

British Influences on Folk Medicine and Healing Practices in Sikkim

A Dissertation Submitted

To

Sikkim University



In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Master of Philosophy

By

Jigme Dorjee Bhutia

Department of History
School of Social Sciences

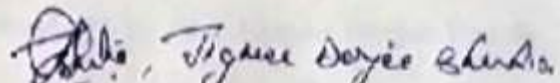
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**DEDICATED TO MY FAMILY AND THE FAITH HEALERS OF
SIKKIM**

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I, **Jigme Dorjee Bhutia**, hereby declare that the research work embodied in the dissertation titled "**British Influences on Folk Medicine and Healing Practices in Sikkim**" submitted to **Sikkim University** for the award of the **Degree of Master of Philosophy**, is my original work and it has not been submitted earlier to this or any other University for any degree.

Date: 06/02/2020


Signature & Name of Research Scholar

Regd No: 18/M.Phil/HIS/03

Name of Department: History

Name of School: School of Social Sciences

सदर, साम्दुर, तादोंग - 737102
दोक, सिक्किम, भारत
F-03592-251212, 251415, 251656
फैक्स - 251067
साइट - www.cus.ac.in



6th Mile, Samdur, Tadong-737102
Gangtok, Sikkim, India
Ph. 03592-251212, 251415, 251656
Telefax : 251067
Website : www.cus.ac.in

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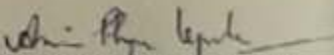
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled "**British Influences on Folk Medicine and Healing Practices in Sikkim**" submitted to the Sikkim University for partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** in the Department of History, embodied the result of bonafide research work carried out by **Mr. Jigme Dorjee Bhutia** under my guidance and supervision. No part of the dissertation has been submitted earlier to this or any other University for any Degree, Diploma, Association and Fellowship.

All the assistance and help received during the course of the investigation have been duly acknowledge by him.

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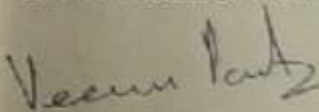

Dr. Anira Phipon Lepcha

Assistant Professor

Department of History

School of Social Sciences

Anira Phipon Lepcha Ph.D
Assistant Professor
Department of History
School of Social Sciences
Sikkim University, Tadong
Gangtok, Sikkim, India



Dr. Veenu Pant

Head of the Department

Department of History

School of Social Sciences

Dr. Veenu Pant
Associate Professor & Head
Department of History
School of Social Sciences
SIKKIM UNIVERSITY

6th Mile Tadong-737102 Gangtok, Sikkim

सम्बल, सान्दुर, तादोंग - 737102
टेक, सिक्किम, भारत
फोन-03592-251212, 251415, 251656
फैक्स - 251067
साइट - www.cus.ac.in



6th Mile, Sandur, Tadong-737102
Gangtok, Sikkim, India
Ph. 03592-251212, 251415, 251656
Telefax : 251067
Website : www.cus.ac.in

सिक्किम विश्वविद्यालय SIKKIM UNIVERSITY

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"British Influences on Folk Medicine and Healing Practices in Sikkim"

Submitted by Jigme Dorjee Bhutia under the supervision of Dr. Anira Phipon Lepcha, Assistant Professor, Department of History, School of Social Sciences, Sikkim University, Gangtok, 737102, India.

Jigme Dorjee Bhutia
Signature of the Scholar

Anira Phipon Lepcha
Countersigned by Supervisor

Anira Phipon Lepcha Ph D
Assistant Professor
Department of History
School of Social Sciences
Sikkim University Tadong
Gangtok, Sikkim, India

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Jigme Dorjee Bhutia

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CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

The medical treatment of the illness, injuries and sickness has been taken into an explanation of important phenomena from the minimum efforts of preliterate human to the existing detailed collection of specialities and treatment.¹ Folk medicine has always been a crucial phenomenon in the life of the human being from ancient to modern time. Folk medicinal practices in a simple term mean the ‘traditional knowledge’ of medicine and its practice, which has been transferred from one generation to the other since time immemorial. According to Ryan Abbott, ‘traditional knowledge’ contains no commonly recognized explanation. But in a larger account, it often comprises of traditional societal practices and information of the system, the logical and incorporeal social tradition, which also comprised of indigenous and social groups.² Before the advent of modern medicines, the Indian society was consisting of two important propensity, i.e., a) Organized tradition and b) Folk traditions. Organized tradition mainly comprised of formal cultured hypothetical basics, which were stated in a number of manuscripts comprising of complete divisions of medicinal practices like for example Tibetan medicine, *Unani*, *Sidaha* and *Ayurveda*. On the other hand, folk medicinal practices are those group of medicinal practices which is informal and passed on verbally since time immemorial and without any written form.³ These folk medicinal practices are again divided into two groups; a) Natural folk medicine and b) Religious folk medicine.⁴

¹ Ch. Ibohal Singh, *Health Information System in North-East India*, B. R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 2005, p. 2.

² Ryan Abbott, *Documenting Traditional Medical Knowledge*, World Intellectual Property Organization, n. p., 2014, p. 3.

³ Puspashree Nayak, *Folk Medicine and the Traditional Healers in Orissa: An Anthropological Study*, Unpublished Ph. D Thesis, Department of Anthropology, Sambalpur University, 2010, p. 21, <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in>, accessed on 20.05.2019.

⁴ Don Yader, Folk Medicine, in Dorson M. (ed.), *Folklore and Folklife*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1972, p. 192.

Sikkim consisting of several ethnic communities like Lepchas, Bhutias, Nepalis, and the people from the plains lives here. Each having their folk medicinal practitioners. The term and meanings of shamans⁵ and faith healers, modern and Western are used/written interchangeably in this research. The indigenous⁶ Lepchas shamans being the spiritual expert, also contain the knowledge of the locally available herbs and remedial system. Medical knowledge and healing ceremonies include an extensive information and performance of rituals when suffered from various sickness and illnesses.⁷ They also believe in *Rum* or good spirit and *Mung* the evil spirit. In Lepcha society, *Bongthing* is attributed to psychiatrist, medicine man, spiritualist, preacher and a priest. Whereas *Mun* is a female priestess and she is attributed to the practice of transporting the departed soul to the *Rum Lyang*, (*Rum*=god, *Lyang*=place) or heavenly abode.⁸ Like Lepchas, the Bhutias also believe in natural force and evil spirit. *Pau*, *Ney jum* and *bon ban bongthing* are their spiritual leaders, who perform many rituals in order to cure the sick caused by the evil spirit. *Pau*, *bon ban bongthing* and *Ney jum* are their male and female priestess. They are the follower and practitioner of old Bon faith in Sikkim. Apart from these two communities of Sikkim, the Nepalis, which consist of the larger group, also have their separated ritual practitioners and knowledge of local medicines. Among the Nepali communities of Sikkim, this work mainly deals with special reference to the Limboos of Sikkim and their medicinal knowledge and healing practices. In the Limboo

⁵ Shamanism is an anthropological term for a range of beliefs and practices relating to communication with the spiritual world. Shamanism encompasses the belief that shamans are intermediaries or messengers between the human world and the spirit world. Shamans are said to treat ailments/illness by mending the soul. J. R. Subba, *Origin and Development of Religion:100 Questions Answered in Yumaism*, Sukhim Yakthum Mundhum Saploppa (SYMS), Gangtok, 2013, pp. 201-202.

⁶ 'Indigenous' status attaches to the tribes. This coining is derived from the position adopted by the U.N Working Group on indigenous populations formed in 1982. The description 'indigenous' attributes the status of original people to a group of people who started their settlement in an area previous to settlement of people of different ethnic origin. Prasenjit Biswas, Chandan Sukla Baidya, *Ethnic Life-Worlds in North-East India: An Analysis*, SAGE Publication India, Pvt, Ltd, New Delhi, 2008, p. 105.

⁷ Davide Torri, In the Shadow of the Devil: Traditional Patterns of Lepchas Culture Reinterpreted, in Fabrizio M. Ferrari (ed.), *Health and Religious Rituals in South Asia*, Routledge, New York, 2011, p. 154.

⁸ Anira Phipon Lepcha, the Religion of the Lepcha with Special Reference to their Boongthing-Mun Culture in Sikkim, *Deepak: An International Research Journal*, 2017, pp. 35-36.

community their shaman or faith healers are known as *Phedangmas*, consisting of nine individuals who have different role to play in the Limboo society.

Regarding the geographical location of Sikkim, the Tibet Autonomous Region of China surrounds Sikkim in the North, West Bengal in the South, Nepal in the West and Bhutan in the East. Thus, Sikkim is a center of civilisation and ethos.⁹ Sikkim covers a total area of 7,096 square kilometres, extending in elevation from 300 to 8540 metres. The third-largest mountain of the world, i.e., Mount Khangchendzonga also located in Sikkim. The forest and snow cover the larger area, and only 20 per cent of its area is suitable for human habitation.¹⁰ In regard to geographical boundaries of Namgyal dynasty, during its initial period, according to Thutob Namgyal and Yeshay Dolma mentioned that the boundaries of Sikkim were extended from Tagong La in the East, Yangmag Khangchen Yarlung, Timar Chorten, Shingsa Dag-pay and Wa lung in the West, along the river Arun, to Dibdala in the North and Titalia and Naxalbari in the South.¹¹ But this statement about the geographical boundaries of Namgyal dynasty was questioned by A. C. Sinha, in his work and he argues that when Namgyal dynasty was initiated, it lacked in the workforce to govern and manage such a vast region at the initial stage. He puts forward that according to the first census of 1891, the whole inhabitants of Sikkim were documented to 30,459 only, even after the 250 years of ruling in Sikkim by the Namgyal dynasty. Out of 30,459 total population, 4,894 were Bhutias, 5,762 were Lepchas, 3,345 were Limboos, and rest of the population included other Nepali communities. Furthermore, due to the thick jungle and wildlife, landscape, huge mountain and wide ranges, if not impossible then

⁹ Alex McKay and Anna Balikci-Denjongpa (ed.), *Buddhist Himalaya: Studies in Religion, History and Culture*, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok, 2011, p. 3.

¹⁰ Alex McKay, *Their Footprints Remain: Biomedical Beginnings Across the Indo-Tibetan Frontier*, IAS Publication Series, Amsterdam, 2007, p. 85.

¹¹ Thutob Namgyal and Yeshay Dolma, *History of Sikkim*, translated by Kazi Dousandup, Unpublished Work, n. p., 1908, p. 20.

must have put an obstruction in the communication process, and also put a question on being the entire of Limbuwan a part of Sikkimese territory.¹²

Regarding regional history, the original inhabitants of Sikkim are the Lepchas and the Limboos. However, from the period around the 13th century onwards, there started the immigration of Tibetans in Sikkim, who were known as ‘Bhutias’ but more appropriately known as Lhopos.¹³ They migrated to Sikkim in different phases from different provinces of Tibet and some parts of Bhutan. But if we follow the work of Saul Mullard, he has provided a different theory related to the Bhutia migration to Sikkim and traced back the date to around ninth-century, which we will discuss in detail in chapter three. According to many past sources of Sikkim, regarding the foundation of Namgyal dynasty in Sikkim. It is mentioned that in Tibet when the follower of rNying-ma-pa sect or the Red Hat Sect was overpowered by the Gelu-kpa sect or the Yellow Hat Sect. The follower of Red Hat Sect lamas known as Sempah Chhembo, Rigdzin Kunzang Chhembo and Lhatsum Chhembo entered Sikkim in the 17th century and declared Phuntsog Namgyal as the *Chogyal* of Sikkim.¹⁴ And traced the ancestral lineage of Namgyal dynasty from Mu rub btsan po, who was the middle son of the Kham Min Yak monarch, Khri-Srong-Ide-btsan of Tibet. Who had three sons, Mu ne btsan po, Mu rub btsan po and Sad na legs. According to the Tibetan legends, It is believed that after twenty five generation, the Crown Prince of Kham Min Yak, obtains a dream from the deity of the region, who stated him to leave the place and find the sacred place called Demozong, as prophesied by Guru Padmasambhava¹⁵. After having this dream, he went to central Tibet in a pilgrimage, along with his four sons. When he reached Lhasa, he went to offer prayer to Jo po in Jo khang.

¹² A. C. Sinha, *Sikkim: Feudal and Democratic*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2008, p. 49.

¹³ Alex McKay, Op. cit., p. 86.

¹⁴ Suresh Kumar Gurung, *Sikkim, Ethnicity and Political Dynamics: A Triadic Perspective*, Kunal Books, New Delhi, 2011, pp. 32-33.

¹⁵ Guru Padmasambhava was an Indian monk from Udayana who was invited to Tibet his reign by Thi-Sron-De- Tsan during his reign and who had also visited Sikkim in the 8th century A.D. H. H. Risley, *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*, B. R. Publication Corporation, Delhi, 2010, p. 7.

The Jo po statue also told him to advance towards the sacred place of Demozong, because his offspring were meant to rule the Demozong. But still, he continued his pilgrimage towards Sa skya, where his guru resided. When they reached there, they saw in Sa skya the hierarch was building a new monastery but was having trouble in laying the main pillar of the monastery. Therefore, the eldest son of the prince helped them to lay the foundation of four main pillars single-handedly and got the name Gye-Bum-Sar or a man with the strength of thousand-person, and the daughter of Sa skya hierarch was married to him. At the same time, another miracle happened, a letter fell from the sky, which foretold them to move towards Demozong. This led the prince and his sons to move towards Sikkim, but the prince died on the way, Gye-Bum-Sar marched forward and settled in Chumbi.¹⁶ While in Chumbi, when Gye-Bum-Sar's wife was not able to conceive a child, he marched downward and took blessing from the Lepcha chief Thekong-Tek, who blessed him with sons. And as a token of gratitude when he visited Thekong-Tek for the second time, they swore a blood brotherhood friendship and sacrificed animals to the guardian deities and their ancestors as a witness to their swearing at Kabi Lungchuk in north Sikkim. Later, Gye-Bum-Sar was succeeded by Mi-Pon-rab, who was again later succeeded by Guru-Tashi and his son Phuntsog was born in the year 1604, *Shing-dug* year or wood Dragon year of the Tibetan era. Who was coronated at Yuksam in the year 1642 as the first *Chogyal* (Dharma Raja or righteous king) of Sikkim by the three lamas who came to Sikkim during this period.¹⁷ Following are the list of the *Chogyal*, who ruled Sikkim during different period.

Table. 1.1: List Of *Chogyal* and Its Consecration on The Throne Of Sikkim

Sl. No	Name of the <i>Chogyals</i>	Consecration date
1.	Phuntsog Namgyal (1604-1670 AD)	1642 AD

¹⁶ Saul Mullard, *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and The Construction of Sikkimese History*, Rachna Books & Publications, Gangtok, 2019, pp. 38-40.

¹⁷ Sunita Kharel, Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia and A. B. Subba, History, in Sunita Kharel and Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia (ed.), *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Home Department, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok, 2013, pp. 72-73.

2.	Tensung Namgyal (1644-1700 AD)	1670 AD
3.	Chagdor Namgyal (1686-1717 AD)	1700 AD
4.	Gyurmed Namgyal (1707-1733 AD)	1717 AD
5.	Namgyal Phuntsog (1733-1780 AD)	1734 AD
6.	Tenzing Namgyal (1769-1793 AD)	1780 AD
7.	Tsugphud Namgyal (1785-1863 AD)	1793 AD
8.	Sidkeong Namgyal (1819-1879 AD)	1861 AD
9.	Thutob Namgyal (1860-1914 AD)	1874 AD
10.	Sidkeong Tulku (1879-1914 AD)	1914 AD
11.	Sir Tashi Namgyal (1893-1963 AD)	December 1914 AD
12.	Palden Thondup Namgyal (1923-1982 AD)	1963 AD

Sources: Sunita Kharel, Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia and A. B. Subba, History, in Sunita Kharel and Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia (ed.), *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Home Department, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok, 2013, pp. 73-94.

The relation between Sikkim and the British started due to the rising conflicts between the British and Nepal. The British also had an interest in opening the trade relation with Tibet and China. Therefore, Sikkim was the buffer-state between Bhutan, Nepal, Tibet and India. So, the British took an opportunity when they realised that Sikkim too had a rivalry with Nepal and promised to give back those territories of Sikkim which was earlier taken by Nepal. After signing of the treaty of Segauli with Nepal, by the British they gave back the lost territories to Sikkim and also signed the treaty of Titalia in 1817 with Sikkim. This treaty provided a sphere for the British to influence Sikkim's foreign relations which in return they offered the protection to Sikkim against Nepal. While dealing with Sikkim's cause, the British officials asked for the possession of Darjeeling to make a sanitorium. However, the relation between Sikkim and the British also started to hamper on the question of Darjeeling Hills which ended in forming the Grand Deed of 1835. The treaty of Tumlong signed in 1861, is also one of the

crucial episodes in establishing Sikkim-British relation, which led to the entering of British troops in Sikkim. The Sikkim Expedition of 1888 and the Sikkim-Tibetan Convention of March 1890 are the key events which underwired their relationship, which also confirmed the British authority over Sikkim. In 1889, J. C. White was sent as a British political officer to Sikkim who brought many changes in the age-old traditions of Sikkim.¹⁸ His policy of opening the gates for the European Christian Missionaries has affected the ethos of the society and culture of Sikkim. In the medical field, there witnessed an increase in the use of the modern method of medical practices/biomedicine and establishment of dispensaries and hospitals, which led to the gradual decline/derecognition in the folk medicine and healing practices in Sikkim.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Sikkim is a land of faith healers. The Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Nepalis form the dominant population of Sikkim. Every community has both formal and informal medical practices. The Lepchas regard their *Bongthing* and their *Mun* as their spiritual figure who cast away the evil spirit. They also used numerous locally available herbs, bones and meat of domestic and wild animals for medical purposes. The Bhutias in Sikkim have the knowledge of the traditional medicinal practices having a legacy to the Tibetan medical system. They also believe in the natural force and evil spirit. *Pau*, *Ney jum* and *bon ban bongthing* are their spiritual leaders, who perform many rituals in order to cure the sickness caused by the evil spirit. And they are the practitioner of the old Bon faith in Sikkim. Apart from these two communities of Sikkim, the Nepalis who formed a larger group brought along their knowledge of the traditional medical and healing practices. This research work mainly deals with the Lepchas, Bhutias and the Limboos medicinal and healing practices in Sikkim. The faith healers

¹⁸ Alex McKay, Op. cit., p. 86-87.

of Limboo tribe are called *Phedangmas*, who are nine different individuals, and have different role to play in the Limboo society of Sikkim.

The people of Sikkim practised folk medicine widely during the rule of the *Chogyal's* belonging to Namgyal dynasty in Sikkim. Sikkim underwent a political turmoil after the signing of Treaty of Segauli in 1815 with Nepal by the British and with the restoration of the lost territory of Sikkim with the signing to Treaty of Titalia in 1817. Slowly and gradually, the British were able to make Sikkim as their protectorate state in order to achieve their aim to establish a trade relation with Tibet and China. However, these political and economic policies of British in Sikkim led to a gradual change in the traditional practices of folk medicine and healing system in Sikkim, after their hold in Sikkim became prominent and opening the gate of the closed theocratic kingdom of Sikkim to the Western ideas and practices of medicine. The long-awaited permission to enter and to reside in Sikkim was granted to the European Christian Missionaries. Their presence in Sikkim had a significant impact on the derecognition of folk medicine in one hand, and on the other, there was a rise of modern medical/biomedical practices in Sikkim.

1.2. Literature Reviews.

Many books, research articles and records are easily found on Sikkim, but there is a dearth of literature on the history of folk medicinal and healing practices of Sikkim. The following are the reviews of literature which have been used while writing this dissertation.

Alex McKay, (2007), *Their Footprints Remain: Biomedical Beginnings Across the Indo-Tibetan Frontier*, this work discuss the bio-medical system and indigenou medicinal practices of local people of the frontier region of Indo- Tibetan border. It talks about the traditional medicinal practices and further explains the later spreading of the Western medicinal system in the region of Sikkim, Bhutan, Kalimpong, and Tibet. Regarding medicinal practices in

Sikkim, in the whole chapter, he talks mainly about the spread of the Western biomedical system. He has less discussed about the traditional medical practices of Sikkimese people.

Anira Phipon Lepcha, (2016), in her article '*A History of the Church of Scotland Foreign Mission in Sikkim*' has explained the history of the coming of the Church of Scotland Foreign Missionaries in Sikkim. She writes that because of the arrival of the missionaries, the traditional knowledge of the Lepchas on medicine underwent change. She mentions that the Lepchas started to use the medicine provided by the European missionaries in their newly established dispensaries in their villages. However, she has briefly touched upon the contribution to the medical sphere.

Sunita Kharel and Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia, (ed.), (2013), *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, deals with the public health in Sikkim though not in detail. It explains that the 19th century was a period of health development in Sikkim. It shows the gradual development of this sphere from 1890 under the British Agency and how the medical centres were opened for the public. It also mentions that from 1990 dispensaries which were started in every village of the kingdom were fully established as small hospitals.

J. J. Roy Burman's, (2003), *Tribal Medicine*, mentions briefly about the system of traditional medical practices among the Lepchas and Bhutias of Sikkim. Moreover, it explains that in Sikkim, there is a prevalence of a very ancient medical system which is still very popular. Further, he has added that the factors which have affected the health indirectly are religion and family outlook on health.

Fabrizio M. Ferrari, (ed.), (2011), *Health and Religious Rituals in South Asia*, debates over South Asian understandings of diseases as forms of possession or problem. This book has thought to consolidate and promote the debate on how the South Asian traditional practices of different communities residing in Asia are done and explains the importance of religious rituals followed by the people living in South Asia.

R. C. Sundriyal, (1995), *Cultivation of Medicinal Plants and Orchids in Sikkim Himalaya*, dealt with the Sikkim climate, soil and geographical benefits for the development of medicinal plants. He tries to explain the wide variety of flora in Sikkim and its positive impact on the cultivation of a variety of medicinal plants. However, he fails to explain the tradition of Folk medical practice in Sikkim.

H. H. Risley, (2010), *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, have given the detailed account of the history of Sikkim. Its geographical features, different varieties of flora and fauna of Sikkim. It has also mentioned about the Lamaic practices along with a general description of Sikkim monasteries and temples. In an overall view, he tries to explain the detailed account of the Sikkim history during the 19th and early 20th century.

Jonathan Keyes, (2009), *Human Health, A Natural Way*, deals with the phenomena that how the Western world saw life as being made up of four elements: fire, water, air, and earth. Moreover, it tries to relate these elements into the season and specific emotions, organs of the body and things found in nature. Apart from this, it also deals with traditional Western medicine and primary philosophical practice of the Western healers from the past.

Anna Balikci-Denjongpa and Alex McKay (ed.), (2011), *Buddhist Himalaya: Studies in Religion, History and Culture*, deals with the different Buddhist practices in the Sikkim Himalayan region but most importantly it gave the importance of traditional use of *Ci* millet beer that is used in the Lepcha communities of Sikkim. Apart from this, it also mentions other Tibetan practices of beliefs in *knye* among the Tibetan communities.

K. P. Singh, (2013), *Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge*, consists of different topics related to traditional Indian knowledge in a different part of the nation and has incorporated the traditional knowledge of the Limboo tribe of Sikkim, especially of the region of South-West Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve in West Sikkim. The journal provides the list of

medicinal plants which has been used by the Limboo tribe of Sikkim but does not include the folk medical practices of other communities of Sikkim.

H. Birkumar Singh, P. Prasad, and L. K. Rai, (2002), *Folk Medicinal Plants in The Sikkim Himalayas of India*, provides the detail list of medicinal plants which have been used in Sikkim since earlier period. Such for example *Dungdunge*, *Titaypati*, *Malingo*, *Pakhanbed*, *Betlauree*, etc., apart from this, the book also talks about as how the overexploitation of this medicinal plants has changed the habitat conditions that have resulted in a gradual loss of other associated species. However, considering the seriousness of the situation, the Department of Forest of the Government of Sikkim have put a restriction of overuse of certain endangered species of these plants.

G. N. Devy, Geoffrey V. Davis and K. K. Chakravarty, (2009), *Indigeneity: Culture and Representation*, discusses the meaning of the term indigeneity. This book has helped to understand the meaning of the term indigenous and indigeneity.

Bengt G. Karlsson, (2006), *Indigeneity in India*, consists of the different meaning given to indigenous Indian people by the Indian government. It explains the concept of “indigenous people” and explains why and how the related international framework are not applicable in the Indian context. Neither the scheduled tribe nor any other category of people in India can be defined as “Indigenous”. Alternatively, it is claimed that all Indians are “Indigenous”.

The author explains that the indigenous issue has grown merely out of patronage and promotion by the international agencies like the ILO, World Bank and the UN is to ignore the history of the indigenous peoples struggle all over the world.

Ch. Ibohal Singh, (2005), *Health Information System in North-East India*, provides the different meaning given to the term folk medicine by the different writers. It mentions Don Yade 's explanation on folk medicine as the substance of all traditional viewpoints of sickness and the healing methods applied against a disease which exist among the people. It includes R.

M. Sarkar discussion on the tribal and folk medicines as of the long experience of shared wisdom based on trial and error process coming down from one generation to another generation. Apart from this, the book discusses the different folk medicines used by the people of North-East India in brief.

Gian Singh, H. G. Singh and T. K. Mukherjee's, (2004), *Ethno-Medicine of North-East India*, gives a detail list of the medicinal plants which has been used by the people of North-Eastern states. For example, *Chanden* the local medicinal plant name uses by Lepcha people and *Dumsing* used by the Bhutia people of Sikkim. *Chem-men* Lepcha word for the medicinal seed and *Peyogokhym*, the Bhutia word for the Rhizome or stem. This book has included some of the names of medicinal herbs used in Sikkim but has left many.

Purna Hang Subba and Rangalal Mohapatra, (2018), *Society and Economy: The Limboos of Sikkim*, deals with the socio-economic condition, health, land issue and gender disparities in the education level of tribes in India in general and the Limboos of Sikkim in particular. It talks about the history and overall condition of the Limboos in Sikkim which includes their culture, literacy rate, tradition, religion, etc. This book has dealt about the history of the Limboos and their shamanic practices in general.

J. R. Subba, (2013), *Origin and Development of Religion: 100 Questions Answers in Yumaism*, deals with the detail information about the origin and development of Limboo Yumaism, their religion and understanding of beliefs and rituals in general and the religion of the limboo society in particular mostly from Sikkim and Nepal. The chapters discuss the *Mundum*, followed by the role and function of religion in society, and analysis of religious belief and rituals.

Dagmar Bernstorff Welck, (2002), *Exile as Challenge: The Tibetan Diaspora*, deals with the historical and political framework of Tibetan society in exile. It also gives a valuable glimpse of the spread of Tibetan medicine and its importance. It also talks about how the Tibetan

medicinal system started in Tibet and gradually started to spread in a different part of the world. Moreover, it mentions all the Tibetan literary work on medicine, that about ninety per cent exists in the original Tibetan language only and a tiny portion having been translated into any Western languages.

D. T. Tamlong, (2008), *Mayel Lyang and The Lepchas*, this work explains the different aspects of Lepcha culture in Sikkim and Darjeeling. Moreover, it puts forward the different arguments given by different writers related to the Lepcha language, dress, and class system. It also provided a critical point on the Lepcha religion and their drink of the Lepchas ‘*Chi*’. He further explains that ‘*Chi*’ has been a part of Lepcha life, culture and religion. He puts further as this ‘*Chi*’ has to be considered as holy as ‘*Dagras*’ or ‘*Samaras*’.

Tamdin Sither Bradley, (2010), *Principles of Tibetan Medicine*, explains the theory and practice of Tibetans medicine, historical background, diagnosis, treatment and therapies, tips for a healthy diet and lifestyle. It is clear from the beginning that Tibetan do not separate science and spirituality but see them as one. He also quotes what D. B. Welck stated that: “the foundation of Tibetan medicine was and remained the Indian Ayurvedic system of medicine.” However, contrary to this argument Bradley explains “that there are many books which state that Tibetan medical knowledge is solely derived from India and China and this is not true because as Tibet has had its medical knowledge for thousands of years before the entering of Buddhism in Tibet”.

Samten G. Karmay, (2001), *The Treasury of Good Sayings: A Tibetan History of Bon*, gives detail information about the Bon religion of Tibet. From its rise to its decline. He tries to explain the different texts of Bon which were initially written in the native language, i.e. Tibetan language. He gives a piece of valuable information about the Bon religion, it's meaning and its persecution of Bon faith in Tibet which according to him took place in two phases,

earlier during the time of king Gri- gum and later persecution took place during the reign of king Khri-Srong-Ide-Btsan.

Anira Phipon Lepcha, (2018), in her research article, *The Religion of The Indigenous Lepchas of Sikkim: The Changing Context*, throws light on the history of the Lamaism in Sikkim and its influence on the Lepchas. It also discusses the functions of the *Boongthings* and *Muns* of the Lepchas in Sikkim. However, she has not done a detailed study on the medicinal herbs that are used by the Lepchas.

Nandini Bhattacharyya Panda, (2015), *Culture, Heritage, and Identity: The Lepcha and Mangar Communities of Sikkim and Darjeeling*, consist of the documentation of the cultural pursuits and quest for identity of the Lepcha and Mangar Communities of Sikkim and Darjeeling. So it mainly deals with the story of displacement of two marginal/tribal groups in the Eastern Himalayan region in a historical context and their current struggle to revive lost domain. It traces that the Lepcha and Mangar community are the indigenous people of Sikkim and not an immigrant from other regions.

A. R. Foning, (1987), *Lepcha My Vanishing Tribe*, in this work he tries to show an overall view of Lepcha lifestyle which consists of its culture, customs, religious belief, marriage, as well as their historical background. Apart from the above information he also mentions the role of *Bongthing* and *Mun*. However, his work fails to explain the important medicinal herbs and animal part used by the Lepcha *Bongthing* in order to cure the illness.

Geoffrey Gorer, (2005), *Himalayan Village: An Account of the Lepchas of Sikkim*, explains the important aspects of Lepcha community of Sikkim particularly of Lingthim village, which include of traditional life of Lepcha people. Although he mentions about the detail information about the Lepchas but regarding the shamanic practices of the Lepcha people he only talked about the importance of shamanic practices of *Mun* but failed to talk about the role of

Bongthing which he referred as *Padim* (a term used to mention about *Bongthing* in Dzongu region).

Vanya Jha and Ajeya Jha, (2012), *Ethno-Ornithology of Lepchas of Sikkim*, tries to highlight in their work the importance of birds in the life of Lepcha people and their vast knowledge regarding different species of birds of Sikkim. They have tried to show how from the time immemorial, Lepcha people used to relate themselves with birds of a different kind which they reflected it into their folklore and myths. They have tried to explain the importance of birds in the life of the Lepcha community but regarding the use of birds as medicinal purposes they have only mentioned in brief, or only a little information is provided by them, which is an important aspect in the life of Lepcha community.

C. De Beauvoir Stocks, (2001), *Folk-Lore and Customs of The Lap-chas of Sikkim*, has written extensively about the Lepcha or *Rong*-folk. However, the focal point is mainly on Lepcha folktales which are sub-divided into the creation of myths, zoological myths, heroic tales and short stories. Lastly, he also mentions about the Lepcha customs: about their family life, birth, marriages, etc.

J. R. Subba, (2012), *Yumaism, The Limboo Way of Life: A Philosophical Analysis*, is an account of the ancient religion of Limboos called *Yumaism* which he discussed in a detailed manner and tried to explain it in a philosophical point of view. Apart from these information he also dealt with the indigenous knowledge of food and other livelihood bio-resources which included the use of different fresh water crabs and frogs for medicinal purposes by the Limboo community with special reference to the people of Hee and Hee Patel area and the use of wild plants gathered for healthcare and medicines as well as wild-plants gathered for religious rituals.

Anna Balikci, (2008), *Lamas, Shamans and Ancestors: Village Religion in Sikkim*, has discussed the Bon system in Sikkim. She gave an overall view of the role played by *Pau* and

Ney jum in the Bhutia community. In her work, she clearly stated that the *Pau* and the *Ney jum*, the male and the female shamans have their way of worshipping practices and no influence of Lamaism can be seen in their practices. So, she particularly mentions about the village called Tingchim where *Pau* and *Ney jum* perform their rituals separately but parallel with lamas and only in rare circumstances they performed their ritual together.

Suresh Kumar Gurung, (2011), *Sikkim: Ethnicity and Political Dynamics, A Triadic Perspective*, highlighted the political history of Sikkim. Where he discussed the major ethnic groups of Sikkim and their history and identity. According to Gurung the Bhutias attempt to legitimize their rule through the myth of 'blood-brotherhood' between Bhutias and Lepchas and the '*Lho-Men-Tsong-Sum*' pact etc. Regarding Nepalis migration he divided this group into two racial groups, i.e., Mongoloid and Aryan; which he further explains that Mongoloid were among the earliest settlers like Lepcha and Bhutia and the Aryan race of Nepalis entered Sikkim in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Though the primary focus of his work is based on the political history of Sikkim, there are not many mentions about the role of J. C. White and his role in establishing a different administrative institution in Sikkim.

Keshab C. Pradhan, (2008), *The Life and Times of Plantsman in the Sikkim Himalayas: A Memoir*, is a work based on his memoir, where he discussed his life experience about the flora of Sikkim when he was appointed as a chief forest officer of Sikkim during *Chogyal* period. His work is mainly based on flora of Sikkim which consists of rhododendrons, alpinas and orchids. Apart from this information, he also mentions about the medicinal plants of Sikkim in brief. Apart from this he mentions about the *Amchis* from Tibet coming to Sikkim, in order to collect medicinal plants from Sikkim.

Yishey Doma, (2008), *Sikkim: The Hidden Fruitful Valley*, mainly deals with the lifestyle of the people of Sikkim. It consists of the historical background, culture, food habits of three communities of Sikkim, i.e. Nepalis, Lepchas and Bhutias. She mentions about Buddhism in

Sikkim and the construction of monasteries. Apart from this she also says, about the different lakes, heritage sites and the importance of hot springs which was mainly used for medicinal purposes, especially for skin diseases.

Sarat Chandra Das, (1984), *Tibetan Studies*, mentions the religious practises of Mongolia, China, India in general and Tibet in particular. He says about the Bon faith in Tibet before the introduction of Buddhism. However, after its introduction, how it led to the persecution of the Bon religion in Tibet. Although he wrote about the religious practices of Tibet, it failed to mention about the writing which is related to Tibetan medicine and its relation with Sikkim.

J. R. Subba, (2008), *History, Culture and Customs of Sikkim*, provides a detailed explanation about the history of Sikkim from its culture, food habits, dress, health system, etc. regarding folk medicine practices he divided it into the four categories. The patient world, the natural world, the social world and the supernatural world. In addition to this, he also mentions about the allopathic or Western medicinal healthcare system in Sikkim.

Deepak Kumar and Raj Sekhar Basu (ed.), (2013), *Medical Encounter in British India*, is a study of medical practices in India during the British period. This edited work has mostly described the East-West exchange of medical practices. And it mentions that there is no word like 'pure' East and 'pure' West and science know no geographical limitation but rather, it should be between 'Modern' and 'Ancient' medicines.

J. F. Marc des Jardins (ed.), (2013), *The Journal of the International Association for Bon Research*, covers the whole idea of Bon system in Tibet. They have tried to find out the ancient history and culture of Tibet by studying the original source from Sangshung, which is related to the pre-Buddhist tradition of Bon system in Tibet.

Although many of the scholars explain about the Bon system in Tibet, it is only Geoffrey Samuel who mentions about the Bon system and its relations with neighbouring regions like, Nepal, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Bhutan, etc. He also did not mention about

the Bon system of Sikkim in detail except a brief note which he explains by referring to the Anna Balikci work on Sikkim village called Tingchim.

Anna Balikci-Denjongpa (ed.), (2010), *Bulletin of Tibetology*, Volume 46, No.1, is a collection of relation and connection between Sikkim and Bhutan, both in past and the present. In this Bulletin Anna Balikci mentions about the *Padim* of Lingko, Dzongu, North Sikkim and talks about the Lepcha practice of shamans by their local priests like *Padim* and *Mun*. According to her, *Mun* is considered to be more powerful than *Padim* because of her helping spirit. But according to A.R. Foning in his work *Lepcha My Vanishing Tribe*, he stated that between the *Mun* and the *Boongthing*, the *Boongthing* is very much more in demand and circulation.

Although her work provided with lots of valuable information, it fails to explain about the different medicinal herbs and parts of plants use by *Padim* to cure the sick apart from ritual practices.

Puspashree Nayak, (2010), “*Folk Medicine and the Traditional Healers in Orissa: An Anthropological Study*”, mainly deals with the tribal medical practices and healing practices of Western Orissa. She explains about the different concept of folk and tribal medicine and its popularity. Except that she also mentions about the promoting traditional medicine by WHO which is safe, effective and affordable. She has provided detail information about the different plant which was used by tribal medical practitioners of Western Orissa, still she fails to explain about the different ritual practices used by the faith healers except from few.

H. Vanlalhrauaia, (2010), *A History of Traditional Medicine of Mizoram in Pre-Modern Period* is an account of the traditional medical practices in Mizoram from second half of 19th century to early 20th century. According to him “the experiences of illness and healing in all cultures are shaped by Cultural, Social, Political and Moral Components”. His work deals with the coming of colonialism in Mizoram, which also let to the entering of missionaries, which in turn tried to convert local people into Christianity started to setup many dispensaries and

modern medicines. And called the Mizo explanation of diseases being “irrational and superstitious”.

Maharaja Thutob Namgyal and Maharani Yeshey Dolma, (1908), History of Sikkim, is an important work related to the history of Sikkim, and the history of *Chogyal* from Phuntsog Namgyal to Thutob Namgyal. This work on history of Sikkim provided many valuable information related to the historical background of Phuntsog Namgyal from the starting of Namgyal dynasty in Sikkim. Although it had provided much important and valuable information related to the political history of Sikkim, mostly all the related sources for this work is depended upon religious sources, or Tibetan work and no other sources were used while writing this work, which would support the argument or writing.

Saul Mullard, (2019), *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and The Construction of Sikkimese History*, is a study of the political history of Sikkim. Mullard in this work on Sikkimese history tries to present its history through historical perspective and based on all the evidence, mostly the Tibetan references, documents from Royal Archives, official government correspondence, private letters etc.

He has tried to questions all the earlier works based on religious and myth and presented it in a different perspective. Although his work tries to present a history of Sikkim in more elaborately and historically, he has referred mostly only the Tibetan sources or work of Western writers based on Tibetan writings. Though he has tried to look into the Sikkimese history through a historical perspective he mostly referred to the Tibetan sources. Used no other sources like Limboo and the Lepchas which might have answered his questions to fill the gap which prevailed in the Sikkimese history.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- i. To examine the folk medicinal and healing practices of the indigenous Lepchas and the role of *Bongthing* and *Mun* in their society.
- ii. To study the folk medical practices of the Bhutia community and the healing practices of *Pau*, *Ney jum* and *bon ban bongthing*.
- iii. To elucidate the folk medicinal practices of the Nepali communities in Sikkim; with special reference to Limboo *Phedangmas*.
- iv. To discuss the coming of the British and the rise of modern medicinal/biomedical practices with the help of Christian missionaries in Sikkim.

1.4. Methodology

This dissertation work deals with the qualitative method based on both the primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include all the relevant archival documents, unpublished M. Phil dissertation and Ph. D thesis, gazetteers and government publications. The secondary sources include all the published books and research articles relating to Sikkim, Folk medical practices, community history, and faith healers/shamanism. Various libraries like Sikkim Central University Library, Sikkim State Library and the library of Namgyal Institute of Tibetology has been visited, apart from the Ecclesiastical department. First-hand information through interviews with the folk medical practitioners, the faith healers and also some of the common men from these three communities have been analysed. And lastly, e-books and unpublished Ph-D thesis has been used from Internet Archive and shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in.

1.5. Chapterization

Following are the list of the different chapters.

Chapter I: Introduction

In the introductory chapter, it consists of an Introduction to the research work, which includes Statement of the Problem, Literature Review, Objectives of the Study, Methodology and Chapterization.

Chapter II: The Folk Medicine of The Lepchas With Special Reference to *Bongthing* and *Mun* in Sikkim

In this chapter, a brief history of the Lepchas has been mentioned. Besides, the folk medicinal practices and the role of *Boongthing* and *Mun*, its nature and practice of the healing process have also been discussed.

Chapter III: The Bon and Healing Practices of The Bhutias in Sikkim

This chapter discusses the brief history of the Bhutias in Sikkim. The folk medicinal practices of the Bhutias and the Bon system in relation to healing practices has also been explained.

Chapter IV: The Limboo Folk Medicinal Practices and The Role of Their Shamans

This chapter elucidates the Limboo way of worshipping their Mother Creator and the practice of *Yumaism*. The role of *Phedangmas* in the Limboo Society and the use of different medicinal plants by the Limboos in Sikkim have been discussed.

Chapter V: The Role of the British and the Rise of Modern Medical Practices in Sikkim

This chapter has discussed the coming of the British in Sikkim, its role in the derecognition of folk medicinal and healing practices, and the establishment of health Centers and Western education system with the help of Christian missionaries.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

The last chapter is the concluding part which has summarise the significant findings of the research work.

CHAPTER - II

THE FOLK MEDICINE OF THE LEPCHAS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO *BONGTHING* AND *MUN* IN SIKKIM

The original inhabitant of Sikkim are the Lepchas. They call themselves as '*Mutanchi Rongkup*'¹. The Lepchas refer to their land as *Mayel lyang* (a place akin to paradise)². They have their own story of origin which says that they were originated from the snow of Khangchendzonga. Most of their folktales and folklores reflect the geography, flora and fauna and their lifestyle associated with the places of Sikkim. However, one cannot neglect the different theories on the migration of the Lepchas from other places.

A religious conversation which constructs of various beliefs and cultural ideas, overlapping one after another which compose of different dialogic units. Each layer gives a different meaning from the others, which form a unique conversation.³ Lepcha *Bongthings*, besides being the spiritual experts, contain the vast medicinal knowledge which helps them to cure every illness with proper therapy and through the descriptive method.⁴ In the present time, the Lepchas are either Buddhist or Christians. The original religion of the Lepchas is the *Munism* and *Bongthingism*. However, due to the gradual changes in their religion, we do not find many of the Lepchas holding to their original faith, apart from few in the interior who still practice this religion side by side with the Lamaist Buddhism.⁵ J. D. Hooker, believes, "the Lepchas profess no religion, though

¹ (The children of the snowy peaks, children of God -*Mu* is *Ithbu-mu*, *Rong* is snowy peak, *Kup* is children and *Rum* is God or good spirit), Yishey Doma, *Faith Healers of Sikkim: Traditions, Legends, and Rituals*, Trysts & Traces (For Information & Public Relations Department), Government of Sikkim, Haryana, 2018, p. 71

² Ibid.

³ Davide Torri, In the Shadow of the Devil: Traditional Patterns of Lepchas Culture Reinterpreted, in Fabrizio M. Ferrari (ed.), *Health and Religious Rituals in South Asia*, Routledge, New York, 2011, p. 153.

⁴ Ibid, p. 154.

⁵ D. T. Tamlong, *Mayel Lyang, and The Lepchas*, Amina Tamlong Publication, Darjeeling, 2008, pp. 39-40.

acknowledging the existence of good and bad spirits. To the good, they pay no heed. Every tribe has a priest-doctor; he neither knows nor attempts to practice the healing art, but is a pure exorcist; all bodily ailments being deemed the operations of devils, who are cast out by prayers and invocations”.⁶ The above statement ‘neither knows nor attempts to practice the healing art’ of J. D. Hooker’s on tribe is unable to accept because the tribe Lepchas do have the knowledge of healing practices not only through the spiritual manner but also through the use of medicinal herbs. Keshab C. Pradhan, writes “There are numerous herbalists in the villages across the state, especially among the ethnic communities. But the *Bongthings* among the Lepchas have a mass of knowledge in herbs”.⁷ The *Bongthings* and the *Muns* are the folk healers of Lepcha society.

2.1) *Bongthing* and Their Ritual Practices

The community of Lepcha people is well built with priestly class, and for every ritual and ceremony they have their separate priest known as "*Bongthing*". For every problem from failing of crops to the spread of any kind of diseases related to the sickness and illness, *Bongthing* is summoned to determine the actual cause of the problem. The *Bongthing* on his part to diagnose the cause of illness, ask for animals or birds to sacrifice according to one’s capacity and the people on their part, present animals and birds like buffaloes, bullocks, pigs, etc. for the ritual. Then, the *Bongthing* will determine the cause of the problem and imply required measured to pacify the rage spirits of demons. Sometimes he determines the cause of illness by just using an egg and examined its yolk if the person is financially low. If the *Bongthing* is supplied with needed sacrificial

⁶ J. D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals*, Vol. I, John Murray Publication, London, 1854, p. 135.

⁷ Keshab C. Pradhan, *The life and Times of a Plants man in the Sikkim Himalayas: A Memoir*, K. C. Pradhan, Tadong, 2008, p. 184.

materials, then only he will be able to diagnose every sickness from stomach-ache to the crop failure.⁸



Fig. 2.1: Use of snake bone in the healing ritual by the *Bongthing*

Concerning *Bongthing* and *Mun*, people mostly invite *Bongthing* for all the problems not only related to the illness but also for performing ceremonial rituals. The Lepchas believe that the demons or the *Mungs* make them suffer from sickness and bring all the problems in one's life. They believe that the *Bongthings* are assigned by Mother Goddess to counter all the problems of Her creation and also to appease the demons by performing necessary rituals and sacrifices. *Bongthing* is also seen as a mediator between the human and demons as well as humans and gods. Apart from ritual practices and sacrifices, he is also attributed to many other works as a medicine

⁸ David Macdonald, *Twenty years in Tibet*, Pilgrims Publishing, New Delhi, 2005, pp. 258-59.

man, spiritualists, preacher, psychiatrist, etc., which makes him indispensable in his society. As similar to *Muns*, *Bongthing* is also categorized into many sub-groups according to their level of knowledge and performing rituals practices or *Rum Chat*. The lesser *Bongthings* are mainly involved in primary services. Once they know about their capability, they mainly restrict themselves to official work like harvest offerings, devoting the god of hunting, or by pacifying the demons of envy, jealousy which is known as ‘*Sugihat*’ and other related works. Among all the *Bongthing*, the superior one is known as ‘*Zor-Bongthing*’ who is much more respected but at the same time they are not to be annoyed or else they can also cause harm to others by using their special power. It is also believed that the ‘*Zor-Bongthings*’ do not interfere with each other works, if they did, it can cause to large-scale conflict or can also lead to their whole family extinct.⁹

The different ritual's practices performed by *Bongthings*-

- 1) The rituals which are conducted for the betterment of the entire village community are mentioned below.
 - i. *Chirim*: This ritual is performed in praise of their guardian mountain deity *Kongchen Kongchlo* (Khangchendzonga) as well as other smaller summits and holy lakes every year before the rainy season, collectively by the 14 houses in the village of Lingko in Dzongu. A sacred space is made in the forest of Lingko on a big rock to win the favour of their guardian deity to stop sickness like fever and dysentery, which are usual throughout the monsoon season. Every house brings a small basket full of offerings from their lands which represent them and which is placed on a horizontal bamboo pole made at the top of the

⁹ A. R. Foning, *Lepcha My Vanishing Tribe*, Chyu Pandi Farm Publication, First Published in 1987, Second Edition 2003, West Bengal, pp. 79-80.

sacred space. Apart from this offering, they even bring chicken for sacrifice at the event of the worshipping the sacred space.¹⁰

- ii. *Lyang dik rum fat*: The performance of this ritual is mainly done for the divine being of low lands to protect the people from falling sick during the rainy season and sent them back to their abode.¹¹
- iii. *Tyak dum*: The ritual performance on *tyak dum* or protector of the house is conducted at the time when a *Bongthing* diagnosis that the cause behind the illness of the family member is caused by *tyak dum*. This could occur when the *tyak dum* is displeased by the family members of the house.¹²
- iv. *Lyang it nikung* (grandmother's birthplace): This preventive divine is mainly a female and comes from the birthplace and *putso* (clan) of women's house. It is believed that the work of this deity is to protect but when a girl married, the deity goes along with her and can also cause difficulty and sickness to the groom's house. This problem can be solved only after the *Bongthing* diagnoses the cause and when he calms the deity with the proper religious presentation.¹³
- v. *Sum doue* (to collect lost soul): This ritual is to show the right path to the 'lost souls' of the dead who are troubling the humans. The *Bongthing* on his part to protect the humans, either, demolish the lost soul with the assistance of his helping-spirit called *Chiang* or use the same lost soul as a helping-spirit.¹⁴

2) The Lingko *Bongthing* yearly performed private healing rituals:

¹⁰ Anna Balikci-Denjongpa (ed.), The Lepchas Padim of Lingko, Dzongu, North Sikkim, *Bulletin of Tibetology*, Volume 46, Number 1, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok, 2010, p. 126.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 128.

¹² Ibid, pp. 129-30.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

- i. *Sugileot*: This religious rite of Lingko *Bongthing* is conducted at the end month of the year. This ritual is performed as a self-ritual in the sacred room of the *Bongthing* house for three days. In is a ritual performance of the village as a whole where food is also prepared for all the villagers. This ritual is witnessed by the *Bongthing's* cousins, Lingko villagers as well as people from the nearby villages who provide financial or other necessary materials according to their wish. The sole intention of this ritual is to call and thanked his personal deities for rendering their regular help for the whole year and also sending them to their respective dwelling places during the early winter. He again invites them back during the spring season with the *Tokpo bur* ritual. The items offered during this ritual are dry fish, ginger, dry bird, grain, butter lamps and the silk scarfs '*khadas*'. The people who are gathered for the ritual also offer cash. All these things are placed on the banana leaf '*lafit*' in front of the *Bongthing* for the sanctification. The *Bongthing* invites the three deities for the said ritual, they are - a) deity belonging to lowlands, b) deity of highlands and lastly c) the *Bongthing* personal deity, '*Pum rum*' inherited from his forefathers. Every deity is provided with the line of flowers as a mark of respect. This ritual practice has to be performed for about three consecutive nights. In the course of the ritual performance especially during the third night, *Bongthing* gets hold by his '*Pum rum*' and it is believed that, in the third night the plates of ginger, medicinal plants, and fermented rice will be blessed by '*Pum rum*'. These blessed items are distributed to the people as a healing substance. In the end, the *Bongthing* blows healing mantras on every person and to the little children who are thought to be liable to get the harmful effect of the *Mung*. He then tries to chase away the harmful spirit of the *Mung* all over the house. Similarly, he frequently blows on every material around them to send the evil spirit away or sometimes

try to chase the evil spirit outside the house by throwing some pieces of offering outside the window. Apart from evil spirits, there is also a good spirit which helped the *Bongthing* to protect the door of the sacred room, and in return, *Bongthing* provides some particular offerings for them. Close to the offering place of the *Bongthing*, he keeps his knife so that it can guard the offerings while he frequently leaves the room. When the blessing and healing rituals gets over, he along with his personal deity 'Pum rum' chants the *Mun* ritual continually for the whole night.¹⁵

- ii. *Tokpo bur*: This ritual is performed again in the *Bongthing* house to call his deity back during the spring. These is a single day ritual, and all the local villagers are invited again to receives the blessing of deity by chanting the healing mantras and providing the healing items.¹⁶

2.2) *Mun* and Their Ritual Practices

The Lepcha people of Sikkim pay their equal respect and dignity to the *Mun* alike *Bongthing*. The *Mun* also consists of equal power like *Bongthing* or mostly considered more powerful than *Bongthing*. Yishey Doma mentions that there are six different types of *Muns* that exist in the Lepcha society but J. R. Subba has mentioned seven different types of *Muns* viz. a) *Avore-Mun*, b) *Pildon-Mun*, c) *Tangli-Mun*, d) *Mun-Jyum-Mun*, e) *Anngan-Mun*, f) *Aur-Mur-Mun*, and g) *Lyang-Ith-Mun*.¹⁷ During the ritual healing practices, they produce a tune, which sounds similar to the friction of the bamboos. There are many tunes which are called *Heet-Sat*, *Tro-Kinto-*

¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 130-31.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 132.

¹⁷ J. R. Subba, *History, Culture and Customs of Sikkim*, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 2008, p. 260.

Sat, *Apil Dan-Sat*, and *Pok-Sat*. The tunes which are produced by *Mun* are not high but it is similar to that of the hummingbirds or the sound of a bumblebee.¹⁸

After becoming a *Mun* when he or she is possessed by deities or spirits and finds out the instant reason behind the illness, the *Mun* demands the required items to be collected for the rituals. These items sometimes are just exhibited to please the deities and sometimes are included with the consumable items like *Chi*, ginger, dried bird and dried fish. Following the ritual, these items are kept in a secluded place for the animals to eat or are consumed by the people gathered there. While performing the ritual, at first, the animals are presented alive to all the spirits and the deities. Then after the animal will be sacrificed by local persons and the meats are distributed among themselves. Some parts of the sacrificed animal-like lungs, liver, heart (*sha-fot*) are cooked with rice, and offered it to the evil spirits and rest of the parts like, head, one fore-leg, and one hind-leg (*gazook*) are offered to the devils who are assumed to be present in the ceremony. The remaining sacrificed meat is cooked for the people, and a portion is offered to the *Mun* as payment. Mostly, she takes four hours to pray because of which the peoples who attend the rituals do not stay there for the whole time. During the day time ritual, when the weather is good, the *Mun* prefers to perform his or her ritual far from the house so that he or she is not disturbed.¹⁹

The *Muns* of higher rank (*Pildon Mun*) can carry out the after-death ceremony, i.e., *Sanglyon* ceremony and guide the spirits to the heaven or *Rum Lyang*. These *Muns* while guiding the spirits call open god/deity or his spirits, by take out a pleasant tune to get their assistance. The basic disparity in the prayers of the *Bongthing* and *Mun* is the harmonious tune. Few of the *Muns* wear ornaments made out of items like animal bones, claws, and fangs, beaks of birds, porcupine

¹⁸ Ibid, 261.

¹⁹ Geoffrey Gorer, *Himalayan Village: An Account of the Lepchas of Sikkim*, Pilgrims Publishing, New Delhi, 2005, p. 232.

quills, animal scales, etc., and the *Muns* who use these ornaments are known as *Tangbor* in the Lepchas language. According to A. R. Foning, in the frequent debate or belief, says "*Nyulik Mun* was the first *Mun* to receive the divine '*lung*', resulting from initiation and ordination by the *Bongthing* send down to earth by the Mother-Creator". It is believed that at the beginning of the ritual, *Bongthing* uses three leaves of the elephant grass to hand over the power provided by the Mother Goddess to the *Mun* because of this reason till date the use of the leaf of the elephant leaves is an important equipment for a *Mun* to perform any ritual practices. Apart from this good *Mun*'s, the Lepcha people also accept that some *Muns* take the wrong path with equal power. They delude their supreme power and become influential power in a harmful act. Their sole role or purpose is to spread illness, troubling people as well as death. Though there is no proper evidence of their wrongdoings, still there are people who strongly consider this type of *Mun* do exist and are known as "*Mum-Mook-Muns*".²⁰

The other kind of *Mun* is *Mun Jyum Mun*, whose work is also similar to that of the *Pildon Mun*, i.e., related to the spirits but not as powerful as in the case like *Pildon Mun*. When a *Mun* is in the process of becoming a *Mun*, one realizes the signal of '*Rum chat*' within self and also knows that the spirit is entering into their body. *Mun Jyum Mun* also practices the work of prediction, sacred rituals and deal with the illness by making use of roots, leaves, grains, etc., they are called by people when there occur minor problems.²¹

The third type of *Mun* is '*Tangli-Mun*'. Mostly their work is related to the recitation of *Lungten* tales in the weddings and death ceremonies. Few of them are also skillful in having medical knowledge and other related materials. This can be possible because '*Tangli-Muns*' work

²⁰ A. R. Foning, Op. cit., pp. 75-77.

²¹ Ibid, p. 78.

is not only related to the other ritual practices, but she/he gets engaged in the medicinal activity. Gradually, they have started developing themselves into the high rate of medicinal practitioners. At the time when the rest of the *Muns* were engaged mediating the prayer during morning and evenings.²²

2.3) Different Medicinal Practices of the Lepchas of Sikkim

The Lepcha community of Sikkim are not only restricted to the practices of spiritual healing but also contains vast knowledge on the locally available Medicinal usage. Likewise, according to H. H. Risley mentions in his work that, “the Lepchas, or as they call themselves, the *Rong-pa*...they are above all thing’s woodmen of the woods, knowing the ways of birds and beasts, and possessing an extensive zoological and botanical nomenclature of their own”.²³

2.3a) Folktales Related to the Origin of the Lepchas Knowledge of Medicinal Use

In the Lepcha *Mayel lyang* around five hundred years back, its neighbouring kingdom invaded it. Despite the Lepchas being not well equipped and less in number, they still fought courageously and did not let their foeman capture a piece of their land. The war went long and horrific. Many of them lost their lives, many were seriously injured, but the battle did not come to an end. As a consequence, there was a negative effect on the livelihood of the people. The situation became distressful due to the lack of rainfall, this led to the drought like situation. It was hard for them to get a meal for a day. The children were the worst sufferer along with the womenfolk and the older ones. As usual, one day, a boy and his grandfather went to search for the food in the jungle. It was difficult for them to find the food since all the plants had already withered. In this situation the animals also had migrated to other places. Still, the young boy and his grandfather

²² Ibid, p. 79.

²³ H. H. Risley, *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*, B. R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, Reprinted 2010, p. i.

searched for the food but found nothing. Back at their home their women folk and other children were waiting for the food, hoping that the grandfather and the young boy would bring something to eat. At this time, when they lost hope, a bird was watching from a distance and was feeling bad for them and then decided to help them. The bird took them to the big beehive. Both the grandfather and the young boy felt happy, and all their frustration and tiredness got melted away when the bird told them, it will help them to get the food. However, when the grandfather came to know about the food, i.e., beehive, he felt disheartened. He told the boy to be careful because “the honey on that hill, at this time of the year is highly poisonous. Our whole family will get wiped off if we have it”. The young boy felt frustrated and could not believe in their ill luck. The boy never felt like leaving that place where that beehive was, but his grandfather withdrew him away. Just after taking a few steps, they heard the movement of some big animals approaching nearer towards them. Quickly they hide behind the thick shrub. They saw it was a gigantic Himalayan bear. The only animal the Lepchas mostly remain to abstain is from a bear because they believe when a bear is in bad temper, it can even charge against the tiger. Hence, both the grandfather and the boy choose to stay behind the thick shrub.²⁴

The bear also got the smell of the beehive and following the smell; it reached there. The moment the bear reached the beehive, it started to drive the bees away with its hands. The bees were not able to sting the bear because of its thick hair. After the bear chased away the bees, it started to eat the honey in a large swallow.²⁵

"Grandpa" the boy called his grandfather.

²⁴ Vanya Jha and Ajeya Jha, *Ethno-Ornithology of Lepchas of Sikkim*, Readworthy Publication, New Delhi, 2012, pp. 59-60.

²⁵ Ibid.

The little boy was confused, "Would not the poison kill the bear?" he asked in a low tone.

His grandfather had no reply to his query. Grandpa signaled the boy and told him to stay calm and keep watching the bear. As the bear finished eating half of the honey from the beehive, the poison started to work in its body. The bear appeared disturbed and unstable. Immediately, it started to tremble and fall. By the time the bear finished eating the honey and was trying to go away, it could not able to reach so far.²⁶

The grandfather and the young boy could watch the bear falling badly. It started to tremble and fell on the ground. With a great force, the bear tried to lift itself upward and walked nearer to the specific shrub. And it trying to pull the leaves of a specific shrub and started to consume it. The duo was watching all this without making any sound, quietly. After some time, the bear sat on the ground to calm down. The sun was going down, and was becoming late still they waited and watched, as what will happens to the bear. However, after some time, the bear rose from the ground and it looked fine. Every sign of illness got vanished. The bear turned on the side where they were hiding and slowly went towards the downhill.²⁷

"Grandpa, let's go, the bear has gone", said the boy softly. "

Wait for a while son. The bear has given me an excellent idea. Perhaps our days of hardships are over now", replied the grandpa.

The grandpa started collecting those leaves which the bear had taken after consuming the poison. Then after, he started gathering the honey which was left by the bear. Both of them went home after carrying all this. Then, the grandpa started mixing honey with the leaves and fed it to

²⁶ Ibid,

²⁷ Ibid, p. 61.

his whole family. All the member was delighted with the food, and all became well another day. Afterwards, the grandpa started to find other new ways to cure the sickness. They discover a new method to fight the food crises as well. After that, the Lepchas concentrated on the war, and within no time, they were able to chase their enemy back. In the end, the Lepchas started to live in peace and harmony.²⁸

Puspashree Nayak stated, “The healer not only learns from his ancestors but also he tries to learn from the animals like dogs, cats, reptiles and wild animals that eat specific grasses, roots, and other plant parts to relieve pain, supplement diet, and help cure the diseases”.²⁹

Vanya Jha and Ajeya Jha in their work quoted that, “According to historian Mircea Elidae, for many traditional cultures nearly every sacred story qualifies as an origin myth. Traditional man tends to model his behaviour after sacred events... Scientists have recently introduced a new discipline called Zoo-Pharmacognosy, which is the study of the medicinal knowledge of animals. Thus, this story has a basic truth in it”.³⁰

2.3b) Use of Birds as Medicine by the Lepchas

The Lepchas also use birds as medicine, they are mainly grouped into two sections: 1) healing medicine and 2) pure medicine.³¹ The use of healing medicine as a bird is widespread among the Lepcha community. As we have mentioned earlier the Lepchas believe in the cause of every sickness is led by the evil beings- the *Mungs* and the sickness which causes the diseases in

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Puspashree Nayak, “*Folk Medicine and the Traditional Healers in Orissa: An Anthropological Study*”, Unpublished Ph. D Thesis, Department of Anthropology, Sambalpur University, 2010, p. 19, <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in>, accessed on 20.05.2019.

³⁰ Vanya Jha and Ajeya Jha, Op. cit., p. 62.

³¹ Ibid, p. 75.

children is attributed to the *Ka Su Lom Mung*.³² Likewise, the Lepchas for centuries have developed a fully sound system of medicines, founded based on various medicinal plants and a small number of animals and birds in use. For regaining the strength, a sick person is given boiled chicken and its soup. The females during their pregnancy period are also provided with a good portion of the chicken and chicken soup.³³ Apart from this, the birds are also used for the pure form of medicine, although this kind of medicinal practices are found very rarely, like for example-

- i. For the disease like orchitis, they use the flesh of wildfowl.
- ii. For backaches and spondylitis, they use the oil procured from great Indian hornbill.
- iii. For dog-bites, they use excreta of fowls and pigeons.
- iv. For paralysis, they use the flesh of pigeon.
- v. And for common weaknesses, soup of fowl is used.³⁴

2.3c) Use of Different Medicinal Plants and Animals' Part by the Lepchas of Sikkim

The Lepcha people of Sikkim contains a vast knowledge of medicinal use which they extracted from plants and parts of the animals to overpower the health-related difficulties, which we will discuss in the following lines.

Table. 2.1: List of Different Medicinal Plants Use by the Lepchas

Sl. No	Scientific name	Local name	Health problem	Uses
1.	<i>Swertia chirata</i> <i>haiu</i>	<i>Rungkyen</i>	For <i>sujong-ro</i> (high fever)	The whole part of the plant is used as medicine. A few pieces of <i>Rungkyen</i>

³² Ibid, p. 76.

³³ Ibid, p. 77.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 78.

				are soaked in water. Later, the water is consumed.
2.	<i>Curcuma aromatic Salish</i>	<i>Selek</i>	For <i>tobok doak</i> (stomach pain) and <i>mik-sor</i> (evil eyes)	Rhizomes are consumed.
3.	<i>Eupatorium cannabinum Linn</i>	<i>Nam nongmuk</i>	For healing <i>mo</i> (wound) and <i>numar-v</i> (nose bleeding).	Leaves are to be rubbed first, then apply over the wound, and put inside the nostrils in case.
4.	<i>Heracleum wallichii</i>	<i>Syamben</i>	For <i>tobok doak</i> (stomach pain).	The dried fruits are chewed.
5.	<i>Artemisia vulgaris Linn</i>	<i>Tiknyel</i>	For control of <i>numar-v</i> (nose bleeding) and bleeding in case of injury and for skin disease.	It is rubbed and put inside the nostril to stop nose bleeding. Besides, its root, the whole plants are rubbed in the skin to treat skin disease.
6.		<i>Aepmu</i>	For <i>tobok doak</i> (stomach disorder) and <i>amot nung</i> (vomiting control).	Fruit consumed.
7.	<i>Tupistra nutans wall</i>	<i>Parvek</i>	For diabetics.	The flowers are cook as curry.
8.	<i>Zinziber officinale Rose</i>	<i>Heng</i>	For <i>tobok doak</i> (stomach disorder) and <i>amot nung</i> (vomiting control)	The root is consumed.
9.	<i>Ammomum Subulatum</i>	<i>Lenji</i>	For <i>tobok doak</i> (stomach pain)	Seeds are chewed.

10.	<i>Carica papaya</i> <i>Linn</i>	<i>Mayaa paot</i>	For Jaundice.	The fruit is consumed.
11.		<i>Peju kung</i>	For <i>muzu doak</i> (body ache).	Taking bath with the boiled water with barks and Leaves cure.
12.	<i>Acours calamus</i> <i>Linn</i>	<i>Ruklop</i>	For <i>sujung ro</i> (fever) and <i>vyang shyong</i> (infection).	Roots are consumed.
13.	<i>Cannabis</i>	<i>Ghaja</i>	For health problems related to cow, goat, and pig.	Juice of leaves is given to animals.
14.		<i>Timg bum</i> <i>chilaok</i>	For <i>athyak doak</i> (headache), <i>afo doak</i> (toothache) and sinusitis.	Juice of the root is used.
15.	<i>Oroxylum indicum</i> <i>vent.</i>	<i>Phaago Koong</i>	For <i>sukdaek adaok</i> (throat pain) and typhoid.	The seeds are consumed
16.		<i>Tingsik muk</i>	For curing <i>mo</i> (wound)	Root along with some soil attach on it is applied overwound.
17.	<i>Hydrocotyle</i> <i>asiatica Linn</i>	<i>Sugee</i> <i>muk/Kahley</i> <i>Nyaok</i>	For <i>sukdaek adaok</i> (throat pain)	Leaves are consumed.
18.		<i>Sugor sa</i> <i>banmara</i>	For <i>neeng</i> (poisoning)	The whole plant is used as medicine.
19.		<i>Ribum</i>	For <i>neeng</i> (poisoning)	The root is used as medicine.
20.		<i>Tungtok</i>	For <i>sukdaek adaok</i> (throat pain) and <i>muzuadaok</i> (body ache).	The tuber is consumed.

21.		<i>Turjyor Muk</i>	For problems related to <i>mik</i> (eyes)	The stem of these plants has medicinal properties.
22.		<i>Sungtuk</i>	For <i>neeng</i> (poisoning)	The root is consumed.
23.		<i>Nokhrul poth</i>	For <i>tobok daok</i> (stomach pain).	Fruits are consumed.
24.		<i>Kuzoo kung</i>	For curing <i>Telim</i> (Measles)	Bag of the roots of nettle plant <i>Kuzoo kung</i> . Use by <i>Bongthing</i> Kaloo Aju for curing Measles <i>Telim</i> .

Sources: Tenzing Zangmu Lepcha, *Health care practices in rural Sikkim: A Case Study Among Lepchas of Bakcha and Chojo Villages*, Unpublished M. Phil Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, Sikkim University, 2018, pp. 73-77, 87-90.

Apart from many medicinal plants use by the Lepchas of Sikkim to cure different health related problems, they even use some parts of animals to cure the illness and diseases. If someone suffers from mushroom poison, they use deer's skin (*Suku-kompu*). If someone suffers from high fever, they use monkey's flesh (*Suhu-maon*). For the sickness related to the breathing problem or asthma, they use the flesh of the fox (*Homu-maon*). The bear appendix (*Sinaha-khepu*) is use for curing Tuberculosis and swelling. For disease like diabetics they use *Chyakmong-fo*. For measles they use the fat of pork, even its blood or its meat. They use honey of stingless bees (*Aithu*), for problems related to diphtheria.³⁵

Lastly, they use toad (*Tuthyuk*) to heal the wound (*mo*) or even for diarrhea (*etshya*) and also for diabetics. However, while consuming this, a person needs to be extra careful so that he

³⁵ Ibid, p. 67.

/she does not intake the poisonous part of the toad body. They usually chop off the head where the poison lies and after that, they boil the meat and drink its soup. Similarly, in frogs like (*lupok taluk*)- the meat of this frog is consumed for many purposes like for example for the swollen body, tuberculosis as well as for many other health-related issues.³⁶

2.4) Importance Of ‘Sadaer Long’ and Chi for Both the Healing Rituals and Medicinal Use by The Lepchas

The importance of ‘*Sadaer Long*’ and *Chi* in the lives of the Lepchas is considered as the most important items because these not only help them in healing rituals but are also useful as a medicine. And they considered these items very sacred which, according to them, have been sent as a blessing by their Mother Goddess.

2.4a) ‘Sadaer Long’

Every Lepcha family believe that they must have ‘*Sadaer Long*’ in their houses. They even go to the extent in saying that those who do not possess this, is not a perfect house. They have a firm faith that ‘*Sadaer Long*’ is sent to them as a blessing from the Thunder God and occasionally as a punishment to them. The primary function of ‘*Sadaer Long*’ is to protect the house from the lightening or the great anger of the Thunder God. Apart from this, it will also protect the house from the evil spirits, and they regard ‘*Sadaer Long*’ as divine and sacred. There are different shapes and sizes of the ‘*Sadaer Long*’ but are mainly constitute of hard black stones. Some of these stones are cream in color and are known as ‘females’, and the black stones the ‘males.’ Those houses which owns both are said to be blessed in two ways. Apart from these, there are also some stones

³⁶ Ibid, p. 85.

which are of different types and values. These stones can also be worn around the neck or in hammocks of infant child, so that it can guard them against the evil spirits and devils.³⁷

These stones are also used as a medicine and amulets or talisman by the Lepchas. In problems related to pneumonia, mumps, gangrene, gout, or other diseases caused by the sun, these stones are used as medicines in various ways. The cattle are also treated with these stones. For mostly all the problems related to the pain-sensitive areas, mumps, or external ailments it can be used by the collision of two hard stone along with a drop of water and a paste or glue is made which is put upon the infected areas. Similarly, for internal problems this paste or glue is mixed with water and make the sick person drink. The same treatment will be applied to the animals as well.³⁸

2.4b) *Chi*

The Lepchas commonly used the term *Chi*, for the millet beer. It is also known with other names like *Kumya Mon*, which means (medicine for lightheartedness). During the ritual performance, they term it as *Chetshuk*, obtain from *Chet* 'power, strength; or *Numfyengmu*, where it considered *a'fyeng*, as a specific smell of *Chi*. The *Chi* is mostly prepared with millet. However, if the millet is not obtainable then it can also be made with other grains as well.³⁹ Millet is also prepared like rice in a large vessel after washing it. After it is thoroughly cooked, it is put into the bamboo mat which again is spread over the leaves of various plants like banana or the sheet of polythene. Then it is mixed with the yeast cake or fermented powder which is known in Lepcha as (*bât*) before the millet gets cold. When this process is completed it is put inside the bamboo

³⁷ A. R. Foning, Op. cit., pp. 29-32.

³⁸ Ibid, pp. 33-35.

³⁹ Heleen Plaisier, Tales of Lepcha *Ci*, The Traditional Medicine for Lightheartedness, in Anna Balikci-Denjongpa and Alex McKay (ed.), *Buddhist Himalaya: Studies in Religion, History, and Culture*, Volume II, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok, 2011, p. 283.

basket or tin, which should be kept in an airtight manner while covering its side portion by the banana leaves or also with polythene. When this process is over, the whole basket or tin is kept as it is for at least three days in a room without opening it, so that the fermented process can take place. *Chi* can be used after three days or so, but if it is kept for a longer time, more it will be effective.⁴⁰

2.4b.i) *Chi* as A Medicinal Use and Ritual Practices



Fig. 2.2: Use of *Chi* as a medicine

Chi, the millet beer of the Lepchas is not only taken as an alcoholic drink, but they also believe that it also consists of nutritional and medicinal benefits. Therefore, the term '*Chizom*', which comprises the word *azom* meaning 'food, cooked rice'. It is also believed that *Chi* is mainly used to protect oneself from the cold and to provide strength to the women after giving birth to a child. It is because of having high calory of properties which contribute the body to gain the strength back. *Chi* which is provided to women after giving birth to a child is called '*Dyamci*'. The

⁴⁰ D. T. Tamlong, Op. cit., pp. 156-58.

word *Dyam* means to 'soothe' or 'profit'. *Chi* which is presented to the *Rum* 'god, is directed as '*Ci fat*'. It is observed that during the traditional recitation of the Lepcha stories that in every problem caused by the evil spirit *Chi* provides the solution. And the Lepchas know the benefits and negative impact of the *Chi*, for which they say 'if one knows how to drink *Chi*, it is medicinal. If one does not know how to drink *Chi*, it is poisonous'.⁴¹

2.5) Interviewed with *Bongthings* and *Muns*

The Researcher interviewed some of the *Bongthings* of Sikkim and found out that the majority of the Lepchas do not recognize the works of *Bongthings*. They think that most of the people have started referring to their works and their medicinal knowledge and practices as outdated and do not believe in it. The names of the interviewed *Bongthings* are as follows, a) *Bongthing* Tshering Lepcha, b) *Bongthing* Dukda Lepcha, c) *Bongthing* Dawa Tshering Lepcha, d) *Mun* Penday Lepcha and e) *Mun* Lakhi Lepcha.

Bongthing Tshering Lepcha, has provided many pieces of information's about their ritual's practices and the medicinal uses. He is a *Bongthing* from Hee Gyathang lower Dzongu.

⁴¹ Anna Balikci Denjongpa and Alex McKay (ed.), Op. cit., pp. 283-85.



Fig. 2.3: *Bongthing* Tshering Lepcha, from Hee Gyathang

He narrated that at the age of twenty-two years, he became *Bongthing* and had to sacrifice a hen to his deity. From his forefather, all of them were *Bongthings*, and these family traditions is known as (*Alet*) in Lepcha language. According to him, it was *Bongthing* who was first sent by the Mother Goddess *Ithbumu* to look after her creation.⁴²

Moreover, among the *Muns*, he stated that *Pildon Mun* is considered more superior than *Nyulik Nyosong Mun* because *Pildon Mun* deals with the deity related to landslide and also protect the souls. He stated that both the *Mun* and the *Bongthing* use similar material in order to perform the ritual practices likes banana leaf, ginger, local fish (*Mumo-muyang*), birds (*Sumdey-Sumthok*), fruits (*Thampot*), flowers (*rip*). He also says that the most essential items are *Chi Sunkyo*, *Chi-Kyob*, *Chi-byu*, etc., without which the performance of rituals is not possible. He adds that the only

⁴² Interviewed Tshering Lepcha (*Bongthing*), (M), 53 years, Hee Gyathang, North Sikkim, on 03.08.2019.

difference between the *Mun* and the *Bongthing* is the way they chant the mantras. Though all the Lepchas follow similar ritual practices all over the places there is little difference in their way of performing rituals during the worship of their local deity. The local deity which *Bongthing* Tshering worship is called '*Phalo*'.⁴³

Similarly, every clan has its local deity to worship, which is called '*Lungzey-Lunglong*'. Furthermore, while performing rituals they wear their traditional dress called *Thokro*, *Gyado*, etc., but the most important part of their dress is hat which is called '*Sumok-Thyaktuk*' because they believe that the power of the *Bongthing* lies in their hat.⁴⁴

He is not only a Lepcha priest but also a folk healer. He provides medicines to the sick. He usually provides medicines for food poisoning, diarrhoea, throat pain, and other common sicknesses. He mentions that for every illness there is a solution and for every sickness, they have remedial medicines which they get from their surroundings.⁴⁵ Similarly, there is an incident of food poisoning mentioned by Tenzing Zangmu Lepcha in her work which stated:

“Mrs. Sangkit Lepcha wife of *bongthing* cum herbalist Phumzay Ajyu of Chojo village informed that once she was poisoned for which initially, she did not have an idea and went to hospital for treatment but the biomedicines did not cure her. Thus, she later tried local medicine which gave her the positive result. She shared that she had headache, heartache, stomach pain and diarrhoea. It was informed by Ajyu Phumzay and his wife that if one got poison in tea then a person will dislike tea. It is similar with other things. It is said that the poison won't work in hot water. Thus, one person whom I met out of the field told me that whenever he goes to some doubtful places, he tries to drink tea as hot as he can. Further Ajyu Phumzay added that a poison can also be present at the door of poison giver's house. In both Bakcha and Chojo villages, people fear to visit some of the houses. The people of

⁴³ Interviewed Tshering Lepcha (*Bongthing*), (M), 53 years, Hee Gyathang, North Sikkim, on 03.08.2019.

⁴⁴ Interviewed Tshering Lepcha (*Bongthing*), (M), 53 years, Hee Gyathang, North Sikkim, on 03.08.2019.

⁴⁵ Interviewed Tshering Lepcha (*Bongthing*), (M), 53 years, Hee Gyathang, North Sikkim, on 03.08.2019.

both Bakcha and Chojo village wholly rely on traditional health care system for *neeng* (food poisoning). These are various medicinal plants which are used by the Lepchas of both villages. Some of these plants are *Sugor sa Banmara*, *Ribum* and *Bikmar*. *Sugor sa Banmara* and *Ribum* are found and use in Chojo village by Phumzay Aju and *Bikmar* is use by Lepchas of both areas but is not available in their areas. One can get it from market that is sold by herbalists. Besides it there are people like *bongthing* Aju Sangay and Aju Phumzay who prepare holy water having medicinal properties in it”.⁴⁶

Apart from *Mun* and *Bongthing* the Lepchas have their separate medicinal practitioners (*Tyampon*) also, who mainly deals with the problems related to the major injuries like, bone-related cases, skin, etc. According to *Bongthing* Tshering he feels that rather than taking a patient to a hospital they should be treated with the local medicine which is more effective and does not contain any side effects.⁴⁷ After talking to many Lepcha folk healers, they believe that “In certain cases, especially when the patient is suffering from their initial phase of becoming a *Mun* or a *Bongthing* they should not be given an injection because it can complicate the situation more or even can led to death. And even for other health related problems before treating a patient, they should be diagnosed first whether the patient is suffering from *Mung* spirit (evil spirit) or not and accordingly they should be treated”.^{48 49 50 51}

⁴⁶ Tenzing Zangmu Lepcha, Op. cit., p. 59.

⁴⁷ Interviewed Tshering Lepcha (*Bongthing*), (M), 53 years, Hee Gyathang, North Sikkim, on 03.08.2019.

⁴⁸ Interviewed Tshering Lepcha (*Bongthing*), (M), 53 years, Hee Gyathang, North Sikkim, on 03.08.2019.

⁴⁹ Interviewed Dawa Tshering Lepcha, (*Bongthing*), (M), 39 years, Rey Mendu, East Sikkim, on 09.12.19.

⁵⁰ Interviewed Penday Lepcha, (*Mun*), (F), 40 years, Rey Mendu, East Sikkim, on 09.12.19.

⁵¹ Interviewed Dukda Lepcha, (*Bongthing*), (M), 75 years, Rey Mendu, East Sikkim, on 09.12.19.



Fig. 2.4: *Bongthing* Dukda Lepcha, from Rey Mendu



Fig. 2.5: *Mun* Lakhi Lepcha (on left) and *Mun* Dawa Phuti Lepcha (on right), from Rey Mendu.

Regarding the question relating to the decreasing number of the *Bongthings* and *Muns* is concerned as compared to earlier times, all the Lepcha folk healers stated that ‘when someone is chosen as the *Bongthing* or *Mun* by the deity, they should not ignore it, if they do; the spirit of the previous *Bongthing* and *Mun* will get disappear’ and since, mostly today, people do not believe in

the supernatural spirits and folk healing practices. It is felt that these folk healers are being derecognised in their society. These folk healers opined that it is because of the opening of the dispensaries and hospitals in their locality they are being derecognised by most of the people.^{52 53}

⁵⁴ Dukda Lepcha mentions that when his father was a *Bongthing* all the people in an around used to visit him for the treatment of various sickness. However, the time he became *Bongthing*, he witnessed a decrease in the numbers of their followers, particularly when a dispensary was constructed in his locality. People started to visit more in the dispensaries, hospitals and give less importance to them.⁵⁵

Lastly, to conclude we can understand that the Lepchas are the original inhabitant of Sikkim. From the time immemorial they have their own system of healing practices and medicinal knowledge, which they passed on from their forefather through oral means. *Bongthing* and *Mun* plays an important role in their society to cure different health-related issues. Many works related to the folk healing and medicinal knowledge system of Sikkim, mentions about the faith healers among the Lepchas have a mass of knowledge in the use of medicinal plants to cure different illness and sickness. However, gradually these knowledge systems of the Lepchas started to disappear, especially when the British introduced their modern medicine/biomedical system and modern education system in Sikkim and looked upon the folk healing practices as barbaric and superstitious.

⁵² Interviewed Tshering Lepcha (*Bongthing*), (M), 53 years, Hee Gyathang, North Sikkim, on 03.08.2019.

⁵³ Interviewed Dukda Lepcha, (*Bongthing*), (M), 75 years, Rey Mendu, East Sikkim, on 09.12.19.

⁵⁴ Interviewed Lakhi Lepcha, (*Mun*), (F), 42 years, Rey Mendu, East Sikkim, on 09.12.19.

⁵⁵ Interviewed Dukda Lepcha, (*Bongthing*), (M), 75 years, Rey Mendu, East Sikkim, on 09.12.19.

CHAPTER – III

THE BON AND HEALING PRACTICES OF THE BHUTIAS IN SIKKIM

The Bhutias are one of the important communities in Sikkim who have their unique history and culture. To find their history, culture and particularly Bon and healing practices in Sikkim, we need to trace it back to the history of Tibet. Many scholars have worked on the Bon religion of Tibet and have provided much information's which sometimes differ with each other. Bon generally means invocation. From time immemorial, the Bhutias have the traditional medicinal knowledge for every sickness and longevity, which started from pre-Buddhist Bon era of Tibetan History.¹ Ven. Rechung Rinpoche Jampel Kunzang writes “The earliest inhabitants we know of probably practiced the shamanism prevalent in the whole of Northern Asia. The Tibetan form of this was called Bon religion”.² Sudash Lama in his work quotes B. L. Bansal work, “Bon is the primitive native religion of Tibet, and it has in spite of the influence of Buddhism, preserved itself till the present day, albeit not in its original form...Bon was originally a cult of nature worship. It is said to have been widespread in inner Asia, China, East and West Turkestan, Manchuria, Mongolia, and the Tibetan plateau.”³ Bon religion that we find in Tibet is of three types. They are i) *Jola-Bon*, ii) *Khyar-Bon*, and iii) *Gyur-Bon*.⁴ Geoffrey Samuel has divided the existence of three Bon types into different time periods, i.e., i) *Jola Bon*- is basically the time between the early phase of Bon religion to the killing of the legendary king Gri-gum, ii) *Khyar-Bon*- from the death of Gri-gum to late eighth-century during the rule of king Khri-srong-Ide-btsan, and iii) *Gyur-Bon*- modern

¹ Tamdin Sither Bradley, *Principles of Tibetan Medicine*, New Age Books Publication, New Delhi, 2010, p. 1.

² Ven. Rechung Rinpoche Jampel Kunzang, *Tibetan Medicine*, Well Come Institute of the History of Medicine, London, 1973, p. 4.

³ Sudash Lama, *From Bon to Buddhism-Social and Cultural Changes of the Tamangs*, Unpublished Ph. D Thesis, Department of History, University of North Bengal, 2013, p. 135, <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in>, accessed on 12.09.2019.

⁴ Alaka Chattopadhyay (ed.), Sarat Chandra Das-*Tibetan Studies*, K. P. Bagchi & Company, Calcutta, 1984, p. 5.

religion of Bon practices of Bon-pos or mixed religion.⁵ He tries to explain these three phases by comparing with the practices of rNying-ma-pa and Nine ways of Bon, which is a sequence of the passage from *gZi brjid* (consist of 12 volumes and constitute the part of Bon-po *bKa' gyur*, where it is written about sTon-pa gShen-rab's, the real founder of Bon religion) .⁶ Following are the list of the names of the Nine Ways (*theg pa dgu*) in Bon and rNying-ma-pa.

Table. 3.1: Comparison of The Nine Ways (*theg pa dgu*) in Bon and rNying-ma-pa

Sl.no	Bon	rNying-ma-pa
	“Bon of Cause”	
1.	Divination, prediction, medical diagnosis	Sutra level 1
2.	Rituals to local gods and spirits	Sutra level 2
3.	Destructive rituals	Sutra level 3
4.	Death rituals	Tantra level 1
	“Bon of Effect”	
5.	Sutra level 1 (<i>dge bsnyen</i>)	Tantra level 2
6.	Sutra level 2 (<i>drang srong = dge slong</i>)	Tantra level 3
7.	Tantra level 1	Tantra level 4
8.	Tantra level 2	Tantra level 5
9.	rDzogs chen	rDzogs chen

Sources: Geoffrey Samuel, *Tantric Revisionings: New Understanding of Tibetan Buddhism and Indian Religion*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd, Delhi, 2005, p. 127.

⁵ Geoffrey Samuel, *Tantric Revisionings: New Understanding of Tibetan Buddhism and Indian Religion*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd, Delhi, 2005, pp. 123-24.

⁶ “...the purported birth of the founder of Bon, Ston pa Gshen rab, in the Indian Palaeolithic: 16,017 B.C.E-according to the 19th-century bonpo scholar Mkhan chen Nyima bstan dzin.” Henk Blezer, Kalsang Norbu Gurung and Saraju Rath, Where to Look for the Origin of Zhang-zhung-related Scripts, J. F. marc des Jardins (ed.), *The Journal of the International Association for Bon Research*, Inaugural issues Volume I, 2013, p. 100.

As mentions above, there is a two-division of nine ways of Bon, the 'Bon of cause' which consists of four parts, and the other five consist of 'Bon of effect'. As stated, the last five of the Bon, i.e., 'Bon of effect', represent a common function with that of rNying-ma-pa groups. The fifth level of 'Bon of effect' is a direction of *upāsaka (dge bsnyen)*. The sixth is a direction of a monk (*drang srong* in Bon nomenclature, corresponding to Buddhist *dge slong*). Similarly, the seventh and eighth level of 'Bon of effect' are equivalent to those of Tantric rituals. Lastly, the ninth level of Bon comprised of the Bon form of rDzog-chen teachings, similar to that of the ninth level of rNying-ma-pa rDzogs chen doctrines. Likewise, similar to the 'Bon of effect' the first four levels, i.e., 'Bon of Cause' though not clear and specific with rNying-ma-pa group but its rituals are shared by the rNying-ma-pa and other Tibetan Buddhist (*chos pa*) schools through practices obtain from Tantras.⁷ To explain it further Geoffrey Samuel quoted the work of Kvaerne, who stated thus, "...during the following centuries [after the collapse of the Tibetan kingdom] chos-pas as well as bon-po siddhas assimilated all they could of indigenous Tibetan religious beliefs and ...the ancient lha-chos, "sacred conversion," disappeared altogether as an independent institution."⁸

Geoffrey Samuel explains that the term used for Bon as an 'original' religion of Tibet by Western Tibetanists, 'nameless religion' by Rolf Stein, or 'folk religion' by Giuseppe Tucci or other Western scholars, are not appropriate because as mention in the above table there is some relation between the Nine Ways of Bon and rNying-ma-pa. It also evident that the Bon-pos and *chos pa* have adopted some of the practices of old Bon faith.⁹

⁷ Geoffrey Samuel, Op. cit., pp. 127-28.

⁸ Ibid, p. 131.

⁹ Ibid.

Therefore, Geoffrey Samuel tries to clarify, it is not possible to find the original religion of Tibet, i.e., old Bon faith by just referring to the present text related to the Bon-po religion, which is the mixture of Buddhist influences. And by just referring to it, will bring more problem rather than to find the solution. Hence, to find the original old Bon Tibetan religion, one needs to study in-depth historically, the Tibetan religious system and its relation with the Bon followers, rather than explaining it with the use of present Bon-po text.

3.1) Origin of The History of Bon

Samten G. Karmay tries to trace the history of Bon by translating a few important works which are related to historical importance. He translated *The Legs-bshad rin-po-chi'i mdzod dpyod-Idan dga'-ba' i-char* (the Precious Treasury of Good sayings, pleasant rain for the wise), which is identified as *bsTan-'byung* by the Bon-Po in their histories, *mDzod-lnga* (the Five Treasuries), i.e., a) *Bon-gyi Byung-khung ston-pa gtso-bo legs-bshad-mdzod* (the Treasury of Good sayings that fully reveals the origin of Bon), b) *Lung-rig-mdzod*, c) *sDe-snod-mdzod*, d) *dByings-rig-mdzod*, and e) *Nam-mkha'-mdzod*. All these works are written by Grub-dbang bKra shis rGyal-mtshan Dri-med sNying-po who was born in Shar-rdza, a district in Khams, in 1893 and died in 1935, and was also a strong believer in the teaching of rDzogs-pa chen-po (Great Perfection).¹⁰

These translated work of Samten G. Karmay has helped to trace the origin and history of Bon religion. It mentions that the Bon arrived in Tibet during the time of sTon-pa gShen-rab's, while he moved from 'Ol-mo lung-ring in sTag-gzig, entering by Zhang-zhung. Bon-pos also believe that Bon originated in 'Ol-mo lung-ring in sTag-gzig. Though this place cannot be

¹⁰ Samten G. Karmay, *The Treasury of Good Sayings: A Tibetan History of Bon*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd, Delhi, 2001, pp. xv-xvi.

identified exactly, Bon-pos suggest that this place is in the West direction. Some scholars assume this place to be in Persia. With the help of ‘*rGyal-rabs bon-gyi ’byung-gnas*’ and ‘*Legs-bshad-mdzod*’, it can be traced to the Mount gYung-drung dgu-brtsegs located at the middle of rivers flowing into four different paths. At the front there lies a lake Ma-phang, which is surrounded by other mountains like sPos-ri ngad-ldan and on the other side by Brag-phug rong-can. Samten G. Karmay tries to locate this place in Kailāsa. It is found that in front of Mount Kailāsa there lies a lake Ma-phang, a source for the rivers like Brahmaputra, Indus, Sutlej, and Karnali.¹¹ He further argues:

“It is possible that the tradition of Bon coming to Tibet from ’Ol-mo lung-ring in sTag-gzig may give us a clue to its geographical origins, but owing to the inconsistency among Bon-po authorities themselves, we can only talk of probability. The kind of agreement between independent historical sources, which provides the critical historian with firm fact, is not available in the case of Tibet before the seventh century. The first date that can be fixed with such certainty seems to be A.D. 649, the death of Srong-btsan sGam-po. Not only the dates but also the existence of most of the kings listed by Tibetan historians as having preceded Srong-btsan sGam-po are questioned by Western historian in view of the complete lack of convincing evidence.”¹²

Similarly, Geoffrey Samuel tries to relate Tibetan society with its connection with Indus Valley Civilization by linking through its linguistic issues, agriculture practices, religion, etc. Geoffrey Samuel tries to explain by referring the work of George van Driem saying that the linguistic family of Tibetan, Chinese, Newar, etc., belongs to the Bodic family. The Bodic family was a part of larger Tibeto-Burman or Sino-Tibetan language family, which was separated from the main group of Tibeto-Burman family in later period and is also considered as the second to the

¹¹ Ibid, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

¹² Ibid, p. xxxi.

language family of Indo-European. George van Driem with the help of archaeological records tries to trace the part of Tibeto-Burman language by separating and forming a new culture known as Mǎjiāyáo culture (3900-1700 B.C.E), which he considers as 'proto-Bodic', in the region of Eastern Gansu and other bordering parts of Qinghai and Ningxia.¹³ He has looked into the migration of these people into two different directions, i.e., one towards West of Gansu taking its route through inner-Asian trade route in the opposite side of the Himalayas and from the Northern Neolithic culture of Kashmir and Swat during 2700-1700 B.C. Another group migrated towards Southern region through Eastern and South-Eastern Tibet, and to the region of Bhutan and Sikkim.¹⁴

The further separation from the Himalayan sub-group of Bodic language led to the origination of Bodic sub-group, i.e., Manchad, Bunan, Kanauri, Newari, etc., who migrated into Eastward in the Southern direction of the Himalayas. From where one section migrated into the Southern region of Eastern and South-Eastern Tibet. He further says that Zhang-zhung language group was a part of the Himalayan sub-group. It must have reached Western Tibet during the middle of the third millennium B.C.E. Following this evidence, it can be said that there occurred a natural process of connection among the Tibetan Himalayan Plateau and other surrounding areas from 2500 B.C.E.¹⁵

On the other hand, according to van Driem he observed that though Northern or Kashmir Neolithic culture is contemporary to the culture of Indus Valley Integration Era, there was indeed a difference between the two culture, and technologically the former was far less advanced.¹⁶

¹³ Geoffrey Samuel, *Op. cit.*, p. 143.

¹⁴ Saul Mullard, *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History*, Rachna Books & Publications, Gangtok, 2019, p. 8.

¹⁵ Geoffrey Samuel, *Op. cit.*, pp. 143-144.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 144.

However, G. Samuel explains that in spite of these differences between the two there was an adequate amount of communication. He suggested:

“In such situations of culture contact, one would expect members of the less technologically advanced society to accept and adopt those features that make sense within their own cultural context and ecological adaptation, often transforming them in the process, while rejecting those that do not fit, much as the Tibetans at a later period were to select and transform elements from the Tantric Buddhism of India to develop their own unique form of Buddhism.”¹⁷

He traces the connection between the Indus Civilization with the Tibetan culture with the use of barrel-shaped carnelian beads (Tibetan *gzi* beads), as a trading commodity through these trade routes. Still there is a good market for these all over Tibet and are considered as greater worth which are used for preventive talismans. It is found that similar kinds of beads were also manufactured by Indus Valley artisans, who worked widely with these carnelian beads. However, these beads do not prove that there was a trading relationship between the Indus Civilization and Tibetan plateau. Still, the beads were traded into Tibet, via., Northern Neolithic or Kashmir trade. Similarly, other precious stones like Turquoise and coral were also traded into Tibet.¹⁸

Regarding agriculture, G. Samuel traced that in spite of the dependency of Neolithic technology by the Northern Neolithic culture they practice a fully elaborate method of farming. Related to this he quoted the work of Stacul which mentions thus “conclusive proof for early, well-developed double cropping...and for a well-balanced farm breeding system...which dates from the beginning of the second millennium B.C.” likewise those evidence of large stone-walled settlement in the upper Swat Valley, in connection with agriculture, grazing and possibly with the

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 147.

¹⁸ Ibid.

utilization of forest materials, also dates back to second millennium B.C.E. Though the Mǎjiāyáo culture was a millet producing farming culture. However, the Tibetan shifted to barley cultivation which was a more altitude resistant crop. This may be its connection with the Indus Valley people who practice barley cultivation.¹⁹

In relation to religion, he has tried to resemble the worship of animal deities with that of the Indus practice of animal deities and goddess cults with that of the Indus valley religion. For example, the depiction of the sacred pictures of animals like bulls, buffalos, etc., with the Tibetan worship of wild animals like yak, sheep, goat, donkey, etc., as well as the mountain deity. Although these animals in a traditional symbolic form in modern art and images are often visualized as the medium of ride for the deity but the essence of the deity itself view in the impression of animal, especially the yak '*lha'i g-yag*'²⁰. gNyan-chen thang-lha, a great significant deity of Central Tibetan kingdom and rTa-rgo rin-po-che, supreme guardian of the Zhang-zhung kingdom, are maintain apparent in this impression. Besides this, a godly yak (*the Srid-kyi g.yag-po dkar-po*) plays a crucial role in one of the specific forms of myth related to the theory of the origin of Bon. Apart from this, there lie other evidence of Tibetan rock-paintings in the impression of the animals, though it is not clear whether it is related to any divine form. He opines, "there has been considerable speculation regarding the role of goddesses in Indus Valley religion... might look at possible relationships between these and early Tibetan goddess-cults. Tibetan goddesses in more recent times have been associated mostly with lakes and with the earth more generally."²¹ For

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 148.

²⁰ "A typical Tibetan animal frequently used as a mount by deities of truly Tibetan origin is yak. Tibetan texts describe this *vahanas* as "a young yak bull", "the great black wild yak", "the white yak of the *lha*, from whose muzzle and nostrils a snow-storm is blowing", "the wild yak with nine horns", etc." René De Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet: The Cult and Iconography of the Tibetan Protective Deities*, Book Faith India, Delhi, First Reprint 1993, Second Reprint 1996, p. 14.

²¹ Geoffrey Samuel, Op. cit., p. 158.

example *srin-mo*, dPal-ldan lha-mo and Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo (dPal-ldans Bon-po corresponding). Similarly, Dang-ra rgyal-mo, the goddess of the lake which is in contact with Mount rTa-rgo.²²

R. S. Sharma writes "In Harappan numerous terracotta figurines of women have been found. In one figurine, a plant is shown growing out of the embryo of a woman. The image probably represents the goddess of earth and was intimately connected with the origin and growth of plants. The Harappan, therefore, looked upon the earth as a fertility goddess and worshipped her..."²³.

Then, as a whole, regarding religious practices of Indus Valley Civilization he further mentions that "...the inhabitants of the Indus region worshipped gods in the form of trees, animals, and human beings, but the gods were not placed in temples...Nor can we say anything about the religious beliefs of the Harappans without being able to read their script..."²⁴

Lastly, Geoffrey Samuel tried to find some connection between the Indus Valley Civilization and Tibetan Plateau with its relation with earlier Bon faith and its origin. However, more research is needed to come to the concrete conclusion on this debate.

3.2) History of Bhutias Migration in Sikkim and Its Relation to Bon

The history of the migration of Bhutias in Sikkim is a matter of controversy due to the lack of any authentic historical evidence but there lie many sources which though debatable still provide evidence which can at least put some light on the Bhutias settlement in Sikkim.

One of the important sources to trace back the history of the Bhutias in Sikkim is the work by Thutob Namgyal and Yeshay Dolma, i.e., 'History of Sikkim'. This book has traced the

²² Ibid, pp. 157-58.

²³ R. S. Sharma, *India's Ancient Past*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005, p. 82.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 83.

migration of Bhutia people from the coming of the Gye-Bum-Sar along with the eight tribes or *Beb-tsan-Gyat* who traced their royal lineage from Kham provinces of Tibet. It is also mentioned that there are other sources which say that the Bhutia family multiplied from Gye-Bum-Sar's three sons²⁵ and increased in number, i.e., *Beb-Tsan-Gyat* (the eight tribes of settlers), and the *Tong-due-ruzhis* (the four regiments of 1000 in each). Among the above two groups the four tribes of *Tong-due-ruzhis* identify as, a) Shangdarpa, b) Tse-chu-dar, c) Guru-Tashi, and d) Nyimagyalpo. Apart from these four tribes they also mention the name of one other tribe i.e., Lingserpa. But according to Anna Balikci she mentions thus 'Additionally, two satellite clans, the Yulthepa (Yul thon pa) and the Lingzepa (Gling mdzes pa) are said to be the descendants of Gye Bumsa's first and second sons, Kyaborab and Langmorab respectively.'²⁶ Similarly, Saul Mullard also stated that "...in typical Tibetan style, there are six clans within this initial division of the *Stong sde ru[s] bzhi*. These six clans are:

1. Yul [m] thon pa.
2. Gling gser [sa, zad, zer etc.] pa
3. Zhang dar pa
4. Tshes bcu dar
5. Nyim [nyi ma] rgyal pa
6. Guru bkra shis pa"²⁷

²⁵ 'Tradition relates that Gye Bumsa's three sons were named Kyabo-rab (sKya bo rab), Langmorab (gLang rmo rab), and Mitponrab (Mi dpon rab). The youngest son Mitponrab, who displayed the aptitude of a leader and succeeded his father, in turn, had four sons... These four grandsons of Gye Bumsa ...together form a superior descent group referred to as the Tongduruji (sTong 'du rus bzhi)'. Anna Balikci, *Lamas, Shamans and Ancestors: Village Religion in Sikkim*, Brill Publications, Leiden, 2008, p. 70.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Saul Mullard, Op. cit., p. 74

Among the *Beb-Tsan-Gyat* (eight tribes) who are considered as the lineage, got slowly detached from the *Tong-due-ruzhis* (four sons) the eight tribes are a) Bon-pos, b) Gonsarpas or Gantagputsos, c) Namtsangkors, d) Tagchung-dars, e) Kartsopas, f) Gyonto-pas g) Tsungyalpas and h) Topas and Dokhangpas. Bon-pos are again divided into five sub-division: - i) Bon-po-Nagdig, ii) Lhasung, iii) Wo-cha-Bon-pos, iv) Nabons, and v) Bonchung (Bonchung are considered to be the lineage of Gonsarpas Tribe).²⁸

The works of Thutob Namgyal and Yeshay Dolma, Anna Balikci, and Saul Mullard, have provided the names of the fourteen Bhutia tribes in Sikkim, but there arises a confusion regarding the two tribes. Accordingly, to the work of Thutob Namgyal and Yeshay Dolma in *Tong-due-ruzhis* they have mentions about five names of the tribe and nine names in the *Beb-Tsan-Gyat*. Which accordingly in the work of Anna Balikci she mentions the two separate tribes apart from four tribes of *Tong-due-ruzhis*, where she traces their lineage towards the first and second son of the Gye-Bum-Sar. Saul Mullard clarifies that in *Tong-due-ruzhis* there are a total of six clans rather than four or five in number. While comparing the names of all these fourteen tribes, two names of these tribes were conflicting, i.e., Tonpas which is included in the *Beb-Tsan-Gyat* by Thutob Namgyal and Yeshay Dolma and Yulthenpa (Yul thon pa) by Anna Balikci and Yul [m]thon pa by Saul Mullard. Since both, the work of Anna Balikci and Saul Mullard mention about the tribe Yulthenpa or Yul[m]thon pa, to the tribes of *Tong-due-ruzhis*. It might be considered as part of the *Tong-due-ruzhis* tribe. But the Tribe Tonpa, which does not match with later work of the two is problematic to accept as the Tribe which might have migrated to Sikkim because the term *Beb-*

²⁸ Thutob Namgyal and Yeshay Dolma, *History of Sikkim*, translated by Kazi Dousandup, Unpublished Work, n. p., 1908, section II, pp. 7-8.

Tsan-Gyat means eight tribes and the work of the former have mentions about nine tribes in *Beb-Tsan-Gyat*.

Therefore, we can trace that there are total 14 tribes, (in *Tong-due-ruzhis* we can trace six clans, four from of Mi-Pon-rab sons, i.e., 1)Shangdarpa, 2)Tse-chu-dar, 3)Guru-Tashi and 4)Nyimagyalpo, two from the sons of Kyaborab and Langmorab, i.e., 1)Yultheпа and 2)Lingzepa. In *Beb-Tsan-Gyat* there is a total of eight tribes which are as follows: - 1) Bon-pas, 2)Gonsarpas or Gantagputsos, 3)Namtsangkors, 4)Tagchung-dars, 5)Kartsopas, 6)Gyonto-pas, 7)Tsongyalpas and 8)Dokhangpas.) who are considered to be the first Bhutia tribes to settled in Sikkim.

3.2a) The Bon History in Sikkim

The migration of Bhutias in Sikkim dates back to the thirteen centuries. During this period, Buddhism had already influenced all over Tibet. The spread of Buddhism led the old Bon faith to absorbing its philosophical ideas. When Gye-Bum-Sar came to Sikkim he made a blood brotherhood treaty with the Lepcha chief Teg kong teg where they followed the common religious custom-like sacrificing of animals and taking oath of loyalty and faithfulness to one's duties, which was practiced in Tibetan Empire²⁹ and which was also strongly opposed²⁹ to Buddhism. And according to Anna Balikci "...the arrival of Tibetan Rinpoches in Sikkim following the Chinese takeover of their country in 1959, the transformation of the village's ritual practice continued following the influence of the 16th Karmapa who eliminate the practice of animal sacrifice in the village."³⁰ This mentions that the practice of animal sacrifice was followed in Sikkim particularly

²⁹ "Formerly in Tibet, as now in Sikkim, people used to kill animals to appease the wrath of evil spirit who were supposed to spread plaques and ride men or women. They were a terror to the people. Padma Sambhava abolished the system of animal sacrifice for which he substituted meal rice and cake sacrifices called Torma. This is the origin of Buddhism worship with flour cakes now so common in the Himalayan countries and Tibet." Alaka Chattopadhyaya, (ed.), Op. cit., p. 94.

³⁰ Anna Balikci, Op. cit., p. 59.

in North Sikkim until 1959 before the arrival of Tibetan Rinpoches in Sikkim. In a village called Tingchim in North Sikkim for every rite from individual to the village as a whole, they depend upon their shaman before the end of the 19th century. The Bhutias though they called themselves Buddhist had no Buddhist priest until 1910 writes Anna Balikci.³¹ We still can find Bon tribes in Sikkim, though many of them have adopted Buddhism or some follow a new system of Bon (*yungdrung* Bon). The presence of Bhutias in Sikkim and their old Bon religious Practices and customs helps one to understand that their coming to Sikkim is after the arrival of Buddhism in Tibet. Since, introduction of Buddhism led to the political turmoil and the persecution of old Bon faith in Tibet.³²

One of the possible evidence through which we can trace the Bon history in Sikkim and its migration period is - the closeness of the Bhutanese house of worship constructed by Tibetans for the subdued of a female demon or evil spirit of Tibet during the time of Tibetan empire, is to point out that the territory near to Sikkim was known to the people of Tibet in the contemporary time. Secondly, it is evident that some portion of Nepal was included in the Tibetan empire, they even take Tribute from the Pala king of Bengal, i.e., Harsha during the year 755 A.D. The Tibetans have also made the Chumbi valley an important center for the trans-Himalayans trade before their empire declined in the ninth century. This might can lead to the Tibetans moving through the region of Sikkim to reach Bengal. Accordingly, it is unlikely that the area of Sikkim which is located between the areas of Nepal, Bhutan, and Bengal, where there was greater sway of Tibetan was not a region of their influences or even possibility of their migration into this region. During the period when the Tibetan empire decline few numbers of officials and traders to keep away

³¹ Ibid, p. 9.

³² Saul Mullard, Op. cit., p. 76.

themselves from the political turmoil in Tibet might have settled in Sikkim. And along with them, they may have brought their ritual practices which was different from Buddhism. Buddhism was growing in Tibet and gradually reached Sikkim during the later period. According to H. H. Risley “Lamaism or Tibetan Buddhism is the State religion of Sikkim...entering the country about two and half centuries ago...”.³³ Now, apart from the above shreds of evidence, there is also other evidence that can also provide the migration history of Tibetan in Sikkim. The language of Bhutias which is term as Lho skad is known as the old Tibetan language which is mainly evident by the different units of the sound of Lho skad use by them, that have been passed down from the similar old Tibet language. This linguistic evidence of Bhutia has been used by linguists like George van Driem to prove that the migration of Tibetans in Sikkim and Bhutan took place in the same period. If it is so, then the date for which different evidence provides for the migration of Bhutanese goes back to around the ninth century. Similarly, it can be possible that the first people from Tibet who have migrated to Sikkim also go back to the ninth century or so.³⁴

Now comparing the evidences which have been mention above about the evidences related to the Bon ritual practices, geographical location, and linguistic evidences of old Tibetan language related to the follower of old Bon ritual. Provide enough evidence of Tibetan people migration to Sikkim earlier then the period which was mentions in the time of Gye-Bum-Sar, i.e., thirteen centuries. Or it can also be possible that the migration period of Gye-Bum-Sar is only related to the royal family lineage as mentions in the work like ‘History of Sikkim’ and other works. And do not apply to all the Tibetan people who came to Sikkim. Lastly, all these evidences which mention

³³ H. H. Risley, *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*, B. R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, Reprinted 2010, p. 241.

³⁴ Saul Mullard, *Op. cit.*, p. 77.

above related to the migration of *Beb-Tsan-Gyat* and *Tong-due-ruzhis* in Sikkim might have been added later on to the migration history of Gye-Bum-Sar.³⁵

3.2b) Presence of Bon Faith in Sikkim and Its Connection to The Neighboring Regions

Some of the Bhutias in Sikkim follow both the old Bon faith and new modified Bon faith. The above written passage discusses the entering of the old Bon faith in Sikkim. The new modified Bon faith is commonly known as *Yungdrung* Bon. This new modified Bon faith advanced along with Buddhism in Tibet during the 8th century and other. This new Bon faith entered Sikkim during the 1980's due to the Chinese invasion of Tibet in the 1950's, which led to the Rinpoches and chief lamas to come to Sikkim and take refuge. Many lamas who follow the *Yungdrung* Bon faith also came to Sikkim along with them. It is evident that one of the lamas of *Yungdrung* Bon faith namely Yungdrung Tsultrim, also established a Bon Monastery in the village called Kewzing, in South Sikkim on 13 July, 1984.³⁶

Now, talking about the old Bon faith in Sikkim, Anna Balikchi mentions that the followers of old Bon faith in a village called Tingchim in north Sikkim, worship sTon-pa gShen-rab (the founder of Bon) in respect of the spiritual value of *Pho lha mo lha* (the ancestral gods and lineage protectors) and placed him on their altars. The rituals practices, i.e., Bon, of this village is mostly connected to a few characteristics of the “Bon of Cause” especially the earlier three which I have mentioned in the table 3.1.³⁷ Risley, in his work, mentions about the worshipping of Demons³⁸ by the Bhutias of Sikkim and stated thus:

³⁵ Ibid, p. 78.

³⁶ Gnudup Sangmu Bhutia, *Bon Religion in Sikkim: Past and Present*, Unpublished M. Phil Dissertation, Department of History, Sikkim University, 2016, p. 88.

³⁷ Anna Balikci, Op. cit., p. 13.

³⁸ “If the supernatural beings of *bon*, whether *pho lha mo lha* or *nöpa*, have come to be seen as ‘demons’ in the literature, I believe it to be a result of the influence of conventional Buddhism...”. Ibid, p. 123.

“like most mountaineers, the Sikhimites...are thoroughgoing demon-worshippers. In every nook, path, big trees, rock, spring, waterfall, and lakes there lurks a devil...have each their special demons, and sickness is always due to malign demoniacal influence...The body also of each individual is beset by a burden of spirits named the “ *hgo-wa-lha*,” or “the person chief gods,” ...These personal gods, some of which are of an ancestral nature, are five in number, viz- a) *The Male Ancestral god* (Phô-lha), b) *The Mother-god* (mo-lha), c) *The life god* (Srong-lha), d) *The Birthplace god* (Yul-lha, literally “country-god”), e) *The Enemy god* (dgra-lha)...”³⁹

For Risley the way of worshipping nature by the Bhutias in Sikkim was a ‘demon worship’ but this idea of worshipping nature and their ancestors was the practice of old Bon faith in Sikkim. Some section of the Bhutias who follow old Bon faith in Sikkim still worship *Pho lha mo lha*, nature and other ancestral gods and all these can be traced to the old Bon practices of Tibet.

The personal god of ancestral nature *dgra-lha* is pronounced as “*dab-la*”, who resides in man’s right shoulder like *Yul lha* in Sikkim. *dgra-lha* are also to be found worshipped in Tibet as well as in Bhutan region and can be traced back to its relation to the Bon spirits. Other than the personal *dgra-lha*, there are many other numbers of *dgra-lha*, generally term as *dgra-lha* brotherhood. The assembly of three *dgra-lha* brothers, are called (*Mi thub dgra-lha spun gsum*), supposed to be worshiped mainly by the Bon, and another *gdra-lha* which are arranged in five positions is called (*dgra lha sde lnga*), the seventh position is called (*dgra lha bdun*), the nine position is called (*dgra lha mched dgu*), which is also known as *dgra lha gnyan dgu mched dgu*, the thirteen position is called (*dgra lha bcu gsum*) and lastly the twenty-one position is called (*dgra lha nyl shu rtsa gcig*). The work of both this *dgra-lha*, the personal and the group of *dgra-lha* is

³⁹ H. H. Risley, Op. cit., pp. 353-354.

to provide protection and assist their worshippers to overpower hindrances and vanquish their opponents.⁴⁰

3.3) The Healing Practices of Bhutias In Sikkim: *Pau, Ney jum* and *bon ban bongthing*

Regarding the healing practices of Bhutias in Sikkim, the healers mostly believe in spiritual healing by driving out the evil spirits or by destroying it. Like the Lepchas, the Bhutias also have their folk healers known as *Pau, Ney jum* and *bon ban bongthing*⁴¹.

bon ban bongthing

In the Bhutia community of Sikkim, when somebody gets sick, the first among all the three healers they called upon is *bon ban bongthing*. Firstly, the *bon ban bongthing* tries to search for the cause of the illness by throwing the dice. With the help of the dice along with the nature of sickness and looking into the history of the patients and her/his family members, he will find out either it is caused by *nöpa* (local harmful spirits) or not. If the sickness is caused by *nöpa*, then he will find out what kind of *nöpa* is causing the problem and the reasons behind the cause of sickness. And accordingly, he will specify what ritual he has to follow, so that the harmful spirit will leave the patient body. Though the *bon ban bongthing* knows *pho lha mo lha* and can control the harmful spirits or *nöpa*, he on no occasion gets possessed by the spirit like other folk healers.⁴² Hence, he diagnosed the sickness through divination by using materials like cooked rice, boiled egg, flowers and butter lamps which is known as *karcho* or white offering. All these items are kept on the

⁴⁰ Réne De Nebesky-Wojkowitz, Op. cit., pp. 318-319.

⁴¹ “Previously, the Lhopo *bongthing* used to be referred to...as *bon ban* or the ‘the one who can recite the oral text of *bon*’. In the course to time, as the *bon ban* included more and more supernatural beings of Lepcha name and origin in his rituals and as he gradually forgot his *bon ban* texts, the *bon ban*’s ritual performance increasingly held in Lepcha style, led him to be referred to as ‘*bongthing*’ instead of *bon ban* or *bon ban bongthing* by the Lhopos...However, the Lhopo *bongthing*’s ritual practice is not to be confused or equated with that of the Lepcha *bongthing*”. Anna Balikci, Op. cit., pp. 11-12.

⁴² Yishey Doma, *Faith Healers of Sikkim: Traditions, Legends, and Rituals*, Trysts & Traces (For Information & Public Relations Department), Government of Sikkim, Haryana, 2018, p. 99.

banana leaf or *labyong* (*la 'byongs*) and offer it to the patient's house by invoking *khelen* or *khas len*⁴³ (an oral ritual text and offering ritual for the deities of the land). With this offering, they expect that the *nöpa* will get pleased and the patient will recover from his sickness.⁴⁴ But even after this ritual, if the patient does not recover from their sickness, next they approach *Pau* and *Ney jum*.

Pau

In Sikkim from the early period for every Bhutia ritual performance and healing practices, the folk healers play an important role. Till the 19th century, every Bhutia household had its separated shaman known as *Pau* and *Ney jum* who performed religious functions giving importance to their ancestor and family lineage. Slowly and gradually, the number of *Pau*'s and *Ney jum* decreasing due to the reduction in the significance of lineage protection.⁴⁵ In regards to *Pau* and *Ney jum* in Sikkim, according to Nebesky-Wojkowitz:

“A peculiar group of Tibetan mediums are the male “Pawo” (*dpa' bo*) and the female “Nyenjomo” (*bsnyenjo mo*), to be found mainly in the Chumbi Valley, in Sikkim, and in Bhutan. They are laymen and laywomen who, though not connected with the few Bon monasteries... are regarded by the Buddhists as typical representatives of the Bon creed. Actually, they seem to be a remnant of the earliest, unorganized Bon as it existed before the so called “white Bon” (*Bon dkar*) had developed after the example of Buddhism. The *pa' bo* and *bsnyenjo mo* are believed to be sorcerers and sorceresses who become possessed by the spirits of the dead, and who are able to communicate, while in the trance, with their own protective deities. Their main task is to perform divinations and to cure illnesses.”⁴⁶

⁴³ “*Khas len* or its honorific form *zhal len* means ‘expressing’ or ‘addressing’.” Anna Balikci, Op. cit., p. 38.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 127.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 145.

⁴⁶ Réne De Nebesky-Wojkowitz, Op. cit., p. 425.

Now, the question arises who can be ordained as a *Pau* and *Ney jum*. Mostly, a *Pau* always inherent his spiritual power from his common male lineage for example, his father, grandfather or any other male member of his family who was a *Pau* earlier. Similarly, *Ney jum* also gets her spiritual power from her common female lineage. Apart from a few exceptional rituals, both the *Pau* and *Ney jum* have to go through a similar kind of ritual to become a confirmed *Pau* and *Ney jum*. When it is confirmed that a new *Pau* is blessed by the gods and has extraordinary powers, he exhibits signs of communication between god and humans. He has to go through two more functions. Firstly, the chosen one has to become a divine descendent and accept the abilities and forces of the departed *Pau*. Hence, the deceased *Pau* is known as his *kabab* (*bka' babs*) or spiritual ascendant but a new *Pau* does not need to have any relation with the deceased *Pau*. However, mostly it follows the lineage. Secondly, the new *Pau* needs to be trained by a senior *Pau* or *Ney jum* who performs the official function during his first rite, and he will be examined. With all these rituals, the abilities and forces of the departed *Pau* will be passed over through the divine descent. This function of the passing over the strength, ability, knowledge and powers of the departed *Pau* is done by the gods of his forefather through their tutelary deity. After being chosen as a divine descends of the departed *Pau*, automatically his ancestor's tutelary deity will also be his tutelary deity to assist him for the performance of the rituals and healing. It will be only confirmed whether the *kabab* or spiritual ascendant gets possessed in him or not before the initiation⁴⁷ function, when the divine soul of the departed *Pau* discloses his distinguish features by conveying dialogue through the new *Pau* and asking about his particular ceremonial devices. At this time either any of the family members or the senior *Pau* has to provide *kabab* ceremonious devices like a headdress,

⁴⁷ “The initiation ritual of pawos is performed to fulfill three things: to validate the new pawo; to introduce him to the *pho lha mo lha* and *noepa*; and to install him as the new shaman of a particular lineage/village. On the occasion, all villagers witness the pawo's initiation and get a share of the meat from the sacrificial animal”. Yishey Doma, Op. cit., p. 100,

drum, and bell before him. Automatically, all these devices will become an essential instrument of the new *Pau*. It is because of this reason the family members of the *Pau* always keep these devices in a safe place so that when a *Pau* dies, he might again ask for his belongings through the medium of new *Pau*.⁴⁸

Adoration of ancestral family divinity is very usual among all the ethnic people of Sikkim. This ancestral family deity is commonly known as *pho lha mo lha* among the Bhutia community of Sikkim. They believe that if the people ignore their ancestral deity and fails to carry out the rituals in their memory, they might get annoyed and take back their blessings from the family and the village as a whole, which can cause misfortunes and brings back different kind of illness. But if they performed the ritual ceremonies and offering to their ancestral deity, i.e., *pho lha mo lha* then, it can bring good health, prosperity, well-being, etc.

The Bhutia *pho lha mo lha* mainly consists of local deities like Bon deities, their father and mother ancestral family deity and supernatural beings like mount Khangchendzonga (mountain deity) who is considered as the chief of all supernatural beings, and honored as a guardian deity. This guardian deity is also worshipped by the Bhutias as a significant *pho lha*. Yishey Doma has stated that the process of worshipping the mountain deity, i.e., Khangchendzonga by the Bhutias started when Gye-Bum-Sar was blessed with three sons by the blessing of Khangchendzonga and other local deities through the assistance of Lepcha priest, Thekong Tek.⁴⁹ H. H. Risley, explains in his work as to how the Khangchendzonga is worshipped, "In Kang-chhen-dsö-nga's worship also flesh meat needs to be given. And although the flesh of cows and other cattle is now offered on such occasions, there is a tradition that formerly human flesh was offered. And the most

⁴⁸ Anna Balikci, Op. cit., pp. 146-47.

⁴⁹ Yishey Doma, Op. cit., pp. 101-105.

acceptable flesh was the human flesh...”⁵⁰ if we compare the writing of Risley with the work of O. C. Handa, who has mentioned the Bon religious history of the Ladakh people and stated thus “Human sacrifice formed an essential part of propitiation of the *Jola-Bon* deities. Subsequently, when Indian religious traditions were also assimilated into the *Jola-Bon*, the *pho-lha* and *mo-lha* came to be interpreted as Shiva and Kali, and human sacrifice was indicated for them”.⁵¹ Looking into the similarities of worshipping nature by the Bhutias in Sikkim and Ladakh, it can be observed that either Gye-Bum-Sar was the follower of the old Bon faith. Which cannot be accepted because he was already a follower of Buddhism. Or when he made a blood brotherhood treaty with the Lepcha chief in Sikkim keeping the mount Khangchendzonga as their witness. He must have represented the Bhutias who had already migrated to Sikkim by representing himself as the royal lineage of Tibetan kings. Therefore, to accept what Yishey Doma has mentioned about the beginning of the worshipping of Khangchendzonga as a *pho lha* only after the blood brotherhood treaty by the Bhutias is quite debatable.

Returning to the *Pau* healing practices, the *Pau* travel into a spiritual world and try to contact with the evil spirits or *nöpa* to find out the reason bending the cause of the sickness. In a few cases, the *Pau* detects the sickness by prediction, through the use of a plate full of rice. He continuously moves the plate until and unless he will see any kind of evil sign. When he sees the evil sign, then he performs a ritual known as *Phupti*, which consists of eggs, clothes and money. This, he executes by moving these items over the head of the patient to appease the evil spirit. After the ritual, these items will be thrown outside the house except for the clothes. Accordingly, they believe that within the three days of the ritual, the sick person will get healed. Other than this,

⁵⁰ H. H. Risley, Op. cit., p. 355.

⁵¹ O. C. Handa, *Buddhist Western Himalaya: part 1-A Political-Religious History*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2001, p. 258.

he even tries to cure the patient with the use of amulets or by using the blistering knife and blowing the warm air around the patient body.⁵²



Fig. 3.1 and 3.2: Images of *Pau* Lhatuk Bhutia performing his healing ritual in Chochen (Barapathing), East Sikkim.

If still, the patient does not recover from his or her sickness than the last option is an animal sacrifice. For the animal sacrifice, the member of the family will approach *bon ban bongthing*, who performs this function along with *Pau*. *Pau* determines the causes of the sickness again by travelling into the spiritual world and tries to contact the evil spirits or *nöpa*. The evil spirit gets inside the body of *Pau* and starts communicating with the people and tells the reason for sickness. On the other hand, *bon ban bongthing* engaged himself with the work of sacrificial offerings. The

⁵² J. J. Roy Burman, *Tribal Medicine*, Naurang Rai for Mittal Publication, Calcutta, 2003, p. 64.

animal which has to be sacrificed for the ritual is done by the male member of the family outside their house. If the sacrificed animal is big in size, then its blood is put inside a container and offered to the evil spirit by the *bon ban bongthing*. While offering, he spread the blood with the help of dipper, around the places incanting the *khelen*. The parts of the sacrificed animal like front and hind leg, head, internal organs especially the intestines are put inside the plate. These are offered along the *torma* as a symbol of *nöpa* and his associates inside the house. Usually, the *torma* is made up of rice, but in certain cases when dealing with the evil or harmful influences like *dü* (harmful black spirits) and other *nöpas*, *tormas* are made up of black millet. But if they offer chicken to an *ajo anyo* or a *latsen* (the *tsen* spirits of mountain passes and it can be both male and female) the offering objects will be spread out and put into the banana leaf (*labyong*). In this case *nöpa* will not represent in the form of *torma* but in the form of small bamboo filled with millet beer or *chang*. According to the belief, it is considered that the offering of the sacrificed animal is one of the greatest performances in the process of the healing systems among Bhutias in Sikkim.⁵³

Ney jum

There is little difference between the ritual practices of *Pau* and *Ney jum*. *Pau* is a male Bhutia folk healer and *Ney jum* is a female Bhutia folk healer. Both of them perform similar functions, except for a few rituals. Like *Pau* and *bon ban bongthing*, *Ney jum* also have her separated alter and yearly calendrical ceremonies to be performed. One of the important functions of *Ney jum* is to prevent the patient from sickness. She has the power to point out which evil spirit has caused the illness and also has the power to control the evil spirits in the surrounding areas. It is believed that the evil spirits or supernatural spirit which is different from *pho lha mo lha* are

⁵³ Anna Balikci, Op. cit., pp. 135-36.

regarded as wild or to some extent they can be controlled, but they are considered as unpredictable. In some instances, due to their supernatural power, they get appeased with offerings, but at the same time, they may also get instigated and cause sickness and bring calamities in the village. Hence, the important work of the *Ney jum* and other ritual healers is to prevent the villagers from the danger by combining their ritual power and taking guidance from their *pho lha mo lha*.⁵⁴

3.4) Medicinal Practices of The Bhutias in Sikkim

The medicinal practices in Sikkim, it is divided into two groups 1) those who follow Bon faith (basically the common people) and 2) those who follow Buddhism (mostly the aristocrats).⁵⁵ Since we are dealing with the Bon and healing practices of Bhutias, we will focus our study on the healing practices of the common Bhutias in Sikkim. From the earliest time, the Bhutias of Sikkim mostly rely on folk healing practices, apart from this, they also have knowledge of the medicinal plants. The Bhutias have migrated from Tibet and the people of Tibet from the ancient time possess the knowledge of medicinal use and different kind of medicines, even before the arrival of Buddhism in Tibet. Tamdin Sither Bradley, mentions,

“Methods for keeping healthy and promoting longevity have been present in Tibet for many thousands of years. For example, Tibetans know that drinking hot water will relieve indigestion and placing melted butter in cuts and wounds will stop bleeding and promote healing...Tibetan Medicine originates from the pre-Buddhist Bon era of Tibetan history... There are many books which state that Tibetan Medical Knowledge is solely derived from India and China. This is not true as Tibet has had its medical knowledge for

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 10.

⁵⁵ “The Lhopo aristocracy (who made up the bulk of the monastic population), had access to the wider Himalayan medical tradition known as *sowa rigpa*, which was practiced there by monks and less commonly by *amchis*...But in rural areas, where even today 90% of the population still resides, such knowledge was less accessible and various forms of local healing were the primary treatment option...” Alex McKay, *Their Footprints Remain: Biomedical Beginnings Across the Indo-Tibetan Frontier*, IIAS Publications Series, Amsterdam, 2007, p. 90.

thousands of years and it is important to remember that the Bon and Buddhist eras comprise two different historical periods of Tibet”.⁵⁶

It will be correct to note that along with the spiritual healing practices, the Bhutias also have brought along the vast knowledge of medicinal practices of Tibet in Sikkim. Although not much work has been done on the medicinal history of the Bhutias in Sikkim. Although with the help of few shreds of evidence we can understand that the Bhutias do know the use of medicines before the arrival of the modern medicine/biomedicine. According to Keshab C. Pradhan in his memoir, he mentions that “For about 50 years, trading of herbal plants from Sikkim was in the hands of a merchant called Mamraj Agarwal, originally from Rajasthan, but based in Gangtok. He had established good contacts with the Pipons of Lachung and Lachen through whom herbals plants like *aconitum*, *jatamansi*, *kutki*, *Ephedra*, *Podophyllum* and *Rheum* were traded. He used to source other items like *chirata*, *piper* and *Acorus* from lower areas”.⁵⁷ The people living in Lachen and Lachung are also the Bhutias and by looking into the above passage, we can understand that Bhutias in Sikkim knew the use of medicinal plants to cure the illness. Following are the list of the medicinal plant's use by the Bhutias to cure different sickness.

Table. 3.2: Medicinal Plants Used by The Bhutias in Sikkim

Sl. No.	Botanical name	Family name	Common/Vernacular name	Parts used	Disease/ailment
1,	<i>Abies densa Griffith</i>	<i>Pinaceae</i>	<i>Dumsing</i>	Oleoresin	Toothache.

⁵⁶ Tamdir Sither Bradley, Op. cit., pp. 1-2

⁵⁷ Keshab C. Pradhan, *The Life and Times of a Plants Man in the Sikkim Himalayas: A Memoir*, K. C. Pradhan Publication, Tadong, 2008, p. 183.

2.	<i>Bergenia purpurascens</i>	<i>Saxifragaceae</i>	<i>Peyogokhum</i>	Rhizome, stem	Body ache, wounds, and throat pain.
3.	<i>Elatostema platyphylla wedd.</i>	<i>Urticaceae</i>	<i>Dambrum choem</i>	Leaf	To expel and kill worms in children.

Sources: A. S. Chauhan, Ethnobotanical Studies in Sikkim Himalaya, Gian Singh, H. B. Singh, T. K. Mukherjee (ed.), *Ethnomedicine of North-East India: Proceedings of National Seminar of Traditional Knowledge based on Herbal Medicine and Plant resources of North-East India-Protection, Utilization and Conservation*, National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources, New Delhi, 2004, p. 200.

Table. 3.3: Medicinal plant used in folk medicinal practise in Sikkim.

Sl. No.	Botanical Name and Family	Local Name (Bhutia)	Distribution	Parts used with medicinal and other uses
1.	<i>Abies densa</i> <i>Pineaceae</i>	<i>Dumshing</i>	Temperate to alpine zone	Infusion of fresh leaves is taken against bronchitis, cough, stomach disorder.
2.	<i>Acorus calamus</i> <i>Araceae</i>	<i>Sudag</i>	Tropical to temperate zone	Rhizome used against asthma, pneumonia, bronchitis, diarrhoea. Also applied in cuts, wounds and to kill lice. Decoction of rhizome is given to cattle for diarrhoea
3.	<i>Artemisia indica</i> <i>Asteraceae</i>	<i>Khempo</i>	Tropical to temperate zone	Leaves are used in skin disease, irritable bowel syndrome, bleeding and various toxic condition.
4.	<i>Bergenia ciliate</i> <i>Saxifragaceae</i>	<i>Hong-Lem</i>	Subtropical to alpine zone	Dried or fresh rhizome is used for diarrhoea, vomiting, cough, pulmonary infection, fever,

				earache. Inflorescence is mixed with barley flour and given to cattle to cure bleeding in urine.
5.	<i>Nardostachys jatamansi</i> <i>Valerianaceae</i>	<i>Pangtey</i>	Alpine zone	Dried root is used in paralysis, cholera, piles, palpitation and hair loss.
6.	<i>Oroxylum indicum</i> <i>Bignoniaceae</i>	<i>Paksam</i>	Tropical to sub-tropical zone	Bark paste is used against burns, pimples, rheumatism and fruits in piles and bronchitis and seeds against throat infection and diabetes.
7.	<i>Picrorhiza kurrooa</i> <i>Scrophulariaceae</i>	<i>Lie-tikta</i>	Alpine zone	Dried roots are used in malarial fever, also in jaundice and intestinal worms. Also used as incense. Root paste is used to heal wounds of cattle.
8.	<i>Podophyllum hexandrum</i> <i>Podophyllaceae</i>	<i>Yomha-sisi</i>	Subalpine to alpine zone	The roots are used blood purifier also in gastritis, fever, gynaecological infection and expelling intestinal worms.
9.	<i>Rhododendron arboretum</i> <i>Ericaceae</i>	<i>Etukop</i>	Subtropical to alpine zone	Root bark is used against pneumonia and dried flower for dysentery and menstrual disorder. Moreover, flowers are used to make local wine 'Guranse' which has antidote function against altitude sickness.
10.	<i>Rubia manjith</i> <i>Rubiaceae</i>	<i>Cho-ek</i>	Subtropical to temperate zone	Roots are used in jaundice, skin disease, constipation and dysentery.

11.	<i>Swertia chirayita</i> <i>Gentianaceae</i>	<i>Tikta</i>	Temperate to subalpine zone	Plant boiled water is used to get relief from fever, stomach disorder, asthma. Leaf juice is used against allergies and eczema.
12.	<i>Taxus baccata</i> <i>Taxaceae</i>	<i>Tingschi</i>	Temperate to alpine zone	Decoction of bark and leaves is taken against asthma bronchitis, diabetes.

Sources: D. Mandal, A. K. Panda, M. Rana, "Medicinal Plants Used in Folk Medicinal Practices Available in Rich Biodiversity in Sikkim", *Environment & Ecology* 31 (3A), July-September 2013: 1445-1449, <http://environmentandecology.com>, accessed on 31.12.2019.

3.5) Interviewed with *Paus*.

Gapching Bhutia is a *Pau* from Chandmari, popularly known as *Ajyo Pau*. Being an older person, he was not able to provide much information due to his breathing problem. Still, he tried to provide a few important information related to the ritual practices, which he performs. He says that he became a *Pau* when he was twenty years old. It was a *Ney jum* from Bhusuk who was known as *Anna Ney jum*, through whose divination it came to know that he is chosen as a *Pau* by his ancestral deity. He received his spiritual power from his ancestral deity passing through his father and forefather because before he became a *Pau*, his father and his grandfather were also *Paus*. During his early days, when he became a *Pau*, it was this *Anna Ney jum* who guided and trained him as a *Pau*, and whatever she taught to him he had to learn it orally.⁵⁸ Unlike what is written by Anna Balikci, as she mentions in her work that a new *Pau* will be trained only by a *Pau* teacher.

⁵⁸ Interviewed Gapching Bhutia (*Pau*), (M), 87 years, Chandmari, East Sikkim, on 27.07.2019.



Fig. 3.3: *Pau* Gapching from Chandmari.

Regarding their dress, he mentions that he never had a dress apart from headwear⁵⁹ but *Ney jums* always wear a ritual dress during the time of religious ceremonies or while curing the illness. However, *Pau* Chagu Bhutia, another *Pau* whom the researcher meets and interviewed at Chochen (Barapathing), East Sikkim, says that he became a *Pau* at the age of twenty-three and he inherited his spiritual blessing from his father, who received it from his grandfather. He mentions about the ritual dress of the *Pau* which is called *Chengu*. This dress comprised of only the lower part of the body and is made of red and white colour cloth. And he called his head wear as *Thaci* he says that the dress and the head gear is so vital that without it they cannot perform any ritual and ceremonies, he also says that the power to cure sickness comes through these things .⁶⁰ While asking about the

⁵⁹ “The new *pawo*’s uncontrolled possessions will be tamed through the wearing of the *bätö* (headwear), and no supernatural being will be able to take possession of him unless he is wearing it”. Anna Balikci, Op. cit., p. 155.

⁶⁰ Interviewed Chagu Bhutia (*Pau*), (M), 82 years, Chochen (Barapathing), East Sikkim, on 11.11.2019.

spiritual power between the *Pau* and the *Ney jum*, *Pau* Gapching, mentions that *Ney jum* are more powerful than *Pau*.⁶¹

Regarding their spiritual deities, both the *Paus* mention that they worship *Pho lha mo lha*, *Yul lha* (country-god), *Dabla Sum* (carrying of *torma*) and *Phula Maso* (a household ritual, which perform thrice a year). During the time of curing the illness, they said that they use egg, flowers, fish, fruits, ginger for healing the sick. They also mentioned that, if the condition of the patient is very serious, then only they sacrifice the animal, especially the black hen. And they never sacrifice any other animals. They mentioned further that before they perform any rituals for the curing of illness, they diagnose the sickness of the patient first, and they make their ritual offerings, and if needed then sacrifice of a black hen. According to their belief, any serious illness can be healed after the sacrifices of the black hen is done.⁶² They are of the opinion that the number of *Pau*, *Ney jum* and *bon ban bongthing* in present time are decreasing. Even though the new *Pau* and *Ney jum* are inheriting the spiritual blessings and power, but they are losing their importance and recognition at present times.⁶³ ⁶⁴ *Pau* Chagu says that when the establishment of the dispensaries, community health centers, and hospitals started in their locality, people began to visit more in these centers. They began to believe more in the modern medicine/biomedicine than in the folk medicinal and spiritual practices.⁶⁵

Lastly, to conclude we can understand that the Bhutias are the original inhabitants of Tibet. Although, still the date for their migration into Sikkim is debatable. However, by looking into their healing practices related to the old Bon faith, we can understand that they might have migrated to

⁶¹ Interviewed Gapching Bhutia (*Pau*), (M), 87 years, Chandmari, East Sikkim, on 27.07.2019.

⁶² Interviewed Gapching Bhutia (*Pau*), (M), 87 years, Chandmari, East Sikkim, on 27.07.2019.

⁶³ Interviewed Gapching Bhutia (*Pau*), (M), 87 years, Chandmari, East Sikkim, on 27.07.2019.

⁶⁴ Interviewed Chagu Bhutia (*Pau*), (M), 82 years, Chochen (Barapathing), East Sikkim, on 11.11.2019.

⁶⁵ Interviewed Chagu Bhutia (*Pau*), (M), 82 years, Chochen (Barapathing), East Sikkim, on 11.11.2019.

Sikkim after the arrival of Buddhism in Tibet. Since, introduction of the Buddhism in Tibet led to the political turmoil and the persecution of the old Bon practitioners in Tibet. Saul Mullard, in his work, tried to explain that the migration of the Bhutias in Sikkim might have taken place from the ninth century onwards.

When Bhutias enter Sikkim, they not only brought their culture and traditions in Sikkim but also carry their folk healing systems and medicinal knowledge. Gradually, their started an exchange of healing and knowledge systems among the Bhutias and other communities of Sikkim. One of the examples, which we can see today is the term *Bongthing* used for the Lepcha faith healers, is derived from the term *bon ban bongthing* of Bhutia faith healers. The time when the British administrators started to come to Sikkim and introduced many reforms, its effects were also felt in the field of folk medicinal practices and healing system. Earlier, for every health-related problem, the Bhutias in Sikkim used to consult their faith healers like *Pau*, *Ney jum* and *bon ban bongthing*. However, after the introduction of the modern medicine/biomedicine and the establishment of different hospitals and dispensaries, schools on the Western models by the British in Sikkim, led to the gradual derecognition of the folk healers and medicinal knowledge of the Bhutias in Sikkim.

CHAPTER - IV

THE LIMBOO FOLK MEDICINAL PRACTICES AND THE ROLE OF THEIR SHAMANS

The Limboo community is one of the branches of Kirat or Mongol tribe. The meaning of the term 'Kirat' derives from the word 'Kir' which means pig or boar. This is because they were hunters and their most preferable animal, which they love to hunt was boar. The Limboos have clans and sub-clans. According to some scholars, they believe that communities like Tamang, Gurung, Thami, Magar, and Sunwar also comes under the Kirat tribe. According to the Limboo folklore, it is stated that at the beginning there was a total of five Kirat brothers from the same parents. Which included Surel as the eldest brother, Sunwar as the second brother, Khambu as the third brother, followed by Limboo as the fourth brother and Hayu or Vayu as the youngest one, including of girl child. These five brothers when they went for hunting with their only sister in the bank of Saptakoshi, they reached at the meeting place of a two river, i.e., Arun and Tamor. When they reached there, Vayu the younger brother and the sister decided to settle in the confluence of river Arun and Tamor. The rest of the brothers marched ahead in the banks of separate rivers. Among them, Limboo took the path of the river Tamor and settled there. Similarly, other brothers also went into different directions following the different rivers and settled in different regions. The region where Limboo settled was known by the name Limbuwan, who shared their boundary and lived along with the Lepchas of Sikkim from the ancient times. H. H. Risley referring to Oldfield's work of 1858, mentions that "The district lying on the eastern or left bank of the Arun, and extending from it to Sikkim, is Limbuana or the country of the Limbus".¹ Similarly, according

¹ H. H. Risley, *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*, B. R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 2010, p. 2.

to Suresh Kumar Gurung “...the present two districts namely Gyalsing (Geyzing) in the west and Namchi in the south and a part of the north district of Sikkim lying on the western bank of the Teesta river were originally peopled by the Limboos. The territorial area, called Limbuan...”² And they were divided into ten different clans and sub-clans like for example Anghubo, Isiboo, Khopung, Thebey Angdembey, Fedop, Pomu, Lowti, Chemjong, Liwang, Sodemba, etc.³ One of the important evidence which can prove that Limboos being one of the ethnic community of Sikkim and inhabiting these places, i.e., the Western part of the Sikkim can be proved from the agreement of *The Lho Mon Gtson gsum* between the *Lho pa* (Tibeto-Sikkimese), *Mon* (Lepcha or *Rong kup*), and the *Gtson* (Limbus) in the year of Water Hare, i.e., (1663).⁴ This is further proved by the work of Thutob Namgyal and Yeshay Dolma, which mentions that “ The Tsongs of the ancient times, have also served under the Sikkim Rajas in the capacity of such officers as Shupas or Subahs, Chpons, Dingpons and Gyapons, both under the Rajas, as well as under the Kazi”.⁵ They were called by the Lepchas, Bhutias, and Tibetans with the name *Tsongs* because they believed that the Limboos were migrated from the Tibetan region of Tsang province. Apart from this, they were also referred with the name *Yakthumba* and *Subba* (title offered by the Shah kings).⁶ According to J. R. Subba, as he mentions in his work that:

“The Limboo society is known themselves by their pronominalized endonym “*Susuwa Lillim Yakthum Suwang*” (descendants of *Susuwengba Lalawenba*, son of the wind derived

² Suresh Kumar Gurung, *Sikkim, Ethnicity and Political Dynamics: A Triadic Perspective*, Kunal Books, New Delhi, 2011, p. 124.

³ M. M. Gurung and R. P. Lama, *Communities: Their Ancient Traditions Culture Religion and Beliefs*, Mahendra P. Lama (ed.), *Sikkim Study Series: Culture (Part I), Volume III*, Information and Public Relations Department, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok, 2004, pp. 137-39.

⁴ Saul Mullard, *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History*, Rachna Books & Publications, Gangtok, 2019, p. 140.

⁵ Thutob Namgyal and Yeshay Doma, *History of Sikkim*, translated by Kazi Dousandup, Unpublished Work, n. p., section II, p. 23.

⁶ M. M. Gurung and R. P. Lama, *Communities: Their Ancient Traditions Culture Religion and Beliefs*, Mahendra P. Lama (ed.), Op. cit., p. 139.

from their Mythic or symbolic structure). They are also known by their endonyms adopted after the influence of Noun-based languages of neighbors- *Yakthumbas*, *Yakthungbas*, *Yakthunghang*; semi-endonym-*Subba* derived from “*Sobwa*” or “*Subha*” (for the headman of a village or group, also derived from *Susuwa* of *Susuwa Lillim Yakthum Suwang*; semi-endonym Limbu derived from *Lillim* of *Susuwa Lilim Yakthung Suwang*; Limboo corrupted from semi-endonym Limbu; and exonyms *Kirat*, *Kirant*, *Kiranti*, *Tsong*, *Shong*, *Chung* and *Gtsong*”.⁷

Another argument of Limboos regarding their place of origin is mention as follows- the Limboos call their origin place as ‘*Mangenna Yock*’ and believed all their clans originated from there. They regarded it as their holy place and therefore perform ‘cognitive and socio-functional hierophany’ in the name of their progenitor. They are essentially the worshipper of their progenitors. And gradually during their later religious advancement especially in first and second phases, Shamanism and Totemism also got incorporated in their ancestral worship, mainly during the Neolithic Revolution (c. 3000 BC-600/700 AD) along with the practices of slash and burn agriculture in the region of Himalayas.⁸ Still another argument which has been put forward by H. H. Risley in his work by taking evidence from the old Limboo manuscript, mentions thus:

“According to Yak-thum (Limbu) tradition, in the beginning, existed almighty god Tagyera Ningwa Puma. His spirit entered into Mubuk Wa-ma and caused him to create woman out of bamboo ashes and fowls’ droppings: she was called Muzina Kye-ong-ma, and married the wind. They had a son by name Susu-weng Hara-went. He went a-hunting one day and met two women whose origin is unknown. They bore to him respectively a son, Suwangbe-ba, and a daughter, Laha-dang-ma: these two marrying became the progenitors of the whole human race”.⁹

⁷ J. R. Subba, *Origin and Development of Religion: 100 Questions Answered in Yumaism*, Sukhim Yakthum Mundhum Saploppa (SYMS), Gangtok, 2013, p. 202.

⁸ J. R. Subba, *History of the Kirata Empire: The Third Most Ancient Empire of the world Rediscovery and Reconstruction*, Volume II, Sukhim Yakthung Sapsok Songjumbho, Gangtok, 2015, p. 250.

⁹ H. H. Risley, Op. cit., p. 36.

Like Lepchas, the Limboos also have many myths and stories related to their origin and their settlements. Hence, due to the lack of any authentic historical sources, it is important to take all these stories and myths related to their origin, as an important source to know their history.

4.1) Yumaism; The Worshipping of Their Mother Creator

The Limboos is one of the important ethnic community of Sikkim. They have their particular religion called *Yumaism* or *Yuma Samyo* (*Samyo*= religion)¹⁰ and their deity do not possess any kind of physical form. According to Suresh Kumar Gurung, as he quoted the work of, Dalton which mentions that “Scholars differ in their viewpoints regarding the Limboo religion. Dalton too has similar difficulties and adds that they have “obstinately adhered to their primitive paganism.”¹¹ Similarly, according to A. Campbell, he mentions that “All casual observers would be apt to call the Limboos Buddhist...Hindoos...The fact is, however, that they do not belong to either of these religions...but it is more difficult to name the one they follow.”¹² They have firm faith in their Mother Creator known as *Tagera Ningwaphuma*, who is worshipped as their central deity.¹³ Similarly, according to Sajana Subba in her work, she mentions that “ Many believe that *Yumaism* is not only worshipping formless goddess *Yuma* but also passing down of ancestral tradition, culture, and customs of the Limboo people”.¹⁴

¹⁰ “Yumaism is a belief on a matriarchy or feminine Great Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma, cosmic consciousness, who is considered as transcendent, immanent and the eternal being, and who created the universe and all there is. She has the attributes of Supreme Motherhood Mind of Antiquity, purity and holiness, justice, sovereignty, omnipotence, omniscience, omnibenevolence, etc., ...”. J. R. Subba, *Yumaism, the Limboo Way of Life: A Philosophical Analysis*, Yakthung Mundhum Saplappa, Gangtok, 2012, p. 1,

¹¹ Edward T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, Office of the Superintendent of Government Press, Calcutta, 1872, p. 102. As quoted in, Suresh Kumar Gurung, Op. cit.

¹² A. Campbell, ‘On the Tribes around Darjeeling’, “Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London, Vol. 7, pp. 144-159+333”, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1869.

¹³ Yishey Doma, *Faith Healers of Sikkim: Traditions, Legends, and Rituals*, Trysts & Traces (For Information & Public Relations Department), Government of Sikkim, Haryana, 2018, p. 115.

¹⁴ Sajana Subba, *Yumaism and the Limboos of Sikkim*, Unpublished M. Phil Dissertation, Department of History, Sikkim University, 2016, p. 46.

The Limboo practice of *Yuma* religion is mainly confined to shamanism, animism, and worshipping of ancestors. They worship their forefather or progenitor as the protector of their house and their way of ancestral worship is known as *Him Samang* in Limboo language or *Dewta Palnu* in the Nepali language. This is because, as they believe even after the death of their forefather their soul still exists and takes part in everyday home activities. Apart from this, they also believe in worshipping the existence of non-human souls having its own divinely inherent nature like non-living substances, animals and plants.¹⁵ As they believe while creating humans by the god of the creator like *Sigera yabhundinmang Porokmi Wambhamimang*, they created human ancestors with simply decayable resources like (numerous plants, wooden logs, water collected on rocks, fowl excreta, herbs and ashes of *Simikla* a king of a Himalayan bamboo) and put soul after the sacred sign of Mother Creator. Hence, the Limboo people believe that the important object of the human presence in the earth, in a visible bodily structure is to do good things or good “*karma*” and grow close association with the Mother Creator with the aim of meeting with their forefather and stay with them in “*Sangram Pedang Den*” (Heaven), in a place where the Mother Creator also lives. But it depends upon their “*karma*” or how much good work they have done and what kind of association they had with the Mother Creator; accordingly, it will be decided, how long they are allowed to live there. However, only a good work or good “*karma*” is not sufficient in Limboo religion like Buddhism, they should also grow a close association with the Mother Creator by offering regular prayers and dedication towards the Mother Creator. In the case of bad “*karma*” and bad association with the Mother Creator led to the soul of the person live in “*Khema Yongsong Den*” (Hell). Therefore, to live with Mother Creator and their ancestors, is only possible through a good association with Mother Creator along with a good work or good “*karma*” in this world;

¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 42-43.

because, while in both the “*Sangram Pedang Den*” or in a “*Khema Yongsong Den*”, they only have their soul present and no bodily presence will be there, which became impossible for them to earn a good “*karma*” and ultimately, led them to live in “*Khema Yongsong Den*”.¹⁶ Lastly, in *Yumaism*, mysticism and supernatural power is divided into four different groups, i) *Mangs* or deities, which includes *Tagera Ningwaphuma* or *Yuma Mang*, *Yuma Sam* or matriarchal deities, ancestral deity or patriarchal deities, i.e., *Thoba Pa-Sam* or *Hang-Sam*, and *Sijoingmi Sa* or messenger god, ii) *Sammangs* or divinities, iii) *Sammang-Chyangs*-gods which are confined to the earth and the descendant of the god *Sammangs*, and iv) *Sam Sires*-which includes both the good and bad spirits, i.e., *Nu-Sam* and *Phen-Sam*, and souls of their death humans and the animals.¹⁷

4.1a) *Mundhum*; An Oral Spiritual Instruction of Limboo Society

The Limboos from their ancient period has the tradition of *Mundhum* (spiritual instruction) in their society, which are narrated orally during the performance of religious ceremonies. In an actual manner, it is a folktale or myth of the pre-historic time. It attributes *Tagera Ningwaphuma* as the Mother Creator, who has created the whole universe (*Yehang Se: ma*) like the stars, the sun, the moon, earth, day, night, ocean, etc., and apart from this she is also attributed to the creation of humans, and all the living beings of this planet. All these tales have been passed on from generation to generation orally through *Mundhum*.¹⁸ J. R. Subba, explains *Mundhum* in the following manner:

“In the Limboo sociology, the term *Mundhum* (myth) has a non-pejorative meaning. There, *Mundhum* (myth) is defined as a story that is important for the Limboo tribe whether or not it is objectively or provably true. *Mundhums* are the spiritual instruction to us from our

¹⁶ J. R. Subba, *History, Culture and Customs of Sikkim*, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 2008, p. 306.

¹⁷ J. R. Subba, *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

¹⁸ Mahendra P. Lama (ed.), *Op. cit.*, p. 140.

ancestors passed down to generation to generation orally through our *Phedangma* system and *Yehang* system in the society”.¹⁹

Likewise, Sajana Subba, as she quoted the work of B. L. Khamdhak, also mentions that the *Mundhum* plays an important role in the "socio-cultural and religious life" of the Limboo society.²⁰ Iman Singh Chemjong, he divided the *Mundhum* into two categories, i) *Thungsap Mundhum* and ii) *Peysap Mundhum*. He further stated that the first one, i.e., *Thungsap Mundhum* is considered by the Limboos as the earliest original myth which passed down through orally before they developed any form of writing in their society. And this original myth or *Mundhum* was narrated through songs by the *Sambas*. The second one, *Peysap Mundhum*, is considered as the written work of the religion, which is grouped into four divisions i.e., a) *Soksok Mundhum*, *Yehang Mundhum*, *Sapji Mundhum*, and *Sap Mundhum*. He explains that all these works on *Mundhum* contain about the tales about the creation of the universe, the origin of the human race, the causation of wrongdoing, the source of the harmful spirits like anger, jealousy, envy, etc.²¹ According to J. R. Subba, he mentions that “Unlike other belief system, where religious belief tends to be codified in literate societies (e.g. contemporary Bible, Quran, Vedas etc.), *Yuma* religion is still passed on orally through the shamanist religious priests known as *Phedangmas* and *Yehangs*.”²²

If we compared the statements of Iman Singh Chemjong and J. R. Subba then we can find some contradiction on their views because according to Iman Singh Chemjong, he mentions about the written religious work of *Mundhum* and on the other hand J. R. Subba mentioning about the

¹⁹ J. R. Subba, Op. cit., p. 4.

²⁰ B. L. Khamdhak, *The Sikkimese Limboos: Relooking of Their Brief History and Culture*, Harka Khamdhak (ed.), *Emeytnasung*, 32nd Issue, Popular Press, Siliguri, 2011, p. 40, as quoted in, Sajana Subba. Op. cit.

²¹ Iman Singh Chemjong, *History & Culture of the Kirat People*, Kirat Yakthung Chumlung, Lalitpur, 1966-1967, p. 19. Ibid.

²² J. R. Subba, Op. cit., p. 3.

practice of oral transmission of the religious myth or *Mundhum* and lack of any written religious work of the Limboo community. But, if we follow the work of Risley, while he was writing about the history of the origin of the Limboos, he mentions about the old Limboo manuscript (as mentions above in the origin of Limboos). Hence, from this evidence, we can understand that the Limboo community, in Sikkim does have religious work or manuscripts but maybe it is not considered by them as important as the Bible, Quran or Vedas. And put more importance on what is preached or narrated by their religious priests like *Phedangmas*, *Yehangs*, etc., that may be the reason why J. R. Subba mentions about lacking any religious work like those of the Quran or Vedas. It is also learned from Jeetman Subba, *Phijiri Phedangma*, from Soreng, West Sikkim, that the *Mundhum* was written recently because to teach these to the students of Limboo language department in the Colleges and the University.²³

4.2) The Ritual Specialist of The Limboos in Sikkim

The Limboo community based on *Mundhum* beliefs that the whole universe is created by the Mother Creator. Similarly, the Limboo religious specialists were also created by the *Tagera Ningwaphuma* and conferred on them with the mystical power to bind the opposing drive of the malevolent and benevolent spirits and also to uphold the stability between the two spirits.²⁴ These religious specialists in *Yumaism* are known as *Phedangmas*. They are also attributed to both the functions of priests and shamans. But there is little confusion with the number of a religious specialist in the Limboo community because according to Yishey Doma in her work she mentions about four religious specialists in the Limboo community and they are "*Phejeri Phedangma*,

²³ Interviewed Jeetman Subba (*Phejiri Phedangma*), (M), 49 years, Ogeng (Soreng), West Sikkim, on 09.08.2019.

²⁴ Yishey Doma, Op. cit., p. 115.

*Asamgo Sambara, Sawagen Yatchem Muksam Samba and Yabokko Yeba/Yabokko Yema.*²⁵ Similarly, according to M. M. Gurung and R. P. Lama work, they have also mentioned the number of religious specialists as four in number i.e., "*Phedengma; Samba; Yeba-Yema and Yuma.*"²⁶ But apart from these four religious specialists, they have also mentioned about three more specialists like "*Ongshi, Mangbas, and Sattedhangma.*"²⁷ Now, if we look into J. R. Subba's, as well as Purna Hang Subba's and Rangalal Mohapatra's work, they have distinguished the number of religious specialist of Limboos into nine in number, they are " a) *Muhikkum Ongshi*, b) *Phejiri Phedangma*, c) *Sawara Yetchhammuk Samba*, d) *Sibhak Yemi Yeboko Yeba*, e) *Sibhak Yemi Yeboko Yema*, f) *Yuma Sam*, g) *Sammundhum*, h) *Yepmundhum*, and lastly, i) *Sidapandang.*"²⁸ By looking into the difference in the number of the religious specialist of the Limboo community it can be possible that maybe during the earlier times there used to be total nine religious specialists in the Limboo community and as the passing of time they might have loses its importance, like Bhutias *Pau, Ney jum* and *bon ban bongthing.*²⁹ But we will try to discuss all the nine religious specialist and their ritual practices.

Although there are nine religious specialists or *Phedangmas* in the Limboo society, their power and purposes differ from each other. The *Phedangmas* like a) *Muhikkum Ongshi*, b) *Phejiri Phedangma*, c) *Sawara Yetchhammuk Samba*, d) *Sibhak Yemi Yeboko Yeba* and e) *Sibhak Yemi Yeboko Yema*, are the one; who can carry out both the ritual functions as a priest in the *Mangkheim*

²⁵ Ibid, p. 116.

²⁶ M. M. Gurung and R. P. Lama, *Communities: Their Ancient Traditions Culture Religion and Beliefs*, Mahendra P. Lama (ed.), Op. cit., p. 145.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 147.

²⁸ J. R. Subba, *Ethno-Religious Views of the Limboo Mundhums [Myths]: An Analysis of Traditional Theories*, Yakthung Mundhum Saploppa, Gangtok, 2012, p. 13.

²⁹ According to Anna Balikchi she mentions that "the *pawo* and *nejum* ... becoming rarer every year...". Anna Balikci, *Lamas, Shamans and Ancestors: Village Religion in Sikkim*, Brill Publications, Leiden, 2008, p. 41.

(temple) as well as the shaman. It is also believed that these people can be reborn. The *Phedangmas* like a) *Yuma Sam*, b) *Sammundhum* and c) *Yepmundhum* act as the priest in the Limboo temple called *Mangkhim* and they do not perform the functions of a shaman.³⁰

The last one is *Sidapangdang* works as the herbal practitioner and does not have spiritual power. According to the belief of the Limboo people, those *Phedangmas* like shamans perform as the mediator between the human and the Mother Creator and perform rituals for the devotees. Hence, they considered *Phedangma* Shamans as their spiritual guide, since they can perceive the knowledge of Limboo Myths or *Mundhum*. Likewise, to perform certain functions for specific deities they needed a ritual specialist like a priest who can perform the ritual as per the need.³¹

4.2a) Different Functions of All the Limboo *Phedangmas*

- 1) *Muhikkum Ongshi*: They mostly live an ordinary life by deserting luxuries and following the path of dedication and spreading the gospel of Mother Creator and guide the religious functions of the *Sawara Yetchhammuk Sambas* and *Phejiri Phedangmas*.³²
- 2) *Phejiri Phedangma*: They are the male embodied shamans. Among the *Phedangmas*, the first pure soul who embodied into the Limboo society is known as *Phungjiri Phungappo Phedangma*. His important function is to do the domestic ceremonies, healing the sickness and to avert the natural disaster.³³
- 3) *Sawara Yetchhammuk Samba*: Unlike others, these male *Phedangmas* contain vast knowledge of *Mundhum* and religious functions and they mainly practice rituals like

³⁰ Purna Hang Subba and Rangalal Mohapatra, *Society and Economy: The Limboos of Sikkim*, Blue Rose Publishers, Gangtok, 2018, p. 73.

³¹ Ibid, p. 74.

³² J. R. Subba, *The Philosophy and Concepts of Yuma Samyo Tradition*, Sukhim Yakthung Mundhum Saplopa, Gangtok, 2005, p. 14.

³³ Ibid, pp. 14-15.

Toongsing and perform funeral rituals. It is believed that the first *Samba* in the Limboo society was the *Sajuwet Mundhangwet Samba*. He was sent by the Mother Creator to protect humans from sickness, calamities, suffering, etc.³⁴

- 4) *Sibhak Yemi Yeboko Yeba*: They are also the male shamans who practice the worship of *Sasik, Sogha, Sugut, Yeepley Songdok Yeepma*, and other related harmful spirits. Their important functions are to deal with the harmful spirits and never deal with the offering and devotion of *Him-Sammang*.³⁵
- 5) *Sibhak Yemi Yeboko Yema*: This group of *Yemas* is a female shaman or female embodied ritual functionaries and perform all the rituals which are practiced by the *Yebas*.³⁶
- 6) *Yuma Sam*: They are the disciples of *Yuma* (the divine soul of Mother Creator). They are female ritual practitioners, who do not embody or practice any rituals related to the healing or curing the sickness. Her main function is to detect the sicknesses, foretelling the ill lucks and frequently restricted themselves to the devotion towards *Yuma*.³⁷
- 7) *Sammundhum*: They consist of both the male and female ritual practitioners. It is observed that they do not go in trance like other shamans but only recite the *Mundhum*. This type of the *Phedangmas* are decreasing in number day by day in the Limboo community because the followers of the *Yumaism* know that they cannot be reborn or have less power than other *Phedangmas*. Their way of healing and remedial of the sickness is by means of singing the *Mundhum*.³⁸

³⁴ Ibid, p. 15.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 16.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 17.

³⁸ Ibid.

- 8) *Yepmundhums*: Similarly, *Yepmundhums* are both male and female ritual practitioners in the *Mangkhim* who do not get possessed by the spirits, but they also do the healings through religious dance or *Yea-lang*. It depends upon the *Mundhum* rituals, whether it should be performed through dancing or by means of singing. It is observed that *Yepmundhums* are rarely to be found in the nook and corners in Sikkim. Actually, they were mainly expert in *Ya-yeppma* dancing as well as in healing and remedial of sickness.³⁹
- 9) *Sidapangdang*: They consisting of both the male, i.e., *Sida-samba* and female, i.e., *Sida-samma*. Unlike others, they are herbalists and work as healers and protect society from the disease. They provide medicinal herbs, talisman or amulets, and animal products to cure the patients.⁴⁰

4.3) Healing Rituals of The *Phedangmas*

Before we start with the healing practices of the *Phedangmas*. Firstly, it is better to know, who will be chosen for the work of *Phedangmas*. As we have already discussed earlier that, everything in this earth is created by the Mother Creator or by *Tagera Ningwaphuma* and also to the *Phedangmas*. Since then the work of the *Phedangmas* became inherited, which has been passing on from time immemorial. But only those persons can be a *Phedangma* whose ancestors were also a *Phedangmas* and this process is called in Limboo language as “*Ku-yeet-yakma*”. This process is also restricted upon the few types of *Phedangmas* and both the patrilineal and the matrilineal sides are given utmost importance. However, the process of the inheritance of souls is not continuous and sometimes they may appear after a gap of generations.⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ J. R. Subba, Op. cit., p. 19.

When a *Phedangma* passes away especially the one who can be reborn, will be known instantly during their funeral ceremony through the process of recalling the divine soul or *Sam Siri* by their disciples and requesting the divine souls to illustrate his or her successor. And accordingly, when a young child displays any sort of signal of the embodiment in their family, their guardian immediately shows him or her to senior *Phedangma* who are well-informed about the process. Then, the senior *Phedangma* on his part will make the prediction. When they became confirmed about the reborn of the deceased *Phedangma* on the young child, he or she will be handed over to the other senior *Phedangma* who are skillful in transferring the divine soul of deceased *Phedangma* to the new one. During the initiation, at first, the divine soul or *Sam Sire* do not cooperate and have to be appeased by performing offerings. After that, the senior *Phedangma* performs some rituals, attempts to detect and transfer the divine soul to the new member.⁴²

In the process, this new member has to recognize the name of the departed *Phedangma* soul or *Sam Sire*, and also has to know the “*Yeming*” that is tracing its descent either from their female line or from their male line. The deceased soul has to speak through a new member and then she/he is declared as *Phedangma*. If he or she fails to recognize the name of their *Sam Siri* or “*Yeming*” they will not be considered as *Phedangma* by the “*Yehangs*” (senior learned assembly of *Phedangmas* and specialists in *Mundhum* who are ten in number and look after all the religious function of the Limboo society). When the new member is confirmed as the *Phedangma*, they have to acquire skills under the guidance of the senior *Phedangmas*. Therefore, they have to go through years of training.⁴³

⁴² Ibid, p. 20.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 21.

During healing practices, the Limboo shamans try to cure the sick person by examining the rice grains, counting the rosary or by using the cowries and foretelling the cause of illness with the help of egg. Similar to the shamans of other groups, the Limboo shamans expel the illness by means of chanting the mantras. They pray to the divine soul and to gratify the gods they do religious offerings by sacrificing animals, birds, and millets, etc., but from the recent period, the sacrifice of animals has been replaced with the use of flowers and fruits.⁴⁴ It is believed among the Limboo community, that the spirit of forest which is known as "*Tamphungma*" is accountable for immense sickness and brings bad luck consistently if it is not pacified regularly. It should be pacified in every religious ceremony. Apart from the minor ceremonies, a separated ritual is also performed once in a year to worship *Tamphungma* since they believe that the divine spirit of the *Tamphungma* resides in the periphery of the settled areas and the forest edges. They also perform their ritual functions on the side of the forest or the periphery of the settled areas. During the offering ritual of the *Tamphungma* if no shamans are present, then this ceremony is also performed by the head of the family by sacrificing a hen or other animals.⁴⁵

The Limboo shamans or *Phedangmas* also cure or heal the sickness through the *Phedangma* dance, it is interesting to know that in the process of healing, some of the *Phedangmas* are possessed by the spirits and some are not. This *Phedangma* dance is mainly called the dance of possession which is performed by the *Phedangmas* like *Muhikkum Ongshi*, *Phejiri Phedangma*, *Sawara Yetchhammuk Samba*, *Sibhak Yemi Yeboko Yeba*, and *Sibhak Yemi Yeboko Yema*, while curing the sickness, during prediction or chasing out the malicious spirits, etc., from the sick people.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Yishey Doma, Op. cit., p. 117.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 127.

⁴⁶ J. R. Subba, Op. cit., p. 185.

While performing the ceremony, the shamans get seized by the dominant power, shout in a shrill tone with enthusiasm and beat the drum which is known as “*Niyara Hongsing Ke*” as well as the plate of brass, furiously and energetically dancing all over. Hence, in a state of possession for a brief period, they personify their divine soul or *Sam Siri*, to complete the work. As compare to other situations, the chanting of *Mundhum* and exclamation of incantations is somewhat changed while performing the ceremony. Generally, this kind of ceremonies with the performance of ritual dance is practice by moving around *Tongsing* or the altars or *Lasso*, and specifically around the *Pengiri Pengkesing*.⁴⁷

Similar, ritual performance can also be practiced in *Nehangma/Phungsook Timma* ‘A warrior deity and a beautiful woman armed with a bow, shield, sword and perhaps a helmet that is believed to dwell on a snowy mountain who is worshipped for regaining power’⁴⁸, *Sitongsing Kema* or death ritual.⁴⁹

The *Phedangmas* use the local wild plants during different rituals. The commonly used wild plants are as follows:

Table. 4.1: Wild Plants Use for Different Ritual Purposes by the Limboo Folk Healers

Sl. no	Limboo names	Nepali names	Scientific names	Part of the plants
1.	<i>Namyo/ba</i>	<i>Titeypati</i>	<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>	Shoot
2.	<i>Sapsing</i>	<i>Kaulo</i>	<i>Phoeba lanceolate</i>	Leaves and stems
3.	<i>Samyok</i>	<i>Dubgrass</i>	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i>	Whole plant

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Nisha Thapa, *Phedangma Among Limboos of Sikkim: Change and Continuity*, Unpublished M. Phil Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, Sikkim University, 2017, p. 134.

⁴⁹ J. R. Subba, Op. cit.

4.	<i>Nibhe</i>	<i>Totola</i>	<i>Oroxylum indicum</i>	Fruit
5.	<i>Yukme</i>	<i>Harkatto</i>	<i>Ricenus spp</i>	Whole plant
6.	<i>Singjooba</i>	<i>Pangra</i>	<i>Entada scandens</i>	Fruit
7.	<i>Ponghey? Ma</i>	<i>Ritha</i>	<i>Sapindus mucorossi</i>	Fruit
8.	<i>Pareng</i>	<i>Pareng</i>	<i>Arundinaria hookeriana</i>	Whole shoot
9.	<i>Tengosing</i>	<i>Simmal</i>	<i>Bombax malabaricum</i>	
10.	<i>Khechingse</i>	<i>Kattus</i>	<i>Castenea indica</i>	Stem, leaves
11.	<i>Omlari-tetariphung</i>	<i>Sunakhari</i>	<i>Coelogyne sp.</i>	Leaves
12.	<i>Thokwapha</i>	<i>Bhalubans</i>	<i>Dedrocalamus hamiltonii</i>	Stem
13.	<i>Manglokpa</i>	<i>Roringa</i>	<i>Erythrina stricta</i>	Stem
14.	<i>Kokphung</i>	<i>Chanp</i>	<i>Michelia champaca</i>	Flowers
15.	<i>Magkasing</i>	<i>Phaledo</i>	<i>Mucuna monosperma</i>	Whole plant
16.	<i>Tingwasek</i>	<i>Aisseylu</i>	<i>Rubus ellipticus</i>	Whole plant
17.	<i>Sunhing</i>	<i>Chirata</i>	<i>Swertia chirata</i>	Whole plant
18.	<i>Sellobung</i>	<i>Amliso</i>	<i>Thusanolaena maxima</i>	Whole plant
19.	<i>Hondoksing</i>	<i>Sallibisalli</i>	<i>Equisetum debile</i>	
20.	<i>Onlangchekna</i>	<i>Gaikhure kanra</i>	<i>Angiopteris evecta</i>	
21.	<i>Penchhey sing</i>	<i>Rudrachey</i>	<i>Elaeocarpus canitrus</i>	
22.	<i>Sidingba</i>	<i>Boxikanra</i>	<i>Solanum khasiana</i>	
23.	<i>Iseba</i>	<i>Bhakimlo</i>	<i>Rhus semialata</i>	
24.	<i>Sangsing</i>	<i>Gokuldhup</i>	<i>Canarium sikkimensis</i>	
25.	<i>Matii</i>	<i>Bet</i>	<i>Calamus acanthospathus</i>	

26.	<i>Mullama</i>	<i>Malbans</i>	<i>Banbusa nutans</i>	
27.	<i>Pareng</i>	<i>Pareng</i>	<i>Cephalostrachyum hookeriana</i>	
28.	<i>Lampha</i>	<i>Chille bans</i>	<i>Neohouzeous dullosa</i>	
29.	<i>Pakpa</i>	<i>Gaikhure or Unew tarul</i>	<i>Pterospernum aerifolia</i>	
30.	<i>Hangpha</i>	<i>Bhalubans</i>	<i>Dendrocalamux sikkimensis</i>	

Sources: J. R. Subba, *Yumaism, the Limboo way of life: A Philosophical Analysis*, Yakhung Mundhum Saplappa, Gangtok, 2012, pp. 269-270.

4.3a) Limboo Shamans; The Construction of Altar and Its Importance

The shamans of the Limboos do not usually build an intricate altar. Instead they prefer to build a plain small alter inside their house. But during the practice of communicating with the spirits of dead people or performing the séance, the shamans built an intricate altar; to prevent the humans from the harmful spirits like *Sasik*, *Sugut*, *Sogha*, etc. They build an altar with the use of bamboo poles which is tightly held with the use of seven-step bamboos placed in a crossed line pattern and mostly build upon the low case mud raised with the height of twelve feet. The shamans build this altar as a symbol of seven generations with whose souls the *Phedangmas* connect his/her selves to do away with the malevolent spirits. While performing the ceremony and communicating with the spirits, it is believed that the soul of the *Phedangma* rises upon the altar and ask for their (the deceased seven generational ancestral spirit) help. In the meantime, the body of *Phedangma* who usually stance in front of the altar starts to tremble and shake and moves around the altar, at the same time they utter, outcry and discuss with the spirits. At this state of possession, it is

believed that the soul of the *Phedangma* gradually rises to the bamboo ladder signifying that the shaman is traveling over the seven heavenly kingdoms settled by the gods and holy spirits.⁵⁰

In the lower portion of the altar, there lies a bamboo railing finished with the seven patterns of bamboo ropes, which resembled the kingdom of the dead people. While communicating with the spirits, it is believed that the shamans even journey through the kingdom of the dead people, to set free the spirits of the people who have lost their lives either because of the misfortune caused by the spirits of the dead people or due to illness. Hence, according to the shamans, the reason for the death of those people and getting trapped inside the kingdom of the dead souls is due to the action led by *Nahen* (the evil spirit of envy and jealous). So, the chief work of the shamans is to liberate those souls from the controls of the *Nahen*, and the community of the Limboo people believed that the only way to stop *Nahen* from causing such sickness and death is using offering animal sacrifice every three years to him.⁵¹

4.3b) Costume and Equipment's of The Limboo Shamans

The costume of the Limboo *Phedangmas* like *Muhikkum Ongshi* and *Phejiri Phedangma*, is the white Daura Suruwal which they wear while practicing the ritual functions. Along with it they also have their headdress or *Paga*, which is a cotton cloth, plain white and they wear it by covering around their head. The noteworthy equipment which they wear around their neck and body is *Phengbo* or an ornament made up of *rudraksha* beads or rosary balls. With that, they also wear a couple of *Sirpong* or small brass bells, which is worn just below the *Phengbo*. Similarly, they even carry *Laphiji* or *Thilliri Samphenze* or long swords and *Yethala* or brass plate. Like *Muhikkum Ongshi* and *Phejiri Phedangma*, *Sawara Yetchhamuk Samba* also wears white Daura

⁵⁰ Yishey Doma, Op. cit., p. 121.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 126.

Suruwal during their religious functions. The important equipment which they carry along with them while performing rituals is *Phengbo*, *Laphiji*, and *Yethala*. Apart from a few similar costumes like those of *Muhikkum Ongshi* and *Phejiri Phedangma*, the *Sawara Yetchhamuk Samba* also wear a piece of cloth that is tied in front of the body around the chest in a crisscross manner.⁵² The *Paga* of *Sawara Yetchhamuk Samba* is made up of a mixture of red and white colour cloths along with *Wasang* attached. They also wear *Aplak* but without attaching any cowries which is contain of two bracelets which is worn like a pocket belt, *Pangphoyee*; made up of red cotton cloth used as a belt, *Wasang* or attached of feathers in the empty space cone of a pointed metal, *Yesim*; is an extended platted shawl and *Hongsing Ke*; it is a hollow drum with the height of two feet.⁵³ Lastly, the costume of *Sibhak Yemi Yeboko Yeba* and *Sibhak Yemi Yeboko Yema* consist of a white extended ceremonial dress which is adorned with a pair of red color flat clothes. They also wear *Wasang*, *Aplak*, *Phengbo*, and *Yapongey*; it is made up of leather and used as a belt in the waist, the leather is mostly extracted from the skin of buck, tiger or bear. It is stitched with a line of small bells or round bells of brass which dangle all around the belt which linked to the small leather patterns. And they use *Yethala* as well.⁵⁴ The importance of these dresses and ornaments explained above show that a *Phedangma* in an ordinary dress is a *Phedangma* without any healing and spiritual power. “A *Phedangma* is enriched with all the powers and get possessed to heal the sick and cast all the evils away when he is in his ritual costumes.” Says Ram Prasad Limboo, a *Phedangma* from Sombaria, West Sikkim.⁵⁵

⁵² Nisha Thapa, Op. cit., pp. 69-70.

⁵³ J. R. Subba, Op. cit., p. 15.

⁵⁴ Nisha Thapa, Op. cit., p. 70-71.

⁵⁵ Interviewed Ram Prasad Limboo (*Sawara Yetchhamuk Samba* and deputy director of fishery), (M), 58 years, Sombarey, West Sikkim, on 16.12.2019.

4.4) The Use of Local Medicine by The Limboos of Sikkim

The medicinal knowledge of the Limboo community is as widespread as the knowledge contained by the Lepcha and Bhutia community of Sikkim. Among the nine types of *Phedangmas*, one of the *Phedangma*, who is known as *Sidapangdang* is a medicinal practitioner and contains a vast knowledge about the medicinal plants and different parts of animals, to be used for the curing of different illnesses. Apart from them, the common Limboo people also contains knowledge about the curing of different illness. Similarly, according to work done by Hemant K. Badola and Bharat K. Pradhan related to the medicinal use of the Limboo people in Sikkim, states that:

“The highest ICF (Information Consensus Factor) value for ailments, such as, cut and wound, diarrhoea and dysentery, children related problems, cough, and cold, and fever and headache may be related to the common nature of ailments existing in the village life in every part of the world, and is the result of great agreement on the use of same species by Limboo in the study area. It was observed that the Limboo women keep a good knowledge of the diseases associated with the children especially, stomach-ache, diarrhoea, dysentery, intestinal worms, cold and cough and fever, etc., because the rate of exchange of information is high amongst the women. Nevertheless, concerning the knowledge on ethnomedicinal plants, the female was found lagging behind the male, which might be either because the traditional knowledge in the family or community is passed from the male parent to his first-born son...”⁵⁶

Therefore, it is clearly understood that the Limboos of Sikkim contains the knowledge to cure the different illness that prevails in their society.

⁵⁶ Hemant K. Badola and Bharat K. Pradhan, Indigenous Knowledge of Limboo Tribe in Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve, K. P. Singh (ed.), *Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge*, Vol. 12, (1-4), pp. 355-369, National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources, New Delhi, 2013.

Table. 4.2a: Use of Different Wild Plants by The Limboos to Cure Different Illness

Sl. no	Limboo names	Nepali names	Scientific name	Part of the plants
1.	<i>Wana</i>	<i>Abijal</i>	<i>Drymaria cordata</i>	Whole plant
2.	<i>Ning</i>	<i>Bikhuma</i>	<i>Aconitum spp.</i> ,	Tubers
3.	<i>Sekhoksing</i>	<i>Chuthro</i>	<i>Berberis aristate</i>	
4.	<i>Kho? yo? Ma</i>	<i>Bhimsenpati</i>	<i>Buddleja asiatica</i>	Tender shoots
5.	<i>Kherabhe</i>	<i>Bhuinchampa</i>	<i>Kaempforia rotunda</i>	Tubers
6.	<i>Suttak</i>	<i>Chariamilo</i>	<i>Oxalis corniculate</i>	Foliage
7.	<i>Chegutukma sida</i>	<i>Ankhle</i>	<i>Achyranthes aspera</i>	Roots
8.	<i>Sungkhing</i>	<i>Chireyta</i>	<i>Swertia chirata</i>	Whole plant
9.	<i>Muyagosing</i>	<i>Kalo Dhatura</i>	<i>Datura fastuosa</i>	Fruit
10.	<i>Lungsoot</i>	<i>Ghewkumari</i>	<i>Aloe sp</i>	Leaves
11.	<i>Tangdingbrok</i>	<i>Tamarke</i>	<i>Stephania spp.</i> ,	Modified stems
12.	<i>Thokphella</i>	<i>Gurans</i>	<i>Rhododendron cinnamomeum</i>	Flowers
13.	<i>Murse? Yama</i>	<i>Halhaley</i>	<i>Rumex nepalensis</i>	Roots
14.	<i>Harchur</i>	<i>Harchur</i>	<i>Viscum aritculatum</i>	Whole plant
15.	<i>Panboti</i>	<i>Jatamansi</i>	<i>Nardostachys jatamansi</i>	Rhizome
16.	<i>Sammakhu</i>	<i>Jimbu</i>	<i>Allium hypsistum</i>	Bulb
17.	<i>Phamaklangba</i>	<i>Kalijhar</i>	<i>Eupatorium odoratum</i>	Leaves
18.	<i>Kurki</i>	<i>Kurtki</i>	<i>Picrorhiza kurooa</i>	Whole plant

19.	<i>Yikphura</i>	<i>Lalwanti</i>	<i>Mimosa pudica</i>	Whole plant
20.	<i>Lootise?</i>	<i>Lalgeri</i>	<i>Abrus precatorius</i>	Fruit
21.	<i>Pijuma</i>	<i>Lankuri</i>	<i>Fraxinus floribunda</i>	Bark
22.	<i>Pakhanbet</i>	<i>Pakhanbet</i>	<i>Bergenia ciliate</i>	Leaves
23.	<i>Nyahuksida</i>	<i>Panchaunley</i>	<i>Orchis latifolia</i>	Bulb
24.	<i>Pyakhohee</i>	<i>Photchyang</i>	<i>Curcuma amada</i>	Rhizomes
25.	<i>Nebosida</i>	<i>Pinaseylahra</i>	<i>Clematis buchnaniana</i>	
26.	<i>Sawangyamden</i>	<i>Burookhati</i>	<i>Astilbe rivulans</i>	Stem
27.	<i>Warekpa</i>	<i>Siltimbur</i>	<i>Litsea cubeba</i>	Fruits

Source: J. R. Subba, *Yumaism, the Limboo way of life: A Philosophical Analysis*, Yakthung Mundhum Saplappa, Gangtok, 2012, pp. 268-269.

Table. 4.2b: Use of Different Wild Plants by The Limboos to Cure Different Illness

Sl. no	Limboo names	Part of the Plants	Uses
1.	<i>Wana/Ana</i>	Whole plant	It is of two types; plant with big leaves is use for fever and plant with small leaves is use for nose cures, sinusitis and nose blocks. It can also be used for broken bones of domestic animals like cow, pig, hen etc. And its juice can also be used for children with the problem of green dysentery (<i>moss</i>).
2.	<i>Ning</i>	Tubers	It can be used for poisoning and only an expert <i>Yeba</i> and <i>Samba</i> can use it. It can also be used as an amulet.

3.	<i>Sekhoksing</i>	-	-
4.	<i>Kho? yo? Ma</i>	Tender shoots	It can be used as a medicine for fever, body ache and stress.
5.	<i>Kherabhe/ Khamdi Phuma</i>	Tubers	It can be used as a medicine in broken bones and all the bone related problems.
6.	<i>Suttak</i>	Foliage	It can be used in body aches and also provided to the women with child-delivery for energy.
7.	<i>Chegutukma sida/ sidakpa</i>	Roots	One which is extracted from high altitude is use for broken bones and also for tuberculosis.
8.	<i>Sungkhing</i>	Whole plant	It can used for fever, broken bones and for blood purification.
9.	<i>Muyagosing</i>	Fruit	It can be used for problems like gout and also for dog with mental disorder.
10.	<i>Lungsoot</i>	Leaves	It is of four types but only two of its species can be used as a medicine; one with small black leaves can be used for gastritis; and one with the big white leaves can be used for burn skin, throat pain, etc.
11.	<i>Tangdingbrok</i>	Modified stems	It is of two types; one with black colour is rarely found and can be used for every health-related problem; and yellow one is use to provide energy and increase blood in the body.

12.	<i>Thokphella</i>	Flowers	It is mostly use for blood purification and can be consumed twice or thrice in a year.
13.	<i>Murse? Yama/Tanksang lhaphok</i>	Roots	Its roots can be used for curing kidney problems, liver problems and for jaundice. And its leaves are used for curing sickness in animals like buffalo and sheep.
14.	<i>Harchur/Kheboklang</i>	Whole plant	It can be used for broken bones, cold, cough and for brain related problems.
15.	<i>Panboti</i>	Rhizome	It can be used for cold and cough.
16.	<i>Sammakhu</i>	Bulb	It can be used for cold, cough and back ache.
17.	<i>Phamaklangba</i>	Leaves	It can be used in broken bones and fever.
18.	<i>Kurki</i>	Whole plant	It can be used in fever, jaundice, tuberculosis, gastritis, bone related problems and for curing wounds.
19.	<i>Yikphura</i>	Whole plant	It can be used for the women with child-delivery; for energy and also for eye weakness.
20.	<i>Lootise?</i>	Fruit	It cleanses the eye and act as an eye cleaner and during night it also protects humans from evil spirits.
21.	<i>Pijuma</i>	Bark	It can be used for back ache and bone related diseases.
22.	<i>Lungphettee</i>	Leaves	It can be used for body ache and bone related problems.

23.	<i>Nyahuksida</i>	Bulb, roots	It can be used for diarrhoea, cuts, wounds and bone related problems.
24.	<i>Pyakhohee/Mang ya ma</i>	Rhizomes	It can be used for body ache, cough and especially used for child related sickness.
25.	<i>Nebosida</i>	Stalk	It can be use in a form of juice for nose cure, sinusitis and nose blocks.
26.	<i>Sawangyamden</i>	Stem	It can be used for body ache, strong teeth and is good for ear.
27.	<i>Warekpa</i>	Fruits	It can be used for fever, cough and body weakness.

Interviewed Bolan Dhoj Subba (*Sibhak Yemi Yeboko Yeba*), (M), 56 years, Basnet Gaon (Pakyong), East Sikkim, on 21.01.2020. And

Interviewed Dal Karna Subba (*Sibhak Yemi Yeboko Yeba*), (M), 56 years, Saureni (Assam Lingzey), East Sikkim, on 22.01.2020.



Fig. 4.1: *Sibhak Yemi Yeboko Yeba* Dal Karna from Sauren (Assam Lingzey).



Fig. 4.2: *Sibhak Yemi Yeboko Yeba* Bolan Dhoj from Basnet Goan (Pakyong).

4.4a) Use of Crabs and Frogs for Medicinal Purposes

- i. A small crab which is known in Limboo language as *Hangma Sangarung Khebok* and *Rani Gangata* in Nepali is a 15-20 mm long and light body crab, which is used by the Limboos for the curing of diarrhoea. A white colour crab which is known in Limboo language as *Tetlabungy Sangarung Khebok* and *Dudhey Gangata* in Nepali is a light body crab, having its length around 15-20 mm and is also used for the curing of diarrhoea. These crabs are mostly found in muddy areas and irrigational channels, which are used for medicinal purposes and even for food.⁵⁷
- ii. *Yanglukma* in Limboo and *Mon-Paha* in Nepali is a frog, which is 118-120 mm long and considered as one of the largest frogs, which is found in the altitude of 1800 m and use mostly for medicinal purposes. The egg of this frog is also used as an antibiotic medicine and is not suitable for consumption. The adult frog can be consumed as a medicine in the form of soup and even dried for later use. The urine of the adult frog is also used as a medicine to cure the sickness like smallpox, plague, etc., by swallowing its urine and it is collected after keeping it in water for the whole night.⁵⁸
- iii. *Khimbyama* in Limboo and *Pirey Paha* in Nepali is a medium-sized frog with a length of 70-72 mm, found in higher altitudes and brownish-green in colour and mostly use for medicinal purposes.⁵⁹
- iv. *Miklase* in Limboo and *Ningaley Mon Paha* in Nepali is a small size frog with a length of 38-40 mm, found in the high altitudes inside the freshwater or muddy areas and use for medicinal purposes.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ J. R. Subba, Op. cit., p. 239.

⁵⁸ Ibid, pp. 239-240.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 240.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 241.

Table. 4.3: Medicinal Plants Extracted from Forest and Farmland

Botanical name	Family	Common name	Ethnic uses	Use value	Locality	Status
<i>Abies densa</i> <i>Griff</i>	<i>Pinaceae</i>	<i>Gobresalla</i>	Leaf extract used in curing asthma, bronchitis and stomach pain	0.05	Forest	Wild
<i>Abrus precatorius</i> <i>Linn</i>	<i>Leguminosae</i>	<i>Lalgeri</i>	The fruit is chewed or fresh root juice is administered orally during throat pain	0.07	Farmland	Not Cultivated
<i>Aegle marmelos correa</i> ex. <i>Roxb</i>	<i>Rutaceae</i>	<i>Bel</i>	Fresh root chewed or fresh root juice is administered orally during throat pain	0.08	Farmland	Cultivated
<i>Albizzia procera</i> (<i>Roxb.</i>) <i>Benth</i>	<i>Mimosaceae</i>	<i>Seti siris</i>	The bark crushed into a paste and applied on the forehead during fever	0.09	Farmland	Not Cultivated
<i>Anthocephalus chinensis</i> (<i>Lam.</i>) <i>Rich.</i> ex <i>walp</i>	<i>Rubiaceae</i>	<i>Kadam</i>	Fruits consumed during stomach-ache	0.13	Farmland	Not Cultivated
<i>Betula utilis</i> <i>D. Don</i>	<i>Betulaceae</i>	<i>Saur</i>	Bark boiled and used for cleaning	0.25	Forest	Wild

			wounds act as an antiseptic			
<i>Clematis b Buchananiana-DC</i>	<i>Renunculaceae</i>	<i>Pinasey lahara</i>	Fresh roots/leaves mashed and inhaled through nose cures sinusitis and nose blocks	0.62	Forest	Wild
<i>Costus speciosus smith</i>	<i>Zingiberaceae</i>	<i>Betlauri</i>	Crushed rhizomes mixed with leaf juice of <i>Drymeria cordata</i> , root paste of <i>Bombax ceiba</i> administered orally in case of urinary disorder.	0.54	Farmland	Not Cultivated
<i>Girardiana palmate (Forssk) Gaudich</i>	<i>Urticaceae</i>	<i>Bhangrey sisnu</i>	Root juice taken in skin diseases and kidney problems. Root extract used in toothache. The tender shoot part ate in the form of vegetable	0.97	Forest	Wild
<i>Oroxylum indicum (L.) Kurz</i>	<i>Bignoniaceae</i>	<i>Totola</i>	Root bark boiled and the juice taken during the	0.26	Farmland	Not Cultivated

			loss of appetite, cures vomiting sensation; seed burnt and powdered and mixed with lime and applied externally to relieve throat pain; fresh seed chewed to relieve menstrual pain in women			
<i>Tagetes patella</i> Linn.	<i>Asteraceae</i>	<i>Sayapatri</i>	Chewing dried flowers cures sore throat, cough, and mouth ulcers	0.37	Farmland	Cultivated
<i>Zanthoxylum alatum</i> Roxb.	<i>Rutaceae</i>	<i>Bhaley timmur</i>	Bears such properties as <i>Z. acanthopodium</i>	0.85	Forest	Wild

Sources: Hemant K. Badola and Bharat K. Pradhan, Indigenous Knowledge of Limboo Tribe in Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve, K. P. Singh (ed.), *Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge*, Vol. 12, (1-4), pp. 355-369, National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources, New Delhi, 2013.

4.5) Interviewed with *Phedangmas*

Jeetman Limboo, a *Phedangma* from Ogeng, West Sikkim, testifies that when he was at his younger age, he used to get sick frequently, as he had epilepsy. He consulted many doctors but was not able to recover from his sickness. It was only after reaching the age of 17 he asked the local Limboo shamans to heal him but in the process, it was found that he was the chosen one as

the new *Phedangma* from his paternal side. So, he accepted the spiritual blessing of the Mother Creator and performed the ritual of ‘*Mangana*’⁶¹, and around seven hens were sacrificed to *Nahen* (the evil spirit of envy and jealousy). He says after this ritual, he did not have epilepsy. Then, he tried to learn *Mundhum* and other ritual practices but was not able to perform it accurately. Slowly and gradually he lost his interest in this field. So, he stopped playing the role of *Phedangma* after practising for a couple of years. It was noticed that Jeetman was relapsed with epilepsy. Ultimately in 2014, he decided to accept the position of *Phedangma* and work as a full-time ritual practitioner and perform the ritual of ‘*Phungsok/Gurupuja*’⁶² in front of the ‘*Tumyanghang*’⁶³. He says, it is mandatory to perform this ritual in front of the *Tumyanghang*, to show that he is capable one and can perform the rituals so that they can accept him as a new chosen one.⁶⁴

Regarding the name of the Limboo shamans like *Sibhak Yemi Yeboko Yeba*, *Sibhak Yemi Yeboko Yema*, and *Yuma Sam*, he believes that the term *Yeba* and *Yema* is not a Limboo term but a Lepcha (Rong) term. The Limboo called both the male and the female *Yeba* and *Yema* as *Ya* only.⁶⁵ This can be due to the intra cultural influences in Sikkim.

While asking him about the *Phedangmas* and their different kinds, Jeetman gave a new understanding of the *Yuma Sam* and stated that it is also known in Limboo society as *Mang-thuk-ma*. He further gives additional knowledge regarding *Yuma Sam*. He says that *Yuma Sam* is divided into two groups. a) One is blessed from *Yuma* and possessed by the spirit of the *Yuma*. While being in possession, the priest will start speaking in Limboo language fluently even if he/she had never

⁶¹ (a ritual for the prosperity of the clan or lineage), Nisha Thapa, Op. cit., p. 133.

⁶² (The biggest ritual for the *Phedangma* to maintain and gain power and knowledge), Ibid, p. 135.

⁶³ (Limboo village council who are experts in Limboo culture and heritage as well as village elders especially having very good knowledge about their own culture and traditions), Ibid, p. 138.

⁶⁴ Interviewed Jeetman Subba (*Phejiri Phedangma*), (M), 49 years, Ogeng (Soreng), West Sikkim, on 09.08.2019.

⁶⁵ Interviewed Jeetman Subba (*Phejiri Phedangma*), (M), 49 years, Ogeng (Soreng), West Sikkim, on 09.08.2019.

heard or learned of this language before. They wear fully white clothes from top to bottom and do not use drums while performing the rituals.⁶⁶

b) On the other hand, the other group of *Yuma Sam* is believed to be blessed from forest deity (*Banas candy*). While in the state of possession, they do not speak Limboo language and use ritual drums while performing the rituals. They wear red and white headgear and a white skirt. And they never perform rituals in the house of the people rather they perform their rituals in their temple itself.⁶⁷

While asking about the present status of the *Phedangmas*. He, in a remorse tone, says that the number of *Phedangmas* is decreasing day by day in the Limboo society. Earlier there used to be two to three *Phedangmas* from a single-family but things have changed drastically. It is due to the ignorance of their original religion and their respect and allegiance towards their *Phedangmas*.⁶⁸

Jeetman points out that even while performing rituals, in recent times, people do not sacrifice animals. still, the blood of the animals is necessary for all the meaningful ceremonies and rituals to be conducted. He further adds that people bring fruits and vegetables as offerings instead of animals which sometimes do not work especially during the ordination for new *Phedangmas* the blood of the sacrificed hen is mandator. He also points out that, in most cases, he neither force people to sacrifice animals nor demands any fruits or anything for the rituals. This is because he fears that if forced, the ordinary people might convert into Christianity or any other religion where sacrifices of animals and offerings of any kind are not needed. When the people start to distance

⁶⁶ Interviewed Jeetman Subba (*Phejiri Phedangma*), (M), 49 years, Ogeng (Soreng), West Sikkim, on 09.08.2019.

⁶⁷ Interviewed Jeetman Subba (*Phejiri Phedangma*), (M), 49 years, Ogeng (Soreng), West Sikkim, on 09.08.2019.

⁶⁸ Interviewed Jeetman Subba (*Phejiri Phedangma*), (M), 49 years, Ogeng (Soreng), West Sikkim, on 09.08.2019.

themselves from the indigenous knowledge system and rituals, the age-old knowledge system of the community and the folk healing practices also becomes just a history. Which is a significant loss to the community as a whole.⁶⁹



Fig. 4.3: *Phejiri Phedangma* Jeetman from Ogeng (Soreng)

Lastly, Jeetman explains that this is also due to the introduction of modern education and scientific knowledge. The people has stopped believing in the power of *Phedangmas* and their

⁶⁹ Interviewed Jeetman Subba (*Phejiri Phedangma*), (M), 49 years, Ogeng (Soreng), West Sikkim, on 09.08.2019.

lineage systems. Whenever a person shows the signs of becoming *Phedangma* his/her family members refused him/her to be *Phedangma*. He/she will be taken to hospitals and medicated to cure sickness. This is also one of the reasons why there is lesser number of *Phedangmas* in Sikkim.⁷⁰



Fig. 4.4: *Sawara Yetchhamuk Samba* Ram Prasad from Sombaria.

Ram Prasad, who is a *Sawara Yetchhamuk Samba* says that the impact of modern medicinal practices is significant on the derecognition of the indigenous medicinal practices. He is of the opening that only older people use indigenous medicines in different health problems like pneumonia, fever, asthma, tuberculosis, etc. He says although the indigenous medicines take a

⁷⁰ Interviewed Jeetman Subba (*Phejiri Phedangma*), (M), 49 years, Ogeng (Soreng), West Sikkim, on 09.08.2019.

longer time to cure, it does not contain any side effects as compare to modern medicine /biomedicine.⁷¹

Ram Prasad further says that, this folk healing and, medical knowledge system is unknown to the younger generation and they do not give importance to this knowledge system and mostly depend upon the modern medicine/biomedicine. He added that, it is due to the lack of guidance by the parents of the young children, who do not teach their children about the importance of the indigenous knowledge system and who depend upon the Western education system. This, according to him, not only led to the derecognition of the indigenous knowledge system but also put a negative impact on the indigenous culture and tradition as a whole. According to him if these indigenous knowledge systems are not appropriately preserved then in near future it will disappear completely. And lastly, he added that due to the forest laws in the state those medicinal practitioners to some extend were not able to get the medicinal plants which they needed to cure different illnesses and this is also the reason behind the knowledge of local system getting vanishing.⁷²

To conclude the faith healing and medicinal history of the Limboos in Sikkim, it is clearly understood, that the Limboos are having their folk healers called *Phedangmas* and medicinal practitioners from the pre-historic times and as the time passed by this institution lost its importance with in the community. Today, the nine types of *Phedangmas* are not to be found in the Limboo society. It is observed that mainly four types of *Phedangmas* exist today. Most of the people have lost their faith and believe systems and are now modernised and look at this folk

⁷¹ Interviewed Ram Prasad Limboo (*Sawara Yetchhamuk Samba* and deputy director of fishery), (M), 58 years, Sombarey, West Sikkim, on 16.12.2019.

⁷² Interviewed Ram Prasad Limboo (*Sawara Yetchhamuk Samba* and deputy director of fishery), (M), 58 years, Sombarey, West Sikkim, on 16.12.2019.

medical knowledge as superstitious and irrational. Which is also mentions by Jeetman Subba, who is a *Phejiri Phedangma*, “earlier all the nine *Phedangmas* were there in the Limboo society but gradually the *Phedangmas* like *Yuma Sam*, *Sammundhum*, *Yepmundhum* and *Sidapangdang* loses its importance and started to decline. And even for other remaining *Phedangmas*, due to the impact of modern education and modern medicinal practices, people started to derecognised them.” It is also seen that even though there is a growing derecognition towards the faith healing practices of *Phedangmas* like *Muhikkum Ongshi*, *Phejiri Phedangma*, *Sawara Yetchhammuk Samba*, *Sibhak Yemi Yeboko Yeba* and *Sibhak Yemi Yeboko Yema*, but still, in nook and corners of Sikkim we can find the young *Phedangmas* coming up and doing their duties in their community. The power to reborn of the *Phedangmas* cannot be underestimated. It was the *Phedangmas* who heal the people when the dispensaries and hospitals were not established in Sikkim. Jeetman Subba, fears in saying that if people continued to ignore the power of *Phedangmas* and derecognised them in their society, then the rich knowledge of the *Phedangmas* will perish, which will lead to the extinct of the *Phedangma* institution.

CHAPTER - V

THE ROLE OF THE BRITISH AND THE RISE OF MODERN MEDICAL PRACTICES IN SIKKIM

In the eighteenth century, after the battle of Plassey in the year (1757), the British were successful in having the supremacy over Bengal. This led to the beginning of a new system of Politics- comprised of a modern economy, military policy and administration. The British started to spread their power in the Bengal, and Sikkim shares its border with Bengal in the South. Sikkim, from the very early period, had its religious and political relation with Tibet. But not with Bengal. The British in Bengal then started to build a relationship with the raja of Sikkim, which brought a change in the course of the history of Sikkim. They always wanted to have a trade relation with Tibet, for which they regarded Sikkim as a medium to accomplish their dream.¹ They made many attempts to established their relation with Sikkim but failed. Ultimately, they were able to do so when there occurred a hostility between the British and Nepal. At that time, a rumour had gone viral that Bhutan and Nepal were planning to combine their armies to oppose the British, which is divided by Sikkim. Hence, the British desired to stop Nepal from receiving any help from anywhere, particularly from China, who hold a dominant power over Nepal since 1792, and also to isolate Nepal. For this purpose, Adam, the Secretary of Government of India, decided to keep a connection with Sikkim, since Sikkimese royal family had a close relation with Tibet, who further relied on China.²

¹ Suresh Kumar Gurung, *Sikkim, Ethnicity and Political Dynamics: A Triadic Perspective*, Kunal Books, New Delhi, 2011, p. 36.

² P. R. Rao, *India and Sikkim (1814-1970)*, Sterling Publishers (P) Ltd, New Delhi, 1972, p. 1.

Likewise, in the year 1815, the Governor-General, Lord Moira, convinced *Chogyal* Tsugphud Namgyal with the help of Captain Barre Latter to form an alliance in opposition to their common rival, i.e., Nepal and in return the British assured to give back Sikkim all the lost territories to Nepal earlier. With the defeat of the Nepalese army under Amarsingh Thapa, a Treaty was signed in the year 1815 known as Treaty of Segauli. As agreed, the areas placed between the Mechi on the Eastern side and river Teesta on the Western side, comprised of total 4000 sq. miles, which was captured by Nepal earlier, was returned to Sikkim by signing the Treaty of Titalia³ in the year 1817. Although, few areas like Tarai, Dabgong and nearby places was not returned to Sikkim. But, couple of months after the signing of the Treaty of Titalia, Morung was presented to Sikkim by Lord Moira as a gift. This treaty had put restrictions on Nepal's intervention and its desires, and also confined the power of the *Chogyal's* in a considerable amount. However, the problem started again in 1827, between Nepal and Sikkim on the question of the control of Ontoo (area situated on the Eastern side of river Mechi). According to the Treaty of Titalia, *Chogyal* forwarded the matter to the Governor General, Lord William Bentinck. The British Governor-General then sent Captain G. A. Lloyd and J. W. Grant, to look into the issue. When they were on their mission, they came across Darjeeling and saw it as the ideal place for the British Sanitarium and accordingly they made Darjeeling as the part of British Sanitarium in 1835.⁴ After Darjeeling was put under British control, the relation between the British and the Sikkim started to deteriorate,

³ "The Treaty of Titalia ran into ten Articles... (1) not to commit aggression on the Gurkhas or any other state (Article two); (2) to submit to the arbitration of the Company his disputes with Nepal and other neighbouring states (Article three); (3) to render military assistance to the Company in case of need when they are engaged in war in the hills (Article four); (4) not to allow any European or American to reside in his kingdom without obtaining the permission of the Company (Article five); (5) to deliver up British-Indian dacoits who may take refuge in his kingdom (+Article six); (6) not to afford protection to the British-Indian revenue defaulters or other delinquents (Article seven); and (7) not to levy transit duties on British merchandize and to afford protection to merchants and traders from Company's provinces (Article eight). In return for these privileges, the Company under Article nine, guaranteed to the Raja and his successors the peaceable possession of the territory made over to him under Article one. The parties agreed to ratify the treaty within one month of its signing (Article ten)." Ibid, pp. 3-4.

⁴ Suresh Kumar Gurung, Op. cit., pp. 37-38.

which was followed by the signing of the Treaty on 28 March 1861 at Tumlong. In 1886, when the British decided to send a trade mission to Tibet, it was fully opposed by the Tibetan and Lingtu (a part of Sikkim) was captured by the Tibetan forces. This led the British to send a military mission under General Graham in 1888 and Tibetan forces were pushed back from Lingtu. Due to the growing problems between the British and Tibet. J. C. White was appointed as the first political officer of Sikkim in 1889. Following this event in 1890 Anglo-China Treaty was signed, and China officially recognized Sikkim as the British protectorate.⁵

Similar, to trade, the practices of modern medicine/biomedicine also enter Sikkim. With the growing influences in the bordering areas, the British physicians also attended both military and political tasks. The main work of this physician was to keep up the good health of the British armies and also to treat those peoples who were injured by British soldiers. Hence, modern medicine/biomedicine officially arrived in Sikkim, with the conquering British soldiers, particularly after the 1888-89, following the growth of British authority in Sikkim.⁶

5.1) Introduction of Modern Medicines and Health Centers in Sikkim

After establishing the firm hold in Sikkim by the British and signing the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890. The British medical officers started settling in Sikkim. The important work of these medical officers was to look after the good health of the British representatives, but they began to look after the health problems of both the Sikkimese nobles and the common people. The primary aim of the British diplomats in providing medical assistance to local people was to gain

⁵ Ibid, pp. 41-42.

⁶ Alex McKay, *Their Footprints Remains: Biomedical Beginnings Across the Indo-Tibetan Frontier*, IAS Publications Series, Amsterdam, 2007, p. 21.

support from the local community. This policy of the British became the key policy in established their political ambition in Sikkim and also in spreading modern medicine/biomedicine in Sikkim.⁷

Although at the initial stage the use of new medicines by the local people of Sikkim were very meagre and limited. But gradually by the end of the 20th century, the practice of modern medicine/biomedicine started to become widespread among the local people and made it an important source of medical cure. As compare to Sikkim, other parts of the Himalayan states adopted the practices of modern medicines/biomedicine only after the post-colonial period but in Sikkim, this new system of medicinal use was adopted during the colonial period itself.⁸ The important factors that led to the spread of modern medicine/biomedicine are discuss below.

5.1a) Growing Number of Patients in Different Government Health Centers and Gangtok Hospital

As we have already discussed the coming of the British in Sikkim with their political motive as to have trading relation with Tibet. For which they have used modern health system to fulfill their political ambition in Sikkim. The beginning of this motive started by opening the Gangtok dispensary for the public, which was actually constructed for Imperial Agencies in the year 1890. The need to provide medical services to the local people was put forwarded in the year 1891 by the Army Medical Officer, Surgeon D. G. Marshall, who wrote a letter to Political Officer for the need to open the Gangtok dispensary for the public purposes.⁹ Which was accepted by the Political Officer and for the construction of the civil dispensary an allowance of rupees 1,330 was sanctioned in the year 1895-96. Where total rupees 974 was used for its maintenance and for

⁷ J. R. Subba, *History, Culture and Customs of Sikkim*, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 2008, p. 243.

⁸ Alex McKay, *Op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁹ Sunita Kharel, Public Health, in Sunita Kharel and Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia, (ed.), *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Home Department, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok, 2013, p. 476.

hygiene 145 rupees.¹⁰ Following are the list of the patients who have attended the Gangtok dispensary from 1891 to 1892.

Table. 5.1: Number of Patients Attended from January 1891 to February 1892, In British Gangtok Dispensary

Sl. No	Period	Number of Patients
1.	25 January - 25 February 1891	39
2.	25 February - 25 March 1891	64
3.	25 March - 25 April 1891	62
4.	25 April - 25 May 1891	37
5.	25 May - 25 June 1891	47
6.	25 June - 25 July 1891	30
7.	25 July - 25 August 1891	33
8.	25 August - 25 September 1891	66
9.	25 September - 25 October 1891	128
10.	25 October - 25 November 1891	54
11.	25 November - 25 December 1891	81
12.	25 December - 25 January 1892	85
13.	25 January - 25 February 1892	78

Sources: Sunita Kharel, Public Health, in Sunita Kharel and Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia, (ed.), *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Home Department, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok, 2013, p. 477.

After the construction of civil dispensary in Gangtok in the year 1896-97, a new dispensary, was opened in Chidam in the year 1902. Following are the percentage of local people who have

¹⁰ Alex McKay, Op. cit., p. 88.

attended the Gangtok dispensary which was constructed for the common people in the year 1896-97.

Table. 5.2: Percentage of Local People Attended the Gangtok Dispensary From 1896 to 1902

Sl. No	Year	Daily average attendance
1.	1896-97	6.5
2.	1897-98	7.4
3.	1898-99	7.4
4.	1899-1900	5.9
5.	1900-01	5.3
6.	1901-02	12.8

Sources: Alex McKay, *Their Footprints Remains: Biomedical Beginnings Across the Indo-Tibetan Frontier*, IIAS Publications Series, Amsterdam, 2007, p. 90.

Apart from the dispensaries in Gangtok and Chidam, one more dispensary was constructed in the year 1908 at Rangpo. Although the dispensary at Rangpo was built for the Public Works Department or Bengal employees, gradually large number of the local people also started to show up for the treatment of their illness. And in the same year, local *Kazis* and *Thikadars* also showed their willingness to construct a dispensary if government contributed drugs and other equipment in their dispensaries.¹¹

Now following are the number of patients treated in the Gangtok dispensary from the year 1903 to 1925.

¹¹ Sunita Kharel, Public Health, in Sunita Kharel and Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia, (ed.), Op. cit., p. 479.

Table. 5.3: Treatment of Patient from the Year 1903 to 1925 In Gangtok Dispensary

Year	Number of Patient Treated			Result of Indoor Patients				Expenditures in Rs	Daily Average
	Outdoor	Indoor	Total	Discharge	Absconding	Died	Remaining Under Treatment		
1903	-	-	5934	-	-	-	-	-	23.88%
1904	-	-	8833	-	-	-	-	-	35.18%
1905	-	-	7063	-	-	-	-	-	32.24%
1909	7274	218	-	192	-	13	13	2502	38.95%
1911	7205	225	-	-	-	12	-	3415	34.52%
1913	8096	244	-	216	8	14	6	5276	39.38%
1914	8646	227	-	197	8	5	17	4901	37.40%
1915	-	215	7940	-	-	13	-	-	37.88%
1918	8473	346	-	-	-	-	-	-	46.70%
1921	7980	217	-	-	-	-	-	-	32.49%
1925	7997	337	-	-	-	-	-	-	21.89%

Sources: Sunita Kharel, *Gangtok: Metamorphosis of A Stereotype-Sikkim-Urban Conglomerate into A Colonial Hill-Station (1889-1950): A Historical Construct*, Unpublished Ph. D Thesis, Department of History, University of North Bengal, 2005, p. 214, <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in>, accessed on 28.08.2019.

In the following table, we will try to look into the number of patients treated from various diseases in the dispensaries of Chidam, Rangpo and Gangtok dispensaries from the year 1908 to 1919.

Table. 5.4: Patients Treated in Rangpo, Chidam and Gangtok Dispensary from 1908 to 1919; Suffering from Different Diseases

Diseases	1908-09	1909-10	1910-11	1912-13	1913-14	1914-15	1915-16	1916-17	1917-18	1918-19
Worms	5250	11428	10618	10898	8817	NA	10168	8229	6590	2517
Malaria	2257	3679	6114	3821	3786	5125	3380	4179	4004	1360
Goiter	776	1093	713	1371	1560	1115	1240	1055	846	474
Skin Diseases	1179	267	3	1099	1331	2169	2506	2210	1938	951
Small Pox	733	357	NA	19	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Ulcer	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2142	NA	NA	NA	NA

Sources: Sunita Kharel, Public Health, in Sunita Kharel and Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia, (ed.), *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Home Department, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok, 2013, p. 480.

Apart from the above-mentioned dispensaries, a new hospital was also built in 1912 at Gangtok and was used from 1917 onwards. It was inaugurated on 24 September 1917 by the *Chogyal* of Sikkim, Tashi Namgyal. In the newly built hospital at Gangtok, different departments were included a) administrative block b) stores c) dispensary d) medical examination unit and e) chamber of civil surgeon and medical officer. It had two main wardrooms. The total expenditure of Rs 1,444 was spent on purchasing for necessary equipment's for the newly constructed hospital. During the early 1920s, Gangtok hospital was further expanded, where the quarters for medical officers were built; apart from tuberculosis ward which was approved by Government in the year 1926. From 1927 onwards the use of kerosene lamp for lighting was replaced by electric lights. Likewise, in the year 1928 fix drainage system and water taps were also made in the Gangtok hospital. In the new ward of tuberculosis, the payment system was also started for those who could

afford for treatment, like for example, eight *annas* for smaller room per day and rupees 1 for bigger room per day from 1928 onwards.¹²

In the following table, we will look into the total expense used by the Government for sanitization and medical works, which gradually increases due to the buying of Western medicines for the different dispensaries and Gangtok hospital.¹³

Table. 5.5: List of Expenses on Sanitation and Medical Works From 1907 to 1932; Especially on Western Medicine

Sl. No	Year	Expenditure in Rupees
1.	1907	4389-5-6
2.	1908	5140-5-5
3.	1909	6015-6-9
4.	1910	8524-14-2
5.	1911	9655-9-0
6.	1912	10492-11-10
7.	1913	12686-12-2
8.	1914	10856-15-5
9.	1915	12571-2-1
10.	1916	13915
11.	1917	13928
12.	1918	16220
13.	1919	15872

¹² Ibid, pp. 484-85.

¹³ Ibid, p. 483.

14.	1920	13919
15.	1921	16726
16.	1922	20684
17.	1923	27284
18.	1924	28543
19.	1925	28070
20.	1926	30533
21.	1927	27722
22.	1928	30724
23.	1929	NA
24.	1930	25932
25.	1931	28232
26.	1932	33486

Sources: Sunita Kharel, *Gangtok: Metamorphosis of A Stereotype-Sikkim-Urban Conglomerate into A Colonial Hill-Station (1889-1950): A Historical Construct*, Unpublished Ph. D Thesis, Department of History, University of North Bengal, 2005, p. 218, <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in>, accessed on 28.08.2019.

5.1b) Appointment of Medical Officers in Different Health Centers

When J. C. White was appointed as the first Political Officer in Sikkim, Dr, D. G. Marshall was also sent as a Surgeon Captain at Gangtok in 1891 as a medical officer of J. C. White. After him, in 1892, he was substituted by Dr. A. W. T. Buist Sparks as the Surgeon Captain in Gangtok. Likewise, Dr. G. F. W. Ewens was appointed as the Surgeon Captain in the year 1893 who stayed as the Surgeon Captain till 1895 in Gangtok dispensary. After Dr. G. F. W. Ewens no European physician was appointed as the next Surgeon of the Gangtok dispensary. Instead in the year 1905 an Indian trained medical assistant was appointed in the Gangtok dispensary who served in

Gangtok dispensary for a few years. Till the construction of civil dispensary in the year 1896-97, all the above mention Surgeon Captain work was to serve J. C. White, his staff members and military personnel.¹⁴ For civil dispensary and attending the health checkup of *Chogyal* and the royal family, J. N. Turner was appointed as the Civil Surgeon in Gangtok dispensary from the year 1910 to 1919. It was under his tenure that the allowance for his work was increased from rupees 100 per month to 150 per month. Following are the letter he wrote to the superintendent, through the Political Officer of Sikkim, for the increase in his allowances from the Sikkim Darbar.

'From'

(The civil surgeon and Superintendent of vaccination)

(SIKKIM AGENCY, GANGTOK)

To,

The Superintendent, Sikkim state,

Through the Political Officer in Sikkim.

Dated Gangtok, the 9/Jan/1917

Sir,

I have the honour to request that you would kindly ask His Highness the Maharaja of Sikkim, to increase the allowance I received from the Darbar, from Rs. 100/- to Rs. 150/- per mensem.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

Civil Surgeon,

Sikkim Agency.¹⁵

¹⁴ Alex McKay, Op. cit., p. 89.

¹⁵ File No. 17 of 1916, serial no 5 (xv), Cultural Affairs and Heritage Department, General Department, Sikkim State Archive, 1916, p. 12.

In response to his letter, the Superintendent of Sikkim state, sent a letter to the civil surgeon Lt. J. N Turner, informing him about the sanction of the amount by G/I (Government of India), through the Darbar, which he has requested for.

Sikkim state

Office of the Superintendent, Sikkim state.

HEADING: - Allowance to C. S for attendance on H. H and family.

To,

Lt. J. N. Turner, I. S. M. D.

Civil Surgeon, Gangtok.

Sir,

With reference to your application dated the 9th January 1917 for an increase of Rs 50/- to the allowance paid by the Darbar for medical attendance on H. H and family, I have the honour to inform you that the G/I in the Foreign and Political Dept. Have sanctioned the increase of the allowance from Rs. 100/- to Rs, 150/- a month with effect from the 3rd July 1917.

I have etc.

S. S. S.¹⁶

Turner was later replaced by J. C. Dyer in the year 1919 as the Civil Surgeon of Gangtok.¹⁷ In the year 1922 the whole work of Sikkim medical activity like hygiene, dispensaries etc., was put upon the charge of Dr. J. C. Dyer along with working as the Civil Surgeon of Gangtok hospital. Apart from all these works like Turner, his responsibility was also to look after the health issues of *Chogyal* and his family members. And for serving the royal family he was provided with an additional sum of rupees 150 per month from the *Chogyal*.¹⁸

¹⁶ File No. 17 of 1916, serial no 5 (xv), Cultural Affairs and Heritage Department, General Department, Sikkim State Archive, 1916, p. 24.

¹⁷ Sunita Kharel, *Gangtok: Metamorphosis of A Stereotype-Sikkim-Urban Conglomerate into A Colonial Hill-Station (1889-1950): A Historical Construct*, Unpublished Ph. D Thesis, Department of History, University of North Bengal, 2005, pp. 177-183, <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in>, accessed on 28.08.2019.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 219.

Dr. J. C. Dyer remained as the Civil Surgeon of Gangtok hospital till he left Sikkim in the year 1928. He was replaced as a Civil Surgeon by Dr. Kenneth Percival Elloy DCM, who earlier worked as his sub-assistant surgeon till 1932. Later on, after him, Dr. W. St. A. Hendricks was appointed as the Civil Surgeon of Gangtok.¹⁹

Now, we will discuss the two important factors, i.e., education and Christian missionaries, that led to the growth of modern health system in Sikkim after the coming of the British in Sikkim.

5.2) British Education System and Modern Medicinal Practices in Sikkim

From the time of the formation of British authority in Sikkim, they have always thought of establishing the modern education system in Sikkim. J. C. White, the first Political Officer of Sikkim, was responsible for introducing an education system which was based on modern system. An important purpose for British to establishing a system of training based on modern education was to generate a set of local people who would be faithful towards British in the future and work for British authority in Sikkim. For such purposes, at the initial stage, they started providing modern education to the young family members of *Chogyal* and the family members of the nobles like sons of *Kazis* and Lamas in Sikkim. They began their plan when J. C. White sent the sons of *Kazis* and Lamas who were around eighteen in number to Darjeeling to pursue the British system of education. For such purpose they even provided financial assistance of these children. The main intention of British to introduce the modern education system was to train them in the British way, who would give support to the Colonial decision on the question of choosing new successor and not put questions on future British plans in Sikkim. Alongside they wanted to put on the throne of Sikkim, a kind of ruler who would possess Colonial way of thinking.²⁰

¹⁹ Alex McKay, Op. cit., p. 101.

²⁰ Sunita Kharel, Op. cit., pp. 193-94.

Due to this policy of British and the acceptance of modern education by the *Chogyal* and noble families of Sikkim by the year 1915, the use of Western medicine/biomedicine was increased in huge number in Sikkim as compared to Bhutan and Tibet. According to Alex McKay

“Such an education was an essential precursor to the biomedical training process, imparting the modern scientific worldview necessary for the understanding of biomedicine. The fact that this education was, in state schools, essentially secular, and did not require conversion to Christianity made it more easily acceptable to the Himalayan Buddhist aristocracy, who from the 1920s onwards came to increasingly occupy the more powerful positions in the developing medical structures.”²¹

Although till the tenure of J. C. White, none of the Sikkimese people could get an education to qualify beyond the post of the compounder, but after him Charles Bell’s policy to secure its northern border emphasized more on the modernization of Himalayan states. For such purpose, he started encouraging the Western education to Sikkimese students who were pursuing medical studies, and the ultimate aim of his was to send those students to work in Tibet. Therefore, among the first three students who were sent by British to study in Patna Medical College of Temple, and after their graduation, i.e., Tonyot Tsering and Bo Tsering graduated in 1913 and 1914 was sent by the British as sub-assistant surgeons to Tibet in Political Department dispensary. The third one known as Bhawani Das Prasad Pradhan was posted at the dispensary of Chidam in 1913 in Sikkim itself. Hence, the system of medical education started to advance in Sikkim and more students of Sikkim who were medical graduate from different colleges were appointed in many available posts. Those students who were sent to study or for trainings outside Sikkim were sponsored from

²¹ Alex McKay, Op. cit., p. 98.

the revenues of Sikkim state. For example- the cost of Lopzang Mingyur, who was sent to Campbell Medical School, Calcutta in 1924-25, the cost was born through the Durbar expanse. After he passed, he was appointed as an assistant compounder in Gangtok hospital. Similarly, those people who were trained and graduating from the Western mode of institutions were easily observed in the public health administration as it was growing and developing gradually and rooms for employment were opened in the different posts, for example appointed in the registration of birth and death divisions, Civil Veterinary divisions, etc.²²

5.2a) Construction of Different Schools on The Basis of Western Education

In the year 1895, J. C. White, the Political Officer of Sikkim, planned of establishing a boarding school on Western model at Gangtok. For such purpose, he started sending numerous proposals to the Government of Bengal. His focal point on establishing boarding school at Gangtok on the Western model was to save the expenditure which they were spending on educating the Sikkimese students at Darjeeling. On the other hand, J. C. White, also expected that those family members whose children will study in the Gangtok boarding school would also be providing financial help to the school. The following are the names of the *Kazis* and Lamas whose children's were getting their education from Darjeeling²³: a) Shew Dewan, b) Living *Kazi*, c) Sook Singh, d) Rhenock *Kazi*, e) Yangthang *Kazi*, f) Song *Kazi*, g) Sumik *Kazi*, h) Asso *Kazi*, i) Tashiding *Kazi*, j) Temi *Kazi*, k) Lachung *Kazi*, l) Lachen *Kazi*, m) Deboo *Kazi*, n) Lingthen *Kazi* and o) Magbru *Kazi*.²⁴ In reply to J. C. White's proposals, the Governor of Bengal in the year 1895, permitted the construction of a school at Gangtok. For this, the yearly amount of Rs. 3,500 was approved to maintain the school and boarding house, which also included the salary of two teachers, as estimate

²² Ibid, p. 99.

²³ Sunita Kharel, Op. cit., pp. 195-96.

²⁴ M. P. Kharel, Education, in Sunita Kharel and Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia, (ed.), Op. cit., p. 434.

sent by J. C. White. Rupees six hundred and fifty-six which was sanctioned for boarding house of twenty students and two master's residencies. All these expenses were drawn from the revenue of Sikkim. Except for Rs. 200 per month which was taken from provincial tax to pay the salary of Lama Sherab Gyatso, who was a teacher there. Although the amount for the construction of school and boarding house was sanctioned in 1895, it took around a decade to complete the school and for proper functioning. It was only in the year 1906 that it started functioning regularly by the name of Bhutia Boarding School; a Middle English school, which was located in the present day Baluakhani, Gangtok. Immediately after the construction of a Bhutia Boarding School, a new school was also started in the year 1907 as Nepali Boarding School in Lal Market at Gangtok.²⁵

Following are the table of the number of students who were studying in the Bhutia Boarding School and Nepali Boarding School in the year 1908.

Table. 5.6: Total Number of Students in The Year 1908; From Bhutia and Nepali Boarding Schools

Schools	Total Numbers	Boarders
Bhutia Boarding School	47	27 (financial support provided to the 24 students among the 27 boarders)
Nepali Boarding School	58	5

Sources: Sunita Kharel, *Gangtok: Metamorphosis of A Stereotype-Sikkim-Urban Conglomerate into A Colonial Hill-Station (1889-1950): A Historical Construct*, Unpublished Ph. D Thesis, Department of History, University of North Bengal, 2005, p. 199, <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in>, accessed on 28.08.2019.

²⁵ Sunita Kharel, Op. cit., p. 198-99.

With the development of schools in Gangtok, the British Political Officer J. C. White, was also planning to send prince Sidekeong Tulku to study in England, which was accepted and Sidekeong Tulku along with the three of his friends were sent to England for their studies in September 1906. After finishing their study, they returned to Sikkim. With the influences of Western education and thoughts, the prince desired to bring new modifications and build more schools in the state. In the meantime, he thought that most of the benefits of Western education was provided to the aristocratic families like Newar *Thikadars* and *Kazis*, he motivated the children of the local people to join the newly constructed schools. With the full consent of the Council of State, prince Sidekeong Tulku decided to established vernacular schools in the year 1909 at Pathing, Rhenock and Namchi on his direction. He even initiated the work of giving education facilities to the girl's child of landlords and *Kazi* families and opened a separated girls school at Gangtok in the year 1912.²⁶

Particularly from the year 1915, the *Kazis*, *Thikadars* and local people started to understand the value of modern education and around fourteen schools were started by *Thikadars* in various region of Sikkim by 1925. But till the year 1920, the total number of teaching staff presented in Gangtok schools were very less in number. Following are the list of the teachers in the Boarding Schools of Bhutia and Nepali Boarding School of Gangtok, along with the separate school for the daughter of *Kazis* and landlords of Sikkim in the year 1920.²⁷

Table. 5.7: List of The Teaching Staff in The Year 1920

Sl. No	Schools	Number of Teaching Staff
1.	Bhutia Boarding Schools	4 (1 Head Master and 3 Assistants)
2.	Nepali Boarding Schools	4 (1 Head Master and 3 Assistants)

²⁶ M. P. Kharel, Education, in Sunita Kharel and Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia, (ed.), Op. cit., p. 435.

²⁷ Sunita Kharel, Op. cit., p. 202.

3.	Girls School for Kazi and Landlords Daughters	2 (1 Tibetan Teacher and 1 Knitting Teacher)
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Sources: Sunita Kharel, *Gangtok: Metamorphosis of A Stereotype-Sikkim-Urban Conglomerate into A Colonial Hill-Station (1889-1950): A Historical Construct*, Unpublished Ph. D Thesis, Department of History, University of North Bengal, 2005, p. 203, <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in>, accessed on 28.08.2019.

Education system in Sikkim took a new step when *Chogyal* Tashi Namgyal brought back the administrative power to himself in the year 1918.²⁸ Hence, after 1918 the new revised set of courses was started like- English, Mathematics, Tibetan primer, Geography, Hindi, Sanskrit, History, Physical Drills and Gymnastics were imparted in the Nepali Boarding School and the subjects like Mathematics, English, Tibetan vernacular, Geography, Gymnastics, History and Physical Drills were imparted in the Bhutia Boarding School. The importance of the health of the students was also given in these schools. The annual administration report on Education for the year ending 31st march 1910, chapter 5 mentions “the health of the school boys was, however, not very good this year, owing to there being a good deal of dysentery among the boys. Some of the boys are still under medical treatment from Sanitary point of view the school site is very bad”.²⁹ These two schools which were set up in the year 1906, was now decided by the Government in the year 1925 to merge it into one school whose course would be comparable to High School of British India. It was renamed as ‘Tashi Namgyal High School’ and Mr. C. E. Dudley, a capable European educationist and a graduate of Dublin University was appointed as the Head Master in the school. It started to serve as a higher standard School of Sikkim and was also recognized under Calcutta University and came directly under the supervision of *Chogyal* Tashi Namgyal. It also consists of a management committee which was consist of eight members.³⁰

²⁸ For further information see appendix I.

²⁹ File no. Nil, Cultural Affairs and Heritage Department, Education Department, Sikkim State Archive, 1909, p. 23. For further information see appendix II and III.

³⁰ M. P. Kharel, Education, in Sunita Kharel and Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia, (ed.), Op. cit., p. 436.

Following are the list of the endowments which was granted from the year 1908 to 1932 by the Government for the education purposes.³¹

Table. 5.8: List of Endowments Granted From 1908 To 1932

Sl. No	Year	Expenditure in Rupees
1.	1908	6648
2.	1909	6417
3.	1910	7239
4.	1911	7618
5.	1912	7960
6.	1913	7031
7.	1914	7163
8.	1915	7839
9.	1916	8376
10.	1917	7994
11.	1918	8381
12.	1919	9115
13.	1920	8019
14.	1921	7432
15.	1922	11,183
16.	1923	9436
17.	1924	11,328

³¹ Sunita Kharel, Op. cit., p. 206.

18.	1925	13,873
19.	1926	20,759
20.	1927	23,002
21.	1928	NA
22.	1929	NA
23.	1930	30,654
24.	1931	27,773
25.	1932	27,680

Sources: Sunita Kharel, *Gangtok: Metamorphosis of A Stereotype-Sikkim-Urban Conglomerate into A Colonial Hill-Station (1889-1950): A Historical Construct*, Unpublished Ph. D Thesis, Department of History, University of North Bengal, 2005, p. 207, <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in>, accessed on 28.08.2019.

Sir Tashi Namgyal High School became a leading institution in Sikkim. Till 1947 from the starting of Government in Sikkim the British have upheld a total of five schools which were directed under their supervision. They are as follows:

- a) Sir Tashi Namgyal High School, Gangtok.
- b) Enchey Monastery School, Gangtok.
- c) Village School, Lachen.
- d) Village School, Lachung.
- e) School of Industry, Gangtok.³²

5.3) Christian Missionary an Important Aspect of British Influences in Sikkim

An early attempt of the Christian Missionary to enter Sikkim was made during the time of Rev William Sutherland when he came to Kalimpong to become a part of Scotland Mission Church

³² M. P. Kharel, Education, in Sunita Kharel and Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia, (ed.), Op. cit., p. 437.

in 1880 and Sikkim was selected for his part of the mission field. Since then he made many visits to Eastern and Southern districts of Sikkim as a part of missionary work and even went to Tumlong to meet the *Chogyal* of Sikkim in the year 1883 to ask for his approval for the settlement of missionary in Sikkim. He did not receive any reply from the *Chogyal*. After him many attempts were also made by missionary name Rev William Macfarlane in the year 1885 who was roaming around the part of Southern Sikkim but he too failed to receive any reply from the *Chogyal*. This was because the *Chogyal* of Sikkim did not want the Christian Missionaries to come and settle in Sikkim and since *Chogyal* never wanted to aggravate British Government further interference in Sikkim. Hence, the *Chogyal* unwillingly allowed the missionaries to visit Sikkim but was totally against the permanent settlement of missionaries in Sikkim. Therefore, Macfarlane took another step and started to send the Lepcha missionary of Kalimpong to propagate the Gospel in Sikkim and for some length was able to succeed in his mission. The entering of Christian Missionaries in Sikkim started to increasing more particularly after the war of 1888 under the new political situations. Hence, the *Chogyal* of Sikkim could not able to stop missionaries from settling in Sikkim. The first missionary settlement was established at Chidam in 1890 by Sutherland. And it was on the same year at Gangtok, the Political Officer of Sikkim J. C. White also shifted to his new Residency.³³ Starting from this year itself we can see the work of Christian Missionary as an important aspect in British influence in Sikkim. Particularly with the help of education and health, which ultimately led to the rise of modern medicinal practices in Sikkim.

Even after the establishment of Christian missionaries' settlement in Sikkim, they were unable to succeed in getting a firm foothold in Gangtok. The number of local converted Christians started to decreases in Sikkim from the year 1913 to 1922. This was mainly because most of the

³³ Alex McKay, Op. cit., p. 92.

earlier missionaries were not a medical missionary and was an evangelist. But on the other hand, the missionary's group like Scottish University Mission were able to convert the local population into the Christian faith due to their policy of medical missionary, like for example Elatji Matiyas, was a local converted Lepcha Christian who was appointed as a compounder of Chidam medical dispensary in the year 1897. This can be further proved by indicating to all those local converted Christian people who were appointed as a dispensary staff at various medical dispensaries like Rhenock, Soreng, and Dentam in 1906. Further, more dispensaries were opened in Sikkim after 1910 and accordingly by 1923-24 total eight dispensaries were opened by Christian missionaries along with dispensaries started by Scandinavian Alliance Mission in Lachung, North Sikkim in 1894 with two female missionaries. The total number of dispensaries which was maintained by the Scottish University Mission was Rhenock, Soreng, Chakhung, Dentam, Song and Wok. Those maintain by Scandinavian Alliance Mission was at Lachung and Lachen. Due to the medical services provided by the missionaries in Sikkim, the Government of India also helped them by providing medicines to the missionary dispensaries in Sikkim.³⁴ Those missionaries who came to Sikkim knew very well that, the only way to reach the local population is through medical services. Unlike Kalimpong, where most of the responsibility of medical services were under European missionaries, in Sikkim all the schools from where the local people were getting Western education and after the completion of their studies were appointed in all the dispensaries, which was under the responsibility of local people.³⁵

Apart from the health sector the missionaries also contributed to the establishment of many missionaries' schools in Sikkim. Macfarlane, when he could not get permission from the *Chogyal*

³⁴ Sunita Kharel, Public Health, in Sunita Kharel and Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia, (ed.), Op. cit., p. 487.

³⁵ Alex McKay, Op. cit., pp. 93-94.

to settle in Sikkim took another step by sending local converted Lepcha Christians of Kalimpong, to spread the Gospel in Sikkim. They also started a Training School in Sikkim and Darjeeling by appointing catechists and teachers. Along with production and translation of Christian literature into Tibetan, Lepcha and Nepali. After the completion of the training of Nepali and Lepcha teachers, Sutherland started four schools in South Sikkim by 1889 and a total of seven schools, i.e., three schools at Kitam, Chidam or Sadam, and Namthang in South and Central Sikkim, Magbo, Soreng and Chakhung at West Sikkim, and one at East Sikkim, Singtam, was constructed by the end of 1890. All these schools were constructed in the model of Middle English School.³⁶ The list of schools which was started by the church of Scottish University Missionary in the year 1909-10 was around 13-day schools and 8-night schools.³⁷ Following are the list of total number of schools from 1889 to 1947, which was opened by Scottish University Missionary and Scandinavian Alliance Mission in Sikkim.

Table. 5.9: List of Schools Opened by Scottish University Missionary and Scandinavian Alliance Mission in Sikkim; From 1889 to 1947

Sl. No	Scottish University Missionary Schools	Scandinavian Alliance Mission Schools
1.	Temi Primary School	Lachung Weaving School
2.	Pakyong Primary School	Lachen Weaving School
3.	Rhenock Primary School	Song Primary School
4.	Kamlet Primary School	Rinzing Primary School
5.	Vok Lace School	
6.	Namthang Primary School	

³⁶ M. P. Kharel, Education, in Sunita Kharel and Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia, (ed.), Op. cit., p. 439.

³⁷ File no. Nil, Cultural Affairs and Heritage Department, Education Department, Sikkim State Archive, 1909, p. 11.

7.	Phambong Primary School	
8.	Wok Primary School	
9.	Chidam (Sadam) Primary School	
10.	Soreng Primary School	
11.	Chakhung Primary School	
12.	Dentam Primary School and	
13.	P. N. G. High School	

Sources: Sunita Kharel, *Gangtok: Metamorphosis of A Stereotype-Sikkim-Urban Conglomerate into A Colonial Hill-Station (1889-1950): A Historical Construct*, Unpublished Ph. D Thesis, Department of History, University of North Bengal, 2005, p. 208, <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in>, accessed on 28.08.2019.

These missionaries in Sikkim also contributed to the field of female education in Sikkim. When Mary Scott got the permission to stay in Sikkim from the *Chogyal* of Sikkim during 1923, she took charge of all the Missionary works which also comprised the responsibility of dispensaries and schools in Sikkim and on the same year she started a girl's school in Sikkim. Till then, not much effort has been done by the Government of Sikkim in the field of female education except the school opened for the daughters of Landlords and *Kazis* of Sikkim by prince Sidekeong Tulku in the year 1912, which was restricted for the common girls. But Mary Scott shifted this school to the center of Gangtok and open the school for all the children of common people. This cause of the Scott was also supported by the State Government and provided fund for the school and dispensary which was running by the missionaries. The girl child from all the social background started to get the opportunity from this newly formed school, and they started to teach Subject like English, Hindi, Tibetan and also trained in sick nursing, cooking, needle work and first aid. The total number of students after a decade touched around seventy-five in number. In the year 1939 when Mary Scott got retired, Mrs. Fairservice was appointed as the new head of the girl school. Under her tenure a new building was constructed by the Durbar which was turn into a

hostel and a residence in the remembrance of the eldest son of *Chogyal* Tashi Namgyal, i.e., prince Palzor Namgyal, who died while fighting under the Royal Indian Air Force in the year 1946. At the same time school was also recognized by the University of Calcutta as the High School in the year 1945. After Mrs. Fairservice, Miss Shirras was appointed as a new Principal of school till 1947.³⁸ Following table deals with the budget and funds provided to the missionary schools of Sikkim in relation to education.

Table. 5.10: List of Funds and Budget for The Education of The Missionary Schools in Sikkim

Sl. No	Year	Amount	No. of Students
1.	1905-06	2429.00	N/A
2.	1906-07	5096.00	N/A
3.	1907-08	6648.00	N/A
4.	1908-09	7800.00	N/A
5.	1909-10	7350.00	N/A
6.	1910-11	7350.00	N/A
7.	1911-12	8310.00	N/A
8.	1912-13	8770.00	N/A
9.	1913-14	8770.00	N/A
10.	1914-15	8845.00	N/A
11.	1915-16	9420.00	N/A
12.	1916-17	7995.00	N/A
14.	1917-18	8381.00	N/A

³⁸ M. P. Kharel, Education, in Sunita Kharel and Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia, (ed.), Op. cit., pp. 440-42.

15.	1918-1919	9115.00	N/A
16.	1919-20	11272.00	N/A
17.	1920-21	7432.00	N/A
18.	1921-22	7432.00	N/A
19.	1922-23	9430.00	N/A
20.	1923-24	N/A	N/A
21.	1924-25	13,873.00	N/A
22.	1925-26	20,758.00	N/A
23.	1926-27	23,002.00	N/A
24.	1927-28	26,381.00	N/A
25.	1928-29	27,600.00	N/A
26.	1929-30	27,832.00	N/A
27.	1930-31	27,655.00	N/A
28.	1931-32	27,772.00	N/A
29.	1932-33	27,688.00	N/A
30.	1933-34	28,523.00	N/A
31.	1934-35	30,137.00	N/A
32.	1935-36	28,800.00	N/A
33.	1936-37	29,200.00	N/A
34.	1937-38	30,600.00	N/A
35.	1938-39	N/A	N/A
36.	1939-40	N/A	N/A
37.	1940-41	N/A	N/A

38.	1941-42	N/A	N/A
39.	1942-43	N/A	N/A
40.	1943-44	N/A	N/A
41.	1944-45	N/A	N/A
42.	1945-46	N/A	N/A
43.	1946-47	N/A	N/A

Sources: M. P. Kharel, Education, in Sunita Kharel and Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia, (ed.), *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Home Department, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok, 2013, pp. 442-43.

5.4) The British Influences in Sikkim

The Importance of Treaty of Titalia that was signed in 1817 is very significant because from this time onwards the British influences was felt in every sphere in Sikkim. However, the British influences on folk medicine and healing practices started, after Sikkim officially became its protectorate in the year 1890. Particularly due to their policies in making health system or modern medicine/biomedicine an important aspect, with the help of Western education and Christian missionaries. Although their contribution in the field of health system or modern medicine/biomedicine with the help of Western education and Christian missionary was immense. But the question of British intension in spreading modern education and health system also raises alongside. According to J. C. Aggarwal, he mentions that “political ideologies go a long way in determining the aims and the system of education...the ruled nations had a different educational system than their rulers as they were being exploited by their rulers. The system of British education was implanted... for purely political motives.”³⁹ This can be further proved by what Charles Grant and Macaulay thought about the spreading of Western idea and mindset among the

³⁹ J. C. Aggarwal, *Theory and Principles of Education*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd, thirteenth edition 2010, Noida, p. 17.

native people. Charles Grant mentions that anywhere the introduction of colonial ideologies and language spread, it would inevitably be led to the flow of its trade. Macaulay too believes that the only way to have lasting and most lucrative conquest was of the mind.⁴⁰ So, it can be understood from their argument that the sole purpose of the British in imparting Western education and health facilities to the indigenous people was merely for their own benefit and not for the benefit of the local folks. Aparna Basu, mentions that “In Many colonial countries, the metropolitan powers introduced Western education with the hope that this would lead to a class of persons who would imbibe Western culture and values, appreciate the benefits of foreign rule and become its political allies. The content of schooling with its heavy emphasis on European knowledge was designed to create a sense of inferiority and inadequacy in the minds of the indigenous people...”⁴¹ Likewise, in relation to the missionary role in converting the indigenous people with the help of modern medicine/biomedicine and education system, K. M. Panikkar mentions that “Christian proselytization as a drive for ‘mental and spiritual conquest...supplementing...Political authority.”⁴² The influences of British increased mostly when the missionaries started translating the Bible into the local language and British settled areas mostly the towns started enticing the local village community by presenting them with the employment opportunity in the schools, churches and hospitals. Led to the local people attracted more towards Western culture.⁴³ This shift towards Western culture and converting to Christianity among the Bhutias, Limboos and particularly Lepcha community led to the change in their thinking and sense of their folk religious

⁴⁰ Aparna Basu, *Colonial Education: A Comparative Approach*, proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Vol. 50, Golden Jubilee Session, 1989, p. 713.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 733.

⁴² K. M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance: A Survey of Vasco da Gama Epoch of Asian History, 1498-1945*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1959. As quoted in Sumit Sarkar, *Modern Times: India 1880's -1959*, Permanent Black, Ranikhet, 2014, p. 46.

⁴³ Davide Torri, *In the Shadow of the Devil: Traditional Patterns of Lepcha Culture Reinterpreted*, in Fabrizio M. Ferrari (ed.), *Health and Religious Rituals in South Asia: Disease, Possession and Healing*, Routledge Publication, London, 2011, pp. 152-53.

and medicinal practices. The evidence of this changes in the belief of their local religion and medicinal practices can be observed from the way those converts were preached through the bible verses like for example “when you come into the land that the Lord is giving you, you must not learn to imitate the abhorrent practices of those nations. No one shall be found among you who makes a son or daughter pass through fire, or who practice divination, or is a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer or one who cast spells, or who consult ghost or spirits, or who seeks oracles from the death.”⁴⁴

Moreover, in regard to the folk medicinal practices of the local people like Bhutias, Limboos and Lepchas they were mainly the practitioners of local available herbs, animal parts, etc., to cure the different sicknesses and illness. However, due to the growing influences of the Western ideas particularly the Christian converts, started calling shamanic and healing rituals as superstition, and openly classifying it as “demon worship”.^{45 46} Davide Torri also mentions about the perspective of the local Christian converted about the local religious practices, while he was doing his field research, and according to him:

“one evening I was in a small Lepcha house... The home was adjoined to a Catholic School. My guest was explaining me several aspects related to the activities and ritual practices of Muns and Bongthings. He was a school teacher and spoke English fluently. Since he was explaining me the rituals of his ancestral religion, I asked him how he felt about it. “Superstition,” he said without hesitation. “And what thing like that: in my opinion it is all a façade. But if spirits are involved, since I am Christian, I must say it is the Devil.” The

⁴⁴ Quoted from Deuteronomy (18: 9-12). Ibid, p. 159.

⁴⁵ Even Risley, in his work mentioned about the folk religious practice as Demon worship or demonolatry “like most mountaineers, the Sikhimites and Tibetans are thorough going demon-worshippers. In every nook, path, big trees, rock, spring, waterfall, and lake there lurks a devil... The sky, the ground, the house, the field, the country, have each their special demons, and sickness is always due to malign demoniacal influence.” H. H. Risley, *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*, B. R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, Reprinted 2010, p. 353.

⁴⁶ Davide Torri, In the Shadow of the Devil: Traditional Patterns of Lepcha Culture Reinterpreted, in Fabrizio M. Ferrari (ed.), Op. cit., p. 160.

day after he brought me to visit some Lepcha households scattered in the nearby valley. In one of them I was introduced to a young boy. He was the son of a famous Bongthing and his father had died not so long before. The people of the village were pushing him into accepting his father's heritage and become a Bongthing himself. He was distressed because he embraced Christianity".⁴⁷

Similarly, according to Christian missionaries the important aspect of their imparting of modern education is to drive away the 'darkness and superstition', and providing "the true light of Christianity".⁴⁸ Therefore, from the above debate and discussions, we can clearly understand, what the important changes that occurred in the practices of local folk medicinal and healing practices of the Bhutias, Lepchas and Limboos of Sikkim. And due to the growing influences of colonial education, health facilities and conversion into Christianity led to the major negative impact on the indigenous practices and knowledge system.

5.4a) The Impact of Modern Medicine and Education System in Folk Medicinal and Healing Practices

As we have already discussed the entering and opening of different educational institutes and health centers in Sikkim by the British, along with the help of Christian missionaries and how the number of different educational institutes, dispensaries and hospital started to increase in Sikkim. The establishment of new health centers also indicate the then growing number of patients in the modern dispensaries and the fresh graduates passing out from medical colleges, Western educational institutes appointed in those dispensaries and hospitals. The sole purpose of British in constructing this modern educational institutes and health centers was for their benefits which, gradually led to the negative impact on the folk medicinal and healing practices. The British

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Aparna Basu, Op. cit., p. 711.

imparting of knowledge system changed the local people's notion of folk medicinal and healing practices and led to the growing derecognition towards the indigenous knowledge system in Sikkim. According to Alex McKay:

“In the wider sense, the introduction of biomedicine is part of the history of the encounter between non-Western cultures and Western modernity. Medicine was one of a number of modern systems, sciences, and technologies that were introduced into the Himalayan during this period. Its history provides a specific example of how that encounter produced stresses and fractures in existing socio-cultural, political, and economic structures and processes and how it resulted in far-reaching transformations in indigenous worldviews...”.⁴⁹

Likewise, according to K. M. Panikkar:

“The four main areas where systematic state initiative was visible- maps and surveys, botany, geology, and medicine-were all related to British economic or political-military interests. Modern medicine was evidently necessary for the sheer survival of British traders, officials, and soldiers...There was some initial interest in indigenous medical systems, but it came to be largely displaced through the development and the long preponderance of a new environmental paradigm for the diagnosis of illness and epidemics. Indigenous medical experience and knowledge fell into disregard.”⁵⁰

Further, regarding the impact of British modern medicine, Deepak Kumar mentions that “Western medical discourse occupied an extremely important place in the process of colonization... In its former role it served the state and helped ensure complete dominance... And the indigenous systems were so marginalized that they sought survival more in resistance than collaboration”.⁵¹ And in regard to impact of Western education, Aparna Basu stated that “In the

⁴⁹ Alex McKay, Op. cit., p. 29.

⁵⁰ K. M. Panikkar, Op. cit. In Sumit Sarkar, *Modern Times: India 1880's and 1959*, Permanent Black, Ranikhet, 2014, pp. 54-55.

⁵¹ Deepak Kumar, Medical Encounters in British India, 1820-1920, Vol. 32, No. 4, *Journal of Economic and Political Weekly*, 1997, pp. 166-170.

establishment of the hegemonic power, education plays a crucial role. Education was supposed to reinforced culturally what colonial policies aimed at achieving economically and politically”.⁵²

All these concepts mention that how the growing influences of the British led to the derecognition of the folk knowledge of medicinal and healing practices, which is not only limited to Sikkim but all around the world where the knowledge of Tribal people was marginalized by the colonizers. Mentioning the work of Karstin Knopf, he stated “The ignorance and neglect of Indigenous Knowledge is a legacy of colonial...where Indigenous social and political structures, knowledges, religions, and world views were seen as inferior, insignificant, and even barbaric by the Western world... Western educational institutions have discounted Indigenous knowledges and nurtured the belief that non-Western cultures, contribute nothing to the development of knowledge, humanities, arts, science, and technology.”⁵³

Lastly, to conclude, since from the 19th century onwards, the Western historian, anthropologist, missionaries and colonialist, regard to the Tribal practices or mostly presumes that the Tribal community do not differentiate among the mystical world and natural world. They perceive the Indigenous traditions as “superstition”, “barbarism”, “savagery” and “irrationality”.⁵⁴ With this understanding, when the British officials and the missionaries entered Sikkim, they started spreading their ideas and philosophy to the local people. By introducing their education system and the use of Western medicine, the local people started to ignore their folk healing and

⁵² Aparna Basu, Op. cit., p. 707.

⁵³ Karstin Knopf, The Turn Towards the Indigenous: Knowledge System and Practices in the Academy, Vol. 60, No. 2/3, *Journal of Amerikastudien/American Studies*, 2015, pp. 179-200.

⁵⁴ H. Vanlalhrauaia, *A History of Traditional Medicine of Mizoram in Pre-Modern Period*, Unpublished Ph. D Thesis, Department of History, University of Hyderabad, 2010, p. 120, <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in>, accessed on 20.05.2019.

medicinal practices, which led to the derecognition of their folk healing and medicinal knowledge in Sikkim. Slowly and gradually, the number of folk healers also started to decrease.

CHAPTER - VI

CONCLUSION

Sikkim is a land of faith healers. For every disease, there is an indigenous way of healing. Every community has its own faith healers, who apart from knowing spiritual rituals also have vast knowledge in medicinal practices. Lepchas or *Mutanchi Rongkup* (children of the snowy peak) are the original inhabitants of Sikkim, who, from their pre-historic time, have their original religion known as *Munism* and *Bongthingism*. Apart from being a religious specialist they are set to have a vast knowledge of the medicinal practices to cure different sickness and illness. They have their myths, lore's, songs, tales, etc., which contain answer to every question in regard to their community, disease, illness, etc.

Bhutias are the original inhabitant of Tibet who have migrated to Sikkim in different phases. However, still, there is a lack of proper historical evidence regarding the time of Bhutia migration to Sikkim. Tibet, from its very ancient time, is known for its vast knowledge in medicinal practices. When they started entering Sikkim (which according to many sources traced back to 13th century) they not only brought along their different culture and lifestyle but also brought their healing practices and medicinal knowledge. However, in this dissertation by referring to Saul Mullards work and linguistic evidence provided by George van Driem, who have traced back the early Bhutias entering to Sikkim around ninth century A.D, is supported by comparing the similar shamanic ritual practices between the early Tibetan and the Bhutias living in Sikkim. This can be possible because if we look into the ritual practices of the Bhutias in Sikkim, we can find the similar shamanic ritual practices in Tibet as well, i.e., before the coming of Buddhism in Tibet, known as old Bon faith or Black Bon. After the arrival of Buddhism and the growing political

instability during the ninth century in Tibet, might have led to the follower of old Bon faith come to Sikkim and settled down. The faith healers of Bhutias in Sikkim are known as *Pau, Ney jum* and *bon ban bongthing*.

Apart from these two communities, Limboos are the inhabitant of the Limbuwan empire which according to some sources traced a portion of Limbuwan as the part of the Sikkim territory, which provided the evidence that the Limboos of Sikkim are also one of the original inhabitants of Sikkim. Limboos have their religion called *Yuma Samyo* or *Yumaism*. In the Limboo community they have a separate group of people who are known as *Phedangmas* which is divided into nine groups (but today only four among them can be found in the Limboo society). Their main work is to look after the health-related issues like performing rituals to their local gods and goddesses, and preparation of different medicines for their community.

The important findings we can see in this regard is the growing inter-cultural exchange among these three communities. If we follow the original faith healing practitioners among these three communities, then we can trace *Pau, Ney jum* and *bon ban bongthing* among the Bhutias, *Padim, Mun, Yeba* and *Yema* among the Lepchas and *Phejiri Phedangma, Sawara Yetchhammuk Samba, Sibhak Yemi Yeboko Ya, Yuma Sam, Sammundhum, Yepmundhum* and *Sidapangdang* among the Limboos. However, as per the historical development, we can find the intermixing of the term used among the different communities of Sikkim like for example *Bongthing* among the Lepchas, *Yeba* and *Yema* among the Limboos. Secondly, all the faith healers of these three community are the worshipper of nature, ancestor and different forms of gods and goddesses. Thirdly, from their pre-historic times they use to perform animal sacrifices to appease their local gods, goddesses and evil spirits. But gradually, people started to reduce to observed the number of ritual practices and ceremonies. It may be because of the economic factor and the spread of

Buddhist teaching that the people in these communities began to offer different flowers, fruits, vegetables, and so on, instead of sacrificing animals. Lastly, among these three communities of Sikkim, apart from their folk spiritual healers they even have a separate medicinal practitioner who provide medicines to cure different illness and sickness with the help of locally available herbs and different organs of animals.

However, during the early decade of the 19th century, due to the growing disharmony between the British and Nepal, and also the British's intention to have a trade relation with Tibet, they started to pay interest on Sikkim, which was a buffer state. The signing of the Treaty of Titalia between Sikkim and British in 1817, put many restrictions on the power of the *Chogyal*, this led the British to have influence over Sikkim in a large manner. This can be evident, when British separated Darjeeling from Sikkim in 1835, to use it for the British Sanitarium. Ultimately, this growing power of the British in Sikkim, made Sikkim officially as the British protectorate in 1890, after signing the Treaty of Tumlong in 1861. Due to this shift of power in Sikkim, the British were successful in introducing modern systems in Sikkim, particularly the introduction of modern medicine/biomedicine and modern education system, which put a greater impact in the folk medicine and healing practices of Sikkim.

Earlier, when people use to get sick and suffer from many health-related problems, they use to contact their local healers and medicinal practitioners. But after the introduction of modern medicine/biomedicine in Sikkim there started a gradual shift in the medicinal use of the indigenous people. This can be proved from the evidence which shows how the number of patients started to increases in the government dispensaries and decrease in the faith and belief systems among the people on the indigenous medicinal practices and healing rituals. This ultimately led to the gradual derecognition of indigenous methods of healing and medicinal system. One of the biggest reasons

behind the success for the spread of modern medicinal knowledge through education was due to the opening of the gate to the Christian missionaries and providing support to them. After receiving support from the British officials in Sikkim they started to introduce modern education and health centers in Sikkim. The British Political Officer's introduce several policies in Sikkim; one of them is forest laws. The forest laws, to some extent, hindered the folk healers and medical practitioners from going to the forest freely as before and collect the herbs for the treatment. This can be because of appointing forest guards, chaprasis and officials in the forest areas of Sikkim.

The most important impact upon the folk medicinal practices and healing system was due to the British notion of looking into the local knowledge system as barbaric, unorganized, savagery, irrational, unscientific and superstitions. This notion of British also spread among the local people, after the introduction of Christianity, who started converting the local people and translated the Bible into the Bhutia, Limboo and Lepcha languages. This ultimately led the folk medicinal and healing practices insignificant and started to lose its value. Even though in recent times, many new folk healers are ordained by their old ones, and people do believe that they are the chosen ones by their god and goddess, however it is observed that their importance in their community is not as significant as the earlier days. Only a few older people believe in their healing powers and medicinal practices. Sometimes it is seen that when the people are not able to treat by modern hospitals then only, they seek help from their folk healers.

Lastly, due to the impact of modern education system, spread of Christianity and increasing use of modern medicinal practices among the people in Sikkim, it is observed that whenever a person shows the sign of becoming a spiritual healer, the people in the family will take him/her to the hospital directly and ignore the calling of the local deities/gods and goddess, to become a spiritual healer. In present times the faith healers of the Lepchas, the Bhutias, and the Limboos

believe that if they ignore the calling of gods and goddess, the good spirit will leave their lineage, which will lead to the decreasing number of faith healers. It is also observed that in most of the cases, the faith healers themselves deny in being the spiritual faith healer because the society at large derecognised them and only turn to them when there seems to be no way to be cured of the illness one suffers. Therefore, it is seemed that there are influences of the British on the folk medicine and healing practices in Sikkim among the Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Limboos.

APPENDIX - I

Transfer of Medical Department Under the Darbar¹

‘From’

(MAJOR W. L. CAMPBELL, C. I. E.,)

(POLITICAL OFFICER IN SIKKIM,)

To,

The Civil Surgeon at Gangtok,

Gangtok,

Dated Gangtok, the 24th day 1918.

‘Sir’,

I have the honour to inform you that consequent on the conferment of full powers of administration on His Highness Maharaja Tashi Namgyal, the entire control of the Medical Department of the Sikkim State has been transferred to His Highness... you should therefore confine yourself in future to your duties as Civil Surgeon at Gangtok and to the Supervision of the State Dispensaries, Jail, etc. The only State dispensaries opened so far are the Sir Thutob Namgyal Memorial Hospital at Gangtok and the dispensary at Chidam. The word “etc.” may be taken to cover any other medical institutions or Jails which the state may open here after. The Scottish Universities Mission Dispensaries at Rhenock, Seriyong, Dentam and Vok are not state institutions and it will be for the Sikkim Darbar...

His Highness the Maharaja Desires to continue for the present the arrangement by which the Sub-Assistant Surgeon in charge of the Public Works Department Dispensary at Rangpo...

The above letter, dated on 24th day 1918, was written by the Political Officer of Sikkim, Major W. L. Campbell, to the Civil Surgeon, mentioning about the transfer of administrative power under the Maharaja of Sikkim. And from 1918 onwards all the administrative works will be under the supervision of the Maharaja Tashi Namgyal, which includes Medical Department, Jails, Education Department, etc., except from the institutions which is under the Missionaries supervision.

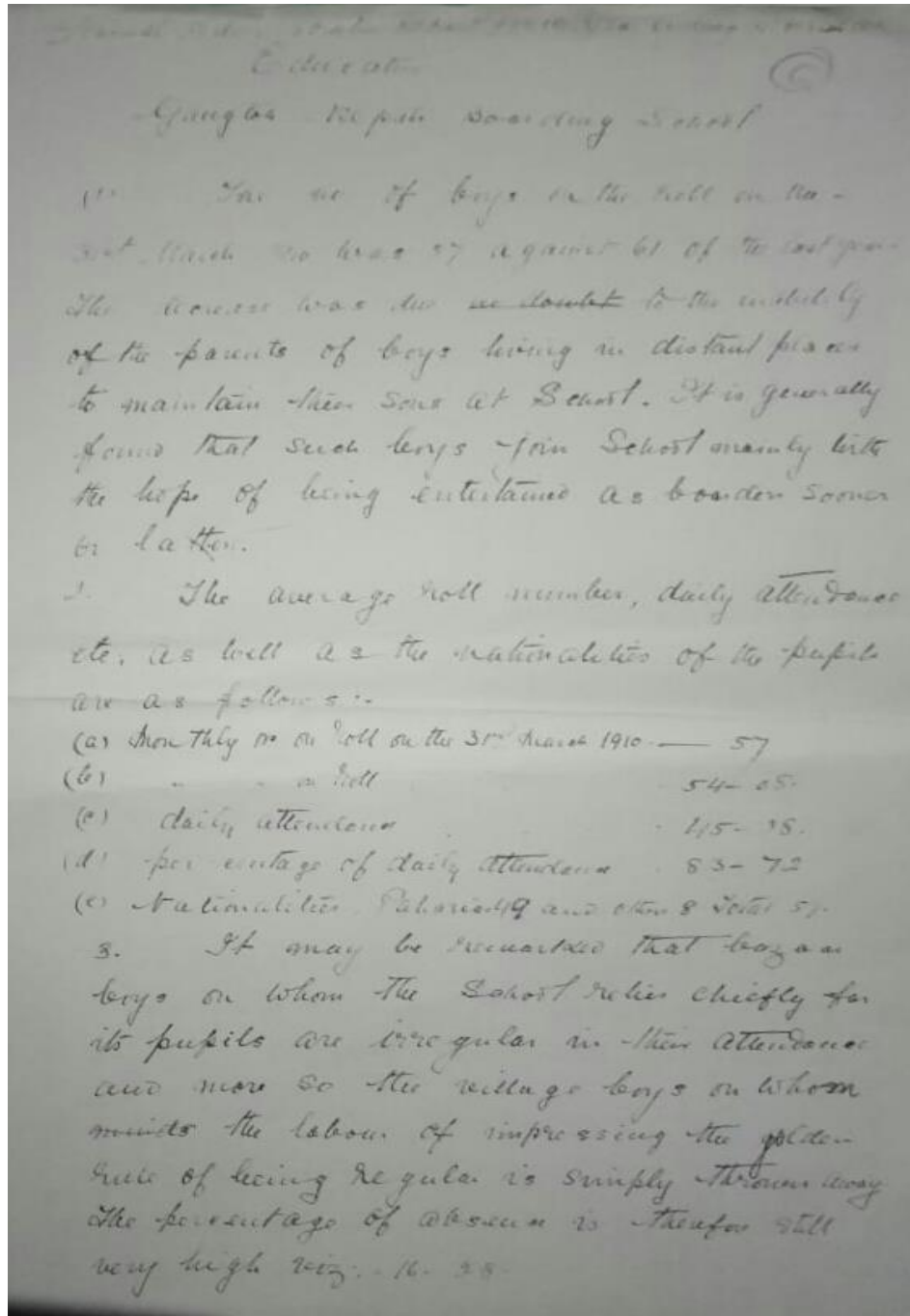
¹ File No. 918, of 1918, serial no. 11, Cultural Affairs and Heritage Department, General Department, Sikkim State Archive, 1918, pp. 2-3.

APPENDIX - II

Annual Administration Report for The Year Ending 31st March 1910

Education

Nepali Boarding School, Gangtok¹



¹ File No. Nil, Cultural Affairs and Heritage Department, Education Department, Sikkim State Archive, 1909, pp. 6-7.

4. With the exception of ^{boarders} ~~two~~ who
are supported by the State, ^{all} the boys are ~~the~~
day scholars residing at or near the station.
These ^{being sons of} ~~being~~ ^{the} ~~poor parents~~, the duration
of their attendance ^{tuition} at School cannot therefore
be stated with any amount of certainty.

Of the Shikadai's sons and
relations two brothers of Shikadai -
Nalbahadur Pradhan and two sons of
of late Shikadai Prasad Singh are attending
this School.

Kind of Education

5. English and Hindi are taught the
subject including History, Geography and
mathematics are drawing in which several
of the boys have made a fair progress. The
boys of the lower classes are now receiving
more attention.

Moral Character

6. The moral character as well as
the general behaviour of the boys have been
on the whole quite satisfactory.

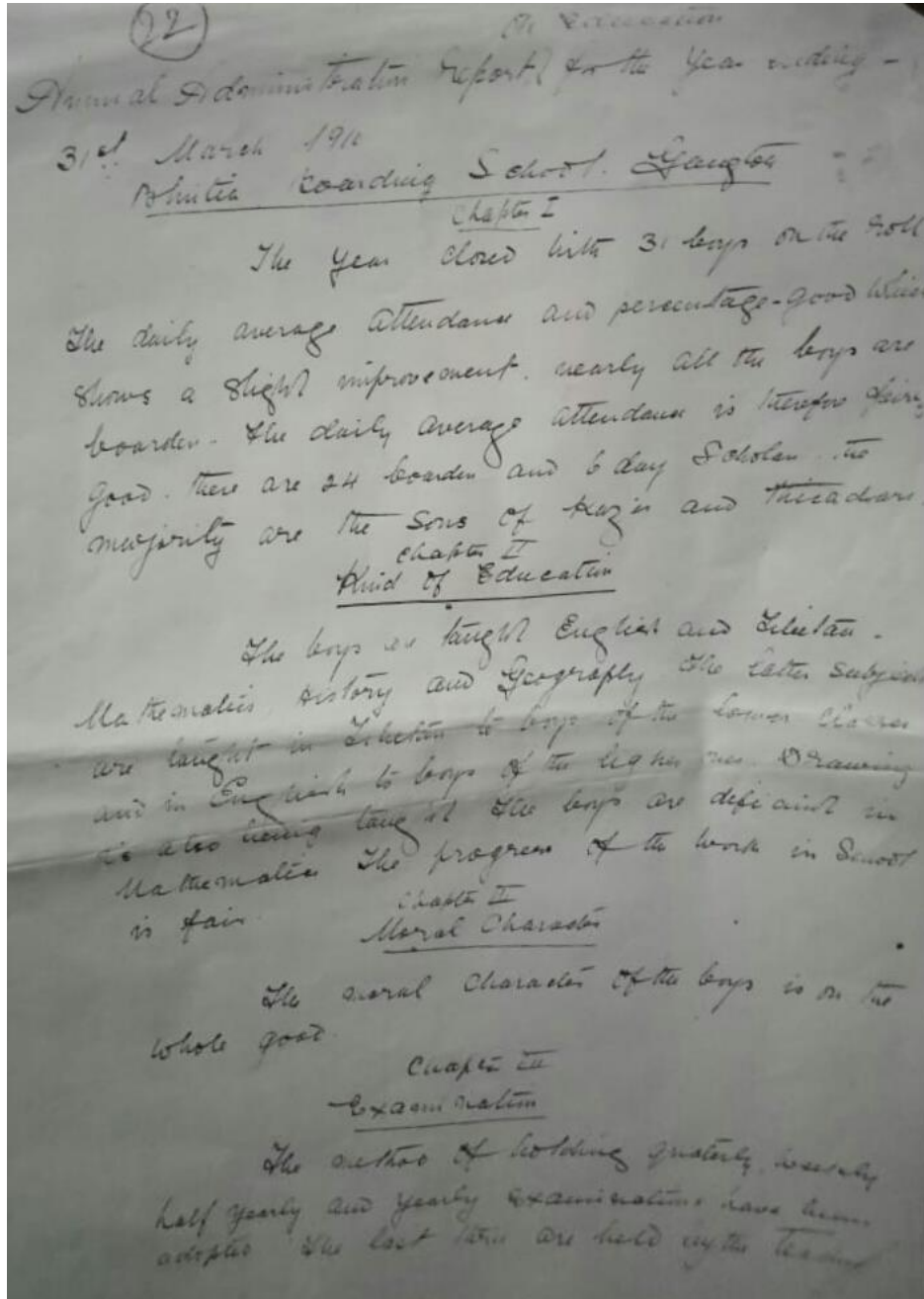
Examination Result

7. The system of holding quarterly
examinations, half yearly and yearly examinations
has been introduced. The work done so far
by the teachers themselves would be probably

APPENDIX - III

Annual Administrative Report on Education for The Year Ending 31st March 1910

Bhutia Boarding School, Gangtok¹



¹ File No. Nil, Cultural Affairs and Heritage Department, Education Department, Sikkim State Archive, 1909, pp. 22-24.

... which the practical examinations are taken
up by one. The results show a fair progress
in the work done. The Sub Inspector of Schools
concerning this visited the School twice during (23)
the year and expressed himself as pleased with
the work done. I report on the inspection of the
School by this Sub Inspector has been already
submitted to the Political Officer in Shimla
under this Office letter No. 19. Dated the 7th April '90.
For the 1st time in its history the School has
seen two of its boys selected for professional
training. It refers to Bawa and Thonyad Singh
the boy under medical training.

Chapter 5th

Health of the School boys.

The health of the School boys was, however, was
very good this year, owing to there being a
good deal of dysentery among the boys.
Some of the boys are still under medical
treatment. From Sanitary point of view
the School site is very bad.

Chapter 6th

Physical training

Boys are exercised in gymnastics and
Military Drill comes twice a week to school.

The boy in physical training they show sufficient aptitude for this.

His Highness the Maharaja of Bikaner visited the school several times and takes interest in the progress of the school. The lads have been twice invited to the palace to show their physical training.

Chapter 7

Sports and Games.

Football is as usual the only popular game among the school boys.

Chapter 8.

Establishment

Two Master and 3 Chaprasis form the total strength of this school. The teaching staff remain the same as heretofore. The raising of the status of this school is also anxiously looked forward without which the future of the boys attending this school appear anything but bright.

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Interviewed with Faith Healers and Medicinal Practitioners:

Interviewed Tshering Lepcha (*Bongthing*), (M), 53 years, Hee Gyathang, North Sikkim, on 03.08.2019.

Interviewed Dukda Lepcha, (*Bongthing*), (M), 75 years, Rey Mendu, East Sikkim, on 09.12.19.

Interviewed Lakhi Lepcha, (*Mun*), (F), 42 years, Rey Mendu, East Sikkim, on 09.12.19.

Interviewed Dawa Tshering Lepcha, (*Bongthing*), (M), 39 years, Rey Mendu, East Sikkim, on 09.12.19.

Interviewed Penday Lepcha, (*Mun*), (F), 40 years, Rey Mendu, East Sikkim, on 09.12.19.

Interviewed Chagu Bhutia (*Pau*), (M), 82 years, Chochen, East Sikkim, on 11.11.2019.

Interviewed Gapching Bhutia (*Pau*), (M), 87 years, Chandmari, East Sikkim, on 27.07.2019.

Interviewed Jeetman Subba (*Phejiri Phedangma*), (M), 49 years, Ogeng (Soreng), West Sikkim, on 09.08.2019.

Interviewed Ram Prasad Limboo (*Sawara Yetchhamuk Samba* and deputy director of fishery), (M), 58 years, Sombarey, West Sikkim, on 16.12.2019.

Interviewed Bolan Dhoj Subba (*Sibhak Yemi Yeboko Yeba*), (M), 56 years, Basnet Gaon (Pakyong), East Sikkim, on 21.01.2020.

Interviewed Dal Karna Subba (*Sibhak Yemi Yeboko Yeba*), (M), 56 years, Saureni (Assam Lingzey), East Sikkim, on 22.01.2020.

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