Peasants’ Resentments and Resistance
A Glimpse on Rural Past of Sikkim 1914-1950
Rajen Upadhyay
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Chapter 1

Sikkim: A Short Introduction

Sikkim is a landlocked Indian state nestled in the Himalayas. It is the least populous state in the Indian Union and the second smallest after Goa. According to the census of 2011, the total population of Sikkim is 610,577, out of which 323,070 are Male, and 287,507 are Female. Sikkim was an independent state ruled by the Namgyal dynasty until 1975, when a referendum to make it India’s 22nd state succeeded. The chicken-neck-shaped Himalayan state borders Nepal in the West, the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) of the People’s Republic of China to the North and East, and Bhutan in the South-East. The Indian state of West Bengal borders Sikkim to the South. The official language of Sikkim is English and Nepali, and the predominant religions are Hinduism and Vajrayana Buddhism. Gangtok is the capital and the largest town of the State.

Owing to its location at the Himalayan foothills, Sikkim is geographically diverse; its terrain ranges from tropical in the south to Tundra in the north. Kanchenjunga, the world’s third highest peak, is located in Sikkim spanning its northern border with Nepal. Sikkim has now become one of India’s most visited states owing to its status for untouched charming exquisiteness and political stability. Recently, in October 2013, Lonely Planet’s best in Travel 2014 has included Sikkim as the top ten regions for travel destination. It is also a destination for all seasons.

Sikkim became a constitutional unit of India in 1975, but her political involvement with India started from early 1817. After the Anglo-Gorkha war, Treaty of Segauli was signed between Government of Nepal and Government of India (East India Company) in 1816. In 1817, the Treaty of Titalia was signed, whereby the boundary between Sikkim and Nepal was laid along the Mahanadi and Mechi rivers and the Sanga-rila range as the border. Sikkim’s political entity was decided by the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, between Great Britain...
and China. After the Indian independence, the colonial concept of protectorate continued upon Sikkim and became a virtual protected Kingdom of Independent India. In 1975, Sikkim was converted into 22nd State of the Indian Union by abolishing monarchy.

**Origin of Name**

Sikkim or **Sikhim** means crested land in Nepali. The term which was coined by the invading Gorkhas, is derived from the Sanskrit word ‘Sikhim’ which means ‘crested,’ and is the most widely accepted theory of origin. Sikkim would thus owe its name to its almost entirely mountainous terrain. Graham Sandberg, in his of Manual of Sikkim Bhutia Language also indicates the word Sikkim with a Gorkha origin. An alternative etymology of Kotturan suggests that the name originates from the Limbu word ‘Su’, which means ‘New,’ and ‘Khyim’, which means ‘Palace’. Hence, the term Sikkim may also mean ‘New Palace,’ in reference to the palace built by the State’s second ruler Tensung Namgyal after his marriage with a Limboo princess. Early European travellers like Samuel Van de Putte and Horace Della Penna used the name ‘Bramasojon’ for Sikkim.

Tulshi Ram Sharma a writer and an ex-speaker of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly opine that Sikkim and the Lepchas were intimately related. In their language they had the name of Sikkim as Nye-ma-el-Ren-Iyang which means ‘Heaven’. When Bhutias’ emigrated from Tibet, Lepchas’ called Sikkim as ‘Ren-zong’, which was insignificant in the Bhutia language therefore, they according to their appreciative renamed it as Dya-Zong, or the land of rice. With the lapse of time, the word, it seems got distorted and corrupted to Denzong.

As stated earlier, the origination of the word Sikkim is sometime correlated with the Limboos as well. It is said that, the Second King of Sikkim, Tensung Namgyal fought a battle with the Limboo King Yo Yo Hang of Aryn Tambor of Limbuwan in which Sikkim emerged out as victorious. To give a new silhouette to the hostile relation, Tensung married the Limboo princess and brought some Limboo maids to Sikkim. As the latter was their new home and to them either of the two names of the land Ren-Zong and Denzong was meaningless, therefore they began to call it as Su-Heem or ‘new-home’. Later, when other people from Nepal infiltrated into Sikkim, they heard the word as ‘Sikkhim’ and hence began to call the land ‘Su-khim’, which in Nepali means ‘happiness’ or the place of happiness. The word ‘Suk-Him’ in the course of time was mispronounced by the British as Sikkim.

**The People**

Mainly there are three communities in Sikkim, who emigrated from different places and settled permanently and became inseparable sections of Sikkimese population. They are the Lepchas, Bhutias, and the Nepalese. The Lepchas are believed to have been the original inhabitants of Sikkim. Their language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family of languages. This perhaps led George Kotturan to remark that the Lepchas came from Assam and belonged to some Tibeto-Burman family. The Lepchas are nimble-fingered woodsmen. Elaborating their craftsmanship propensity Richard temple writes:

“The Lepchas being most skilful woodsmen, will in a very short time build themselves a hut of bamboo, much after the Burmese fashion, which is water tight and sufficiently warm”.

There is a universal belief among the Lepchas that they are the creation of the soil of Sikkim itself; many legends and folklore are found in connection with this conviction. According to a well-known Lepcha folktale, the almighty had created *Fadongthing* the first Lepcha male and *Nzaangnynnou* the first female from the sinew of snow of Mt. Kanchenjunga and therefore they worship the mountain as their deity. Likewise, in another prodigy the Lepchas believe that the main rivers of Sikkim Teesta and Rangit were lovers who started their journey to meet at a certain point. According to the anecdote, Teesta was guided by an eagle and river Rangit was guided by a python. If we look at the pattern of river flow Teesta is straight as according to the tale, was guided by an eagle and Rangit has many curves in a way that a python moves. These tales and anecdotes too provide us some space to believe the aboriginality of Lepchas in Sikkim.

Rong, Lepcha and Lapchey are different names given to the Lepchas by different communities. The idioms Lepcha itself is derived from the word ‘Lap’ which means the people who lived in sacred place. However, the term Rong must has been given to them by the Tibetans. In their language ‘Rong-Pa’ means a person living on the scopes and the glen of the mountains. Jai Dhamala and George Kotturan suggest that the word Lepcha appears to have Nepali origin and is derived from Lapchey meaning village speakers. Later, the term was modified into ‘Lepcha’ in English.

Conversely, Tenzing believes that Lepcha is derived from a Rong word Lapchao meaning a resting or waiting place on the way side. He further writes that with the coming of the Nepalese the Rong word Lapchao got distorted into Lapchey or Lapcha due to the difficulty of the former to pronounce. He affirms this hypothesis with the prevalence of Lapcha word used by the Nepalese to identify the Lepchas of Ilam.
The People

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“...The Lepchas, being most skilful woodsmen, will in a very short time build themselves a hut of bamboos, much after the Burmese fashion, which is watertight and sufficiently warm..." 16

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The Lepchas are simple, mild, peace loving and superstitious people and are lovers and worshippers of nature. Hence, the majority of the Lepchas are accustomed to live in remote and inaccessible areas. Rev. J.A. Graham, a Baptist Missionary points out the usage of Boongthings by a Lepcha Manager Raja Tenduk of Kalimpong, to propitiate an angry demon. He further believes that the Lepchas had come under the Tibetan fold through their association with the Tibetans.20 We do not have any historical evidences or written documents, which are available about the Lepchas, and it is also said that whatever they had was systematically destroyed by the Tibetan priests in the very beginning of their arrival in Sikkim.21

The Stateship was instituted and the Kingship was also brought into existence in Sikkim with the advent of the Tibetans. 'Bhot' is the Nepali synonym for the country of Tibet.22 Hence, the Bhutias are also known to the Nepalese as Bhotey meaning the people of Tibetan or Bhot origin. It is believed that, up to the seventeenth century they were very few in numbers therefore, as such they could not affect the cultural as well as religious and traditional beliefs of the Lepchas. However, with the arrival of numerous Tibetan Lamas, the aboriginal Lepchas of Sikkim were adapted towards the Tibetan fold.23

However, A.C. Sinha points out that, the Tibetan traders, farmers and the Lamas were in search of new areas for colonisation long before the first century. Sikkim at that time was very sparsely populated by the primitive tribes of Lepchas and the Limbus. The Tibetan grazers and the missionary Lamas were perhaps the earliest immigrants to Sikkim in search of new pastures and converting people to their religion. They were followed by the traders in their permit of catering their goods.

It is also said that Tibetan peasants came in search of rice fields. In this process, a large number of Tibetan immigrated to Sikkim and played a major role in the State formation. Owing to their cordial relations with the Lepchas they institutionalised a monarchy in 1642 that was in power till the merger of Sikkim in 1975. The third but the largest number of inhabitant of Sikkim is the Nepalese. It is estimated that 75 per cent of the total population of Sikkim is of Nepali origin. Nepalese settlement in Sikkim has proved to be a boom for prosperity, because the Nepalese were hard working and industrious people and made excellent cultivation and still continues to be one. The adoption of new methods for agriculture by exploiting virgin forests and espousal of terraced field cultivation by the Nepalese had radically changed the fate of Sikkim.24

However, the important factor which brought the Nepalese to settle in Sikkim was the rise of the Gorkha Kingdom in Western Nepal under the vibrant leadership of Maharaja Prithivi Narayan Shah. He had succeeded in establishing a new Kingdom of Nepal and filled the logic of unity and pride among the various tribes and united them under the Gorkha banner. In 1788-89, Gorkha General Jahu Singh made a surprise attack on Rhabdentse, the then capital of Sikkim. Since then, for some years Pemiongchi and the entire South Teesta tract paid rent to Nepal, until in 1815 the Nepalese were expelled by the British Government.25 The number of the Nepali population widely increased in Sikkim after the Treaty of Tumlong 1861. At this point it appears that, the East India Company or later the British Indian Empire had strongly felt the need of cheap labourers to strengthen their army and the paucity of this essential was supplied by neighbouring Nepal. As far as Sikkim was concerned the original inhabitants were mainly engaged in trading and herding activities and were not ready to provide labour services to the British for their new schemes. As a suitable alternative to this, British encouraged the Nepalese from Nepal to settle in their dominions in India.

The Nepali community is composed of three different sub-cultural stocks. These are known as 'Tagadhari' (Those who wear sacred thread), 'Matwali' (Those who do not wear sacred thread and were in the habit of drinking alcohol or traditional liquor), and the 'Newars'. The Brahmins and the Kshatriyas (Bahun and Chettris as they are known in Sikkim) or the Nepali society are considered as the 'Tagadhari' people. Similarly, the other warrior stocks belong to the Mongolid race of the Nepali community like Rai, Limbu, Gurung, Tamang, Sherpa, Magar, Tamuwar, Bhuje etc are known as Matwals. The Matwali also incorporates Kamis, Damaks and Sarkis and other 'Dalis' of Aryan stock as they too are fond of alcohol. The Newars have an entire type of social order in which one can notice the existence of the Korkas, the Kirats and the Newars.26 As such, they were also numerous and the Nepalese as the Newars had adapted and they thoroughly monopolised the mines and minerals and were the middlemen to the counterpart of the Gorkha power who in the present time and in Western Nepal, the Nepalese are the people of Eastern Nepal and the Gorkhas are the people of Western Nepal. As stated earlier under the leadership of King Prithivi Narayan Shah in Nepal, the Nepalese entered Sikkim numerous attacks towards Eastern Nepal and the Gorkhas were in the middle. The Kathmandu valley and Darjeeling were under the Gorkhas as the middle

20 Peasants' Resentments and Resistance...
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As stated earlier, the emergence of the Gorkha power under the leadership of King Prithivi Narayan Shah in Nepal, the Nepalese made numerous attacks towards the East and they clashed with the Kirats of Eastern Nepal and the Bhutias of Sikkim in the middle of the eighteenth century. With the unification of Nepal including the valley of Kathmandu by the Gorkhas in the middle of the eighteenth century, some of the Newars of the Kathmandu valley also migrated towards East. They settled in Darjeeling by the middle of the nineteenth century. Within a time, they entered Sikkim as the monopolists of the copper mines and minting...
industry. The Gazetteer of Sikkim mentions about the track of Pacheykhani including the Bhotang mines belonged to Lakshmi Das Pradhan one of the earliest Newar Thikadars.

Another important minority which constituted the Sikkimese society is the migrants from Indian plains. They are the people from States like Rajasthan, U.P., Bihar, Bengal, Punjab, Odisha etc. The Marwars and the Baniyas have played an imperative role in the trade and commerce of the state while others have maintained themselves in academic and administrative spheres. Thus, Sikkim has served as meeting points of these above mentioned communities broadly known as the ‘Sikkimese’.

The census report of 1891 is the first available authentic information regarding Sikkim’s population. It has shown a total population of 30,458 inhabitants which included 5,762 Lepchas, 4,894 Bhutias and 19,281 Nepalese. The rest 521 people have been categorised as the slaves and other miscellaneous groups. It is important to mention that, all such census were conducted in a haphazard manner as the first census made by H.H. Risley was made on the basis of race and caste. Likewise, C.A. Bell, the Political Officer who succeeded Mr White made a survey in 1910-11 according to the religion a subject professed. Similarly, the Administrative Report of Sikkim for the year 1921 has simply mentioned of having 81,721 people in the Kingdom of which 41,492 were males and 40,229 were females. Once again the census of 1931 was conducted on the basis of community.

Table 1.1: Temporal Changes in Population 1891-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Sex Ratio</th>
<th>Decadal per cent Variations</th>
<th>Density of Population</th>
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<td>10,563</td>
<td>22,152</td>
<td>912</td>
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<td>NA</td>
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<td>28,219</td>
<td>68,014</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>166.4</td>
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<td>1911</td>
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<td>42,861</td>
<td>87,920</td>
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<td>1921</td>
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<td>81,721</td>
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<td>967</td>
<td>34.37</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>907</td>
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<td>162,189</td>
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<td>1,13,945</td>
<td>1,38,385</td>
<td>835</td>
<td>50.76</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1,16,427</td>
<td>1,10,030</td>
<td>2,26,457</td>
<td>878</td>
<td>28.48</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1,28,217</td>
<td>1,25,276</td>
<td>2,53,493</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>32.98</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>323,070</td>
<td>287,507</td>
<td>610,577</td>
<td>889</td>
<td>13.86</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Graph 1.1: Temporal Changes in Population of Sikkim 1891-2011.

However, these entire censuses show an overwhelming increase in the Nepali population whereas the Bhutias and the Lepchas as has been at the same stage. According to Risley, Nepalis with 56 per cent (including Murmi constitutent) constituted the population followed by the Lepchas (19 per cent) and slaves (8 per cent). After, the share of Lecha population has went down while the share of the Nepalese escalated to about 70 per cent which more or less the same proportion.

The Bhutias and the Lepchas are converting to Buddhism but few Buddhists among the Sikkimese. The Shakya Newars, Tamang, Gurungs, and Buddhists among Nepalese who have converted to Buddhism, and other religious institutions including monkhood, monasteries, and shrines etc., are recognized as well as lingua franca of Sikkim. of the Indian Constitution.

Culture

Sikkim was though, a British protectorate after their withdrawal from India, in splendid isolation. Sikkim’s contact with the outside world has been largely because of that many people in the past had not even heard of it. The term Sikkimese indicates no linguistic or ethnological implication.
However, these entire censuses show an overwhelming increase in the Nepali population whereas the Bhutias and the Lepchas as has been at the same stage. According to Risley, Nepalis with 56 per cent (including Murmi) constituted majority of the population followed by the Lepchas (19 per cent) and Bhutias (16 per cent). There were other constituents like Khambus and slaves. More than a century later, the share of Lepcha population has gone down to 14 per cent whereas that of the Nepalese escalated to almost 70 per cent with the Bhutias constituting more or less the same proportion.31

The Bhutias and the Lepchas were all Buddhists but, nowadays the Lepchas are converting into Christianity, in spite of the fact that there are few Buddhists among the Nepalese population most of them are Hindus.32 The Shakya Newars, Tamangs, and a couple of Gurung communities are Buddhists among Nepalese with a larger Nepali identity. The total numbers of religious institutions including monasteries, temples, mosques, and churches etc. are figured approximately 600. Nepali is the official language as well as lingua-franca of Sikkim and it is included in the VIII Schedule of the Indian Constitution.33

Culture

Sikkim was though, a British protectorate and even remained the same after their withdrawal from India, had remained for many centuries in splendid isolation. Sikkim’s contact with India was very nominal and may be because of that many people in the plains of this country have not even heard of it. The term Sikkimese indicates a resident of Sikkim and has no linguistic or ethnological implication.34 For the growth and development of a culture, religion, society, food and habits, manners and customs always
Peasants’ Resentments and Resistance...

play a key role. Hence, the culture of Sikkim is different from the rest of the country because of its distinct social set up and its isolation that it maintained in the past. It is an acculturation of three different cultures namely the Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Nepalese.

Broadly, there are two diverse cultures in Sikkim namely, the Hindu culture and the Buddhist culture. However, they run parallel in Sikkimese society. The Hindu culture which is followed by nearly 70 per cent of the total population is more appropriate to call as Nepali culture. Similarly, the Buddhist culture was implanted from Tibet long before shares similarities feature with the Sikkimese Bhutia culture.

In Sikkim, Buddha is being worshipped by a Brahmin as an incarnation of Lord Narayana. Similarly, a Buddhist Lama worships the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva as the foundation pillar of his religion. A Brahmin spins the prayer wheel of the Buddhists and a Buddhist chants sloka of Vedas. The local religious festivals are celebrated with a great enthusiasm by all the communities.

Topography

Sikkim is absolutely a mountainous state, with a very few flat lands. In the northern segments of the state are the high Himalayan peaks and acmes, at all times covered with snow. These snow covered mountains lies on the south of Tibetan plateau and play a role of natural shield for Sikkim. However, these very mountains contain certain important passes to get into Sikkim. The Chola ranges which form the eastern boundary of Sikkim with Tibet, contains the two important passes of Nathu-La (15,512 ft.) and Jalep-La (13,354 ft). Similarly, Singalila range, which forms the boundary between Sikkim and Nepal, contains the important pass of Chewabhanjang (10,320 ft). The highest peaks are Kanchenjunga (8,586 m), Kinchinjhan (8,586 m), Siniolchu (8,586 m) and Chomolom (8,586 m). Besides, there are some other large and small passes around Sikkim border. The Singalila range lies between Sikkim and Nepal acts as the natural boundary between these two territories.

In Sikkim, there are mainly two prominent rivers-Teesta and Rangit. Teesta River originates from Lacha Lachung and Yumthang and passes through Changthang, Singik, Mangan, Dikchu, Singtam, and Rangpo and further from the Indo-Sikkim boundary it moves towards Triveni in Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA) of West Bengal. Teesta is the longest and the largest river of Sikkim. Another significant river of Sikkim is Rangit and it flows from West Sikkim.

Though, Sikkim is very small in terms of geographical area, it can be identified as the land of wide topographical contrast such as dense forests and audacious table lands, snow clad peaks, hills, dales shrubs, and grasslands. It would be appropriate to state as Kotturan says it is an artistic paradise and one can always behold her changing moods of nature in its catching forms and interplay of clouds sun shine, mist and shadow.

Climate

The climate has great variations and every variety ranging from sub-tropical to temperate and arctic type types of climate can be noticed here. The rainfall is heavy and averages 137 inches a year at Gangtok, the capital. The valley and hill regions, below 7,000 ft. from the sea level have a temperature of sub-tropical and humid type. However, the highlands above 7000 ft. and 10,000 ft. have alpine type of climate. Sikkim has its climate is caused by its geographical location, relief. The temperature conditions vary from sub-tropical to cold deserts in the snowy north. If one checks the temperature at 10,000 ft. from the sea level, he will be finds it hot at Rangpo and cool at Nathu-La. The temperature decreases upward towards the heights. South West monsoon experiences good rainfall, at the same time the East could go well above. The rainfall penetrates through the high mountains, and Lachung is the rainiest point. Dew is rainfall between the mountain ranges.

Flora and Fauna

Flora and fauna plays a vital role in the economy of the state. As it is known so far, the forests are full of vivid colors, and they are also charming which are full of various spices. The flowers and animals. Among the flora and fauna, trees and bushes are found including scattered throughout the State. About 150 species of flowers is found in the Himalayan region outside of Sikkim.
through Chungthang, Singhik, Mangan, Dikchu, Singtam, and Rangpo and further from the Indo-Sikkim boundary it moves towards Triveni in Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA) of West Bengal. Teesta is the longest and the largest river of Sikkim. Another significant river of Sikkim is Rangit and it flows from West Sikkim.38

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Flora and Fauna

Climate plays a vital role for the survival of any kind of flora and fauna. As it is known so far that, Sikkim is the land of trees and dense forest which are full of vivid creatures. The forests of Sikkim are not only lavish but are also charming which are considered as the homeland of various spices of flower and animals. Approximately 4,000 varieties of flowering plants and bushes are found including the rhododendron in various forests scattered throughout the State. About 98 per cent of the Indian species are found in the Himalayan region out of which 72 per cent are found in Sikkim.43 In the sub-tropical lower valleys, several varieties of bamboos,
The orchid family is also extensively represented in Sikkim, there being from 350 to 400 species out of an estimated total of 5,000 for the whole world.\

Because of its heavy rainfall, Sikkim is densely forested area and its forests are capable of yielding valuable timber. In the sub-tropical zone, which extends up to 5,000 feet, several varieties of ferns and tree ferns, sal and orchids are obtainable. Magnolias, conifers, larches and junipers, oaks, walnuts, silver fir, prunes etc. further beautify the landscape. The more gentle slopes at these high altitudes are often covered by a variety of beautiful flowers like the Primula which added a touch of glorious colour to the sombre grandeur of the lonely mountain sides. The floristic composition of the flora of the Sikkim Himalaya is unique of its kind. Bamboo has a special value among the Sikkimese people, and most particularly it has a great importance among the Lepcha folks. They use it for building their homes, to make weapons, pots, mats, and flutes. The tender bamboo shoots are also used to prepare delicious items. There are about twenty species of bamboos.

Though, a small state in area, Sikkim is quite rich in the field of wild life too. A wide variety of fauna occurs in this Himalayan state. Among the important wild animals that can be found in Sikkim are Panda, Musk Deer, Goral, Bear, Otter, Tiger, Leopard, Barking Deer, and Black Bear etc. At the altitude of 4000 ft. up to 11,000 ft the Himalayan Black Bear is found. At 9,000 ft. barking deer etc. are found and Tiger, Leopards, Wild Cats, Squirrels are found in the warmer regions. The musk deer from which Kasturi or musk, a valuable source of perfume is extracted is found in the higher elevations and rarely descends below 8,000 feet even in winter. Similarly, over 500 species and sub-species of birds and over 600 species of butterflies have been catalogued by some naturalists in Sikkim. Multi-coloured Pheasants, Ducks, Eagles, etc. are chief birds that fly on the sky of Sikkim.
Forest is an important source of livelihood for the people of Sikkim. Apart from the extraction of timber, forest is also the source of herbs and plants that have been traditionally used as medicine. Further, being a semi-tribal nature of the society, forest plays a vital role in the daily lives of the Sikkimese as they believed the jungles as the abode of various Gods and semi-Gods. It is probably due to its close affiliation with the forest, the erstwhile monarchy too had taken some innovative measures for the conservation of forest within their territory. Maharaja Sidkeong Tulku (Feb 1914-Dec 1914), made certain amendments in the prevailing laws and encouraged his subjects for plantation of trees in waste lands. It was during his reign, reserved forests were categorised into two ranges namely, Eastern and Western, and they were kept in charge of the Foresters. It is worth to mention that, these forests were to be managed by the landlords as Forest Officers of their respective Elakhas. Strict rules and laws were adopted to abolish corruption from the forest resources and if a Forest Officer failed to execute his responsibilities accordingly, were dealt with a heavier hand.

Auxiliary, the traditional healing process which plays a permanent part among all the three ethnic groups of Sikkim itself is unique in its nature. The plants and herbs and the names of several Gods and Goddesses like Jungali, Devi, Naag, Shimey-Bhitmey, Ban Jhakri, and Lyam Lyamey etc. confirms the close affinity of Sikkimese with forest and forest products. In the early 1970s, it was estimated that out of the total surface area of 7096 sq.km, Sikkim forest occupied 1,944.05 sq. km (27.4 per cent of the total area of Sikkim) excluding slip reserve and road reserve forest. The higher attention was paid in the northern zone, where forests occupied nearly 805.69 sq.km while in the stolutely cultivated eastern and western zones forests cover was only 527.59 and 610.7 sq.km, respectively.

The existing customary forest laws associated to forest are still practiced in Sikkim even after her merger with the Indian Union. People have the right of free supply of timber and firewood from Khasmal land after obtaining formal permission from the concerned department. In Gaucharan lands the locals have the right of free grazing and collection of deadwood and fodder. However, owing to the degradation of forests and its resources, grazing in the government lands has been done away with in the recent years. For the protection of the wildlife and for a balanced ecological system, the Forest Department of Sikkim made various rules for forest management and Protection) Act 1988, and these are currently operational.
Minerals

Several minerals are found in the state among them Coal, Copper, Sillimanite, Quartzite, Limestone, and Graphite is the most important. The ores of Copper are widespread in Sikkim and are in Dalang beds. Dolomite, Garnet, Talc, and Magnet are of less importance. Two deposits one at Rangpo and the other near Dikchu are being explored. Besides, Coal, Limestone, Graphite, Iron, Garnet have been found in Sikkim. They are so small and not profitable that no sound works has yet been taken up in this direction to exploit the resources full. Sikkim is poor in minerals resources, yet a number of minerals like copper, zinc, lead, graphite, mica, and coal also occur in the State but they have not been adequately exploited. The Sikkim Mining Corporation is working in a copper mine at Rangpo only, while copper deposits have been discovered at many places in Sikkim.

Industries

Sikkim in the last 41 years or so, as a state of Indian Union, has undergone a multifaceted socio-economic transformation in an attempt to align itself to the Indian economy. The mountainous terrain and isolated location of the state has however been an important in the absorption of the liberalisation process that has been sweeping the rest of the country. During the monarchical era the industrial sector was not well developed in Sikkim. The prevalence of craftsmanship based traditional cottage industries dates back to time immemorial. A stated above, the Lepchas have a deep connection with the bamboos and they had shown their skill in bamboo-craft. The Bhutias excelled in ancient Tibetan practice of carpet weaving with striking shades and brilliant colours. On the other hand Nepalese are celebrated for the craftsmanship of their metal work, silverware, and woodwork. In 1955, the distillation of wine and liquors was one of the first modern industries, established at Singtam (East district). Another significant industry evolved during Royal Sikkim, was the Government Fruit Preservation Factory set up at Singtam in 1956. The Palden Thondup Institute of Cottage Industries was set up at Gangtok in 1957, for the development of traditional craftsmanship on Sikkim. Immediately after the merger, a rapid development of industries in Sikkim had taken place. The Directorate of Industries, established after the merger, has undertaken important measure such as the promotion of a feasible system of incentives and subsidies, financial and technical support and industrial training.

In 1977, the Sikkim Industrial Development and Investment Corporation Limited (SIDICO) were set up as the state-level principal financial institution for the promotion and financing the industries. The situation where there was no industry is changing and giving place to a number of industrial units. They produce such items as fruits, jams and juices, biscuits, other bakery products, beer, matches, washing soap, electric cables, watches, leather goods, and industrial jewels etc. At present, there are 929 industrial units have been registered in the small-scale sector. Unfortunately, only a small number of units are functioning, and rests have closed down due to many reasons. Besides, these industrial units, many new pharmaceuticals industries are in its initial stage. To name them, Cipla, Sun Pharmaceuticals, Zidus, Alchem, McLeod etc. have started their production and many of others are in a pursuit to start their productions in the earliest. Cottage industries such as weaving of carpets and blankets, manufacturing of copper ware, bamboo, and wooden articles are also operational.

Trade

The main exports from Sikkim are cardamom, oranges, tea, potato, apple, liquors, wines, handicrafts, canned fruits, and timber. The trade in the past has mainly been with Tibet through the passes of Nathu-la, Jalep-la. When the Chinese invaded these parts and sealed the borders, patent of trade between the two countries from this boundary was greatly dwarfed. But, from 6th July 2006, Nathu-la is reopened after 44 years. From Nathu-la, after the reopening of old silk route, Sikkim exports 29 items to China. In 1998, between Sikkim and fresh vegetables, tea, coffee, rice, tobacco, liquor, lentils and rice were very important. Sikkim imports many consumer goods, beverages and industrial equipments, engine parts, sanitary goods, paints, and many more important articles.

Agricultural Production

Sikkim is an agrarian State where agriculture is the main occupation of the people. By and large Sikkim’s wealth is in its original inhabitants were not agriculturists. They practiced a shifting cultivation of life based on hunting, and fishing were their main occupation. They ploughed only flat pieces of land and the shift cultivation was in vogue. They settled agriculture stepped into Sikkim only after the mergers. These sturdy, hardy, energetic, and
industrial units. They produce such items as fruits, jams and juices, biscuits, other bakery products, beer, matches, washing soap, electric cables, watches, leather goods, and industrial jewels etc. At present, there are 929 industrial units have been registered in the small-scale sector. Unfortunately, only a small number of units are functioning, and rests have closed down due to many reasons. Besides, these industrial units, many new pharmaceuticals industries are in its initial stage. To name them, Cipla, Sun Pharmaceuticals, Zidus, Alchem, McLeod etc. have started their production and many of others are in a pursuit to start their production at the earliest. Cottage industries such as weaving of carpets and blankets and manufacturing of copper ware, bamboo, and wooden articles are also operational.

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Agricultural Production

Sikkim is an agrarian State and is the land of villages. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people and agriculture has a history of its own. By and large Sikkim’s wealth is derived from agriculture and forests. The original inhabitants were not agriculturists and were living a primitive form of life based on shifting cultivation. Further, gathering of wild roots, fruits, hunting, and fishing were their means of livelihood. The Bhutias entered into Sikkim and started a semi-pastoral economy and sedentary farming. They plough only flat pieces of land available here and there. In the earlier days the shift cultivation was in vogue. The wasteful system of cultivation was viable in those days due to the immense availability of surplus land. Settled agriculture stepped into Sikkim only with the arrival of the Nepali settlers. These sturdy, hardy, energetic, and innovative people cleared large number of industrial units. They produce such items as fruits, jams and juices, biscuits, other bakery products, beer, matches, washing soap, electric cables, watches, leather goods, and industrial jewels etc. At present, there are 929 industrial units have been registered in the small-scale sector. Unfortunately, only a small number of units are functioning, and rests have closed down due to many reasons. Besides, these industrial units, many new pharmaceuticals industries are in its initial stage. To name them, Cipla, Sun Pharmaceuticals, Zidus, Alchem, McLeod etc. have started their production and many of others are in a pursuit to start their production at the earliest. Cottage industries such as weaving of carpets and blankets and manufacturing of copper ware, bamboo, and wooden articles are also operational.
Peasants’ Resentments and Resistance...

tracts of wood lands and made the land fit for cultivation. It was the Gorkha people who brought cardamom seeds from Nepal to Sikkim. Rice and maize are the main crops which are grown during the monsoon. The increase of population and the subsequent scarcity of cultivable land forced the people to settle down permanently at one place and to avoid the previous system of shift cultivation.

The nature of the terrain and varied climatic conditions greatly influenced agriculture in Sikkim. Maize, paddy, wheat, barley and buckwheat are the main cereals grown in Sikkim. Sikkim has the largest and the highest production of large cardamom in India. Cardamom and potato are the two important cash crops of the State. There is only one Tea Estate in Sikkim and it is located in Temi (South Sikkim) and is known as Temi Tea Estate. It was started in the 60’s of the last century and is producing a high class of tea species. The tea estate extends over an area of 400 acres. Under Horticulture Department, large qualities of orange, guava, and apple are raised. Vegetables, pine apple, and banana are other cash crops of Sikkim. Some people have started to keep in producing cinnamon and rubber plants. Paddy is another important crop of Sikkim.

Administration

From the administrative point of view Sikkim is divided into four districts namely, East, West, North and South. Gangtok, Gyalshing, Mangan and Namchi are the district headquarters respectively. Each district has two sub-divisions. Each has a District Collector and he is assisted by his deputy. Each district has a court with a judicial Magistrate. Sikkim has 447 villages and 9 towns till recently. The total Provisional Population of Sikkim as census of India 2011 stands at 607,688 out of which 321,661 are males and 286,027 are females representing a decadal growth of 12.36 per cent during the last decade 2001-2011. The sex ratio that is number of females per 1000 males in the state shows an improvement from 875 in 2001 to 889 in 2011. The density of population means total number of persons per square kilometres. According to provisional population calculated at the census of India 2011, the density of population per square kilometre has gone up to 86 as against 76 in 2001 with no change in the state area of 7,096 sq. km. The literacy rates reflect the economic and social condition of the state. The effective literacy rate for the Sikkim as per census of India 2011 is 82.20 per cent while it is 87.29 per cent for males and 76.43 per cent for females. In 2001 census, literacy rate for the total population was 68.81 per cent with 76.04 per cent for males and 60.41 per cent for females.

There are Panchayats with elected representatives for the implementation of different schemes enunciated by the government at the grass root level. There are all together 94 numbers of Zilla Panchayat Wards, 163 units of numbers of Gram Panchayats, 452 numbers of Revenue Blocks. The total number of Assembly seats in the Legislative Assembly is 32, one seat in Loksabha and one seat in Rajya Sabha. The following table shows the district-wise administration in Sikkim.

The main resources of the revenue of the state government are forest, the Sikkim Nationalised Transport, land, house and excise taxes. Very few Sikkimese are engaged in trade and business. All trade and business are concentrated into the hands of the people hailing from the other states of India.

Geo-Politics

The relationship between the non-human environment and human behaviour has been speculated from time immemorial. Many attempts have been made by several individuals to explain and to predict the political behaviour of the people of a country and their relationships with reference to geographical factors. Such interpretations as the above are classified under the term Geo-politics.

Being a Himalayan state the geo-political situation of Sikkim is very important from a perspective of Himalayan studies. Keeping this fact in mind, the location, situation, and the strategic importance of Sikkim can hardly be overestimated. Sikkim lies in the centre of the Himalayan border of its region. Being a vulnerable point, it constitutes an important geo-strategic location.

In the past, Sikkim played an important role in the formation of relations between the countries of South Asia i.e. India and Tibet. There is a trade line between India and Tibet that runs through Sikkim towards Chumbi and Tibet around Enasa. There is a considerable influence of one of the critical regions of the country.

Though, Sikkim merged with India in 1975, it can play a significant role which is played during its own existence in the past. Rather, it has increased with respect to the Indo-China relations the strategic importance of this system cannot be miscalculated. The historical confluence of the land of the Himalayas with all sorts of political, economic and historical importance.
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Being a Himalayan state the geo-political situation of Sikkim is very important from the perspective of Himalayan studies. Keeping this fact in mind, the geo-political position, and the strategic importance of Sikkim can hardly be under mind. As Sikkim lies in the centre of the Himalayan border of India at one of the most vulnerable points, it constitutes a vital zone in her defence system.64

In the past, Sikkim played an important role in the formation of mutual relations between the two great powers of Asia i.e. India and China. It was a trade line between Indian sub-continent and China. The easy passes of Sikkim towards Chumbi valley of Tibet lead directly to the core region of Tibet around Lhasa. Therefore, the geo-political problems of Sikkim as one of the critical regions of the world can be analysed as an example of Geo-strategic location.65

Though, Sikkim merged with India in 1975 as its 22nd state, the strategic role which is played during its protectorateship has not at all decreased, rather, it has increased with respect to India. In the present context concerning Indo-China relations the strategic importance of Sikkim in India’s security system cannot be miscalculated. Therefore, although small in size, Sikkim, the land of the Himalayas with all sort of geographical variation has become a point of high strategic importance and on the other she acquired significant historical importance.
Peasants' Resentments and Resistance (1914-1950)

Resistance of the peasantry is a universal phenomenon which is originated due to the suppression and exploitation from the mechanism and it is a human behaviour to defend him from the unnecessary encroachment or interference of the state. This book, an outcome of my PhD thesis submitted to Kumaun University in 2014, highlights several *modus operandi* adopted by the Sikkimese peasantry to resist feudalism during World War period. To provide a clear sketch about Sikkim, Chapter One gives detail information about the State. Apart from rewriting what it has already been written, even if in an epigrammatic manner, Chapter Two has attempted to peep inside the early history of Sikkim before the Tibetans, in the light of new and fresh documents collected through different sources. Similarly, this Chapter also justifies Sikkim as a Tibetan protectorate. A detail study of Anglo-Sikkim relations, Nepalese Settlement, and its relation with independent India has been made in Chapter Three. Chapter Four illustrates about the introduction of new agrarian arrangement after the appointment of First British Political Officer. Chapter Five highlights about the hidden transcripts of peasants including other major causes for the resentment and resistance. Several forms of hidden transcripts of the rural lots have been observed in Chapter Six and study of folksongs has been made to understand the concealed feelings of the peasantry against monopolistic mechanism. Chapter Seven traces out the assorted modes of everyday resistance by the peasantry in the light of the collected data secured during field survey. Likewise, it also focuses on several forms of hidden transcripts of Sikkimese peasantry against feudal mechanism. Chapter Eight incorporates expansion of individual everyday resistance into a cohesive resistance and makes a sketch of pre-Congress rural Sikkim. Foundation of Sikkim State Congress and its achievements and popularity among the rural folks have been discussed in Chapter Nine. Chapter Ten examines sidelining of the rural issues from the purview of the political parties and their leaders.

Methodology

Being a part of my PhD research work, the data used in this book are from the fieldwork that I made during the course of my study. For the said purpose, data have been secured through different sources. Since the core issue of this study is related to the rural life of feudal Sikkim written documents have not copiously found. Apart from a few documents available in the State archives, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology and a private archive maintained by an enthusiast Ganesh Kumar Pradhan, I could not secure much related to the matter. Insufficiency of documents in the form of orders,
Resistance of the peasantry is a universal phenomenon which is originated due to the suppression and exploitation from the mechanism and it is a human behaviour to defend him from the unnecessary. As it is a known fact that, for the peasants, one loaf of bread is much more important than keeping and preserving records. Probably, owing to this mindset, I came across several instances of neglecting the attitude of the peasantry in maintaining records during field survey. However, even being illiterates, some of such peasants appear to be conscious about the importance of documents. They have maintained their family records since nearly a century in the form of tax receipts, letters, official notices, membership cards, ration cards and the like. Apart from such sources of information, I have to depend on the verbal sources from the descendants of the former ‘flesh and blood’ peasants. Few of the resisters were still alive during the field study that could substantiate me with the information about their mode of resistance and the then agrarian structure. However, it has been impossible to separate facts from their assumptions and postulations; the description that had seemed most trustworthy to me has been included in writing this book.

As stated, the real affairs related to the peasant resistance were not documented and since many of the protagonists of the resistance era died long ago, I have often had to rely on just a single piece of information. The information has been secured through personal interviews conducted in various schedules from October 2011 to February 2012. The field study has greatly supported me to understand many unheard and neglected aspects of Sikkimese feudalism through horse mouth information from the peasants. Since I was free to gather information from the elderly peasants scattered throughout Sikkim, I selected the villages where the number of such people was in a greater number. Therefore, villages like Gerethang, Chongrang, Labing, Lasso, Nesa in the vicinity of Tashiding in West Sikkim were selected. Similarly, villages in the vicinity of Uttarey, and villages under Soreng and Sombarey subdivision in West Sikkim were selected to find out the nature of peasant resistance in West Sikkim. In South Sikkim, villages like Denchung, Omchung, Nandugaon, Namchi, Dambudara, Assangthang, Sumbuk, and Timi Tarku were randomly chosen with a motive to get first hand information. Similarly, the surveyed villages of East Sikkim includes, Linkey, Parakha, Mannring, Manpur, Bering, Angkuchen, Dongrong, Aho, Kadamtam, Assam Lingzey, Marchak, Sanmlur, Runtek, Ranipool, Setipool, and Namili.

Due to the devastating earthquake of 18th September 2011, it was a challenging task to visit North Sikkim for the field survey. Hence, few nearer and accessible villages like Bey, Gor, Lingzya and Passingdang were visited to find out the nature of peasant resistance in North Sikkim during...
The total number of respondents in North Sikkim is only 50 that cover 14.28 per cent of the total number of 350 respondents. Owing to it, very little information related to the issue has been gathered from these villages in North Sikkim. From each of the other districts, information has been secured from one hundred respondents that cover 85.72 per cent of the total respondents.

The data collected through the respondents shows a picture of male domination, as 267 respondents were males covering 76.28 per cent of the total respondents. The number of female respondents from the entire four districts was 83 that cover 23.76 per cent of the total 350 respondents. The major cause of the less participation of women was because of the social belief and practice. The female respondents were not the direct resisters as they were regarded as weaker sex and were never sent to carry loads and for other physical tasks. Hence, the information provided by the female respondents is from what they have heard and seen during the peak period of feudal exploitation.

The present study is based on the nature of peasant resentments and resistance during the reign of Maharaja Sir Tashi Namgyal (1914-1963) that covers time duration of both the World Wars. Hence, all the respondents were the old peasants of Sikkim who had witnessed the feudal exploitation and many of them had worked as wage free labourers in the said period. The number of respondents who had taken the pains of the notorious Kalo Bhari, Jharlangi, and worked as Bethi Khetala and Kuniwa porters is 68, who presently belong to the age group between 71 to 91 years and are considered as direct resisters in the study. This age group covers 19 per cent of the total respondents whereas the remaining constitutes respondents who were between 50-70 years who had also witnessed the cupidity of feudalism but not of a higher magnitude are considered as descendents of resisters in the study. Apart from peasants, the age group covering 81 per cent of the total respondents also incorporates the erstwhile Mandals, Karbaris and others like Sikkim Guards, Ex-Armies, teachers, and the like. Hence, majority of the respondents who had not experienced feudal pressure had grown up listening to the stories from their elders. Consequently, their information about the corrupt practices of feudalism cannot be overlooked. Among our respondents were 52 Lepchas (14.85 per cent), 50 Bhutias (14.28 per cent) and 240 Nepalese (68.57 per cent). A minority of the Madhesias (plain men) were also inquired about their involvement in the feudal system. There were 8 (2.28 per cent) Madhesia respondent. The Madhesias had been into the trade and commerce of the Kingdom after British took an upper hand in the administration.
Thus, in contemplation and observation of the aforementioned bits and
pieces, this is an endeavour to peep inside the rural past of the erstwhile
Himalayan Kingdom of Sikkim. As most of the historians are still engaged
in venerating what is already glorified, the struggle and resistance of
Sikkimese peasantry has not got its mention in the pages of history of
Sikkim. Distress and pains of feudalism in the inaccessible villages, their
troubles, their strategies in defending the feudal yoke, their folksongs, their
hidden transcripts, grudge, and antipathy against feudal set up, their
reluctance and resistance against the monopoly, their unanimity in
combating feudalism, the hidden history with abominations against the
feudal machinery are some of the issues that are so far neglected and have
never been highlighted by a Sikkimese historian. The everyday forms of
resistance, varied techniques adopted by the Sikkimese peasantry to tackle
feudal yoke and their ideas of rancour, in a tacit and concealed manner
among the rural souls, their odium against repressive State and its machinery,
their violent ideas to dismantle feudal edifice, and eventually their
assimilation with a political organisation for a far reaching change are some
of the important areas that are studied meticulously while compiling this
book. Further, these unwritten and unembellished events also break the
impression that, only the written documents can suffice the historical growth
and expansion. Such unrecorded piece of information too speaks in a
voluminous manner that, history even resides in the hamlets, remote pockets,
inaccessible villages, in sludge, and in dusts.

Notes
2. The Resolution of April 10th 1975 Sikkim Assembly Section “A” states, The
   Institution of Chogyal is hereby abolished and Sikkim shall henceforth be a
   constituent unit of India enjoying a democratic and fully responsible Government.
3. India Today online ‘Sikkim world’s number 1 place to visit in 2014, says Lonely
   Planet’ New Delhi, October 29, 2013 Date of access 17th December 2013.
4. The Constitution (Thirty Sixth Amendment) Act, 1975 Dated 19th April 1975
   www.indiacode.nic.in Date of access 25th December 2013.
6. Sikkim- A Concise Chronicle, Royal Wedding Committee, Sikkim Darbar Press,
   Gangtok, March 20th, 1963, p. 16.
8. Pathak, Bishnu, ‘Federalism: Lessons from India’ p. 12 www.transnational-
   perspectives.org Article 429 Date of access 17th December 2013.
9. Sandberg, Graham (1888), Manual of Sikkim Bhutia Language, Defang-Ke,
10. Kotturan, George, (1983), The Himalayan Gateway- History and Culture of
11. Van de Putte was the only European traveller who had ever completed the journey from India through Lhasa to China during Mughals. He returned to India, also passing through Lhasa and was an eyewitness of sack of Delhi by Nadir Shah in 1737.


19. Ibid.


30. Ibid, p. 27.


33. Lama (et al) (2004), op cit, p. 3.


35. The Indian Vedas are known as *Rikje* in Tibetan and the Lamas make recitation of it in all the major Pujas in the monasteries. Likewise, they too worship Wangchuk, as Shiva, Tsangpa as Brahma, and Kyayjuk as Vishnu the supreme trio of Hindu trinity.
38. Dhamala, Jaya, Sikkim Ko Itihas (History of Sikkim), (1983), Shyam Prakshan Darjeeling, p. 12.
42. Sankrityayan, Rahul, Darjeeling Parichaya (1950), Adhunik Pustak Bhawan, Calcutta, p. 193.
43. Lama (et al 2004), op cit, p. 178.
44. Rao, op cit, p. 2.
47. Grover, (1974), op cit, p. 3.
49. Ibid., p. 12.
56. Lama, (et al 2004), op cit, p. 60.
57. Lama (2001), op cit, p. 69.
58. Ibid, p. 70.
59. Lama, (et al 2004), op cit, p. 60.
63. Paper 1, Series 12, Census of India 2011.