famous *chipko* movement
leader and recipient of Raman
Magasaysay Award for Com-
munity Leadership. Member of
various official and non-official
committees and author of a
number of booklets on *chipko*
movement and Environmental
Preservation

- Professor G.D. Berreman
Professor of Anthropology,
California University, Berkley,
California, U.S.A.
- Shri Ram Chandra Guha
M.A.
Fellow, Indian Institute of
Management, Calcutta, Doing
Ph.D. on 'Forest Movements
and Social Change in Garhwal'
- Dr. William Hare Newell
M.A., PH.D., (Univ. of Man-
chester), Dip. in Social Anthro-
pology (Oxford University),
Dip. in Chinese (New China
Union University)
Professor
Associate Professor, Deptt. of
Anthropology, University of
Hongkong and University of
Sydney, Australia, Ex-Prof.,
Deptt. of Anthropology and
Sociology, International Chris-
tian University, Tokyo
- Dr. Manis Kumar Raha
M.SC., PH.D.
Deputy Director, Anthropolo-
gical Survey of India, Govern-
ment of India
- Shri D.B. Negi
M.A.
Fellow (UGC), Deptt. of
Political Science, Himachal
Pradesh University. Submitted
Ph D. thesis under H.P. Uni-
versity on Political Leadership
in Kinnaur. Shri Negi is a
native of Kinnaur
- Smt. Puspa Misra
M.A.
Fellow, Deptt. of Philosophy,
Rochester University, USA,
Lecturer, Deptt. of Philosophy,
Lady Brabourne College,
Calcutta
- Professor Anoop Chandola
M.A., PH.D.
Professor of Oriental Studies,
University of Arizona, Tucson,
USA
- Dr. M.M. Dahsmana
M.A., PH.D., FRAI, FRGS
Squadron Leader, Indian Air
Force, Author of the Ramos of
Arunachal Pradesh. Currently
associated with Institute of
Indological Studies, Ambala

Dr. Makhan Jha
M.A., PH.D.

Reader, Deptt. of Anthro-
pology, Professor-in-Charge,
Centre for Himalayan Studies,
Ranchi University, Ranchi,
and Associate Editor, Journal
of Social Research

Dr. Jagdish Kaur
M.A., LL.B., PH.D.

Resident Editor, Tourism
Recreation Research and
Director, Centre for Tourism
Research, Lucknow, Head,
Deptt. of Geography, The
Avadh Degree College,
Lucknow, Author of Studies
in Tourism, Wild Life Parks
and Conservation, (1982) and
Studies in Himalayan Ecology
and Development Strategies
(1980) etc.

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INTRODUCTION

The vast mountainous tract of the Himalayas in India, with its varying ecological conditions, has not only acted as the centre for meditation for the sages, saints and other holy men, but also has given shelter to a large number of ethnic groups with diverse cultural identity and social formations. These ethnic groups have organised their life and activities in these terrains over a long stretch of time. For centuries most parts of the Himalayas were almost out of reach to the outside world. Thus the inhabitants were able to keep their life style and tradition undisturbed. They could master the difficulties created by the inhospitable environment of the rugged, unkempt, mountainous terrains of the Himalayas they dwell, and could adapt themselves accordingly for their mere survival. The culture built by these sturdy denizens of the Himalayas in such an environment is somewhat different from that prevalent in the plains areas. This difference in their culture exists not only in their material life but also in various other aspects of their life such as economy, social organisation, political activities, religious beliefs and practices and even in their value-judgement. This has happened in spite of the little contact that was maintained by both the mountain dwellers and the inhabitants of the plains.

The human habitations in the Himalayas are spread over different altitudes. Considering the ecological characteristics of different altitudinal position the human habitations in the Himalayas may be classified into three zones—(i) high altitude habitation (above 8000 ft above mean sea level) (ii) middle altitude habitation (between 5000 ft to 8000 ft above mean sea

level) (iii) lower altitude and foothill habitations (below 5000 ft above mean sea level).

The high altitude habitations have an arid or semi-arid climate. The vegetation growth here is quite low. The area is inhabited mostly by the Bhot, Bhotia, Bhutia or Bodh or such group of people having Buddhism as their religion. It is a generic name and includes people inhabiting high altitude regions of Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Darjeeling, Chamoli, Uttar Kashi, Pithoragarh, Kinnaur, Lahaul and Spiti and Leh areas. Here settlements are very small in size and situated on the hill slopes or on a small patch of a flat land. The people are mostly mongoloid in character and depend more on pastoralism, but less on agriculture. A few of them are hunters and gatherers. They lead a nomadic or transhumant mode of life. Cultivation is done on small patches of unfertile terraces and inferior cereals are produced. Irrigation mostly depends on snowfall as water sources like springs, streams are very few and rainfall is very insignificant or nil. Earlier, during pre-Indo-China conflict era (1962) many of them had trade link with Tibet, trade was one of their main sources of income. Another interesting character of some of the people here is the seasonal migration. During winter when agricultural activities are suspended because of the severe winter and heavy snowfall, many of them migrate to down hills or even plains with their livestock. They return to summer settlements with the approach of summer season. In the past they used to make tribes to Tibet for trade during summer season. People here are mostly Buddhists as already said, and this area could be treated as the last stronghold of Buddhism in India. Buddhism is surviving here ignoring the threat of the post-Buddhist Hindu renaissance and also the influence of Islam and Christianity. Polyandry and primogeniture are the basic societal profiles of many of them. In pre-independence era they had very little contact with the people of the plains even with the lower hills. With the development of modern communication and transport systems, they are now coming in regular contact with the people of down hills and the plains thereby the long preserved traditions indicate signs of rapid change. People inhabiting this zone include the Monpa, the Khamba, the Ramos, the Pailibe, the Boojar Bori,

the Bokar, the Tagin, the Sulung and others of Arunachal Pradesh. In Sikkim the high altitude dwellers are mostly the Bhotia. In the Central Himalayas only the Bhot or Bhotia and the Anwals reside in the high altitude valleys. In Jammu and Kashmir the Bodh or Bhot, the Argon, the Dard, the Mon, the Gara, the Beda and others of Leh and Zaskar areas and the Shia Muslims of Kargil are high altitude dwellers. The Bodh of Spiti, the Zad of Kinnaur, the Pangwala of Pangi valley (Chamba) belong to the high altitude zones of Himachal Pradesh.

In the middle altitude zone reside a large number of tribal groups in Arunachal Pradesh, namely, the Aka, the Apatani, the Miniang, the Sherdukpen and others, both tribal (the Bhotia and the Lepcha) and caste groups in Sikkim and Darjeeling. In the Central Himalayas mostly the Hindu castes and a few tribes like the Jaunsari and the Raji (the Jaunsaris of Jaunsar-Bower area of Dehra Dun district though a scheduled tribe, yet basically include the Brahmin, the Rajput and different lower castes) inhabit in this zone. This zone in the Western Himalayas is resided by the Muslims, various Hindu castes and some non-mongoloid tribals. The caste groups here lack some important caste characters as prevalent among the caste groups of the plains. The people living here follow Hinduism or Islam except a few who have accepted Buddhism. The settlements here are either agglomerated or dispersed type and situated on the hill slopes or on the valleys. The inhabitants are mostly agriculturists. There are some tribal groups (of Arunachal Pradesh) who practise shifting cultivation. Some groups in this middle altitude zone depend on pastoralism and lead transhumant life, while a few others are hunters and gatherers. For irrigation they depend on rainwater though irrigational facilities are also available. Monogamy is the general rule though polyandry is also practised only in a few pockets like Jaunsar-Bower (Dehra Dun), Purula (Uttar Kashi), Rewin-Jaunpur area (Tehri) of U.P. and Sirmur district of Himachal Pradesh. The people of this middle altitude zone always keep contact with high altitude people on one hand and plains on the other. A large number of developmental and constructional works have brought new

dimension in this region and have given the people a new meaning of life.

The lower altitude and foothill areas have accommodated a number of tribal groups in Arunachal Pradesh such as the Pasi, the Padam, the Nocte, the Wancho and others, both tribes and caste groups (the Nepalese) in Sikkim and Darjeeling, a large number of caste groups like the Garhwali and the Kumaon castes, tribes like the Bhotia, the Bhoksa and the Tharu and some Muslims in U.P. hill districts, mostly caste people in Himachal Pradesh and both Hindu and Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir. People here are followers of either Hinduism or Islam, of course in Arunachal Pradesh mostly they follow tribal religion or christianity and in Sikkim and Darjeeling both Buddhism and Hinduism. The settlements are built on the flat land, hill sides or on the valleys. The size of the settlement is quite big and usually multicaste in nature. People here are mostly land owners or landless cultivators. Some of them are labourers also. Irrigation depends on rainfall, river and canal water. Shifting cultivators, pastoral nomads and hunter-gatherers are non-existent. Monogamy is the general practice among them though the trace of polygyny is also not wholly uncommon. Polyandry is totally absent. The people here have larger interaction with the people of the plains and this has compelled them to imbibe 'culture of the plains'. The caste groups here bear most of the caste characters as are prevalent in the plains areas.

With his brief observation on the cultural dimensions of the people living in three different altitudinal zones, let us now shift our attention to the cultural variability that exists between the Eastern, the Central and the Western Himalayas and delineate the cultural parameters of the people living there.

The culture of the Eastern Himalayas is basically a 'tribal' culture. The whole of Arunachal Pradesh, where over one hundred ethnic groups (scheduled tribes) live, has a distinct tribal culture. Some of the numerically important tribal groups are the Abor, the Aka, the Apatani, the Bagi, the Bangni, the Bokar, the Dufila, the Deovi, the Karka, the Khampti, the Miji, the Millang, the Miniyong, the Miri, the Mishmi, the Momba, the Monpa, the Nishang, the Nissi, the Nocte, the Padam, the

Simong, the Sulung, the Tagin, the Tangsa, the Wancho and others. Of these tribal people those who live in the high altitude zone are Buddhist by religion though these Buddhists along with other tribal groups follow basically a distinct tribal culture. Some others who have embraced christianity, have also distinct tribal cultural base.

Similarly the Lepchas and the Bhutias of both Sikkim and Darjeeling have distinct 'tribal' base though they profess Buddhism. Of course unlike Arunchal both Sikkim and Darjeeling have a large number of Nepali castes like the Rai, the Limbu, the Newar, the Magar, the Gurung, the Chettris, the Sunwar, the Tamang, the Damais, the Kami, the Sarki and others. The term Bhutia in both areas is a generic name of a number of ethnic groups like the Sherpa, the Yolmo, the Kagate, the Dukpa and others.

But when we reach the Central and the Western Himalayas we find these 'tribal' culture groups living in the high Himalayas do not show the so called 'tribal' cultural features except one or two ethnic groups like the Raji of Pithoragarh. Even the 'scheduled tribes' of both Uttar Pradesh (the Bhotia, the Raji, the Jaunsaris, the Bhoksa and the Tharu) and Himachal Pradesh (the Lahaula, the Swangla, the Jad or Bhot, the Pangwala, the Gaddi, the Kinnaura and the Gujjar) do not bear any major tribal characteristics. Rather many caste characters are distinct among most of them. The Gaddi include different castes like the Brahmin, the Rajput, and the Dom groups who include different artisan untouchables, the Kinnaura or Kinnara. Similarly do not mean a distinct ethnic group but cover the Khosia or Kanet, the Koli, the Lohars, the Badhi and the Nangalu. Identically the Jaunsaris identify the Rajput, the Brahman, the Kolta and some other lower castes. The 'caste-system' is prevalent all over U.P. Hills, Himachal Pradesh and some areas of Jammu and Kashmir regions. Even the high altitude Buddhists living in Leh and Zanskar regions of Jammu and Kashmir, Spiti and parts of Lahaul of Lahaul and Spiti district and Pooch sub-division of Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh and the Jad or the Bhotia of Uttarkashi are closer to the caste fold. The Bhotias of other two areas, Chamoli and Pithoragarh districts of Uttar Pradesh are mostly Hindus.

It is thus seen that the Himalayan culture bears both altitudinal and regional dimensions; different altitudes, high, middle and low, have distinct cultural entity. The regional culture of the Eastern Himalayas is quite different from that of the Central and Western Himalayas. While the Eastern Himalayan culture is basically a 'tribal' culture, the same of the Central Himalayas bears the 'caste' characters. In the Western Himalayas while we find the same 'caste' feature all over, in some parts both 'caste' and 'Islamic' cultural features co-exist.

II

As our readers have already seen that I have divided the whole of the Himalayas into three distinct regions, the Eastern Himalayas, the Central Himalayas and the Western Himalayas. These divisions have been made basing on the diversity of the culture of the people living there and not purely on geographical or geological consideration. I have included under the Eastern Himalayas, the states of Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim and Darjeeling district of West Bengal. The Central Himalayas cover all the eight hill districts of Uttar Pradesh, namely, Tehri, Pauri, Uttar Kashi, Chamoli, Dehru Dun, Nainital, Almora and Pithoragarh. Of these former five districts come under Garhwal Division and the latter three form Kumaon Division. Our Western Himalayas have included the states of Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. My classification of the Indian Himalayas is mostly based, as already stated, on the socio-cultural features of the region, and thus may not coincide with the geographical or geological classification of the Himalayas. The geographers and the geologists may dispute this classification.

III

I have incorporated altogether twentyseven articles in this book. Of these I have included seven articles under the heading the Eastern Himalayan Perspective. Of these seven articles four are from Arunachal Pradesh covering four tribes, viz., the Wancho, the Khamti, the Kamang Mishmi and the Sherdukpen. These four articles have focussed various aspects of culture of some Arunachal tribes. The two articles from Sikkim discuss two important aspects of the Sikkimese culture.

One discusses the political activities there while the other is about the traditional arts and crafts which are gradually vanishing. In both articles ethnicity and identity of the Sikkimese have been dealt with. The Lepchas have represented the lone hilly district of West Bengal—Darjeeling. The author has dealt with the Lepcha socio-economic life.

Largest number of articles have come from the Central Himalayas. There are twelve articles in this part. These articles have covered almost all hill districts of Uttar Pradesh except Nainital. A glance in the contents of the articles shows that these articles have covered various aspects of the culture of the ethnic groups like the Bhotia the Kumaoni (the Rajput), the Jaunsari, the Rajput of Rewain-Jaunpur (Tehri) and Purula (Uttar Kashi) and the Garhwali. Though I have covered the varied aspects of culture of this region, I have given stress, for obvious reasons, on the *chipko* movement, the movement that started over a decade ago for the preservation of environment and keeping ecological balance in the Himalayas which later on has stirred the mind of people at the local, regional, national and even international levels. While I have included two articles from two protagonists of this movement, two other articles pertain to two research papers. All these four articles on the *chipko* movement have touched various dimensions of this apolitical movement for the preservation of the Himalayan environment and resources.

Eight different articles have covered the Western Himalayas. Five of these articles are from Himachal Pradesh and three from Jammu and Kashmir. In Himachal Pradesh districts of Chamba, Kinnaur and Lahaul and Spiti have been covered and in Jammu and Kashmir districts of Leh, Kargil and Srinagar have been highlighted. Through these articles three religious groups, the Muslims, the Hindus and the Buddhists have been covered. Ethnically the people covered in these articles are the Gaddi of Chamba, the Khasa (Kanet) and Jad of Kinnaur, the Lahaula and the Bodh of Lahaul and Spiti, the Shia Muslims of Kargil, the Sunni Muslims of Kashmir Valley and the Bodh of Leh and Zaskar of the erstwhile Ladakh.

The contributors of this volume are all eminent scholars of different disciplines like anthropology, sociology, political

science, linguistics, psychology, comparative religion etc. All of them have long experience of the Himalayan region and understanding of the Himalayan culture. They have depicted their experience and understanding about the people of the Himalayas and their culture in these thought provoking and interesting articles.

IV

My interest in bringing out this book on the Himalayas is of two fold. One is to fill up the gap on the study of the Himalayan culture and secondly to move a step ahead in building a new discipline of the Himalayan studies.

Though I worked among the Lepcha and the Bhutia of Darjeeling district as early as mid-sixties my actual Himalayan study began in the first quarter of 1970 when I took up a research project in Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh under *the auspices* of the Anthropological Survey of India. Thereafter *I was* involved directly or indirectly, in different other research projects on the Western and the Central Himalayas. My experience gave me this idea that the Great Himalayas stretching from Jammu and Kashmir in the north-west to Arunachal Pradesh in the north-east are not well represented in the anthropo-sociological literature. The lack of adequate anthropo-sociological materials on the Indian Himalayas has created a gap in professional understanding of this region.

The second reason of my editing this book on the Himalayas is to contribute a little towards building up a new discipline of the Himalayan studies. The Great Himalayas have *a distinct culture, a distinct entity*, much different from the culture of the plains and even other hill people of other parts of the world. This distinct culture of the Himalayas, *surviving in peculiar eco-systems for centuries*, requires to be studied thoroughly and methodically. A multi-disciplinary approach would help in bringing out various facts of the Himalayan culture and help in building up the discipline of the Himalayan Studies.

SECTION ONE

THE EASTERN HIMALAYAN PERSPECTIVE

CHAPTER I

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE WANCHOS OF TIRAP DISTRICT, ARUNACHAL PRADESH

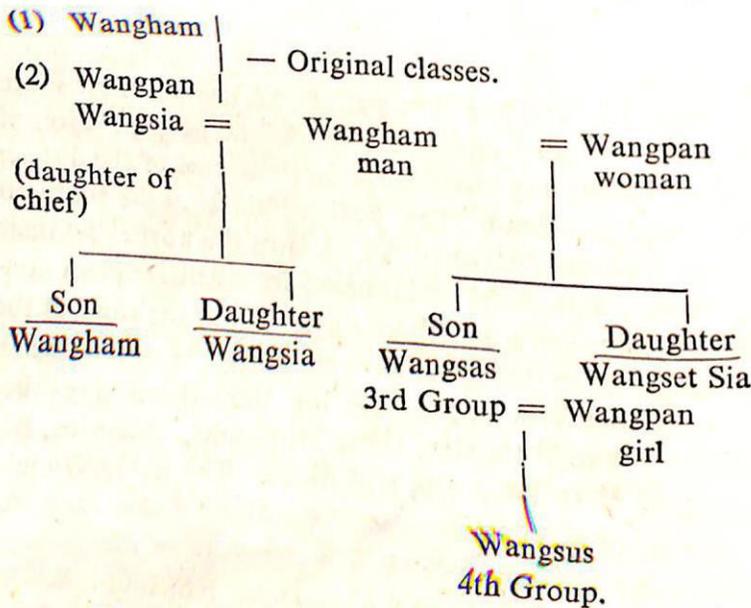
P. C. DUTTA

Introduction

The Wanchos of Tirap District of Arunachal Pradesh are one of the various tribes composing the 3.7 lakhs population of the Territory. Their homeland is the western part of the district on the border of Nagaland. The Patkai hills form the southern border while Sibsagar district of Assam is in the north. To their east live the Noctes, a tribe well known for their frequent contact with the plains since the Ahom days. Upto the time of the British administration the Wanchos were known as the Nagas of the East or the Banforia Nagas. During the Ahom days they were called the Bar Mithunias, Haru Mithunias, Banerias, Bor Banchang, and Haru Banchang and so on. The name Wancho became popular only after the administration of the area was taken over by our own government. The massacre of the Survey party led by Captain Badgley and Lieutenant Holcomb, in the Wancho village of Ninu (also called Nginu) more than a century ago, has brought the Wanchos into prominence even though they were known as headhunters earlier. Closer contact with this tribe was made only when various developmental programmes were taken up by the Government.

The Wancho society is characterized by the existence of class distinction, a system uncommon amongst tribal people.

There are four classes, each one of which is laid on the foundation of clan and sub-clan unity and receives varied degrees of social cognizance. The highest of these classes are the Wanghams, the chiefs, enjoying all the privileges of the society and receiving special honour in every sphere of life. They are the pivots around whom the unity of the tribe revolves. At the lowest level are the Wangpans or the commonalty. Between these two, which are the original classes, are the Wangsas and the Wangsus, two classes sprung up from matrimonial union between the Wanghams and the Wangpans. The Wangsas are the descendants of the Wangham men and the Wangpan women, and are considered next to the Wanghams. The Wangsus are the children of the Wangsa father and the Wangpan mother, occupying the third stratum in the social hierarchy. The growth of these social classes is shown in the following diagram.



Thus it seems that chief's son, born from a Wangsia, daughter of another chief born of a similar mother becomes the Wangham, and the other sons from a Wangpan wife are the Wangsas. The Wangsas and the Wangsus also possess some royal blood for which, they are entitled to take an important part in social functions, and also they are given some important charges such as looking after the chief's *morung*.

Social distinction between these classes is very clearly recognizable in every sphere of life. For example, in the village festivals, the Wangpans are not allowed to take their meal sitting in the same row with the Wanghams. They are also not allowed to marry girls from the Wangham family, though there is no restriction on the part of a Wangham to marry a Wangpan girl. The Wanghams, Wangsas and Wangsus practically control the village, in which the Wangpans have no say. Leaving aside all these internal classifications the Wanchos in general are a very simple homogenous tribe, having less variation in their general outlook and culture, though the linguistic difference, which is a common factor with the hill tribes, is remarkable.

With this general introduction about the formation of the society we will now go into some of their social institutions.

Family

The smallest unit of the Wancho society is the family, consisting of the father, the mother and their children. This nuclear unit transforms into an extended family when the sons get married and stay under the same roof forming a bigger household.

The grown-up boys of the family sleep apart in the *morung*. There is of course, no separate *morung* for girls who sleep in the houses of some widows not related by blood. An exception to this is found in the chief's families, where girls cannot go to sleep elsewhere but in a separate compartment in the chief's house itself meant for them called *nausa-jip-ham*.

Finally, the family breaks up when the parental roof becomes insufficient to accommodate all the persons including the married sons, their wives and offsprings. In such cases, the **married sons establish their individual households except the eldest one who by custom, continues to live in the parental house to support the family and the old parents.** Even after marriage, the other sons sometimes stay with the father, till they have two to three issues when they depart. Though the sons establish separate households yet the attachment and the general tie of the of relationship never ceases to exist throughout their lifetime. Girls, however, depart from the family after their marriage and also when they become pregnant. According

to the custom the delivery cannot take place in the father's house.

While living in a common household, all the members take their meal from a common hearth. The food is cooked by the mother, or by the wife of the eldest son, if the mother is too old. In case of the chiefs, who generally marry more than one wife, the system is a bit different. There is a particular wife, called *chatonnu*, who cooks for the chief, and the other wives take their meals at individual hearth. Each wife of a chief has her separate accommodation called *noi* in the same house.

All the members work together for the common cause of the family.

In the chief's family also all members except the Wangsia married from another chief's family work in the field to earn their livelihood.

Family Property and Rules of Inheritance

All movable and immovable properties, such as cultivable land, bamboo groves and palm leaf (*tokopat*) gardens, livestock, granary, utensils, ornaments and guns are held in common by the family. The father who is the head of the family, is the sole owner of the property, though the other members can also show their attachment to them. Authority over the property lies with the father and is inherited by the eldest son after his death. The female members have no claim over the family property excepting the articles given to a girl in her marriage, which are her own. Besides the family property, the individual members can possess individual property, which is confined to the bare requirement of a person. Such articles are given as grave-goods after the death of a person. This is to say that the personal effects are one's own and are not left behind to be inherited by others. No property held by the family, can be sold or distributed without the expressed permission of the head of the family.

Primogeniture is the general rule of inheritance, and the eldest son becomes the sole heir of the property. When the family breaks up due to the establishment of separate households by the other sons, the family property is never distributed. The sons also cannot demand or claim any part of the family property. But the eldest brother who inherits the property, generally

gives shares till the parting brothers become self-sufficient. At the time of establishing separate households, they are helped with all the requirements, including plots of land for cultivation. Girls do not get any nor can they exercise authority over property. A girl is entitled only to the ornaments, clothings, one basket, one scraper, one iron stick, one *dao* and the grass rain-cover which are given to her at marriage. Even at her husband's house, she cannot claim authority over the property of the husband.

Kinship System

The Wancho society is patrilineal. They reckon their relationship through the male line. But an analysis of the kinship terms reveals that their system of kinship terminology is a classificatory one, where they recognise the cognatic persons, as well as affinal relatives. Most of the terms are applied to persons of both cognatic and affinal relationships. Only a few terms are used to denote some particular persons, which are generally not applied to others. For example, *apa* and *ao* are terms for father and mother respectively which are not applied in case of other persons of one's father's and mother's age. Similarly, *pachong*—father's elder brother, *apasa*—father's younger brother, *nisongnu*—father's elder sister, *nosongsa*—father's younger sister, *hosongsa*—mother's younger brother, *aonu*—mother's elder sister, *konaupa*—younger sisters's husband, *minu*—wife, *mipa*—husband, *nauli*—wife's younger brother, *naupa*—husband's younger brother's wife, are the terms which are not applied to mean any other persons, than those whom they denote.

The terms applied to one's own elder and younger brothers, are also applied to certain other collateral relatives.

Persons, who are junior in age, for example, one's son, daughter, elder or younger brother's or sister's son and daughter, younger brother's wife mother's brother's daughter, wife's younger brother, wife's father's sister's daughter, grand children are generally addressed by name, though they are referred to others by the term. Some persons of both father's and mother's sides are also grouped in one class and a common term is applied to all of them.

Responsibility and behaviour, towards each other in a particular group denoted by a common term, varies according to the degree of affinity and relationship. The term *hosong*, applied to the mother's elder brother, is also applied to the father-in-law of both husband and wife.

Thus it appears that the maternal uncle enjoys similar honour like the father-in-law and is entitled to a certain portion of the bride-price. The existence of cross-cousin marriage of MBD type is hereby indicated.

Again, both parallel and cross-cousins are denoted by common terms, but marriage with the cross-cousin is permitted whereas, parallel-cousin marriage is not only forbidden, but is also considered a crime.

The kinship terms vary to some extent amongst the different *jans*, according to the dialectical variation though all fall within the general framework of classificatory system.

Clan Organization

A study of the clan organization shows that the two original groups or classes, Wanghams and Wangpans, are based on the union of a number of exogamous clans. These clans, locally called *jans*, can more conveniently be called lineage groups, as the very name of the clan signified the names of the families and ancestors from whom the members have descended. It is an obvious fact that most of the tribal people identify themselves with the name of the ancestors and the families to whom they belong.

Amongst the Maujan group, the two main sub-groups are Wangjans and Panjans, corresponding to Wanghams and Wangpans respectively. The Wangjans have three main clans or lineage groups namely Wangjan (the chief's clan), Khama-hamjan and Sanjahamjan. Similarly the Panjans have six different clans, namely, Wangnauhamjan, Nganam(ham)jan, Lo hamjan, Look hamjan, Jo long hamjan and Poi hamjan. Of these clans, the women of Nga hamjan, Lo hamjan, Look hamjan and Poi hamjan cut their hair short.

At Pongchaw also there are two main groups, Wangas and Pansas. The Wangsa group has five clans, namely Wangsa, Wangsu, Dok ham, Wangnauham and Ting loi-sajan, whereas

the Pansa group has only three—Wangpanjan, Agihamjan and Wangnauhamjan.

A large number of clans are found amongst the Nijans, the villages under the chiefs of Nimu. At Longkei, the chief's groups has four main clans and the Pansa—seventeen. The clans of the chief's group are, Wangham, Kamsa Wangham, Kamsa Kamsa-ham, and Sinju-ham, and the Pansa clans are—Baunu-ham, Paina-ham, Ganunu-ham, Gannu-ham, Hau fan gan-ham, Khi-ham, Sang-ham, Kham-ham, Gi-ham, Sankoi-ham, Khang-ham, Na-ham, Fangto-ham, Hamoi Napu-ham, Khangnu pa-ham, Nagopa-ham and Khangpa-ham. Of these Khangnu pa-ham, Gannu-ham, Sankoi-ham and Gi-ham are regarded as superior clans amongst the Pansas.

Another peculiarity of the organization is found at Wakka. Here the village has two divisions Singki and Singkhov. Besides the main chief of the village, each division also has its own chief called Singki Gangham and Singkhov Gangham respectively. The people of the chief's group are called Gangsa, and the commoners, Pansa. The Gangsa group has eleven clans, and the Pansa, fourteen.

A study of the different clan groups reveals that the Wancho clans can more conveniently be called lineage groups. An analysis of the different clan names clarifies that the first name indicates the name of the ancestor from whom the family name is derived, the second word *ham* means house, and the last word *jan* means the group rather than clan. For example, Khama ham-jan means people of the Khama's house. Similar is the case with all other *jan* names.

Moreover, if the two groups, Wang-jan and Panjan, are taken as forming two lineage groups, all other smaller groups can very well be considered as sub-lineages. There is sufficient reason also to consider the smaller groups as sub-lineages because one of the important characters found is that marriage between Wangjan males and Panjan females can always take place, but not conversely. Another factor is that these different groups do not also possess a common plot of land—an important feature to be considered in clan organization. Whatever may be the case, it is important to note that these groups regularise the marriage organization of the Wanchos. There are particular

groups between whom only, marriage can take place.

Descendants of each group closely identify themselves as relatives and many taboos and restrictions are observed between the members of a particular group.

Life Cycle

A Wancho from the very day of his coming into the world to the last moment of leaving it and even after that, passes through many rituals and ceremonies, performed in different spheres of life for various occasions and purposes. These rituals, ceremonies, feasts and festivities make their life more romantic, charming, virile and picturesque. They are happy and cheerful with their own way of life, content with their mode of living. The rituals and ceremonies performed in different spheres of life together contribute to the formation of the Wancho culture.

Pregnancy and Birth

The security of matrimonial union between a husband and his wife, amongst the Wanchos, depends mostly on the number of children she can bear to him. A barren woman is not only looked down upon, but also divorced soon after she is found to be so, or it will lead to polygyny, if she is not divorced. As a matter of fact, procreation is found to be one of the reasons of marriage to which the Wanchos give more importance.

The idea of conception is common amongst all the different *jans* of the Wanchos, in that they believe that some measure of God's blessings will help in the formation of a baby in the womb of a woman, along with physical intercourse.

Though premarital sexual relationship is not restricted and remains an open secret, yet a girl's pregnancy is socially recognised and considered legal, only when conception takes place after the performance of the usual marriage rites. It is however, a common practice for the husband to cohabit with the wife in her mother's house or in the *morung* where she sleeps, though they never disclose the fact to others. At the time of confinement, however, she goes to her husband's house where delivery must take place.

During pregnancy a Wancho woman has to observe many restrictions and taboos in regard to food and movement. Even

after delivery, there are certain restrictions to be observed for a short period.

Ceremonies after Delivery

After the birth of a child, a number of ceremonies are performed.

On the 6th day after delivery a ceremony called *nauman mania o'* is performed, when the hair of the child is shaved. In the early morning the father accompanied by a few male members of the family and clan, goes to the nearby river for fishing and tries to bring at least a few fishes. An expert called *khau gu manu* shaves the hair of the baby before the party returns from fishing.

After hair-cutting, the name-giving ceremony is performed. This is called *nauman*. An old man, called *taikia*, observes the divination with some jungle leaves, uttering the names of the deceased persons of the family, either in the male or in the female line, according to the sex of the child. If the divination is found to be inauspicious with a particular name, several names are uttered, and the one which the divination indicated as good, is kept. The name is disclosed by a particular woman, called *gamnu* who is remunerated with rice beer, meat and a basketful of cooked rice, but the diviner is not given anything. A feast is arranged on this day, with rice-beer, cooked rice and meat, a pig being killed for the purpose.

Then comes the day of *naugam*, the ceremonial visit of the relatives of the girl's side on the seventh day. On this day the relatives of the girl come to visit the house and the new born child. They bring with them about a dozen rats and one fish and give these to the members of the girl's husband's family. The relatives are entertained with rice-beer and meat.

The 8th day called *kanju*. On this day the child is taken out to the front porch of the house. A male child is carried by a boy and a female by a girl.

On the 10th day, the mother can go to the water-point to wash herself properly and to fetch water.

On the 11th day, the child is taken to the nearby cultivable land where the mother offers a little quantity of rice-beer to the deity of the field. But this depends on the result of the divina-

tion observed by an expert. If the result is not favourable, the child is not taken outside the house. The period upto 11th day is *genna* for the child. The death of a child within this period is considered abnormal. The *genna* period is called *nan mocha*.

Another ceremony, called *nau thom*, is performed between the age of one to three months when cooked rice is placed in the child's mouth ceremonially by the maternal grandparents for the first time. On this day, the parents of the mother, and the uncle and aunt (mother's side) are specially invited. The uncle brings some cooked rat meat for presentation. They are entertained with cooked rice, rice-beer and meat, for which a pig is killed. The parents of the girl first put the rice in the child's mouth.

On the following day, the girl goes to her parents' house where a feast is arranged by the parents to feed her. It is a great pleasure on the part of the parents to see their daughter becoming a mother. This is called *fong sa wang*. Only after these two ceremonies can the girl eat elsewhere. She returns from her parents' house on the same day.

Marriage

In the Wancho society much freedom is given to young boys and girls; they can mix freely with each other without any reservation, but observing only the rules of clan exogamy. Boys and girls of different clans select their friends freely and meet each other generally in the place where the young girls sleep. This unrestricted mixing helps them in selecting their partners of life. The girls are, however, not allowed to enter the boys' *morungs* but the boys usually and regularly meet their girl-friends in private houses where they collect.

In most cases marriage is arranged by the parents, though young people are at liberty to have their own choice.

Rules of Marriage

Clan exogamy is the fundamental and basic rule of marriage. Intra-clan marriage is considered to be a serious crime. If any one violates this rule and marries within his own clan he will not only be ex-communicated but also be exterminated. Their clans are exogamous, but the tribe itself is endo-

gamous, and marriages are mostly confined to the same village excepting in the case of the chiefs, who by custom has to marry at least one wife from another village.

Monogamy in the general rule, but polygynous marriage is also prevalent among the chiefs. The polygynous marriage appears to be to show the importance, personal influence and power of the chief concerned, and to have enough hands to work in the cultivable field. There is no restriction on the part of the commoners in having more than one wife, though this depends mainly on the economic condition of the person concerned. Besides, class-endogamy is also very apparent by which a boy must marry a girl of his own status, else the children will belong to a lower social class.

The children of the chief's families should normally marry into other chief's families in villages outside their own village groups or *jans*. This rule, however, does not apply to any group other than the Wanghams. The commoners are to marry from their own village.

Types of Marriage

Marriage with cross cousins is the most favourite and widely practised type. A man may marry his mother's brother's daughter or father's sister's daughter, who by custom are considered as potential mates. In the absence of a mother's brother's daughter or father's sister's daughter, a youth selects his mate from outside.

Widow marriage is prevalent but sororal polygyny is not allowed. A man can marry the sister of his deceased wife, but not during her life time.

Marriage by exchange of sisters is also prevalent and it is considered to be the best type. This type of marriage is called *songlai-mainlai* (Wakka).

Forms of Marriages

Negotiation between parents is the common form of marriage in vogue amongst the Wanchos. Betrothal is done during the young age of a girl. Examples of betrothal even prior to delivery are also found in many cases, where the father of both the boy and the girl extend their willingness. In such

pieces of white 'markin' cloth, armllets, bangles, a basket, a *dao*, a sleeping mat and seeds of arum, millet and paddy.

There is no ritual performed to indicate the marriage, other than tattooing done at different stages. The days are selected by a ceremonial process of divination.

The marriage procedure is a bit different in case of the chiefs and involves some more rituals. The chiefs and their sons and daughters by custom take their partners from villages other than their own village group.

The negotiation between two chiefs' families is undertaken after observing divination, performed by *opa* with an egg. If only the portents are good, the negotiation starts, otherwise the case is dissolved. The process is called *chule*. Thereafter a party is sent to the chief's house to negotiate for the Wangsa—which is called *wangsa kaje yang*. They meet the parents of Wangsa and express their desire. If the girl's parents also agree, a day is selected to send out the Wangsa, which is called *ham nap Wangang*. On this day a feast is arranged at the groom's house. A buffalo or a mithun and a pig are killed for the feast. Sufficient-rice beer is prepared. The bride is accompanied by a large party, and the whole village accompanies her up to the village boundary. A mithun or a buffalo with several *chungas* or rice-beer is taken to the groom's house along with the bride. The villagers from the groom's village also come forward to the village boundary to welcome the bride. From the point where the groom's party welcomes the bride, all articles brought from the bride's house are carried by the groom's party. Before entering the groom's house, a dog is killed just at the entrance by an old man from the bride's party. He utters some ritual incantations at the time of sacrificing the dog. He is presented with a *dao* by the groom. The groom offers a feast to all the members present on that occasions. After the feast the inhabitants of both villages dance and sing in the night. Next day the bride's party returns and the bride stays in the groom's house for a day or two more, during which dancing and feasting continue.

A presentation of *dao* and *endi* cloth by the groom to all persons both male and female, who accompany the bride symbolises the grooms respect for the guests. Moreover the

wangsampa or the persons who carry out the negotiation and perform all other functions for the chief are also presented on this day. The one who does all the work when the chief dies is the *wangda*.

The girl after this ceremony, continues to visit the groom's house, and every time she pays a visit, she is accompanied by a few girls who carry articles of food such as rice-beer, rice and meat.

Tattooing, in case of the chief's daughters does not signify the different states of marriage though it is done at different stages of life.

Among the Wanchos, there is no system of paying bride-price or dowry but presentation of articles such as *endi* cloth, rice-beer, *pan* and meat is made at the time of negotiation and actual marriage. But in case of love marriage and elopement, where the parents do not agree, some amount of fine in cash as well as in kind is imposed on the boy who marries the girl. There is also a custom of giving presents to the girl by the boy. The presentation is made after negotiation and before actual marriage, and is continued for three years consecutively. Articles such as baskets for paddy and fuel, and armlet made of coloured cane, are included in the present. In return the girl also gives ear ornaments of wool and chains of the fine slip of reed made by herself.

After completion of negotiation with due observance of the usual customs, the girl concerned, cannot be married by any other person. If the girl elopes with some other person than the one for whom she has been negotiated, the matter takes a very serious turn and may lead to a feud. If such a thing happened in the case of a chief's daughter it used to lead to head hunting, in the old days. Nowadays, the village council imposes a heavy fine on the offender which amounts to payment of a portion of cultivable land, gun, gong, and palm groves. Instances of such offences are very rare nowadays but in the old days it was one of the causes of head hunting.

Illicit connection with girls, if exposed, is dealt similarly but it is more seriously viewed when a person has such relations with a married woman or a negotiated girl.

Divorce

Divorce is allowed on payment of a fine and is permissible only in some justified causes such as the wife is barren, or not active and cannot help the husband in cultivation, or if she is quarrelsome or possesses an immoral character and indulges in illicit sexual connections with another person. A wife can also divorce her husband on such grounds and if she is not happy. But cases of a wife divorcing her husband are very rare. The case is put up before the village elders who decide it and give their verdict. The fine imposed varies according to the nature and degree of the case. The fine is paid to the chief and compensation to the agrieved party only after which the divorce can be achieved.

Death and Disposal of the Dead

The Wancho idea about death, varies according to its nature. When a person dies in old age, it is considered as natural, but death due to illness is attributed to the evil action of the earth god, Baurang who, they believe, devours the person in the shape of illness. Accidental or sudden death is always taken as due to bad luck.

The funerary custom varies from village to village insofar as the minute details are concerned, but in general it appears to be similar.

Custom in Normal Death

A dead body in normal cases, such as in death due to old age is called *mang* (Pumas), *mangjiga* (Longkai), *mi due* (Wakka) and so on,

The corpse is kept inside the house for about twenty-four hours during which the relatives assemble and express their sorrow. In case of a chief, a wooden coffin is made but a commoner's corpse is wrapped in cloth and matting. The disposal is called *manggu*. Relatives, both men and women together, go to the cemetery, which is generally near some path, leading out of the village. The place is called *jak kha*. There the wrapped corpse is placed on a platform constructed at a height of about five to six feet from the ground. A small shed is made over the platform. An effigy either of wood or bamboo is made where

the possessions of the dead are kept hanging. Sometimes the possessions are hanged on the tomb itself. The effigies or images made for the purpose are disposed of in various ways. Sometimes these are placed in front of the tomb, sometimes several such images are kept together under a small shed.

In many cases, it has been found that the relatives of the dead keep guard near the tomb for a few days.

After disposal of the dead, a feast is arranged at which a pig or a *mithun* is killed. Till the skull of the corpse is finally placed under the earth, members of the family offer a share of each meal they take in the name of the deceased.

After about a month when the dead body has completely decomposed, the skull is detached by an old man called *tai-songpa* (Pumao). It is washed carefully, wrapped with a piece of red cloth and put under a stone. The skull-placing day is a great festival and is called *rapolev* or *ja foatle*. Before the ceremony, a number of people go out to catch fish, they cook the fish caught with rice and take the food to the ceremony. They tie a bundle of fish and rice to the skull saying: "We give this to you; eat and go away, O Lumpu! Go and do not return, do not let us see you again."

In many villages, the skull is put inside an earthen pitcher before being placed under a stone.

Every year at the *poatakle* festival (a festival for taking new rice), the villagers offer rice-beer and other cooked food to the skulls of the deceased members of every family. On this day the whole village collect near the cemetery and the skulls are taken out.

The custom of disposal of the dead body in Longkai and Wakka area is slightly different. At Longkai when a man dies, during the days of dearth the corpse is kept only for about twenty-four hours, otherwise it is kept for two days. The dead body is called *mangjiga*. During these two days, the relatives come and weep near the dead body. On the third day which is called *manggu*, it is taken to cemetery. Relatives and other mourners, both men and women, join in the procession.

The *gampa*, a ritual expert, does all the work of disposal. The corpse is placed on a bamboo platform called *liatan*, over which a shed (*gangs*) is constructed. The disposal platform is

constructed by the *gampa*. The corpse is wrapped in a piece of cloth and the mat on which the dead person used to lie down. An wooden effigy called *sapa* is fixed near the tomb on which the belonging of the deceased such as beads, hat, loin cloth, *dao*, gun and spear are hanged. The articles of foods and utensils are hanged on the tomb itself. On the day following the day of disposal, a ceremony called *latau* is performed. A feast is arranged with rice, rice-beer and meat. A pig or a *mithun* is killed for the purpose. All relatives and other persons who attend the disposal are invited. On the day following the *latau* ceremony, called *guntai*, the relatives sit near the tomb for the whole day. In case of the chief or his wife, the whole village sit near the tomb.

After about one year, the skull-placing ceremony called *go-chau* is performed. The skull is taken out of the tomb, washed carefully and buried underground at a place called *galong*. Before burial, it is put inside an earthen pitcher.

Rice-beer and other items of food are offered to the skull on this day. Valuable articles such as gong, elephant tusk and beads are put in the pit along with the skull. The pit is covered with a stone, over which a gun, a *dao* and a spear are kept.

Disposal of a Chief's Dead Body

The dead body of a chief is first kept near the house for about seven days. On the eighth day the skull is removed with a *dao*. The body part is taken to the common cemetery and the head to a place called *ruk tran khra*, situated in the centre of the village. It is then boiled in water in an earthen pitcher. The flesh is removed and placed with the body in the cemetery.

After the removal of the flesh, the skull is washed, cleaned and kept on a stone. The whole village dance and sing around the skull. Side by side, a feast is arranged. Pig, buffalo and *mithun* are killed. All village under the chief come to join the festival. Each village brings pig or buffalo, rice-beer, rice, vegetables and the like. Heads of the sacrificed animals are kept hanging at the *ruk-tram*. After the ceremony the skull is buried in a stone pit. Valuable articles are buried along with the skull. In case of the chiefs of the big villages of each *jan*, another ceremony called *lung pong wan*, is performed after six or seven

months. In this ceremony all the neighbouring villages, including big villages of other groups, are invited. This is a very big festival performed for a deceased chief. Each village sends presents of pig, buffalo and rice-beer and join the festival. Feasting, dancing and singing continues for several days. The dancers put on their ceremonial dresses.

Disposal in Abnormal Deaths

In abnormal, unnatural and accidental death, no ceremony is performed. The corpse is disposed of in the jungle. It is wrapped in a mat and tied to a tree in the jungle. All the personal belongings of the deceased are thrown away or placed together near the corpse. Nothing of his belongings is kept in the house. No offering is made to him afterwards. In such cases, the corpse is generally disposed of as soon as possible. In some villages, after disposal of the corpse the fire in the hearth of the house is extinguished and the fire is lit afresh.

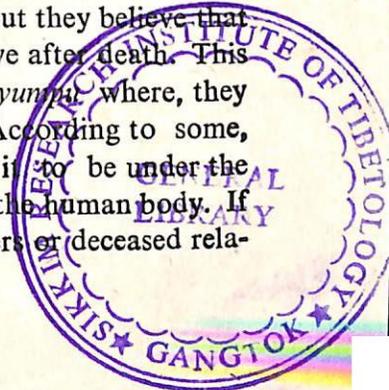
At Wakka, a feast is arranged on the day following the disposal even in abnormal cases. This is, however, not done in other villages. This day is called *gunku*. A pig is killed, and the *gampa* and *taikia* offer a portion of the meat and a share of the meal to the deceased. The clan members are invited for the feast.

The third day is called *guntai*. On this the whole village observes *genna* and refrain from work. The members of the deceased's family do not move out of the house.

A woman who dies at the time of delivery is disposed of in a similar manner. No precaution is taken in case of abnormal deaths.

The Soul after Death and its Destination

The Wanchos do not have a clear idea about the soul and its destination after the death of a person, but they believe that there is some place where man goes to live after death. This imaginary place is called *junpu*, *lompu* or *yumpu* where, they believe, all the dead forefathers are living. According to some, *junpu* is in the sky but the majority believe it to be under the earth. The soul is called *sab*. It lives inside the human body. If one sees in a dream the *sab* of ones forefathers or deceased rela-



tives coming home, one will die very soon, or at any rate some one of the village will die.

At Wakka, the people believe that the shadow of a man is his soul. It vanishes as soon as the person dies. The shadow which they think to be the soul, is called *sab*. It dwells inside the body so long a man is alive and at death goes to *junpu*, a place under the earth. There are two paths through which the *sab* goes. In normal cases the path is good but in abnormal cases it takes a very bad path.

The *sab* comes out from *junpu* on the day after disposal to meet the parents, friends and relatives. At first it comes out from *junpu* in the shape of a man, but while crossing a small river which they believe is on the way, it slips on a mossy slippery stone and becomes a kite. So, when they see a kite flying over the village after the death of a person, the members of the particular family throw some rice grains outside. In case of a child the bird is very small.

There is a village at *junpu*, called *aujum sia* or *chu-sa* where the *sab* of different persons construct individual houses and live, just as they lived in the earth. At *junpu*, there are three rivers from where the *sab* takes water. The *amai si jin* is the good river meant for the *sab* of good people, while the *ganma si jin* is for bad ones and the *angon si jin* is for diseased ones, specially lepers.

There is a story about the existence of the village at *junpu*. Once upon a time a man went to bring paddy from *Aujum sia* village. While coming back he saw his pig was going towards the village following an old woman. He went near the woman who was just like his mother, and in fact he could recognise her as his mother. She, however, did not talk to him. He was surprised to see his mother there and at her not talking to him. On reaching home he found his mother had died. Then he told the whole story to the villagers. Since then people believe that after death the *sab* of a person goes to *junpu* and lives in *aujum sia* village.

Morung Organization

The Wanchos have well organized *morung* system for men which, in the good old days, when the people were ardent head-

hunters, was the centre for training for the youths in the art of fighting, or for holding meetings and discussions with the villagers and also serving as guard houses to protect the village. Since the abolishing of head-hunting, these *morungs* are becoming centres of recreation and sleeping houses of the bachelors. In the old days each *morung* was equipped with all the available arms for fighting. The young boys of the village used to stay there in ever-ready position and guard the village from the attacks of the enemy.

Pa or *Pau* is the Wancho word for the *morung*. Each village has several *morungs*. It has been mentioned previously that the Wancho villages are divided into two main divisions. In many villages these divisions are again subdivided into a number of smaller zones consisting of a few houses. These smaller zones are called *jong* which is similar to the Assamese word *chuburi*. Each *jong* in the village has got a *morung*. Thus the number of *morung* in different villages varies from six to eighteen, depending on the size and the number of houses in the village. The chief's *morung* is called the *wangham-pa*, below which are two *morungs*, *panu* and *pass*. The *panu* is the biggest *morung* in a village. In the *wangham-pa*, important discussions and meetings are held whereas at the *panu*, all the heads collected during head-hunting days are kept. In fact the chief's *morung* is a sort of 'Darbar hall' (assembly house) of the chief. The *panu* is the main *morung* where community meetings and similar other gatherings are held. The different *morungs* are named after the name of the *jong*.

Each *morung* of the Wanchos is well decorated with various wood-carvings and heads of buffaloes and other animals killed on various occasions. But all the people give more attention to decorate the *wangham pa* and the *panu*.

There are small raised bamboo platforms constructed for sleeping purposes. In many *morungs* small compartments are made where the sleeping platforms are arranged in rows and stairs, one over the other just like a shelf. This can, in fact, be called sleeping shelf.

There are several fire places around which the youths and in many cases the old men also sit and gossip in groups. They exchange their thoughts and experiences, hear adventurous

stories from the old people and learn different arts and crafts in the *morung*. On the rear side of the *morung* is a well screened place which serve the purpose a latrine.

In the *panu morungs*, the human skulls are kept in a particular place, some times arranged in rows on some bamboo shelf, and sometimes dumped in a heap.

During day time, the youth of the *morung* stay there in batches, to guard the *morung* as well as the village. If any accident occurs during the watch of a particular batch of young men, either in the village or in any of the houses under that *morung*, all the guards are severely dealt with and heavily fined.

There is no age limit for entering the *morung*, but generally young children do not stay in the *morung*, though there is no restriction to their entering it. Women of any age, excepting children, are not allowed to enter the *morung*. Only on the day of construction of a *morung* can young girls and women enter for the purpose of distributing food at the feast arranged on this day.

The *morung* is constructed generally by the members of the particular *morung*, but in many villages members of one or two neighbouring *morungs*, also help in the work, if they are invited. The chief's *morung* and the *panu* are, however, constructed on a cooperative basis by the whole village. The *morung* construction is community work, and at the completion of the work, a big feast is held at night, followed by dancing and singing, sometimes throughout the whole night.

A big long-drum called *kham* is kept in each *morung* on one side of it. The size of the drum varies from 12 to 30 feet in length. Sometimes the drum is decorated with carvings of the human head, and motifs depicting various animals, snakes and birds. In the old days, when head-hunting was in full practice, the drum was mainly used to give the alarm to the village to be ready for a fight. Nowadays also, besides being used as a musical instrument, it is used on many other occasions as when some accident takes place in the village or some big animals have been killed or to invite people to any gathering and on festival days. There are different ways of playing the drum each indicating a different meaning. The villagers recognize the

different sounds, and accordingly they can understand the purpose for which the drum has been played. Each sound has its particular name. For example, when it is played on festival days—the sound or variety of tones is called *kham chu u*. Similarly, there are others like *khou kham tap*, *tham sayu*, *khong khan tap*, etc., which indicate sudden outbreak of fire or accident, killing of animals like the tiger or the bear and approaching of an enemy, respectively. The *khong khan tap* is not played nowadays.

The chief of each big village has a long drum of his own, kept at his house. To bring this drum, a festival called *kham dak le* is performed by the chief at which the whole village and sometimes neighbouring villages too, join. It is one of the grand festivals of the Wanchos. Each chief, after he is declared as chief, has to perform this festival. The *kham dak le* festival is performed on the day when the drum is finally brought to the village, but smaller rituals are performed at every step of the making of the drum, right from the selection of the tree.

There is no separate *morung* for the young girls of the village. But according to the custom, the girls generally congregate in some houses, preferably those of old widows and sleep there. Young men come to meet the girls in these places, gossip with them, make exchanges of gifts and some times pass the night with the girls. The place where the girls sleep together is called *nausa jup ham*, which means young girls' sleeping house. Though there is not even a rudimentary *morung* for the girls in the true sense, yet the custom indicates the existence of a rudimentary *morung* organization, because the girls who sleep together, work on many occasions in a cooperative way. They collectively go out to bring fuel and supply to each house under the *morung*. They also celebrate their own festival for bringing firewood.

Boys of a particular *morung* also work collectively on a cooperative basis, helping widows in cultivation, in constructing houses and on occasions of need. They together clean village paths, water points and do such other works in the village.

There is a particular person called *wangsam-pa*, who is incharge of the *morung* and is responsible for all works required to be performed by the *morung*. He directs the youths to do

different kinds of work, as conveyed to him by the villagers or the chief. It is his duty to see that the *morung* boys regularly bring firewood and water to the *morung*. He is the only man who can touch the skulls and other valuable articles kept in the *morung*, other people are not allowed to touch them normally. Thus the *wangsam-pa* is the acknowledged leader of the *morung*.

Though there is no system of the *morung* exogamy and the organization does not exert direct influence on marriage, yet the girls do not usually sleep with the boys of their own *morung* whom they consider as their own brothers.

Previously the *morung* were generally constructed near the entrances to the village to guard it against the attack of the enemy, but nowadays *morungs* are constructed within the village itself.

The *morungs* are also centres of arts and crafts. The boys while talking with their friends may make baskets, weave mats carve on wood and gather many useful experiences from experts and old persons. Thus the younger generations learn the different activities of life through association with others in the *morung* which are nuclei of the society and the basic and fundamental institutions of the people to guide the new generation for the well-being of all.

CHAPTER III

AVOIDANCE OF DIRECT EXCHANGE OF BRIDE AMONG TWO TRIBES OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH¹

JAYANTA SARKAR

The avoidance of direct exchange of bride between certain lineages in the North-Eastern part of this country was first observed by late T.C. Das as early in 1936 (Das 1945) among the Purum of Manipur. There are at least four other tribes namely the Khamti, the Kaman Mishmi, the Singpho and the Tangsa of Arunachal Pradesh who have similar custom.

The Khamtis are mainly concentrated on the bank of the Tengapani (Namsom) river of Lohit district while the Kaman Mishmis are inhabiting the high hills in the northern part of this district. The main concentration of the Tangsa population is in northern part of Tirap district and the Singphos are distributed both in Tirap and Lohit districts. A few of them have also settled down in Dibrugarh district of Assam.

The 1971 census records the population of the Khamti, the Kaman Mishmi, the Tangsa and the Singpho as 4,078, 8,233, 6,941 and 1,567 respectively. The Khamtis are the followers of Buddhism which a large number of the Singphos have also adopted. The other two tribes are animist.

The present exercise is an attempt to give an account of the avoidance of the direct exchange of bride among the Khamti and the Kaman Mishmi and to examine how the kinship terms reflect this system.

All these four societies are divided in a number of exogamous clans. Though the clans play important role in regulating marriages, the lineages are considered more important because they impose restriction on exchange of bride between two lineages. Before giving a girl's marriage it is first ascertained whether the groom's lineage is eligible to take a girl as wife from the girl's lineage. It is customary for a boy of these tribes to marry his mother's brother's daughter who is the first preferential mate for him. The other type of cross-cousin marriage i.e., with the father's sister's daughter is strictly tabooed. It is an obligation for a marriageable boy's mother to see that her brother's daughter is brought to her family as wife of her son or a person of equal position. The mother's brother gets offended if his sister's son refuses to marry his daughter.

Besides the mother's own brother's daughter they also marry the girls whom they consider at par with the mother's brother's daughter. Members of a specific lineage of the Khamti call those of their maternal uncle's lineage, real or classificatory, as *lungta*. A marriage with a girl of *lungta*, real or classificatory is considered as a marriage with the mother's brother's daughter. Among the Kaman Mishmis the mother's brother's lineage and also the lineages where from a girl can be brought as wife, are categorised as *yook* while the Tangsas bring a girl as wife from the mother's lineages, real or classificatory, which they classify as *rifan*. Das has mentioned about a similar type of marriage among the Purum. He says, 'the mother's brother's daughter is the most suitable bride for a man, and after her, any girl from the mother's brother's sib may serve the purpose'. (1945 : 153).

Though mother's brother's daughter is a preferential wife, there is no specific Khamti kinship term of address for her or for the girls of her category to separate them from the girls who are to be avoided for taking as wife. One's own elder sister, MoBrDa, MoSiDa, FaBrDa, FaSiDa, elder than ego, are addressed by the same term and the younger sister, MoBrDa, FaBrDa, FoSiDa, younger than ego, are similarly referred to by a single term. However, terms of reference for these relatives are different to indicate the exact consanguineal and affinal relations. Among the Kaman Mishmis both terms of address and reference

for younger sister, MoSiDa, FaBrDa, FaSiDa, younger and elder than ego, are same (*chamai*) but the MoBrDa is referred to by prefixing *yook* to *chamai* indicating her separate social position than ego's other sisters. She is the potential wife of the ego.

In the marriage system of the Khamti and the Kaman Mishmi, members belonging to ego's one ascending and one descending generations generally form a unit for either taking or giving wife to another such unit. One such unit where a girl from another unit has come as wife, normally is not expected to give a girl as wife to the wife-taker unit. This has been illustrated in Figure—1.

Here unit A has taken wife from unit B. So at least for three generations unit B's consanguineal relatives are not expected to take a wife from unit A. Similarly when unit C gives wife to unit B, its members avoid taking any one as wife from unit B. Like the Purums the Kaman Mishmi and the Khamti clans are not subdivided into named lineages, but each lineage is tied to some other lineages for the purpose of marriage. In case of the Khamti, the lineage from where a man and his family members can take wife is known as *lungta*. To a man the lineages from where his father, his own brothers, himself or his own sons can take wife, are categorised as *lungta*, whereas to a woman's consanguineal relatives, the members of her husband's one ascending and one descending generations are referred to as *khuithaw* indicating a lineage from where husbands can be taken. This is also reflected in their kinship terms, where the FaSiHu, SiHu and DaHu are referred to as *khui* prefixing *po*, *nong* and *luk* as the indicators of generation. Though FaFaSiHu is also a wife-taker from ego's lineage, he is not categorised as a man of *khui* group by the ego as the avoidance of direct exchange of bride is observed within one ascending and one descending generations of the ego. To a man his MoBr, WiBr and SoWiBr are referred to by using the term *jao* categorising their families as non-recipient of girl as wife from the ego's lineage.

Kinship terms for wife-receiver and wife donor lineage.

	<i>Relations</i>	<i>Khamti</i>	<i>Kaman Mishmi</i>
Wife receiver from ego's lineage FaSiHu	Po <i>Khui</i> Chao	<i>Komou</i>
	SiHu	Nong <i>Khui</i>	<i>Komou</i>
	DaHu	Luk <i>Khui</i>	<i>Komou</i>
Wife donor to the ego's lineage MoBr	<i>Jao</i> Chao	<i>Yook</i>
	WiBr	<i>Jao</i> Chee Man	<i>Nang</i>
	SoWiBr	<i>Jao</i> Noi	?

From the above listed kin terms of the Khamti one can easily group certain categories of the kins like the *khui* and *jao* to whom females can be given and from whom females can also be obtained as wife. The kinship terms of the Kaman Mishmi also have a single term *Kamou*. FaSiHu, SiHu, DaHu and BrDaHu are all referred to as *kamou*. The term *kamou* indicates a non-consanguineal relative and his family where a girl has been given as wife and from whom no female can be taken as wife. Since FaSiSo can also take a girl from the ego's family as wife they are referred to as *kamou* classifying them as potential wife-taker. But like the Khamti, for MoBr, WiBr and DaHu there is no common term to indicate their families from whom wife has been taken. Though the term *yook* is referred to one's mother's brother and his descending generations, it always means the family which is supposed to provide a girl as wife to the ego's family. The customary law of the Kaman Mishmi prohibits marriage of a person with his father's sister's daughter and permits marriage with mother's brother's daughter. This automatically imposes restriction on the direct exchange of bride between certain families at least for three generations, if not more. The kinship term for FaSiDa, FaBrDa, Si and MoSiDa is *chamai* classifying them as non-marriageable but MoBrDa is referred to as *yook chamai* indicating that the girl is not as par with other sisters.

Though the direct exchange of bride between two units is tabooed, deviation from such norm is not totally absent among

the Khamti. In a village near Chowkham out of 75 married men only two had direct exchange of bride. In one case a man of a lineage of Namsoom clan married to a girl of a lineage of Manjee clan which is supposed to be a wife-taker lineage from the former's lineage. Both the bride and the bridegroom had non-traditional education, and the villagers did not take it as violation of rule as within two ascending generations of the boy no girl was given to his lineage. In another case a man of a lineage of Namsoom clan married to a girl of a lineage of Manpoong clan of Manmow village. As per the norm the same lineage of Namsoom clan cannot give a girl to that particular lineage of Manpoong clan at least for three generations. But the girl's younger brother has married to his sister's husband's elder brother's elder daughter. This was also not taken as an offence; and the couple and their children are enjoying the same socio-religious rights as others. Needham in his analysis of the Purum society has dealt with such problems of departure from the norm. He says, 'For one person or another, difficulty arises in marrying a woman of the eligible category. Must there then be departure from the norm?' Will a man have to marry a woman of the category of 'tu'? 'Tu' is the category of wife-taker. The answer to judge by the common practice in other such societies and particularly by a report from the related Chaute, is that he will not. What typically happens is that a woman is removed from a marriageable one. Her genealogical connection e.g., as father's sister's daughter is entirely disregarded and she is ritually assigned to the appropriate category in the classification which in fact orders social life'. (1960 : 87) In the two marriages of direct exchange mentioned above no such removal of girl from her 'non-marriageable' category was done. They were accepted and recognised as exceptional cases. The villagers, however, feel that the offsprings of such marriages face difficulties in getting wives from the recognised wife-giver unit. They are to go to find out a new unit for obtaining wife. Among the members of a lineage of Manpoong clan living at Manmow it has been observed that in one generation girls have been given to Namsoom clan of different lineage distributed at Sengsap, Chowkham and Momong villages. They have also taken wife of clan of different lineages distributed at Dikrong, Momong and Chow-

kham. Such exchange of bride between two clans have also been found in a Kaman Mishmi village where the Kri clan has taken both the wives and husbands from three clans, namely, Yiun, Ngaton and Pull. These clearly indicate that the clan as such has no role to play in controlling wife-giving or wife-taking. The families and the lineages actually avoid taking wife from another family or lineage whom it has already given wife during last three generations.

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CHAPTER IV

MARKET, RECIPROCITY AND SYMBOLISM AT RUPA—A SHERDUKPEN VILLAGE IN ARUNACHAL

B. K. ROY BURMAN

The village Rupa is situated in the south-west of Bomdila, the headquarters of Kameng district of Arunachal. It is situated at a height of about 4,700 feet above the mean sea-level.

In 1964 when the study was conducted Rupa had a nuclear settlement known by the same name. Besides, the people of Rupa claimed eight hamlets (Thaungreo, Gnau, Gomiam, Mukhuthing, Chellen, Gecham, Brokpoblang, and Smugchi) as their satellites. These hamlets are at different distances from the main core, the further one being 16 km away. The administration, however, does not recognise all the eight hamlets as part of Rupa. In the sixties only the last four were considered to be part of the village organisation of Rupa.

There are also several other ways in which Rupa means different things to different people. Previously Jigaon, situated not far off from the main residential cluster of Rupa, was considered to be a part of the village. But the people of Jigaon did not like to remain clubbed with Rupa, under the same administrative polity at the village level. This unwillingness was more related to the social distance between the people of Rupa and Jigaon, than to the physical distance between these two places.

Though to the outsiders, the people of Jigaon are also the

Sherdukpens, to the Sherdukpens of Rupa and other villages of the tribe, they are the Sherdukpens of lesser shade; they are more commonly known as the Yanlaks. They are supposed to be persons of the Bhotia origin, who were adept in smithy, and were settled by the Sherdukpens of Rupa within their territory a few generations ago. They were required to carry out smithy work and also to render certain ceremonial services during the seasonal migration of the Sherdukpens to the foothills. The Yanlaks were thus a satellite community and the land occupied by them was a sub-village. In the fifties, with the extension of effective administration in this part of the country, a social upheaval took place. The government recognised Rupa as a separate village as early as that time, and the Sherdukpens of Jigaon, who were second class Sherdukpens as it were, became equal along with other Sherdukpens. But it appears that the newly gained equality tended to push the community in two opposite directions: first to become full-fledged Sherdukpens and second to become full-fledged non-Sherdukpens. At present there is a tendency among some in Jigaon to claim the Yanlak to be a distinct community. But Jigaon has not been able to cut off its umbilical cord altogether. Even now, on certain ceremonial occasions of the tribe, Jigaon is not recognised as a separate entity. It is dealt with as a part of Rupa social complex.

Thus Rupa is one in many. This is at the same time a source of flexibility as well of tension, in the social and political relations of the villagers with the outside and also among themselves.

The social world of Rupa has several other complex features. Shinchang, the village of the Khawas, stands on a separate footing from Jigaon. Until recently the Khawas of Shinchang, were subjugated to the Sherdukpens of Rupa. They were required to pay an annual tribute in service or in kind, but their distinct civic identity was not merged. They had a separate village authority of their own. Hence when with the extension of effective administration, the Khawas were exempted from the payment of annual tribute, Rupa did not feel that its identity was being mutilated. The Sherdukpens knew that any claim that they might have over the Khawas belonged to the political order and not the normal order.

More complex, however, was the relationship of the Sherdukpens with the Kacharis of the plain. In the past, the Sherdukpens used to collect tribute from the Kacharis living in between the Dhansiri and the Belsiri rivers. It does not appear that the Sherdukpens considered the Kacharis as their subject or the land of the Kacharis as their subjugated territory. The tribute that they used to get from the Kacharis, has been described by many as blackmail money. Perhaps it was so. But this was commuted into annual stipend during the later phase of the Ahom rule; and the same system continued during the British rule. It continues till now. It is, however, significant that even after the commutation of the so-called quit money into stipend or *posa*, the Kacharis have continued to give some sort of tribute in kind. But why?

It appears that there were two elements in the payments made by the Kacharis to the Sherdukpens. First was the military consideration, second was the consideration of economic and political relations. At the tribal level, the Sherdukpens, because of the strategic location of their habitat, were in a position to carry on raids on the Kachari territory, cause devastation and then turn to their mountain retreat. But it is obvious that, neither by number nor by superiority of arms, they were in a position to continuously rule the Kacharis. Therefore it was only quit money they could impose on the Kacharis. But then there were also other matters of mutual interest. The Sherdukpens required supply of food grains, metallic wares and cotton textiles from the plains; on the other hand they had sheep and goat, woollen goods, musk, borax and other jungle products to offer. In this circulation of commodities, there were two alternatives. After coming all the way to the foothill, the Sherdukpens could as well sell all their wares in the nearby markets in the plains of Assam. But till recently, the bulk of the wares do not appear to have been transacted in this manner. Most of the transactions used to be carried on through the Kacharis. Thus, the Kacharis served as the middlemen between the Sherdukpens and the agriculturist population of the plains of Assam. This role of middlemen was sanctified through a number of rituals at the place of the Sherdukpens and the Kacharis both.

The rituals symbolised the principle of circulation, which appears to be basic to the social structure, not only of the Sherdukpens, but also of most of the hill tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The tributes paid by the Kachari households to the Sherdukpen households were indicators of another principle, which was in a nebulous state, in the context of primitive political and economic organisation; the principle of earning profit during the course of commodity transaction. But before discussing the same, it is proposed to examine the symbolism of circulation in some detail.

For ages, the most important source of livelihood of the tribal communities of the region has been shifting cultivation. It used to be supplemented by collection of jungle products. There were also some household crafts at various levels of technology, but in most cases the technology was low. The population living in the area was, therefore, perpetually haunted by the spectre of starvation. But at the same time, the diversity of the terrain, the differences in the proximity of the more or less stable food producing region of the plains of Assam in the south, and the fairly sophisticated handicraft producing centres of Tibet and Bhutan in the north and the west, created conditions where reciprocity was an imperative need for survival. It was this principle of reciprocity, which promoted circulation. It was symbolised in two forms; one in the form of ceremonial friendship, the other in the form of circulation of sacred bells and sacred plates made of brass, which did not have any use value. The bells and the plates were transferred from family to family as bride wealth. Again, these were returned to the family concerned, through the institution of marriage with the father's daughter. These were also bartered for minimum and other valuables. The possession of these conferred status to the household, as a recognition for the service rendered to the community, by upholding the principle of circulation.

The ethos of circulation is even expressed in the lamentation of the father when the daughter takes leave after marriage. He tells her that it is part of the principle of circulation that he should give her away, even though it rends his heart.

Circulation on the basis of reciprocity presupposes a world view, where accommodation and compromise constitute basic

organising principles in human relationship. This is symbolised in their myth, where the demon who had abducted the princess, was forgiven as soon as he apologised to her spouse, whose hire was roused. He was even befriended and the princess, her spouse and the demon danced together.

A question arises as to how Rupa could become the place for exchange in cash, if reciprocity was the basic principle, not only for circulation of articles, but also for organising the human relations.

To examine this question, one is to consider what are the antimonies of circulation and reciprocity respectively.

The antimony of circulation is extortion and that of reciprocity is market.

Both the antimonies have been symbolically represented among the Sherdukpens. At Rupa they have built up a *chhorten* in honour of a gaonburah, who oppressed them and extorted goods and services for years, and asked for their forgiveness in his deathbed. This narration brings out two processes, first, the symbolic enunciation of the self-destroying character of extortion and second, reiteration of the principle of reciprocity, even to the extent of deifying a repentant oppressor. In fact, one may wonder, whether it is really the ex-oppressor who is deified or whether it is the principle of reciprocity or the fact of his repentance which is extolled. Perhaps, the collective act here communicate different things to different persons; or even to the same persons in different contexts.

In any case, this narration and the *chhorten* associated with it, also bring out the fact that extortion as a method of control of services and goods, is within the mental focus of the community, though its limited validity is also recognised.

In fact, the Sherdukpens as well as other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh practised extortion quite considerably, both in their internal social relationships as well as in their external relationships. But at the same time, they did not allow the acts of extortion to supersede the overall process of circulation through reciprocity. May be sometimes, extortion was a short term *handmaid* of reciprocity, but not its substitute. One can even visualise situations when the social organisation of reciprocity would be out of gear and extortion would be required to

restore the balances. Such situations would be caused by failure of crops in the plains, or in the hills; dynastic changes or shifts in the centres of power in the plains or in Tibet or Bhutan; introduction of improved technology in any sector of production; expansion of transport and communication and so on. But unmitigated extortion could not be a long term process; in that case the whole political structure of the hills would have required a complete reorganisation and the loosely connected tribal entities would have been wedded into a state structure. But there were two constraints to this; first the nature of the terrain and the low level of technology did not provide the economic base for sustaining the state structure; second it would have reduced the flexibility of a larger system of economic and political relationship which involved North East India, Tibet and Bhutan during the pre-British period. The loosely linked up tribal entities of Arunachal allowed the organised state to operate their spheres of influence without directly confronting each other, and at the same time to ensure that commodity transactions from one area to another took place through diverse, but fairly stable channels. Thus it is in the interest of maintaining a larger system or systems of relationship that the tribes of Arunachal remained in a state of perpetual flux in their internal relationship and were not integrated into a single polity. It is easy to perceive that a single polity would have subjected it to pressures and pulls of cultures of entirely two different orders—one primarily based on settled agricultural economy, the other having more diversified and at the same time technologically more simple base, particularly drawing upon agriculture, animal husbandry and forestry. It would have been required either to ally with one and confront others, or to merge completely with one of them. Any of these developments would have complicated the mutual relationships of the organised states of this part of the world, which by virtue of the differences in the nature of their economy, were partially interdependent on one another. Conversely it follows that, had the wider system of symbiotic relationship not been there, or had it broken down, conditions conducive to the integration of the tribes of Arunachal into a single state structure might have prevailed.

This analysis brings out the fact that the loose ensemble

CHAPTER V

ETHNICITY AND POLITICS IN SIKKIM

S. K. CHAUBE

The Demographic Profile

Sikkim joined the Indian Union as its youngest and smallest state on May 16, 1975. Its total territory (7,299 km) constitutes 0.22% of India's total territory, its population in 1981 (315,682) being 0.04% of India's population. As against the average density of population in India of 221 per sq. km. Sikkim has a density of 44 (Padmanabha, 1981).

It will at once appear from a study of the population map of India that all the low-density states and Union territories are on the fringes of the Indian Union. Except the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, further, they are all located on the Himalayan ranges or their extension in north-east India. Of course, Sikkim is surpassed by Himachal Pradesh (density: 76), Manipur (54), Meghalaya (59) and Nagaland (47). However, it leads the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (23), Mizoram (23), Jammu and Kashmir (22) and Arunachal Pradesh (7).

Table—1

Low Density (less than 100) States and Union Territories in India

<i>State</i>	<i>Density</i>
Himachal Pradesh	76
Manipur	64

<i>State</i>	<i>Density</i>
Meghalya	59
Nagaland	47
Sikkim	44
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	23
Mizoram	23
Jammu and Kashmir ¹	22
Arunachal Pradesh	7

The explanation of this low density is easily furnished by nature, the inhospitability of the Himalayan mountains. Sikkim is entirely a mountainous state, its elevation ranging from 800 ft. to 28,000 ft. Its land-use pattern in 1971 can further illustrate the inhospitability of its territory.

Table—2
Land-use Pattern in Sikkim

<i>Type of land</i>	<i>Proportion to total land (%)</i>
1. Cultivation and Agriculture	11.14
2. Reserved Forest	26.66
3. Private Forest	4.24
4. Khasmahal and Garucharan (Pasture) Forest	5.30
5. Area Under Snow and Glaciers	28.29
6. Alpine Pastures	14.14
7. Settlement, Villages, Roads, etc.	10.23
Total	100.00

Source : Report of the Technical Team on the Fourth Five-Year Plan of Sikkim (cyclo), Gangtok, 1971, as quoted in Dasgupta (1980: 135).

The Cultural Frame of Reference

The theoretical frame in which the Sikkimese society can be understood is partly provided by the 'bridge-buffer role' of

the borders provided by Roy Burman (1972). Sikkim's strategic location between India and Tibet has rendered her civilization certain special features which cannot, however, be fully appreciated without a reference to her historical evolution. One needs to look into Sikkim as much as at her environs. The sweeping assumption of the Tibetan influence on the Buddhist faith of most peoples on the southern slope of the Himalayas (in Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan), for instance, needs to be qualified by the fact that the sects which predominate in these areas are 'heretical' in Tibet. Tibet is under the Gelukpa sect (identified by their yellow hats). Buddhists in Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim are identified by their red hats.

In fact the red hat sects were the originally prevalent sects in Tibet until the ascendancy of the Gelukpa, under the Dalai Lamas, and with the support of the Mongol emperors of China (Shakabpa, 1967: 96-111). During the two earlier centuries of conflict over political hegemony in Tibet the defeated sects seem to have dispersed and founded their own niches around Tibet. Subsequently, however, they appear to have established a functional relationship with Tibet without foregoing their autonomy.

It will also be necessary to take into account the century of impact of British imperialism on the Himalayan states in general and Sikkim in particular before the transfer of power in India. But it is no less important to note the socio-economic tensions that developed *internally* partly through such impact.

The Ethnic Profile

It is difficult to ascertain the 'original' inhabitants of Sikkim. Apparently the two oldest groups, the Lepchas and the Limbus, are believed to have migrated into the present-day Sikkim, from outside Sikkim. The Bhutias are believed to have entered Sikkim later than the above-mentioned groups and were originally called Khampas by themselves (Shukla, 1976: 7-8). The indigenous name of the Lepcha was 'Rong' and of Limbus 'Chong' (Tsong). The Lepchas used to call this land 'Neliang' (literally the country of caverns). The name 'Sikkim' was probably given by the Limbus who came via Nepal (and are still there in a large number). The indigenous name of the country

is Denzong (valley of rice). Both the Lepcha and the Limbu are believed to be of the Kirati stock of Indo-Mongoloid group distinguished from the Tibeto-Mongoloid Bhutia.

In the past in Sikkim the local people are believed to have been ruled by their chiefs (*pano/punu*) (Shukla, 1976: 7). Mainwaring speaks of a Lepcha *ano* ruling about 1425 A.D. when a Bhutia patriarch—Khye Bumsa—came to Sikkim from Kham (1876: X). Khye Bumsa came across a Lepcha chief—Thokung Tex—whose blessings led to Khye Bumsa having a child. The last Lepcha *ano* was born in 1886 and ruled for twenty-five years (Sinha, 1975: 12).

The legend about perpetuation of Khye Bumsa's dynasty from which the first Bhutia ruler of Sikkim—Phuntshog Namgyal—emerged was the first attempt at racial assimilation by the immigrants. The story about the killing of Turue by the Limbus (Shukla, 1976: 7) suggests frequent clashes between these two early inhabitant groups of Sikkim. Yet, there was no social bar to their marriage and intermixture. The Bhutia rulers made conscious effort to promote intermarriage with the Lepcha chiefs (Sinha, 1975: 7; Basnet, 1947: 14).

Such intermarriages must have been selective enough to restrict an effective intermixture with the result that the 1971 census showed clear demarcation between the major ethnic communities of Sikkim.

Table—3
Indigenous Linguistic Groups of Sikkim 1971

<i>Linguistic Group</i>	<i>Total Strength</i>	<i>as % of total Population</i>
Tibetan		
Bhutia	4,627	2.20
Sikkim Bhutia	8,064	3.84
Lepcha	10,891	5.19
Gorkhali/Nepali	22,316	10.63
Others	134,275	63.99
Total Population	29,670	14.14
	209,843	99.99

Table—4
Dominant Religious Groups in Sikkim 1971

<i>Religious Group</i>	<i>Strength</i>	<i>as % of total Population</i>
Hindu	144,544	68.88
Buddhist	62,617	29.84
Others	2,682	1.28
Total Populations	209,843	100.00

(Source : Chandra Shekhar : Census of India 1971)

The above statistics reveal the fact that 18.55% of Sikkimese people not belonging to the Bhutia category, are Buddhists. Their strength is accounted for by the Nepalese-speaking Buddhists, mostly Tamang, Sherpa and parts of the Newar, Limbu and the Lepcha communities. Among the Lepchas Buddhism predominates due to the historical reason of the Bhutia political hold. Recently, a section of the Lepchas have embraced Christianity. Yet, both the Buddhist and Christian Lepchas have retained considerable tribal elements in their religious practices (Sinha, 1975 : 6).

The Lepcha-Limbu-Bhutia triangle

The place of the Limbus in the Sikkimese life demonstrates a significant impact of politics on ethnic relations. Most of the Limbus are animists (followers of ancient *bon* religion) but now broadly considered to be either Hinduized or Buddhist. They have a distinct dialect, but are mostly considered to be Nepalese speaking. They are supposed to have been immigrants, but are identified with a region covering eastern Nepal and Western Sikkim and traditionally called Limbuan.

All these dichotomies point to certain hypotheses about their history. They are : (1) The Limbus probably had come from the Tsang valley in the wake of politico-religious disturbances; (2) They probably settled in a region under small chiefships but could not develop a full-fledged state; (3) While consolidation of the Bhutia rule in the fifteenth century led to

the formation of the state of Sikkim encompassing a part of the Limbu country, the subsequent consolidation of the Gurkha rule led to the formation of the modern state of Nepal encompassing the bulk of the Limbu. Finally, when the Sikkim-Nepal border was determined at the Donkhya range, the Limbus became divided under two sovereignties.

The Lepcha-Bhutia-Limbu interaction thus taken on an interesting pattern. The Lepcha society has in the past been permissive. While the Bhutia rulers and their retinues took Lepcha wives, the privilege of entering such matrimonial alliances must have been restricted to the Lepcha elite and we find a few Lepcha Kazis (the governing class of traditional Sikkim), while no Limbu could emerge to such position. On the other hand, Lepcha-Limbu inter-marriage appears to have been more frequent and at the level of the commoners.

Nepali immigration

The biggest linguistic group in today's Sikkim is the Nepali. The bulk of the Nepali population in Sikkim, i.e., those excluding the Limbu, the Magar, the Gurung, the Rai and the Tamang—are immigrants from Nepal since the late eighteenth century, following the Gurkha invasion of 1788-89. But the Gurkha immigration was officially allowed in Sikkim after the 1860 war with the British government, and under the British pressure. In 1867 the first formal lease of land was granted to two Newar brothers (Basnet, 1947 : 44). The Bhutia aristocracy including the king opposed such immigration. This led to ethnic tension and court intrigues.

'By the early twentieth century tension over the Gurkha immigration ceased' (ibid : 66). Though some Bhutia landlords opposed immigration, the strength and influence of the Nepalis grew fast due to their energetic drive. Though no Nepali acquired the status of Kazi, many of them become substantial landowners with the title of 'Thikadars' (lessee landlords). On the whole, however, the Bhutias predominated as both Kazis and Thikadars (ibid : 67). By 1947

The Lepcha-Bhutia tussle had disappeared almost completely due to cultural and social integration of both ethnic

groups to a large extent through inter-marriage and a sort of combined aristocracy and landlordship of the other communities had emerged. The problem of Lepcha peasants and that of Nepali peasants has however remained the same and they continued to be exploited by the landlords without ethnic distinctions. Some of them also migrated to neighbouring British territory (Shukla, 1979 : 46).

Class and ethnicity

Class and ethnicity intertwined in the chequered political process in Sikkim about the time of the transfer of power in India. Sikkim was categorized as an 'Indian state' under the Government of India Act, 1935. When the Constituent Assembly of India started working out the Indian Constitution representatives of the princely states were sent there. Himmatsingh K. Maheswari represented the Sikkim and Cooch Behar group of states. On December 5, 1947 the first political party was organized in Sikkim with the name of the Sikkim State Congress and with a multi-communal leadership. Its chairman was a Bhutia commoner, Tashi Tsering (Ibid : 47)

The Sikkim State Congress demanded (1) abolition of landlordism, (2) formation of an interim government to have the way for a popular ministry and (3) accession of Sikkim in India. The Sikkim Maharaja accepted the first two demands and rejected the third. The Maharaja founded an interim government with three secretaries—nominees of the State Congress—who quickly changed side and defied the party's mandate to resign. The then Crown Prince (subsequently the last Chogyal), Palden Thondup Namgyal, got a National Party organized in April 1948, under Sonam Tsering, one of the renegades, emphasizing the Bhutia-Lepcha distinctiveness and opposing merger. This rendered a militancy to Sikkim State Congress on the one hand and created bad blood within it on the other.

The Maharaja formed the first ministerial government with five ministers, on May 9, 1948. Three of them were the nominees of the State Congress and belonged to the three different communities: Tashi Tsering, who acted like the Chief Minister, was a Bhutia, Dimik Singh, a Lepcha, and C.D. Rai, a Nepali.

The official nominees were Dorji Dadul (a Bhutia) and Reshmi Prasad Alley (a Nepali). The Chief Minister had no control over the Sikkim durbar, made of the Maharaja's supporters. This led to such an unhappy situation that the Indian Government had to intervene and dismiss the ministers. A new system of a Dewan—deputed by the Government of India—with total administrative power took its place.

In May 1951 the Maharaja entered into negotiation with the National Party and the State Congress and hit upon a 'parity formula' over the election of a state council whereby the Bhutia-Lepcha population would have six seats, the Nepali population six seats and the Maharaja's nominees five seats in a 17-member council. Tashi Tsering refused to sign the agreement calling it 'unjust and communal' (Ibid : 57). The Nepali and Lepcha representatives of the State Congress, however, accepted it.

Acceptance of the parity formula by the State Congress was the watershed of inter-ethnic politics in Sikkim. Tashi Tsering, being a Bhutia 'commoner' himself, symbolized the Nepali-Lepcha-Bhutia democratic unity against the monarchy. The parity formula pushed the Bhutias into the royal camp. Tashi Tsering was replaced in the State Congress by Kazi Lhendup Dorji Khangsarpa, who claims to be Lepcha, but whose name strongly suggests a Bhutia background. Tashi Tsering soon died as a frustrated man.

Factions and power

In the first election held, on August 7, 1953, to the State Council, the palace-backed National Party won all the six Bhutia-Lepcha seats. The palace had its five nominees besides them. The State Congress has won the six seats open to the Nepalese. In the new situation the Dewan, as the chief executive, was in charge of the reserved subjects. Besides the Dewan, there were two executive councillors, dealing with the transferred subjects: Kashi Raj Pradhan, representing the State Congress and Sonam Tsering representing the National Party. The experiment proved to be a 'farce' (Sinha, 1975: 28). As the ethnic demarcations were becoming increasingly prominent, Kazi Lhendup Dorji's own position was becoming untenable.

CHAPTER VI

CRAFTS OF SIKKIM AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

BUDDHADEB CHAUDHURI

The history of our crafts is as old as the history of man. From time immemorial the techniques of handicrafts have been handed down from parents to children, and the artisan families preserved the same in spite of many trials and tribulations. The innate strength of handicrafts has withstood the onslaught of mechanization. In richness of design, artistic excellence and inimitable workmanship, handicrafts hold their own against machine-made goods.

Below the Khangchendzonga, world's third highest mountain, lies Sikkim—a mountainous state bounded by Tibet in the north, Bhutan in the east, Nepal in the west and West Bengal in the south. A tongue-shaped southward project of Tibet, the Chumbi Valley, is driven like a wedge between Sikkim and Bhutan for more than half the length of Sikkim's eastern border. On the south lie the hill areas of Darjeeling district of West Bengal.

The present paper is based on a study made on the crafts, particularly wood-carvings of Sikkim. Besides discussing the history and background of the region and communities practising the various types of arts and crafts, it has been examined how far arts and crafts are based on religion and thus, through arts and crafts, the socio-ritual boundaries are often maintained and internal solidarities of these communities are strengthened. Sikkim is the 22nd State of India, with an area of 7096 sq-

km. encompassed in varying elevations ranging from 224 to 8,534 metres (800 to 28000 ft) above mean sea-level. The whole of Sikkim is mountainous, especially the north, east and west regions. There are many high ranges and lofty peaks, eternally under snow and the loftiest of them all is the famous Khangchendzonga which is also intimately connected with the socio-religious life of the inhabitants and is supposed to be the protecting deity of Sikkim. But even the existence of these high ranges forming the physical boundary of Sikkim, it was not isolated to that extent as expected due to the presence of numerous passes, including the Jelep-la-Pass and the famous Nathu-la-Pass through which people traditionally used to migrate or visit Sikkim regularly.

The name of Sikkim is an appellation of Nepalese origin—Sukkim meaning peace and happiness. The Tibetans called it *Denzong*, the hidden valley of rice. It was also known to the Lepchas, one of the early inhabitants of Sikkim, as Nye-Maed or heaven.

Sikkim was under feudalistic order for about three centuries and a quarter and remained relatively isolated from the developed and developing countries. Again, because of the severe climatic conditions and hilly terrain, the only popular means of transport is road. Infact, a few years back, transport and communication systems were in a very bad shape. However, at present, Gangtok, the state capital, is well connected by roads with different nearby places of West Bengal like Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Siliguri and all the district headquarters of Sikkim. Besides the Sikkim Nationalised Transport which ply regular services connecting these places, private buses and taxis are also available. The nearest air port is Bagdogra in West Bengal situated 124 km. from Gangtok. The two closest railway stations are Siliguri (114 km) and New Jalpaiguri Junction (125 km). The river Tista and its tributaries are perennial rivers, but they are not safe for navigation. This relative isolation, however, has helped this region to maintain its tradition and culture to a great extent.

In the past, a large number of communities with varied socio-cultural background migrated to Sikkim. The earliest settlers in Sikkim were the Lepchas who are supposed to have

rations of the people of the area. It has a population of 3,15,682 according to 1981 census living in 215 villages and 7 towns, falling in four districts, East, North, South and West. About 83.77% of its inhabitants live in villages and Gangtok, the biggest town of this state has a population of 36,768. In Sikkim, the average general density of population is 44.

The present population of Sikkim is composed of the Lepcha, who are supposed to be one of the early inhabitants of the state, the Bhotias, who came some centuries ago and the Nepalis—who are more recent immigrants and now constitute the majority covering about 75 per cent of the total population. The Lepchas and the Bhotias are roughly 13 per cent and 12 percent of the population respectively. The three groups speak their own languages, namely Lepcha, Sikkimese (Bhotia) and Nepali.

In Sikkim, two-thirds of the population are Hindus and a little less than one-third are Buddhists. The rural urban differential in the distribution of the Hindus is quite marked in Sikkim. The number of the Hindus per 100 of the population is 67 for all areas, 69 for rural areas and only 24 for urban areas. In Sikkim, the proportion of the Hindus to the total population declined substantially from 71.06 per cent in 1951 to 66.69 per cent in 1961, the growth rate among the Hindus being 10.53 per cent only against a general growth rate of 17.76 per cent. The Muslims, Jain and Sikh population in Sikkim is insignificant and less than one per cent. The Christians account for 1.7 per cent of the population. The Buddhists have registered a growth rate of 26.64 percent against a general growth rate of 17.76 per cent only.

An overwhelming majority of the population (89%) are engaged in cultivation, the cultivated area is estimated to be only 11% of the total area of the State. About 1/3 of the area of the state is covered by forests. Naturally, woods are available in plenty. The staple food of the people of Sikkim is rice, grown along with millet, cardamom, oranges, apples, potatoes, ginger, etc. Sikkim exports cardamom, oranges and potatoes. Besides agriculture, animal husbandry, pig-raising and poultry are followed by many either as primary occupation or to supplement the need. Only a very few local persons are in business;

Beautiful wood carvings in the chapel demonstrate the markedly impressive craftsmanship of the artists. One may also find such examples in other places, the most important of which is the Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology, a world famous institute having the third largest collection of Tibetan books on Manayana Buddhism in the world. There are also over 200 icons, prized objects of art and a number of rare *thankas* (tapestries) which are internationally acclaimed. This is also a centre for study of the Buddhist scholars from all over the world. In the monasteries, wood was largely used not only to decorate or preparing altars or images of the deities, in many places preachings were also written in the beautifully decorated wood.

Now the different arts and crafts of Sikkim, the nature of involvement of the different communities in them and the present condition of the different crafts will be discussed. In this context, a discussion on the history of crafts of Sikkim may be useful.

The earliest known art forms in Sikkim do not go back before the 15th-16th century A.D. This partially explains that the Lepchas did not have the culture of art. However, the earliest forms were rather crude carvings in relief placed on the *chhorten* (receptacles of worship). A *chhorten* is a kind of miniature *stupa* whose original function, that of housing relics of the Buddha or other Great Teachers, was later combined with religious significance. The *chhortens* also marked the route of pilgrims found for the holy places of Buddhist legend. More than a thousand years after King Ashoka built the first *stupa*, this architectural design reached Tibet in its maturity in the 8th century A.D. The first *chhorten* in Sikkim were built after Tibetan models and other shapes were fixed by definite measurements and designs. The earliest forms of stone reliefs used for outer decoration of the *chhortens* go back to a period perhaps before Phuntsog Namgyal (born in 1604 A.D.) who was the first consecrated ruler of Sikkim.

The ascendancy of the Namgyal house marks the beginning of the Sikkimese art, the cultural influences of which can be traced to the origin claimed by the rulers of Sikkim. The Namgyals claim to be the descendents of the legendary king, Indrabodh who, according to one tradition, was the king of Zahor, or what is now Mandi in Himachal Pradesh.

and the Nepali. The "Dragon" jewellery made in Gangtok, is famous and is made in cuff-rings, rings, earrings, necklaces, etc. The gold and lead jewellery of the Nepalis is also very popular. Articles, such as ash-trays, nut-bowls, spoons, and religious artifacts in the Bhotia pattern are often made.

The metal objects that are most attractive, are pots and jugs of various beautiful shapes and types. They reveal best of all that mysterious, ancient culture which is the most characteristic and most basic contribution of native origin to the mixture termed Lamaist art. Some times they do not look very artistic, worked less precisely than the other objects, but they have what is called a touch of folk art, and thus has a certain beauty any iconographic treatment which makes them all the more attractive.

Arts and crafts on stone and clay do not seem to be very popular with the craftsmen. However, small stones are often inserted to decorate a particular object.

Crafts made of bamboo and cane are often seen, but they are less popular and less honourable.

Wood carving is one of the most important crafts of Sikkim. The different articles or objects produced by the wood carvers may be either movable or immovable. The difference between immovable and movable objects is not of design. The same designs are used both on movable and immovable objects. The designs on wood are first carved and pointed. After this, if it is fixed on a movable object, it will be movable, and if it is fixed on a wall or a window or a door, then it becomes immovable wood-craft. The immovable wood-crafts are mostly seen in the *gumphas* and in the houses of well-to-do persons. The common movable objects prepared by the craftsmen are discussed below. It may be pointed out here that some of the objects are traditionally prepared, some, however, have newly emerged considering the commercial demands of some of the articles and are mostly prepared by some of the commercial firms emerged recently.

CHAPTER VII

SIKKIM'S SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

BETWEEN LAMAS' PRAYER-WHEEL AND THE
NEPALIS *KHUKHRI* AND BEYOND

A.C. SINHA

It is a healthy symptom of an open society such as ours to examine the various issues associated with Sikkim's identity into the Indian melting pot. Perhaps the time has come for a deeper analysis beyond the individual manipulations and historical accidents. Possibly one may look into the quality of social forces that led to the events of mid 1970's. It is also imperative to delineate the social base of the ethnic politics. Associated with the ethnic issue is the problem of choice. Has Sikkim got a choice between Lamas' prayer wheels and the Gurkhas' *khukhri* in a symbolic sense? Or it is an absurd question: Why can't both co-exist in a tolerant, happier and prosperous Indian nation? It is a fact that ultimately the Sikkimese have to make a choice and see to it that it works to their maximum satisfaction. However, an academic analysis may project such courses of choice, options open and their implications for the common masses.

Had there been a line drawn to delineate the northern boundary of the British empire in the Eastern Himalaya, east of the river Mechi in 1826, it would have rarely touched the Himalayan foothills. Purnea, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Goalpara, Kamrup, Darang and Lakhimpur—all in the plains—were the

frontier districts. The British got a foothold in the Himalayas in 1817; got an ally in the form of the Gurkhas (Nepalese) and also took the vulnerable *Sikkimpatti* under their wings. The process began in 1835, when the grant of Darjeeling was secured from Sikkim. All through the treaty of 1861 between the two, the process was complete in 1868, when Sikkim became an Indian princely state within the British Empire. Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri, parts of Goalpara, Kamrup and Darang were acquired after the Duar was with Bhutan in 1864-'65 and a pliable principality was established in Bhutan in 1907 with acknowledged British support. And subsequently, the two Maharajas attended the Delhi Durbars knowing fully well that only the British feudatories did so.

Thutub Namgyal was consecrated as the ruler of Sikkim in 1874. In contrast with the Bhutan scene, the Sikkimese ruler had lost everything—his kingdom, his crown and the Crown Prince—and spent years in captivity at Kurseong. All these happened mainly because of his style of functioning was contrary to the then dominant British imperial forward policy to the Himalayan region. The *paharias* (The Gurkhas or the Nepalese) played a significant role in execution of this policy and that's how the present international boundaries in the Eastern Himalayas come to be established within three decades of the Sikkimese takeover. Slowly but steadily, the *paharias* emerged as the dark horse of the British metropolitan economy in the entire Himalayan foothills. They were encouraged to reclaim the malarial *tarai* and *duars* at farmers. They were engaged in cattle rearing, animal husbandary and dairy products. They were first hired to clear the forest and then employed in the flourishing timber industry. With the introduction of tea plantation they turned to be reliable plantation hands. All through they were employed in the armed and para-military forces, so much so that by the turn of the 19th century, they emerged as a very dominant ethnic force in the Eastern Himalayan foothills.

They were seen by the British as the most reliable forward columns of the British interests, Herbert Risely who wrote the *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, identified the Sikkimese scenario in the context of the Nepalese :

"The Lepchas are rapidly dying out; while from the west the industrious... Gurkhas of Nepal are pressing forward Here also religion will play a leading part in Sikkim as in India Hinduism will assuredly cast out Buddhism and the praying wheel of Lama will give place to the sacrificial implement of the Brahmin. The land will follow the creed;.... Thus, race and religion... will settle the Sikkim difficulty for us in their own way". (1894 : XXI)

This was the phase in the Sikkimese history, when Sikkim was administered by Claude White, the then Political Officer in Gangtok. The royal couple spent better part of their rule in exile and imprisonment and they lost two of their elder princes—the eldest one in voluntary exile and the younger one was killed by a callous medical diagnosis. Tashi Namgyal, the third prince of the Thutubs, was entirely a British creation as the next ruler. He was tutored, groomed and guided by the Political Officer. If his father was recalcitrant and indolent, he was weak, ineffective and of retiring nature. He was nominally the ruler and even his family affairs such as education and marital alliances were arranged by the Political Officers. Under such a strong British paternalistic care, the state emerged from the subsistence slash-and-burn and forest economy to the settled wet peasant economy. The Marwari and Deswali merchants had already established the strong roots of the British metropolitan economy. The earlier communal land-ownership was changed into contractual lease system on the feudal pattern, the Sikkim was well integrated into the British colonial system. As a result of all these, Sikkim occupied the most significant place in the chain of the buffer-states on the northern border of India ranging from Afganistan to Burma.

After the two World Wars the British policy towards the Himalayan states underwent sea-change because of the nationalist movement in India. Nepal and Afganistan were recognized as the independent entities. Bhutan was advised against the earlier efforts to show its distinctive character separate from India. And the British empire cautioned the new Indian rulers not to add to their communal problems by integrating Sikkim into India. As the strategic elites in Delhi had given a little

thought to the relationship between the Himalayan states vis-a-vis India such advices came handy to them.

The movement for democratization in the Himalayan states was addressed to the British empire as well as the feudal rulers. It was primarily a movement of the Nepalese peasants, which was led by semi-educated lower middle class leaders as a whole. They did neither the ideological sophistication, nor the organizational skill nor the larger political perspective. As a whole, it was a confused ad-hoc movement against some vague targets. Their slogans, symbols, and action programmes were not much relevant to their local situations. And that is why when the first Government in Sikkim was dismissed in May 1949 after its 29 days existence, the State Congress leadership was not only demoralized, but was also much confused because the State Congress drew inspiration from the Indian democratic ethos and leadership. It happened because the Indian Union under the Congress had changed its previous preference. In the new situation, Sikkim meant the Maharaja of Sikkim rather than the people of Sikkim. Thus, the administration was once more handed back to the paternalistic care of the bureaucrats. Perhaps this might have helped the staggering feudal structure to get strengthened at the cost of the democratic forces.

What resulted on the Sikkimese political scene came to be known as the democratic fraud of the *parity* formula, a concession to the feudal authority. The then Crown Prince got the Sikkim National Party, an anti-thesis to the Sikkim State Congress, floated with his fund and personnel. The *darbar* getting encouraged, started its manoeuvre against the State Congress, which had been espousing the anti-feudal democratic cause. It was a vulnerable movement because of its weak social base. Thus, it was divided on the communal and factional lines. Consequently, politics as a means to do away with the feudal oppression came to be identified with political horse-trading, manipulations, defections and fragility of the political parties.

Among the other reasons for 1973-74 happenings the unreasonable and inflated international personage of Sikkim propped up by the then ruler and some courtiers may be identified. And that is why what happened in Sikkim in 1973-'75 was neither an invasion nor a revolution. It was simply a matter of

changed priority from point of view of New Delhi. The then ruler had possibly overplayed his limited role; gone beyond his brief; and was already nursing an inflated international stature for himself. This should be restrained for greater interest of India. Give it any name, but that's what actually happened.

This could have also happened in 1949, had there been a positive democratic movement against the colonial and feudal structure. Because of the ethnic complexity, such a movement was also vulnerable to dissention. The Bhotias had identified themselves with the ruling dynasty, Kazi aristocracy, lamaist monastic privileges and an overall feudal-cum-theocratic anachronism. The autochthonous Lepchas were too weak and oppressed to assert themselves. Because of their mild, indolent and conflictless temper, they are normally clubbed with their coreligionists—the Bhotias. The Nepalese immigrants, broadly divided into the Kirati, Newari and the Gorkhali stocks, are further divided into various social segments of castes and tribes. They may be Hindus, lamaists or even the animists. Hindus are broadly divided into *tagodhari* (the refined) and *matwali* (those who may drink intoxicant drinks). However, the language, dress, food habits and a largely common cultural tradition unify them into an identifiable Nepali stock. It is an industrious perseverent and gregarious community. It is a mobile stock which had been expanding from its Nepalese base to Darjeeling, Sikkim, Bhutan and then to eastern frontier states. It is slow but steady flow of humanity from the impoverished and overpopulated Nepalese hills to the low density but plentiful untapped resource potential eastern hills.

With the above ethnic background, it may be easier to survey the Sikkimese democratic movement. Though it was led by the non-Nepali Sikkimese, it had always been effectively organised by the Nepalese younger activities. As their social base reflecting their own operational sphere, was always weak, these functionaries had sometimes been changing their political affiliations. In the process, none of them had a consistent image of a fighter for the cause of the oppressed masses. They also suffered from the neo-rich pretensions. In this way the present problem is not of selling or mortgaging the soul or body of Sikkim, but availability of an organizationally skilled and ex-

perienced political entrepreneur, who could galvanize the Sikkimese belaboured mass into an effective force.

The muddled political scenario of theocratic feudal Bhotia inwardness, the Lepcha's loss of nerve and the Nepalese propensity to manipulative politics and organizational unpredictability has created a number of paradoxes. These may be identified as three inter-related levels.

The actual status of the Nepalese, a large immigrant community from another sovereign state, has to be determined. How do they belong to the Indian commonwealth of various cultural nationalities as others do? In what ways their language, culture, traditions and history are Indian? Will the efforts of the Nepalese to seek for the Indian identity be construed as the extension of the genuine policies, programmes and traditions of Nepal? Before one tries to answer the above issues one must be frank enough in accepting certain reservations in India about the Nepalese. Firstly some of the leaders of the Indian freedom movement had thought a section of the Nepalese as the faithful British allies. Secondly, the Nepalese belong to a country which claims to be the only Hindu country in the world; while India proclaims from the house-top her recently acquisitioned secular political culture. Will these two genuine strands of the traditions not lead to a possible conflict of the values? Thirdly, the issue of the Indian Nepalese may be linked with the problems of the immigrant Indians in Nepal. During the last two hundred years the Nepalese rulers encouraged the peasants from the Gangetic plains to clear the hot, humid and malarial *terai* forests. While the hillmen from the interior and eastern Nepal were migrating eastward in India, the Deswalis were engaged in turning the negative *terai* into the most precious economic bastion. It is also a fact that the Deswalis and the *Paharis* fought shoulder to shoulder against the feudal oppression. Both have their kinsmen across the border and share some common cultural and religious tradition. Not only that; more privileged among them, educated at Varanasi, Lucknow, Patna and Calcutta, saw little difference between Hindi and Nepali written in *devnagri* script.

Since 1960, much water has flown in the Bagmati. The resurgent ('Rising' as they call it) Nepal has changed its priorities. Instead of the past common heritage of culture, religion,

