

# **THE POSTAL SYSTEM IN SIKKIM: A HISTORICAL STUDY (1888-1947)**

**A Dissertation Submitted**

**To**

**Sikkim University**



**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of  
Master of Philosophy**

**By**

**Aastha Rai**

**Department Of History  
School of Social Science  
Sikkim University**

**September 2021**

6 माइल, सामदुर, तादोंग - 737102  
गंगटोक, सिक्किम, भारत  
फोन-03592-251212, 251415, 251656  
टेलीफैक्स - 251067  
वेबसाइट - [www.cus.ac.in](http://www.cus.ac.in)



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

# सिक्किम विश्वविद्यालय SIKKIM UNIVERSITY

(भारत के संसद के अधिनियम द्वारा वर्ष 2007 में स्थापित और नैक (एनएएसी) द्वारा वर्ष 2015 में प्रत्यापित केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालय)  
(A central university established by an Act of Parliament of India in 2007 and accredited by NAAC in 2015)

Date:.....

## DECLARATION

I, Aastha Rai, hereby declare that the research work embodied in the dissertation titled "The Postal System in Sikkim: A Historical Study (1888-1947)", 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.

*Aastha Rai*

Aastha Rai  
Roll No: 19MPH001  
Regd No: 19/M.Phil/HIS/01  
Department of History  
School of Social Sciences

6 माइल, सामदुर, तादोंग - 737102  
गंगटोक, सिक्किम, भारत  
फोन-03592-251212, 251415, 251656  
टेलीफैक्स - 251067  
वेबसाइट - [www.cus.ac.in](http://www.cus.ac.in)



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

# सिक्किम विश्वविद्यालय SIKKIM UNIVERSITY

(भारत के संसद के अधिनियम द्वारा वर्ष 2007 में स्थापित और नैक (एनएएसी) द्वारा वर्ष 2015 में प्रत्यायित केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालय)  
(A central university established by an Act of Parliament of India in 2007 and accredited by NAAC in 2015)

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled “**The Postal System in Sikkim: A Historical Study (1888-1947)**” submitted to the **Sikkim University** for partial fulfilment 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 **Miss Aastha Rai** 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 acknowledged by her.

We recommend that the dissertation be placed before the examiner for evaluation.

**Dr Anira Phipon Lepcha**  
Assistant Professor  
Department of History  
School of Social Sciences

**Dr Venu Pant**

Head of the Department  
Department of History  
School of Social Sciences

**Dr. Venu Pant**  
Associate Professor & Head  
Department of History  
School of Social Sciences  
SIKKIM UNIVERSITY  
6th Mile, Tadong, Gangtok, Sikkim

6 माइल, सामदुर, तादोंग - 737102  
गंगटोक, सिक्किम, भारत  
फोन-03592-251212, 251415, 251656  
टेलीफैक्स - 251067  
वेबसाइट - [www.cus.ac.in](http://www.cus.ac.in)



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

# सिक्किम विश्वविद्यालय SIKKIM UNIVERSITY

(भारत के संसद के अधिनियम द्वारा वर्ष 2007 में स्थापित और नैक (एनएएसी) द्वारा वर्ष 2015 में प्रत्यापित केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालय)  
(A central university established by an Act of Parliament of India in 2007 and accredited by NAAC in 2015)

## PLAGIARISM CHECK CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that plagiarism check has been carried out for the following M.Phil. dissertation with the help of URKUND SOFTWARE and the result is 2% tolerance rate, with in the permissible limit (upto10% tolerance rate) as per the norm of Sikkim University.

**“The Postal System in Sikkim: A Historical Study (1888-1947)”**

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

*Aastha Rai*

Signature of the Scholar

*Anira Phipon Lepcha*  
Countersigned by Supervisor

Anira Phipon Lepcha  
Assistant Professor  
Department of History  
Sikkim University

*[Signature]*  
3/19/2021  
Vetted by Librarian

पुस्तकालयाध्यक्ष  
Librarian  
केन्द्रीय पुस्तकालय Central Library  
सिक्किम विश्वविद्यालय  
Sikkim University

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I take this opportunity to thank each and everyone who had helped me and encouraged me to complete my Dissertation. It would have been impossible to complete my work without their massive support and supervision.

My gratitude and respect goes to my supervisor, **Dr. Anira Phipon Lepcha**, Department of History, Sikkim University. Without her selfless help, suggestions and encouragement I would have never completed my work in time.

I am very thankful to all the faculty of Department of History, Sikkim University. **Dr. Veenu Pant**, Head of the Department, **Professor Dr. V Krishna Ananth**, **Dr. Sangmu Thendup**, **Dr. K Renuka Devi**, and **Dr. S. Jeevanandam**. Your encouragement and timely suggestions encouraged me. I acknowledge my especial gratitude to **Dr. T. Vijay Kumar**, who despite of his busy schedule, every time gave me his timely suggestions and encouragement. Further, I would like thank **Mrs. Bishnu Maya Karki**.

My heartfelt thank to the entire personnel of Teesta-Indus Central Library, all the staffs of Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, and the members of Sikkim State Library.

To all the staffs of Sikkim State Archive, Mr. Bhawani Prasad Rai (Additional Director), Mrs. Chunni T. Thakalpa (Joint Director), Mrs. Deepshika Gurung (Archive Officer), Mr. Tashi Wangyal Lepcha (Inspector), Miss Deepanjana Gurung (Office Assistant), Mrs. Dorjee Doma Bhutia (LDC), and Mr. Krishnaman Limboo (Office Attendant), I am thankful for their kind help.

I sincerely express my gratitude to Mr. Shital Pradhan, who made my ideas clear in Philately. Without his guidance, I would have been nowhere in my work. The sources you provided me have helped tremendously. I am highly thankful for your time and suggestions. Further, I am thankful to the entire family of Mr. Shital Pradhan.

I am very much thankful to Mr. Roshan Prasad, who every time came forward to help me in anyway. His suggestions and encouragement has always rendered me a strength and enthusiasm.

I am highly thankful to the entire staffs of the Postal Department Sikkim, particularly, Mr. Sameer Pradhan. He very kindly introduced me with the individuals who were

very helpful in my research work. I also thank to Pritam Mukhiya, who gave me information of his grandfather who had served Indian Postal Department as a mail runner.

I extend my gratitude to Captain Yapo Sonam, Pem Uden Bhutia, Tshering Pintso Bhutia, Dr. Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia, and Tshering Euden Bhutia. Without their help I may not have been done a successful research at West Sikkim.

I extend especial gratitude for my parents, who in every step had encouraged me. Had they not been my major support, I would have never completed my work. Their love, support and blessings gave me courage and enthusiasm.

I am thankful to all my friends especially, Karma Tenzing Lepcha, Ram Sharma, Sonam Choda Bhutia and Suraj Sharma, for their timely help and encouragement. I am thankful to my senior Jigme Dorjee Bhutia for his suggestions.

**Aastha Rai**

## CONTENTS

Page No.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

### LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<b>CHAPTER I:</b>	<b>1-14</b>
<b>Introductions</b>	<b>1-4</b>
1.1. Statement of the Problem	4-5
1.2. Literature Reviews	5-11
1.3. Objectives	12
1.4. Methodology	12-13
1.5. Chapterization	13-14
<b>CHAPTER II:</b>	<b>15-33</b>
<b>The Influence of the British on the Development of the Postal System in Sikkim from 1888-1947</b>	<b>15-17</b>
2.1. Sikkim Expedition of 1888 and development of the Post Office in Sikkim	17-23
2.2. Younghusband Mission of 1904 and its influence on Post Offices of Sikkim	23-29
2.3. Experiment of Rocket Mail in Sikkim	29-32
2.4. Conclusion	33
<b>CHAPTER III:</b>	<b>34-49</b>
<b>People's Response to the Development of the Post Office in Sikkim</b>	<b>34</b>
3.1. People's demand for the development of Post Offices in different places of Sikkim	34-48
3.2. Conclusion	48-49
<b>CHAPTER IV:</b>	<b>50-70</b>
<b>Administrative System of the Postal Department in Sikkim from 1888 to 1947</b>	<b>50-55</b>
4.1. The role of Landlords and Shopkeepers in Postal Systems of Sikkim	56-58
4.2. Runners of Sikkim	58-62
4.3. Dak-Bungalows in Sikkim	62-64
4.4. Revenue Stamps of Sikkim	64-69
4.5. Conclusion	69-70
<b>CHAPTER V:</b>	<b>71-77</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>78-86</b>

---

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

---

### TABLE

Table No.	Table Name	Page No.
2.1	Field post offices established during Tibet Mission 1903-1904	26
2.2	Sikkim-Tibet Operations 1903-1908: List of Civil Post Offices	27
3.1	Post Offices in Sikkim	46
3.2	Establishment of the Post Offices in Sikkim from 1907 to 1937	47
4.1	Sikkim-Tibet Operations 1903-1908: List of Postal Officers	53
4.2	Budget Estimate for the constructions of Post Offices in Sikkim	55

### FIGURES

Table No.	Table Name	Page No.
2.1	The postal cover was send to Sandbach during his service in Sikkim Field Force 1888-89	21
2.2	Cancellation received from Sandbach's correspondence used inside Sikkim	21
2.3	The picture is of Sir Tashi Namgyal 11 <sup>th</sup> Chogyal of Sikkim, who is holding the Rocket	30
2.4	The photograph is of Stephen H. Smith who is holding the Rocket in his hand	31
2.5	The Picture of the Rocketgram Card of Sikkim	31
3.1	Photograph of Mendang or Holy wall from where Chaktha Rinpoche shot an arrow	36
3.2	Photograph with Captain Sonam Yongda	37
3.3	Postcards showing the demand for apples from Pedong	41
3.4	Indian postcard showing the demand for apples from Ranchi	42
4.1	The Picture of Tempa who carried letters of the King in Sikkim	59
4.2	The photograph of a post runner Thendup Bhutia	62
4.3	Revenue Stamps of Sikkim, the value of Eight Annas and Ten Paise	66
4.4	4 Revenue Stamps of Sikkim	67



# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Communication is a lifeline of people. Communication is done in various ways like sign languages, whistling, speaking, writing letters etc., the letters were sent on small strips of wood during the Roman Empire. The Chinese Emperor applied a similar method.<sup>1</sup> The runners played a significant role in carrying letters from one place to the other. Similarly, the arrows were used for sending letters, and pigeon post was put into practice in earlier days in India.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, there is a significant shift in the communication system, which was initiated with sign language in ancient days and has been developed in various ways, among which the post office is one. The post office can be considered as the mother of all technical communication. Though due to the developed information technologies, the use of post offices as one of the means of communications has decreased, however, it has not been declined. The main reason why the post offices and their services are not totally declined is that the post office is one of the trusted organizations and carries the responsibility of the populations, especially of rural areas.<sup>3</sup> Since the development of the information technology had challenged the postal system, the postal system includes many other services besides providing communication facilities through correspondences. Apart from sending letters, the postal system also provides thirty-eight other services, which can broadly be divided into three groups. They are as follows, A. Communications (letters, postcards, newspapers) B. Transportation (parcels, money orders etc.), C. Other services (resource mobilization, postal life insurances), and indulging the postal

---

<sup>1</sup> Jal. Copper, *Stamps of India*, Pereira at the Examiner Press, Bombay, 1968, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Steve. Borgia, *Pigeons to Post*, Indeco Leisure Hotels Pvt. Ltd., 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Simge. Esin and Oguzhan Ozean, From post office to public communication points: A study on the spatial transformation of public buildings due to decreasing functionality with regard to recent developments in information technology, *Journal of Architectural and planning Research*, Summer, 2010, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Summer, 2010), Locke Science Publishing Vompny, Inc. p. 164.

department in modern means of communications. Modern technologies such as computers are used for postal services these days. Similarly, to meet the challenges of the market demand, numerous new services have been added to the postal services in India, such as speed post, business post, express parcel post, media post, greetings post, data post, passport services, and satellite post. On the ground of financial assistance through the post office, the Post Office Saving Bank has been introduced.<sup>4</sup> While tracing the postal system in India, we come across that in medieval India, the postal system particularly during Mohammad Bin Tughluq and the Mughal Dynasty, has been eulogized by foreign writers like *Ibn-i-Battuta* and *Ferishta*, respectively.<sup>5</sup> However, regular the postal system came with the advent of the British in India. Lord Clive first introduced a regular postal system in 1766.

Sikkim, a hidden kingdom, most sacred among other several hidden countries, has been compared to paradise by omniscient Guru Padmasambhava.<sup>6</sup> Sikkim was ruled by the theocratic kings referred to as Chogyal for 333 years until it became part of India in 1975. The history of the postal system in Sikkim developed after the advent of the British. According to the Philatelic studies, the beginning of the postal system of Sikkim can be traced from the Sikkim Expedition of 1888, after which the post offices were established in *Dalupchen*, *Rhenock*, *Kupup*, *Gatong*, *Pakyong* and *Gangtok*.<sup>7</sup> However, the Tibet Mission of 1903-1904 is another important event in Sikkim history and the development of the post offices in particular. The British Indian troops maintained the communication lines like roads and bridges, and the post

---

<sup>4</sup> Vishal Sethi, *Communication Services in India 1947 to 2007*, New Century Publications, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 3-4.

<sup>5</sup> Geoffery. Clark, *The Post Office and its Story*, Abhishek Publication, New Delhi, 2018, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> Maharaja Thuthob Namgyal, and Maharani Yeshe Dolma, *History of Sikkim*, Unpublished work, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok, 1908, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Dipok. Dey, *Sikkim A Brief Postal History*, Postal Himal, 2006, p. 5.

offices in Sikkim.<sup>8</sup> The main reason behind establishing the systematic postal system (1888-1904) in Sikkim by the British was to prepare them to penetrate Tibet. Though the post offices in Sikkim initially set for the British force to defeat Tibet, later, the postal systems rendered their services for the common people. There are many remarkable events in the history of the postal system like the experiment of Rocket-mail in Sikkim by Stephen H. Smith in 1935<sup>9</sup> and the franking of the revenue stamps in 1917 under the administration of the then Chogyal Sir *Tashi Namgyal* and the then British political officer C.A. Bell.<sup>10</sup> Runners are the backbone of the postal system in Sikkim. The romance of the post office is related to the runners, who out of various difficulties, managed to deliver the bag of mails to its destiny. Before establishing a regular and systematic postal system in Sikkim by the British officials, the Chogyal and religious head in Sikkim employed the messengers. However, postal runners in Sikkim were coined by the British officials who served under the norms of the British Indian Postal Department. Despite the communication revolution, runners run to deliver the letters to date. *Sherathang* in East Sikkim, a place near *Nathula* pass, witness the work of the runner who walks for a long distance to exchange the mail with the Chinese runner in China. The postal system in Sikkim from 1888 to 1906-07, was under the Military Postal Department's administration and the British Indian Postal Department. However, after 1906-1907 the Indian Postal Department administered the postal system in Sikkim, along with the aid provided by the Sikkim Durbar.

---

<sup>8</sup> D.S. Virk, *Postal History of India Campaigns Sikkim Tibet 1903-1908*, Philatelic Congress of India Army Postal Association, New Delhi, 1989, p.10.

<sup>9</sup> Sikkim Archive, State General Department, File No. 7 of 1934, Serial No. 3, Profoso visit of Stephen H. Smith, Rocket Mail Experimentation.

<sup>10</sup> Sikkim State Archive, Darbar Department, Introduction of Court fee stamps, File No. 7 of 1916, Serial No., 9(V), p.p 11,12.

The Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890 made Sikkim the protectorate of the British Indian Government. However, in 1947, India got her independence. In 1950 Sikkim again became the protectorate of Independent India by signing Indo-Sikkim Treaty at Palace Monastery in Gangtok by Sir Tashi Namgyal and the Indian Political officer, Harishwar Dayal.<sup>11</sup> However, Hope Cooke, who was the Gyalmo of 12<sup>th</sup> Chogyal of Sikkim, Palden Thondup Namgyal in her autobiography *Time Change*, states that Sikkim was denied many rights by the Indian Government, among which “The International Postal Union. (The Sikkimese felt they could make considerable money by issuing their own stamps)” is one.<sup>12</sup>

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Unlike the political, social and economic history, the postal history of Sikkim also has its utmost importance. Like other countries, the post system of Sikkim has its origin due to the necessity of maintaining communication throughout the country.

The post office played a significant role in administrating the then kingdom. Therefore, the present work intends to study the postal system of Sikkim during the Namgyal rule from 1888 till 1947. The services of the post office during Namgyal rule was confined to the royal house where the Kings and the Kazis sent letters to the different kingdoms like Tibet, Bhutan, and Nepal. Mention about the especial messenger has been made in few sources whose main work was to take letters from royal house to the other places and the appointment of these messengers were made by the King. The regular postal system in Sikkim was initiated by the British Indian Government. The Military Expeditions of 1888 and 1903-1904, has a major role in

---

<sup>11</sup> Jigme N. Kazi, *Sons of Sikkim The Rise and Fall of Namgyal Dynasty of Sikkim*, Hill Media Publications, Gangtok, 2020, p.p 201,202.

<sup>12</sup> Hope. Cooke, *Time Change An Autobiography*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1980, p.149.

the establishment of the post offices in Sikkim. Some of the main post offices opened in 1888, 1903, and 1904 are *Dalupchin, Rhenock, Pakyung, Gangtok* etc. The postal system in 1888 and 1903-1904, was established mainly for the British Indian troops. However, later the postal system provided their services to the common people in Sikkim. Therefore, many post offices were established at different places. On the other hand, these postal services were effectively used by the people of Sikkim to communicate with their distant relatives or friends. It further encouraged the common people in the economic sphere.

However, the appointments of J.C White (1889) as a political officer of Sikkim mark an important influence on developing of the lines of the Indian postal services in Sikkim. In the history of the post office, many events occurred that shaped the postal services, for instance, the printing of the Revenue stamp (1917) and the experiment of Rocket mail by Stephen H. Smith with the approval of the Sikkim Government at various places in Sikkim. The postal administration system was administered by the Military Post Department and British Indian Postal Department in both the 1888 Expedition and Younghusband Mission. Later, British Indian Postal Department along with the assistance provided by Sikkim Durbar administered the postal system. The landlord, shopkeepers, and lamas provided the free assistance to the postal department at their places. The runners were provided the hut free of rent. Sikkim Durbar financially assisted the in constructing and maintaining the Post Offices.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

*Report of A Mission to Sikkim and the Tibetan Frontier: With a Memorandum on our Relations with Tibet* by Colman Macaulay (1885), the book mentions his visit over Sikkim and Tibetan frontier in order to propagate a plan for starting the trade

relationship with Tibet through Sikkim. In his discussion with Phodong Lama, an outstanding personality of Sikkim who had a close connection with the king had sent a special messenger to *Kambajong* in Tibet to deliver the message regarding a trading proposal of Colman Macaulay. The Royal house of Sikkim employed these special messengers. The book further highlights that the private letters were sent at the hand of trusted people. Therefore, the book shows that the messengers were active in taking the letters to their destination. However, the book does not give a clear picture of how the systematic form of sending letters was in operation.

Joseph Dalton Hooker, in his *Himalayan Journals* (1885), volume one, has talked about his encounter with Sikkim and her people in December 1848. It says, as he reached Yuksun (Yuksum), a messenger was waiting for him with a letter; further, the author says that he received a letter from Dr Campbell (Bhomsong) three days after he reached Yuksom. Again Hooker met Kajee (Kazi), who was waiting for him and received a letter which demanded Hooker to have communication with Rajah in private. The author is also of the opinion that when Dr Campbell decided to meet with Rajah of Sikkim, Pagla Dewan communicated with Campbell from the east side of the river bank by shooting an arrow attached with the letters. The book, however, has given a hint of sending letters through messengers, and arrows but it did not mention a systematic system of sending letters.

A book, *Sikkim Thirty Years Ago* (1898) was written by J.C. French. The author visited Sikkim in 1908. He talks about the jingling bells hanged in the neck of the mules that carried traveller's luggage. The author mentions the rest house explicitly at Pedong, where he planned to post a letter and was amused to hear adjure of the postmaster. Though this work has given us some hints about the posting of letters, the author fails to give in detail the ways of sending a letter from one place to the next.

*Bengal District Gazetteers Darjeeling* (1907), written by LSS O'Malley, provides information regarding Darjeeling. The book highlights a brief history of Darjeeling, its people, public health, agriculture, tea plantation etc. It says that in 1839 Dr Campbell was transferred to Darjeeling as Superintendent and he was in charge of the political relations with Sikkim and was given the post of civil, criminal and fiscal administration besides being postmaster. However, this book does not mention the relationship of the postal administration between Darjeeling and Sikkim.

Geoffery Rothe Clark, in his Article *Postal and Telegraph work in India* (1923), has discussed the postal and telegraphic system in India, before the British colonialism. He believes India also established the post office in order to run proper communication, so the rulers are correctly informed about his kingdom. Clark also talks about the importance of Runners in the postal services. He has mainly emphasized the particular caste who played the role of a runner in the post office. He also thinks that in India, Mail runners are taken mostly from the lowest castes and least civilized races. The author also talks about the first telegraph line in India, which was opened between Calcutta and *Diamond Harbour*, a distance of 30 miles, in 1851.

*Himalayan Village, An Account of the Lepchas of Sikkim* (1938), written by Geoffery Gorer, has mentioned the lifestyles of the Lepchas of Sikkim. He also said about *Tempa* from Lingthem of Dzongu North Sikkim, who was sent as a servant in Tibet by the then Maharajah of Sikkim. After the death of his master in Tibet, he returned to Sikkim and resumed service with the reigning Maharajah. His service was carrying the letters and offering to *Talung* Monastery and bringing things back from thence. Though this book has given a hint of *Tempa* being a runner of the then period, the detailed description about the postal system is mentioned, neither the route of carrying the letters is written.

*Trade Through the Himalayas, The Early British Attempts to open Tibet (1951)*, written by Schuyler Cammann, highlights British attempts to open up the trade relations with Tibet through Trans-Himalayan regions. However, the book deals with little about Sikkim.

*Tibet A Chronicle of Exploration (1970)*, written by John Mac Gregor, where the author focused on the several invasion over Tibet by the foreign invaders. The book mainly deals with the Younghusband mission 1904 over Tibet, which provides a little information about the establishment of Postal Services on the route over Tibet.

*From the Diary of Stephen Smith (1980)*, written by D.N. Jatia, talks about the rocket mail experiment experimented by Stephen Smith in Sikkim as well as another part of the country. However, it does not speak anything on the then-existing postal system of Sikkim.

P.K. Jha in his book *History of Sikkim 1817-1904 (1985)*, has mainly focused on the political and administration of Sikkim. The book mainly deals with the British administrations in Sikkim; however the mention of the postal administration has not been discussed.

*Tibet Past and Present (1992)*, written by Sir Charles Bell, shares his experience in Tibet, while his stay in Darjeeling and Sikkim. He also illustrated the political scenario of Tibet, which then was partially influenced by the Chinese Government. The author has stated the communication system of the then Tibet as the post office, Telegraph lines etc. In September 1920, Sir Charles Bell received a letter from the Dalai Lama asking him to lay his help in the constructing a Lhasa telegraph lines. Earlier Tibet had no proper postal services where letters used to be carried by a person which was time-consuming and more expensive. This book has talked about the



postal system of Tibet very limitedly. However, the book throws little light on the British influence of developing the postal system.

Nick Rhodes, in his article “*Notes on the Postal History of Sikkim (1888-1947)*” (1996), throws light on the military expedition of 1888. He mentions the postal developments in Sikkim very briefly. He is of the opinion that on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1861, that the Military runner used to carry the mail and a few of the letters have received a B 68 Cancellation in Darjeeling and a red Darjeeling dispatch mark on 9<sup>th</sup> March as the head office for all the post offices in Sikkim was in Darjeeling. Nick Rhodes has provided the information of post offices in Sikkim 1888. However, his work provides very limited information based on stamps and correspondences.

Francis Younghusband wrote a book *India and Tibet* (1998), where he talked about how Younghusband started his arguments with the coming of Bogle in 1772 to Tibet under the command of the then Governor-General of India Warren Hastings. His focus is on the trade relationship with Tibet, and they had a good relationship with the Tashi Lama Tibetan regent. Younghusband also highlighted the matter of the fact that it was the Tibetans who initiated the first steps of a friendly relationship with the British. This book throws light on the systematic postal system and the way they sent letters.

*Tibetan Wars through Sikkim, Bhutan, and Nepal* (2003), written by Colonel M.N. Gulati explained various wars that took place in Sikkim, Bhutan, and Nepal with Tibet. He further states that the Sikkim Expedition of 1888 was the major step that led to the birth of the organized postal and Telegraph office in Sikkim. Nevertheless, the author has not mentioned the details of the same.

*'A Jingle of Bells' A Short History of the General Post Office Kolkata* (2004), written by Basudeb Chattopadhyay, mentions the historic architect of the General Post Office of Kolkata, which has its historical importance in the history of Kolkata. The author mentions that the postal services in India received a fresh impetus after the establishment of the Muslim rule in India, and with the establishment of the Mughal rule in India, the postal system entered a decisively new phase.

Dipok Dey, in his article "*Sikkim A brief Postal History*" (2006), mentions the postal history of Sikkim. He is of the opinion that it is with the Sikkim expedition of 1888 that the postal service developed in Sikkim. His work also provides the revenue stamps of Sikkim, which can help us to understand the postal history of Sikkim. He also mentions various routes through which the letters were transported. Nevertheless, the author has not elaborately provided the information.

*Gazetteer of Sikkim* (2013), edited by Sunita Kharel and Jigme Wangchuck Bhutia, narrates the geographical, political, social, economic aspects of Sikkim. The book also mentions the *Rhenock* post office as the first post office established in Sikkim in 1910. However, the other records claim *Dalupchen* as the first post office of Sikkim, which was established after the Sikkim Expedition of 1888. It has also mentioned the *Rangpo* post office that was established in the year 1927.

*Tibet Ko Hullak- Path* (2010) is one of the best stories written by the renowned Nepali writer Shiv Kumar Rai, who belongs to *Rhenock* East Sikkim but has lived his life in *Kuersong*, West Bengal. He has very nicely highlighted the story of a runner named *Kulay* (actual name *Kulbhadur*), who lived in *Gnathang* east Sikkim. The protagonist of the story used to stay with one of the Bhutia families in *Gnathang*, where he used to work as a pastoral. Later when the the author's father was

transferred to *Gnathang Dak-Bangalow*, *Kulay* became a part of the postal services. *Kulay* was a packers who use to pack the letters and the parcels into different bags with a seal. He has highlighted the difficulties that the runners had to face.

Devyani Gupta, in her article *Postal Relations between Princely States and British India: Military Lines Communication Networks and the Residency System, C. 1750-1850* (2010-2011), mention the postal development by the British in colonial India in order to fulfil their political and economic interest. The work has especially focused on India's princely states and the importance of the Residency that the British officials built to the colonial states from where the communication lines were maintained. The author has highlighted the importance of military forces in constructing post offices.

Chitra Joshi, *Dak Road, Dak Runners, and the Reordering of Communication Networks* (2012) highlights that the romance of the post office is associated with the Runners. The latter, despite every difficulty like natural calamities, wild animals, attack etc. delivered the mails on exact or given timing. These runners were known by different names as *Dauriyas* in certain regions like Oudh and Mewat. Traditions of running as runners belong to a caste-like *Kahars* in North and East India, *Pattamars* in the South, and *Mahars* in the West. The questions arise as to why the king did not prefer horse runners instead of foot runners. Joshi believes that the king did not use a horse runner in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> c, due to the considerable expense required for a horse compared to the foot runner. The other reason was that of the improper route before the 19<sup>th</sup> c, in order to maintain the proper or specified speed, especially at night, horses required tracks that were clear of trees, stumps and other obstacles. However, the foot runners would deliver the mails out of all those obstacles.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives are:

1. To find out the British influences on the development of the postal system in Sikkim from 1888 to 1947.
2. To analyze the people's response to the development of the post office in Sikkim.
3. To examine the administrative system of the postal department of Sikkim from 1888-1947.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The main concern of the present research work is to study the postal system in Sikkim in historical aspects. Therefore, this dissertation applies qualitative method, quantitative method, and descriptive method. The Qualitative research method focuses on the collections of non-numerical data. Hence, the qualitative research methodology based on the primary and secondary sources have been applied to complete this dissertation work. The primary sources include the documents from the postal department and Royal records, Private letters, Archival documents, Government records. The secondary sources such as books and articles relating the post offices have been accessed. The quantitative research methods include the collections of numerical data. In this present dissertation, the figures and tables have been included which has been analyzed through Administration Reports and Budgets Files. Further, the descriptive research method which focuses on the interviews has also been included for the completion of this research work.

For collecting materials, National Library Kolkata, Sikkim State Library, Sikkim Central University Library, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology and Sikkim State Archive has been visited.

## **CHAPTERIZATION**

### **CHAPTER I**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

The first chapter deals with the importance of the communications system in human life and various means of communications, particularly throwing light upon the services provided by the post offices in Sikkim. This chapter further contains Literature Review, Statement of the Problem, Methodology, Objectives and a brief sketch of the chapters.

### **CHAPTER II**

#### **INFLUENCE OF THE BRITISH ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE POSTAL SYSTEM IN SIKKIM:**

The second chapter gives an account of the British influence on the development of the postal system in Sikkim from 1888 to 1947. The main focus is made on the Expedition of 1888 and the Younghusband Mission to Tibet, which marked the beginning of the regular postal service system in Sikkim.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **PEOPLE'S RESPONSE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE POST OFFICES IN SIKKIM:**

The third chapter analyzes the people's response to the development of the post offices in Sikkim. It further highlights the services of the post office, particularly for the common people.

### **CHAPTER IV**

#### **ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM OF THE POSTAL DEPARTMENT IN SIKKIM FROM 1888 TO 1947:**

This chapter focuses on the administrative system of the post office in Sikkim from 1888 to 1947. It throws light on the British controlled postal service. The role played by the runners and the landlords in Postal administrative works have been highlighted in this chapter.

### **CHAPTER V**

#### **CONCLUSION:**

The last chapter is a summary of the entire work.

## CHAPTER II

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE BRITISH ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE POST OFFICES IN SIKKIM FROM 1888-1947

Sikkim being a small Himalayan kingdom has very little reference to having good communication facilities until the British arrived. The British invasion has marked the communication revolution in Sikkim. They established several post offices, and roads were constructed, due to which Sikkim was introduced to other parts of the world. While analyzing the different phases of the development of postal system in India, it was during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, which marks the commercial and political interest of the English East India Company. The need for the proper communication structures was put forward, resulting in expanding the postal network in India.<sup>13</sup> Ever since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, British officials faced tremendous problems while communicating. Therefore the regular postal system was started in India by the then Viceroy Lord Clive in 1766.<sup>14</sup> Later, it was during the incumbency of Warren Hasting that the postal administrations began to have better footing, which was used for the official purpose generally for private communications.<sup>15</sup> Geoffrey Clarke, in his book *The Post Office of India and Its Story*, mentions that there was no general postal system in the country prior to 1837. It was under the provisions of Act XVII of 1837 that a public post was established in India. However, as the result of Act XVII of 1837, the Dual System of post office emerged, i.e., Imperial Post and the District Post. The Government ran the Imperial post, and the District post was entirely local and

---

<sup>13</sup> Devyani Gupta, Postal Relations Between Princely States and British India: Military lines, Communication Networks and the Residency System, C.1750-1850, *Indian History Congress, 2010-2011, Vol. 71 (2010-2011)*, p. 568.

<sup>14</sup> Geoffrey, Clarke, *The Post Office of India and Its Story*, Abhishek publications, New Delhi, 2018, p.19.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p.21.

controlled by district officials. On the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1904, when the Government revised the Provisional settlements of India where the Government decided to club the District post office of Bengal, Madras and the Province of Assam into the Imperial Post Office. On the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1906, the Government of India abolished all District Post Offices of India.<sup>16</sup> Lord Dalhousie, the Governor-General of India, had an immense role in organizing the scattered local and provincial postal services into one body and initiated the Post Act of 1885. During his administrative tenure in India, the numbers of the post offices increased and affixed runners with mail carts and boats. The post offices were established in every small town in India.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, the communication system, particularly the postal system of Sikkim, was developed after the British invasion. However, the importance of post office in Sikkim before the invasion of the British cannot be overlooked.

Before the invasion of the British in Sikkim, several invasions were made by the foreign invaders, precisely the Bhutanese invasion in the year 1770, the *Gurkha* invasion in 1775 followed up by numerous minor raids and vexatious attacks causing the political, social as well as economic breakdown of Sikkim. In the Sa-Tel year (Tibetan era) 1788, during the reign of 6<sup>th</sup> Chogyal Tenzing Namgyal, *Gurkha* under Purna Ali invaded Sikkim and captured the Palace of *Rabdentse* (West Sikkim), forcing the Raja and his family to run away within no time.<sup>18</sup> Due to the troublesome circumstances created by the *Gurkhas*, the 7<sup>th</sup> Chogyal of Sikkim Tsugphud Namgyal asked for help from the British and on the other hand, the British also faced trouble by the *Gurkhas*. Therefore, the combined force of Sikkim and the British finally

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. pp. 23,24,26.

<sup>17</sup> Daniel. Headrick, A Double – Edged Sword: Communications and Imperial Control in British India, *GESIS- Leibniz Institute for the Social Science, 2010, Vol. 35, No.1*, p. 52.

<sup>18</sup> Maharaja Thuthob Namgyal and Maharani Yeshe Dolma, *History of Sikkim*, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Translated by Kazi Dousandup, (Unpublished Work), 1908, p.48.



succeeded in driving out the *Gurkhas* from Sikkim and signed the treaty of *Segaulee* (*Sugauli*) on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1815. Article 6<sup>th</sup> of the treaty defines the British Government's support to Rajah of Sikkim if Nepal attacks Sikkim. The Treaty of *Titalia* was signed on 10 February 1817 and declared that Sikkim's dispute with any other country would be hereafter solved by the British. They further gave an assurance to protect its boundary. Therefore, the Treaty of *Titalia* brought Sikkim under the sphere of British domain<sup>19</sup>. Later the relationship between Sikkim and the British officials faded after the Deed of Grant 1835, further leading towards signing the Treaty of *Tumlong* in the year 1861. Many great foreign invasions took place in Sikkim before the British invasion but never emphasized developing a systematic postal system until the Sikkim Expedition of 1888.

## **2.1. SIKKIM EXPEDITION OF 1888 AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE POSTAL SYSTEMS IN SIKKIM**

Devyani Gupta, in her article, mentions that the Military line and the Postal line moved parallel to each other and importance was given to the military in building the postal lines by the British Government.<sup>20</sup> The role of the British Indian armies in the development of the regular Postal System in Sikkim is remarkable. Several post offices in Sikkim were build aftermath of the Sikkim Expedition of 1888. Though the postal system was developed for military purposes after 1888 but later the services of the post offices in Sikkim developed into a systematic communications system and served for the betterment of the civilian. To understand the development of postal system in Sikkim as one of the main communication systems, one must study how and why the Sikkim Expeditions of 1888 took place. Therefore, one must note that

---

<sup>19</sup> G.S., Bajpai, *China's Shadow Over Sikkim The political of Intimidation*, Sona Printers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1999, p.24.

<sup>20</sup> Devyani. Gupta, Op.Cit., pp. 569-570.

after several failures Missions of the British Indian Government, i.e., Bogle's Mission in 1772, Dr Hamilton in 1775 and Captain Samuel Turner in 1783 to Tibet, the British started the Sikkim Expedition of 1888. The Sikkim Expedition of 1888 took place after Colman Macaulay in the year 1885 launched a mission for having a healthy relationship with Tibet. As a consequence of the 1885 Mission, the Tibetan force occupied *Lingtu*, an area that encompassed Sikkim and constructed a fort.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the British Indian Government had sent an ultimatum to Tibetan Government in October 1887. The Viceroy of India, Lord Dufferin, gave an ultimatum to vacate the area by 15<sup>th</sup> March 1888. The British Government of India would dispatch the British force over *Lingtu*. However, the Tibetan Officials paid no attention to the ultimatum. On 16<sup>th</sup> February 1888, the British troops moved from *Pedong* and reached *Dulepchen* or *Dalupchen*. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of the same month, the British troops reached *Rangli-Chu* (*Chu* means Water in Tibetan Language) finally giving call to "Sikkim Expedition of 1888", under the command of General Graham.<sup>22</sup> Despite many unsuccessful attempts made by the then Chogyal Thutob Namgyal in maintaining peaceful relations between British officials and Tibet Government, the Sikkim Expedition of 1888 took place where the forces from two sides clashed for the first time at *Jaylup*.<sup>23</sup> As the Expedition of 1888 proved to be very difficult for the British troops in many ways as there were neither proper transportation facilities nor convenient communication systems, all essential arms and ammunition were carried by mule or pony. However, the Sikkim Expedition of 1888 has left its remarkable traces in the history of Sikkim by improving and developing the postal system. British Indian armies had to maintain the communication system, so General Graham, on

---

<sup>21</sup> P.K., Jha, *History of Sikkim (1817-1904)*, OPS Publishers, Calcutta, 1985, p.20.

<sup>22</sup> Colonel, M.N., Gulati, *Tibetan Wars Through Sikkim, Bhutan & Nepal*, Manas Publications, New Delhi, 2003, p.66.

<sup>23</sup> Maharaja Thuthob Namyal and Maharani Yeshi Dolma, *Op.Cit.*, p.95.

October, 27<sup>th</sup> 1888, sent the telegraph to the Regimental General of India, asking permission to extend the telegraphic line over the Tibetan side of *Jalap La*.<sup>24</sup> The British force moved towards *Lingtu* concurrently, they also established telegraphic lines and civil postal services were opened. With this Expedition of 1888, the post office was established in Sikkim by the British wherever the need was felt to facilitate the military operations in war with Tibetan forces. On 16<sup>th</sup> March 1888, the British Indian forces assembled at *Pedong* presently at *Kalimpong* and dispersed into two columns under the command of Brigadier General T. Graham and Colonel Michel. The forces moved towards Fort *Lingtu* and *Rhenok Bazaar*. Therefore, with the breakthrough of the troops a Post Office was opened at *Dulapchin* or *Dalapchand*, which was later removed to *Rangli chu*. At the same point in time, other Post Offices were also opened at *Gnatong*, *Sedonchin*, *Gangtok*, *Rhenok Bazaar* and *Pakyong*.<sup>25</sup> The postal line which connects the above post offices was under the management of *Rongli chu* and *Pakyong* Post Office. Nevertheless, the lines beyond these places were under the control of Political authorities.<sup>26</sup> *Pedong* Post Office was converted into a sub-office on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1888, and since then, it served as a base office for the Sikkim Expedition.<sup>27</sup> These Post Offices, which was opened at various places, delivered the mails and letters to the British army and supplied goods for fodder and livestock.<sup>28</sup>

Dipok Dey, a renowned philatelist in *Sikkim A Brief History* mentions that during those days, the mail route was *Siliguri* to *Ghum*, presently a part of West Bengal by

---

<sup>24</sup> Geoffrey Flack, *Sikkim Filled Force 1888-89*, Postal Himal, No. 78, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 1994, p.34.

<sup>25</sup> Dipok Dey, *Sikkim A Brief Postal History*, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Geoffrey, Clarke, Op.Cit., p. 215.

<sup>27</sup> Indira, Awasti, *Between Sikkim and Bhutan*, B.R. Publishing, Delhi, 1978, p. 25.

<sup>28</sup> Colonel, M.N., Gulati, Op.Cit., p.67.

rail. The mail was carried by runner till *Teesta* and *Singtam*, (East Sikkim) and then to *Gangtok*, (East Sikkim).<sup>29</sup>

While tracing the postal development in Sikkim, Arthur Edmund Sandbach's correspondence is noteworthy. He joined the Sikkim Expedition in 1889. His correspondences highlight the postal arrangements for the Sikkim Field Force of 1888-89. The few correspondences of Sandbach present the letters with "Experimental P.O. C-3"<sup>30</sup>, "Experimental P.O. C-7"<sup>31</sup>, "Experimental P.O. C-22"<sup>32</sup>, which shows the postal use within Sikkim and Tibet in the Sikkim Expedition 1888.<sup>33</sup> Further, Sandbach has also sent a receipt of Rupees 10, which also marks the "Experimental P.O. C-7" strike, and J.C. White has signed the receipt as a Postmaster. Sandbach first reached *Siliguri* then proceeded to *Ghoom (Darjeeling)*. From *Ghoom*, he travelled towards *Peshok* and moved forward to *Kalimpong*. He then towards *Pedong* (Base Headquarter of Expedition) reached *Gangtok*, where he stayed for few days. Then, *Sandbach* moved to *Pakyong*, then to *Ari (Aritar)*, *Lingtam*, *Sedonchen*, *Garnai*, *Gnatong*, *Kupup* and *Jelep La* into Tibet.<sup>34</sup> These places thorough which Sandbach travelled to reach Tibet help us to mark a route towards Tibet. Furthermore, these are also places where the Post Offices were established after the 1888 Expedition.

---

<sup>29</sup> Dipok, Dey, Op.Cit., p.3.

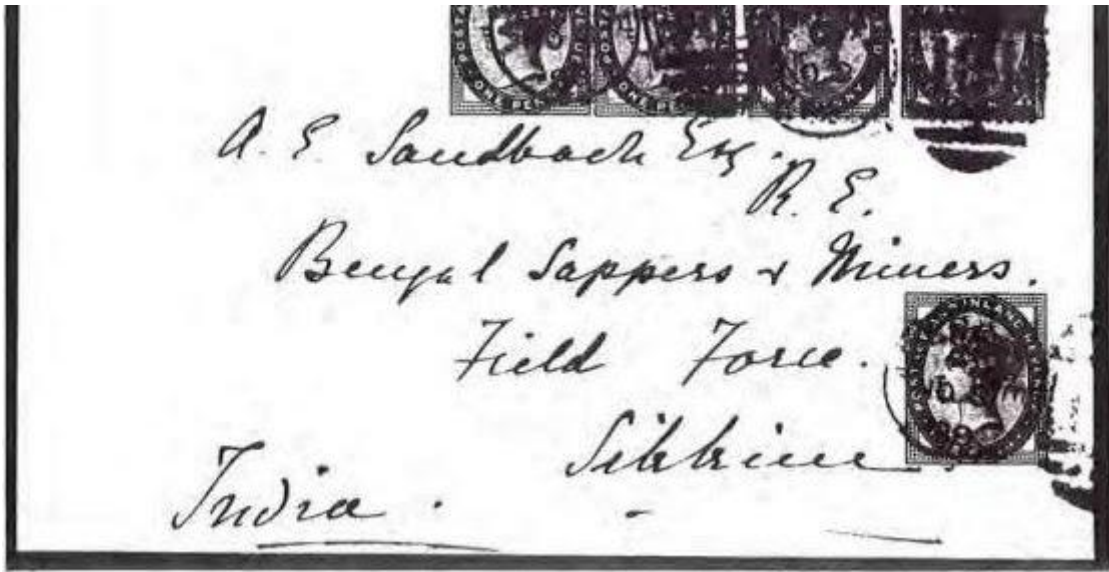
<sup>30</sup> Experimental P.O. C-3: Dated Oct. 3 and Oct. 5, 1888. This Cancellation is assumed to have been used in Rangpo.

<sup>31</sup> Experimental P.O. C-7: Assumed to have been used between Oct. 8 and Dec. 3, 1888. It was used within Tibet.

<sup>32</sup> Experimental P.O. C-22: It was used at Rhenock or Rhenock Ridge. It is to have been used between Dec. 16, 1888 and late May, 1889.

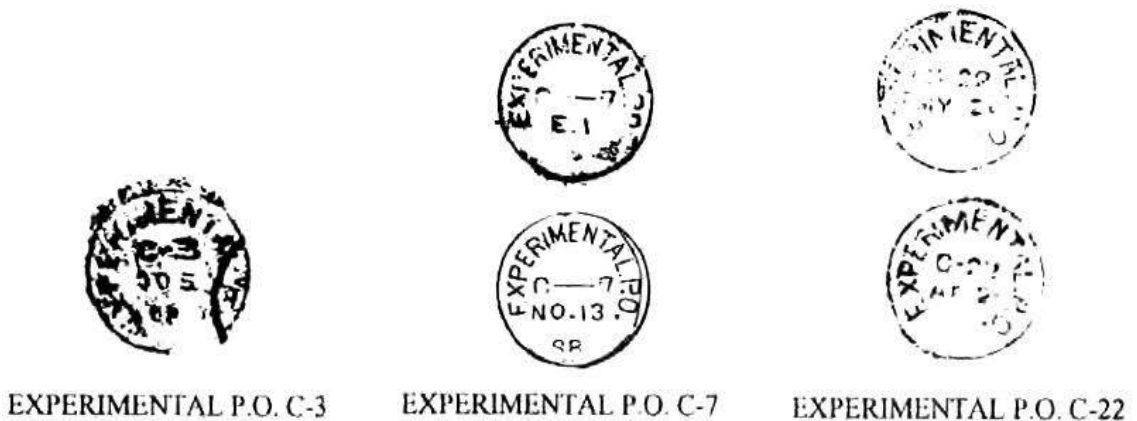
<sup>33</sup> Geoffrey, Flack, Op.Cit., p.39.

<sup>34</sup> Geoffrey, Flack, Op.Cit., p.36.



**Fig.2.1.** The Postal cover was send to LT. Sandbach during his service in Sikkim Field Force, 1888-89

Source: Geoffery, Flack, *Sikkim Field Force, 1888-89 Precursor to the Younghusband Expedition*, Postal Himal, 1994, p.33.



**Fig.2.2.** Cancellation received from Sandbach’s correspondence used inside Sikkim.

Source: Geoffery, Flack, *Sikkim Field Force, 1888-89 Precursor to the Younghusband Expedition*, Postal Himal, 1994, p.39.

The convenient records of the Sikkim Expedition of 1888 emphasize the development of the post office in Sikkim. However, in his article, *Notes on the Postal History of Sikkim (1888-1947)*, Nicks Rhodes throws a light upon the presence of the postal services in Sikkim back on the 1861 Expedition. It mentions the mail sent from *Yantong* on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1861, which was believed to have been carried by a military runner which received a B68 Cancellation<sup>35</sup> in Darjeeling and a red Darjeeling dispatch mark on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1861; however, no official mail services in Sikkim has been recorded.<sup>36</sup>

After Sikkim Expedition, 1888, which was in favour of the British, concluded the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, signed between Great Britain and China at Calcutta.<sup>37</sup> The 1890 Convention declared Sikkim as the British Protectorate state. Article 2 of the Convention mentions that as Sikkim became the British Protectorate, the British possessed exclusive control over the internal and external administrations.<sup>38</sup> This 1890 Convention left the three issues unsolved, i.e., pasturage, communication and trade. However, the above - unsolved issue of the 1890 Convention was solved on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1893.<sup>39</sup> In the long run of gaining supremacy over the trade-in Tibet by the British and making Sikkim a buffer state of the British India and Tibet, the Government of India appointed J.C. White as a Political Officer of Sikkim, 1889. With the installation of White as the Political Officer of Sikkim, all the power of the then country came into hand and made the Chogyal of Sikkim a nominal head of his own country. The provisions of the Convention of 1890 was not

---

<sup>35</sup> The ink mark or other defacement to a stamp to show that it has been used once, and may not be used again.

<sup>36</sup> Nick Rhodes, *Notes on the Postal History of Sikkim (1888-1947)*, Postal Himal, NO. 85, 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 1996, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> Colonel M.N Gulati, Op.Cit., p.71.

<sup>38</sup> Walter Leifer, *Himalaya, Mountains of Destiny*, Galley Press, London, 1962. P.51.

<sup>39</sup> J.N. Jha, Op.Cit., p. 23.

followed by the Tibetan Government, which provoked the British Government of India to start the Sikkim Mission Of 1904.

The post office that was established in 1888 with the connection of the Sikkim Expedition, which was functioning in North Bengal and Sikkim on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1903 under Darjeeling Head Office;

1. *Teesta* Bridge Branch Office under *Ghum* Sub Office

2. Pedong Branch Office, Rhenock Branch Office, Pakyong Branch Office, under Kalimpong Sub office. The *Kalimpong* Sub Office was established before 1888.

3. Gangtok Sub Office under Darjeeling Head Office.<sup>40</sup>

According to D.S. Virk, the mail route to the above post offices was from *Siliguri* to *Ghum* through rail, and from there, the mail was carried by the runners to *Teesta* Bridge, *Kalimpong*, *Pedong*, and *Rhenock* on the *Jelap La* route to *Tibet* and *Rhenock* to *Pakyong* and *Gangtok*.<sup>41</sup>

## **2.2. YOUNGHUSBAND MISSION OF 1904 AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE POST OFFICES OF SIKKIM**

Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy of British India, showed much interest in Tibet after the rejection of his two letters by the Tibetan Government as well as the rumours of Russian interest over Tibet flamed the circumstances more.<sup>42</sup> Despite many communication trials with the Tibetan authorities, which proved to be a failure time and again, the British Government took another step by launching the “Tibet Mission”

---

<sup>40</sup> D.S. Virk, *Postal History of Indian Campaigns Sikkim Tibet 1903-1908*, Philatelic Congress of India Army Postal Association, New Delhi, 1989, p.10.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>42</sup> Peter Fleming, *Bayonets to Lhasa*, Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1961, p.39.

in 1903. The British Government of India recruited Col. F. E. Younghusband to move towards *Khamba Dzong* in Tibet. The British escort stayed in *Khamba Dzong* for nearly five months believing to have a peaceful negotiation with the Chinese and Tibetan delegates. However, Tibet had not responded, making this attempt again a failure for the British. These circumstances encouraged British forces to leave *Khamba Dzong* and cross *Jelep la* to enter *Chumbi Valley* in Tibet with a military escort under Brigadier General J.R Macdonald on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1903. The completion of this “Tibet Mission” has four phases. The first phase took place from 15<sup>th</sup> October 1903 to 24<sup>th</sup> March 1904, where *Chumbi* was occupied by the British troops, and they prepared for an advance to *Gyantse*. Second phase marks from 25<sup>th</sup> March 1904 to 9<sup>th</sup> July 1904 where the British troops invaded *Gyantse* and prepared to move towards Lhasa. In the third phase, the British troops advanced to Lhasa. In the last phase, the British troops occupied Lhasa and withdrew the mission on conclusion by signing Convention between the British and Tibet.<sup>43</sup>

Unlike the Sikkim Expedition of 1888, the Younghusband Mission of 1904 also underwent many hardships in transport facilities and communication facilities. There was no good road, and a good line of communications was not built to date over the route to Tibet. However, the Tibet Mission also played a significant role in constructing roads and maintaining bridges that connects Sikkim with Tibet. In his book *India and Tibet*, Francis Younghusband, mentions that he along with General Macdonald, J.C. White, Walsh, Captain W.F.O’Connor, rendezvoused at *Gnatong* and their troops. They prepared to move towards Tibet and carried all the essential goods such as guns, No. 7 Mountain Battery, Royal Artillery and field hospitals, engineer Field Park, and

---

<sup>43</sup> Maj. Gen. Shubhi Sood, *Younghusband Troubled Campaign*, India Research Press, New Delhi, 2005, p.p. 5-6.



Telegraph, Postal and survey department detachment.<sup>44</sup> In November 1903, the British Indian armies on Tibet mission constructed roads, repaired tracks and bridges between *Rangpo*, *Rorathang*, *Rongli*, *Lingtam*, *Zuluk*, and *Gnathong*. Therefore, a combined post and telegraph office was opened at *Gnathong* on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1903. Similarly, when the troops reached *Lingtam* on late December 1903, the post office was functioning at *Sedongchen*, few miles ahead of *Lingtam*. Post and camps were established at *Rangpo*, *Rorathang*, *Lingtam*, *Zuluk*, and *Gnathong* in Sikkim.<sup>45</sup> From 6<sup>th</sup> January 1904, the postal services of the Sikkim-Tibet Mission Force were divided into two postal division: that is the Base Division extending from *Siliguri* to *Jelap La* and the Advance Division covering the force in Tibet. While on Mission to Tibet, many Field Post Offices<sup>46</sup> were established, and this F.P.O.s were coined by the numbers like F.P.O.s Nos. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 32, 33, 81, 82, 32, 84, 85, 86, 87 and 88. These Field Post offices served in Bengal, Sikkim and Tibet in connection with 1904 Tibet Mission. On 11<sup>th</sup> January 1904, F.P.O.s No. 27 was opened at *Rangpo* and was closed on November 1904. F.P.O.s No. 30 was opened at *Kupup* on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1904 and was closed when the *Jelep La* route was abandoned in May 1904. The F.O.P.s No 33 was established at *Changu* around May- June 1904 after the *Nathu La* route was adopted and the *Jelap La* route was closed. This Field post office was closed on 27<sup>th</sup> October 1904. F.O.P.s No 87 was opened at *Ganthong* around January/February 1904, and due to the abandonment of the *Jelep La* route, this Field Post Office was shifted to *Gangtok*.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Francis Younghusband, *India and Tibet*, Book Faith India, Delhi, 1998, p.139.

<sup>45</sup> D.S. Virk, Op.Cit. p.6,19.

<sup>46</sup> The Postal Services of an army which is directed by the military head quarters.

<sup>47</sup> D.S. Virk, Op.Cit., p.p.20- 25.

**TABLE 2.1****FIELD POST OFFICES ESTABLISHED DURING TIBET MISSION 1903-1904**

Sl. No.	F.P.O.	OPENING DATE	CLOSING DATE	LOCATION
1.	F.P.O. No. 25	10.12.03	11.12.03	<i>Gnathong</i>
2.	F.P.O. No. 27	11.1.04	11.11.04	<i>Rangpo</i>
3.	F.P.O. No. 29	About .1.04	About .5.04	<i>Lingtam/Sedongchon</i>
4.	F.P.O. No. 30	About .2.04	About .5.04	<i>Kapup</i>
5.	F.P.O. No. 33	About .5.04	27.10.04	<i>Changu</i>
6.	F.P.O. No. 84 F.P.O. No. 85 F.P.O. No. 86	About .1.04	About .5.04	L of C Camp below <i>Lingtam</i> ( <i>Riang, Tarkhola,</i> <i>Rorathang or</i> <i>Rongli</i> )
7.	F.P.O. No. 87	About .1.04	About .5.04	<i>Gnathong</i>
		About .5.04	14.11.04	<i>Gangtok</i>

Source: D.S. Virik, *Postal History of Indian Campaigns Sikkim Tibet 1903-1908*, p.61,62,63.

Note: Table shows the list of F.P.O. along with the established and closing dates. The table shows the names of F.P.O.s only of Sikkim. However, the F.P.O.s of Bengal and Tibet is not mentioned.

**TABLE 2.2****SIKKIM-TIBET OPERATIONS 1903- 1908****LIST OF CIVIL POST OFFICES**

Sl. No.	CIVIL POST OFFICES	OPENING DATE	CLOSING DATE	LOCATION
1.	Gangtok Sub Office	Before 1903	Open	Gangtok
2.	Rhenock Branch Office	Before 1903	Open	Rhenock
3.	Temporary P.O. D Sub Office	25.3.03	About .1.04	32 <sup>nd</sup> Pioneers Camp (Rangpo 25.3.03, Singtam 3.4.03)
4.	Experimental P.O. C-46 Branch Office	2.5.03	About 30.9.03	Rangpo
5.	Rangpo Sub Office	About 1.10.03	Open	Rangpo
6.	Pakyong Branch Office	Before 1903	About 1.5.03	Pakyong
		About 1.10.03	Open	Pakyong
7.	Temporary P.O I Sub Office	About .11.03	About .1.04	Lingtam
8.	Temporary P.O. K Sub Office	19.11.03	Open	Gnathong

Source: D.S. Virik *Postal History of Indian Campaigns Sikkim Tibet 1903-1908*, p.60.

Note: The above table mentions the post offices in Sikkim and their established date, closing date and location. The British Indian troops set up these post offices on their way to the Tibet Mission 1903-1904.

The post offices opened at different places in Sikkim and Tibet during 1903-1904, which served the British Indian troops. Unregistered letters, postcards, newspapers, book packets, and parcels etc., would be send from Tibet Mission to India. From one field post office to another, the items like official correspondence, unregistered letters, postcards, books etc., were allowed to be delivered. However, one could purchase ordinary and services stamps from any field post office.<sup>48</sup>

While on the Mission to Tibet, the Field postal service had to face many problems. However, it provided a satisfactory service. There was a rapid development of the

<sup>48</sup> D.S. Virik, op.Cit., p.p. 27,28.

field post offices and telegraph line on the route towards Tibet. At first, they established temporary post offices and lines under the supervision of the Superintendent of Post Office, *Jailpaiguri* Division, but later, the Mission headed towards the *Chumbi Valley*, which resulted in establishing the Field Post Office. When the troops were ordered to leave the Mission by the British Government of India they also ordered the postal officials to abdicate the place. Therefore, under such circumstances, on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1904, the troops left *Chumbi* and the field post office between *Chumbi* and *Gangtok* was also closed.<sup>49</sup> The post office, which served the British Indian pioneers who hold the duty of road-building on the 1903 Expedition, was located at *Gangtok, Singtam, Rangpo, Tokul* and October 1903 at *Pakyong*.<sup>50</sup> The British Indian armies abdicated *Chumbi Valley* in January 1908. Notwithstanding, the Political Department wanted the post offices to remain for the civilian role. However, the Great War of 1914 led to the closure of the Base Post Office at *Siliguri* and the Sikkim- Tibet Division.<sup>51</sup>

The Sikkim Expedition of 1888 and the Sikkim Mission of 1904 is an important event in Sikkim which marks the development of the post offices in Sikkim. After which, several post offices were established at various places in Sikkim. Initially, the purpose behind establishing the post offices was for the benefit of Military expedition over Sikkim, but it later proved to become an integral part of Sikkim administration which served the people of Sikkim.

Sikkim was one of the princely states which were declared as the Protectorate of the British Government in the year 1890 according to which the total administrative control was in the hand of the British Government of India. Nevertheless, on the

---

<sup>49</sup> Geoffrey, Clarke, Op.Cit., p.p. 229,230.

<sup>50</sup> D.S. Virk, *ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>51</sup> D.S. Virk, *ibid.*, p. 37.

ground of the Postal Services, Sikkim created many historical events in later days, for an instance, the Experiment of Rocket Mail in 1934 by Stephen H. Smith.

### **2.3. EXPERIMENT OF ROCKET MAIL IN SIKKIM**

Without mentioning the Rocket Mail Experiment, the postal history of Sikkim is incomplete. The Experiment of Rocket Mail was done by British Stephen H. Smith who occupied the position of Honorary Secretary of the Indian Air Mail Society and a member of the Air League of the British Empire. On the record which covers the proposal of Stephen H. Smith's visit to Sikkim, he had sent a letter to the then Maharaja of Sikkim Sir Tashi Namgyal seeking permission to allow him to visit Sikkim for Rocket Mail Experimentation in Sikkim.<sup>52</sup> Fortunately, the letter was accepted by the Sikkim Durbar and several Rocket mail experiment was conducted in Sikkim. Prior to Sikkim, the rocket mail experiment was done at different places in Calcutta, for instance, on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1934 at *Saugor* Island, on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1934 at *Diamond Harbour* etc. However, this tiny Himalayan kingdom became one of the first countries in the world to have done a successful Rocket Mail Experiment.<sup>53</sup>

According to the Archival record the Rocket Mail experiment conducted in Sikkim:

April 7<sup>th</sup> 1935: from *Gangtok* Post office to the Durbar High School.

April 8<sup>th</sup> 1935: from Sir Tashi Namgyal Field to Post office.

April 8<sup>th</sup> 1935: vertical firing from Sir Tashi Namgyal Field to Post office.

April 9<sup>th</sup> 1935: from *Dak-Bangalow* to Post Office.

---

<sup>52</sup> Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 7/3/1934, Serial No. 3, Subject: Propose Visit of Stephen H. Smith, Rocket Mail Experiment, p.1.

<sup>53</sup> D.N., Jatia, *From the Diary of Stephen Smith*, The Philatelic Congress of India, New Delhi, 1980, p. 30.

April 10<sup>th</sup> 1935: from *Surumsa* to *Ray* (mail).

April 10<sup>th</sup> 1935: from *Surumsa* to *Ray* (parcel and mail).

April 10<sup>th</sup> 1935: from *Ray* to *Surumsa*.

April 13<sup>th</sup> 1935: experiment was done at *Singtam* River and *Rungpo* River.

These rocket carried medicines, mails, parcels, cigarettes, tea, sugar etc. with these rocket mail experiments, the Sikkim Durbar sanctioned a series of four rocket stamps which would be used for the various mail and parcels experiment.<sup>54</sup>



**Fig.2.3.** The picture is of Sir Tashi Namgyal 11<sup>th</sup> Chogyal of Sikkim, who is holding the Rocket.

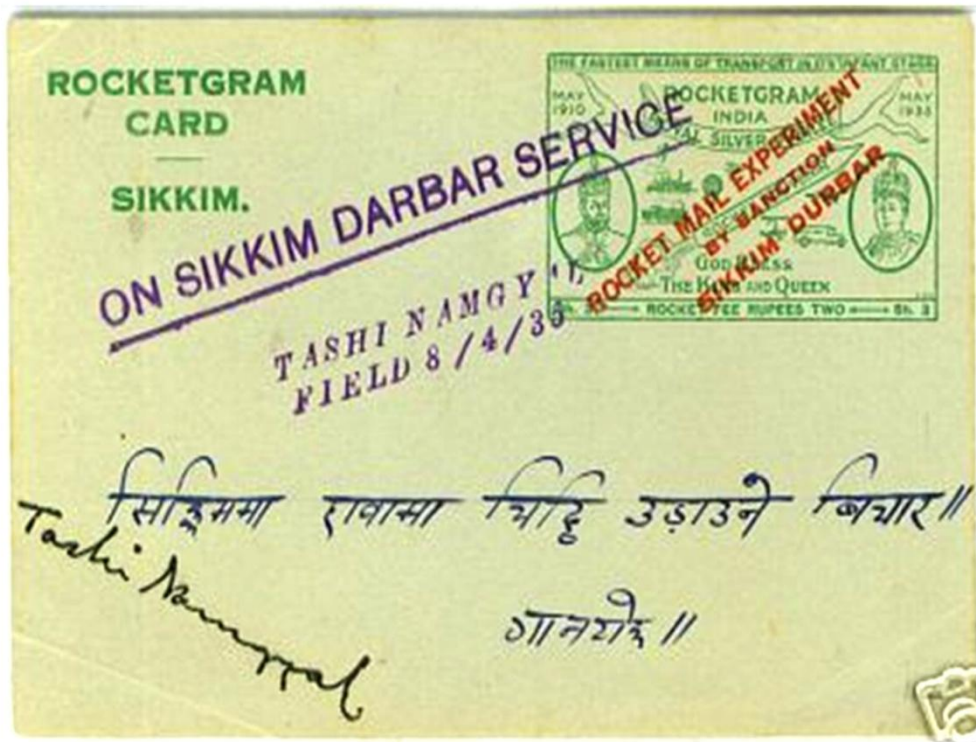
Source: Shital Pradhan a Philatelist from Singtam East Sikkim, Private Collections.

---

<sup>54</sup> Sikkim State Archive, Op.Cit., p.10.



**Fig.2.4.** The photograph is of Stephen H. Smith who is holding the Rocket in his hand.  
 Source: Shital Pradhan a Philatelist from Singtam East Sikkim, Private Collections.



**Fig.2.5.** The above picture is the Rocketgram Card of Sikkim.  
 Source: Shital Pradhan a Philatelist from Singtam East Sikkim, Private Collections.

After the series of events in Sikkim with which the British dominated the administrations in Sikkim and established the post offices as a proper means of communications, the British had to surrender their power from the colonial country. Therefore, India owned her independence from the British supremacy on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1947, where the princely states were left behind with specific provisions. Sikkim, whose administration was completely run by the British after 1947, became the Protectorate of Independent India. The Indian Government started to control the affairs of the then country entirely. Memorandum of Government of Sikkim 1947 describes various clauses which shall to be looked by the Government of Sikkim and shall go favor in Indian administration like territory, military forces, trade, economy etc. The same Memorandum of Government of Sikkim 1947, Clause IV mentions,

“The Government of India undertake as long as Sikkim Government so desire to maintain and improve the existing trade routes between India and Tibet passing through Sikkim territory as well as to maintain expand and develop Postal, telegraph and wireless telephone communication in Sikkim territories and the Government of Sikkim agree to afford all reasonable facilities to the officials of the Government of India deputed for this purpose”.<sup>55</sup>

Finally, on 5<sup>th</sup> of December, 1950, the Standstill Agreement was signed at Gangtok. According to the treaty, Sikkim was declared a Protectorate of the Indian Union and gave Sikkim autonomy over internal affairs where as the external affairs along with defence, and communications remain under the power of the Government of India.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> Memorandum of the Government of Sikkim, 1947, British Library, EAP880/1/1/39, <http://eap.bl.uk/archive-file>, EAP880/1/1/39, Domestic Affair (1875-1975), p. 8.

<sup>56</sup>George. Kotturan, *The Himalayan Gateway History and Culture of Sikkim*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1983, p.98.



## 2.4. CONCLUSION

The British influence on the development of the post offices in Sikkim covers the timeline from 1888 to 1947. In order to understand the event of 1888, this chapter chronologically mentions the events of the invasion from outside in Sikkim especially focusing on the *Ghorkas* invasions, the British intervention in Sikkim followed up by the Treaty of *Segaulee (Sugauli)* 1815, Treaty of *Titalia* 1817, Deed of Grant 1835, Treaty of *Tumlong* 1861. However, the Expedition of 1888 and Younghusband Mission Of 1904 has been discussed elaborately.

Sikkim Expedition of 1888 can be marked as to which the base of the post offices was initiated in Sikkim. The post offices which were established in the Expedition have provided its service for the British Army, who on the war with Tibet set a camp to different areas in Sikkim such as *Rhenock, Gnatong, Dalupchand, Pakyoung, Gangtok* etc., also established the field post offices in such places. Further, this chapter has briefly highlights the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, followed up by the Younghusband Mission of 1904 and its influences on the post offices in Sikkim. During the Younghusband Mission of 1904, the field Post Offices and telegraph line was developed rapidly. As this mission was brought to an end, the field post offices in few places were also closed. Though the post offices earlier were installed according to the need of the British troops, it was later developed for civilian service in Sikkim. The Experiment of Rocket Mail in Sikkim by Stephen H. Smith is another historical event in the development of the post office in Sikkim.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **PEOPLE'S RESPONSE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE POST OFFICE IN SIKKIM**

Sikkim, the then kingdom, had very less exposure to the rest of the world. Its society was based on religious significance but lacked a proper communication facility because of which Sikkim was isolated from the other parts of the world for many centuries. The Nineteenth-century marks the arrival of the British in Sikkim, resulting in the development of a proper and regular communication system. Until 1903-1904, the post offices in Sikkim were established for the interest of British troops. The Common people were unaware of the function of the postal service. However, after realizing the importance of a post office, the common people demanded the Sikkim Durbar to establish the post offices in their native places.

#### **3.1. PEOPLE'S DEMAND FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF POST OFFICES IN DIFFERENT PLACES OF SIKKIM**

We can trace the presence of communications systems before the arrival of the British in Sikkim. Prior to the establishment of a systematic postal system in Sikkim, we come across many methods and ways of sending letters. *L Tshering Khenpo* in his book, *A Sage of Sikkim's Supremely Revered four pioneer Nyingmapa Reincarnates and their Torchbearers*, mentions that in the thirteenth century, the ancient technique of sending the letters was to tie the letter in the neck of the Vulture<sup>57</sup>. The other ways of communications were by applying ingenious methods of shooting to which the letters were attached in an arrow where people use to send letters from one side of the

---

<sup>57</sup> L. Tshering, Khenpo, *A Sage of Sikkim's Supremely Revered four pioneer Nyingmapa Reincarnates and their Torchbearers*, Khempo L. Tshering, 2002, p. 18.

river to the other.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, the oral sources highlight that the religious mantras were the medium of delivering letters. Captain *Yongda*, a renowned lama from *Pemayongchi* Monastery, while interviewing-<sup>59</sup> says that during Namgyal's rule<sup>60</sup>, the means of communications was the arrow.

He also mentions that the monks who performed Tantric practices with the help of Tantric mantras used to deliver the letters through the arrow. He stated, "Around 1904, His Holiness *Chaktha Rinpoche* of *Gangyap* visited *Gyalzing Bazaar* near the holy wall<sup>61</sup> or *Mendang (in-Buhtia)*. From there, he shot an arrow that landed at *Sangacholin* Monastery. A nun lived in this monastery, and this arrow happened to land in front of her door. The nun opened the letter, and later she married *Chaktha Rinpoche* of *Gangyap*."

---

<sup>58</sup> K.C. Bhanja, *History of Darjeeling and the Sikkim Himalaya*, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 2015, p. 20.

<sup>59</sup> Name: Sonam Yongda (Captain Youngda/Yapo Captain), Age-79, Male, Interviewed on Date: 29<sup>th</sup> December 2019, Place: Pemayantse Monastery, Time: 12 Noon.

<sup>60</sup> Namgyal's rule was also known as Khe De Me De Government. This Government was the Spiritual Democratic pattern of government.

<sup>61</sup> In Gyazing Bazar (West Sikkim), we still can find a wall that bears historical importance. It is said that a tantric monk had sent a letter to a nun in Sangacholin Monastery by shooting an arrow where a letter was attached. This is the reason why this place is known as the holy wall.



**Fig.3.1.** Photograph of *Mendang* or Holy Wall from where *Chaktha Rinpoche* shot an arrow.

Source: Photo taken at *Gyalzing Bazaar*, Private collection

Captain Yongda further says that the musical note of the flute was also indicated to convey messages. He laments not having records of the tune of the flute, which was used to send the messages. He said that one used to convey the messages to his fellowmen in the village by playing the flute for which one had to climb on a hilltop or a tree. He believed that the flute used to be long enough so that its sound could travel at a long distance. Another means of communication was the beating of the drums. Sometimes, in order to deliver the messages or letters, messengers were also used. The letters, confidential documents and the Holy Scriptures were stuffed inside the bamboo, and the messengers used to deliver to the person concerned. A whistle was also used as a means of communication in the *Kha De Meh De* Government.



**Fig.3.2.** Photograph with Captain *Sonam Yongda* at his residence in *Pemayantse* Monastery, West Sikkim.

Source: Photo taken at Captain Sonam Yongda's residence in *Pemayantse* Monastery, West Sikkim, Private Collection

The above means of sending letters was for royal and political purposes. Only after the arrival of the British to creating a diplomatic and trading relationship with Tibet via Sikkim, the post offices were established and which later on provided essential services for the common people of Sikkim. Before it, communications through letters was implemented and practised by the King mostly for the political purpose. Only the King or Royal families enjoyed such communication facilities because they were the one who was accustomed to this system. On the other hand, the postal system was not heard by most of the common people of Sikkim. Before installing systematic postal services in Sikkim by the British, the special messengers were employed by the Royal house, i.e., the Kings, the *Kazis* or Landlords and the Buddhist religious heads known as the Lamas. The Report of Colman Macaulay of 1885 highlights the political issues between Tibet and British Indian Government. The Lamas send the special messengers at *Lachung* North Sikkim to *Kamba Jong* in Tibet, informing the Tibetan Government about the arrival of Colman Macaulay to Tibet. Therefore, the political related letters or messages were delivered through special messengers. The personal letters were sent at the hand of the trusted people whom a sender was well known.<sup>62</sup> However, with the Sikkim Expedition of 1888, the post offices were set up at different places in Sikkim, such as *Dalapchen* or *Dalapchand*, *Rongli-Chu*, *Gnatong*, *Sedonchin*, *Gangtok*, *Rhenok* and *Pakyong*. These post offices were opened for the political need, for the British army to hold a political and trading strength in Tibet. The postal service has a tremendous impact on the political sphere in Sikkim. As one of the means of communication, if the British Indian armies in Sikkim did not install the post office, it would have been impossible for the British Indian Government to gain victory on the Sikkim Expeditions of 1888 and the Tibet Mission of 1903-1904.

---

<sup>62</sup> Colman. Macaulay, *Report of a Mission to Sikkim and the Tibetan Frontier: with a Memorandum on our relations with Tibet- Primary Source Edition*, 1885, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1885, p.60,61.

However, the post offices, which were established for political purposes by the British Indian Government, later on expanded and reached for the services of the common people. Consequently, the post offices were established at various places that rendered services for the common people. The post office gradually switched its service from political to social services and encouraged its people to demand the establishment of new post offices at different places in Sikkim.

The common people, particularly in the villages of North Sikkim, like *Lachen*, *Lachung and Ringim*, demanded Sikkim Darbar to establish a post office at their convenient places from where they can have the proper postal services facilities in delivering letters, parcels and making money orders etc. Therefore, the Experimental post office was established at *Chungthang* on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1907, appointing Babu Ram Das as an officer in charge and Branch Post Master.<sup>63</sup> The role of the post office in *Chungthang* is significant because it encouraged the common people to start Apple business outside Sikkim. On the other hand, *Chungthang* had an important frontier Police post. It was necessary to maintain proper communication at *Chungthang*; therefore, the post office in *Chungthang* was very essential for both civilian and for the Government.<sup>64</sup> It is stated in the archival document, File No. 36 of 1927, that a flood had occurred, and this old Experimental *Chungthang* Post office was dismantled. Therefore, on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1928, the old *Chungthang* Post office was shifted to the new building in *Chungthang*.<sup>65</sup>

The post office has highly encouraged the Apple Business in North Sikkim. According to the archival records, when the apple crop would be ready for sale by

---

<sup>63</sup> 1909, Sikkim State Archive, Land Revenue 1890-1909, File No. 2/XIX/1909, Reg. Opening of Post Office at Chungthang, Sl.No. 17, p.p 12-18.

<sup>64</sup> 1938, Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 8 of 1938, Serial No. 3, File Heading, Postal Facilities in rural areas of Sikkim, p. 4.

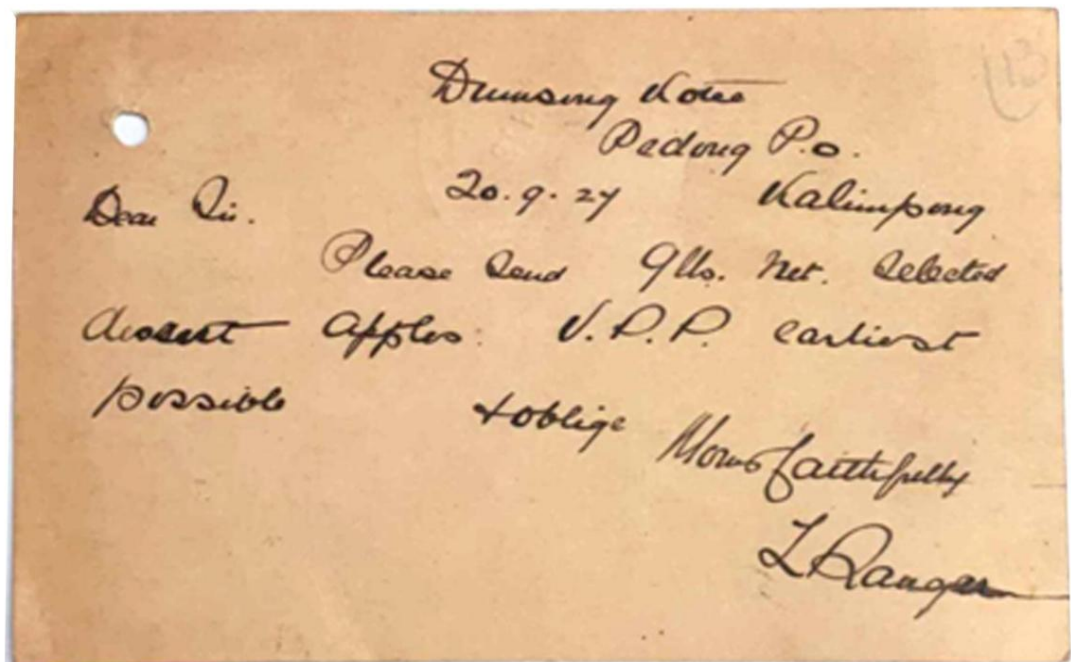
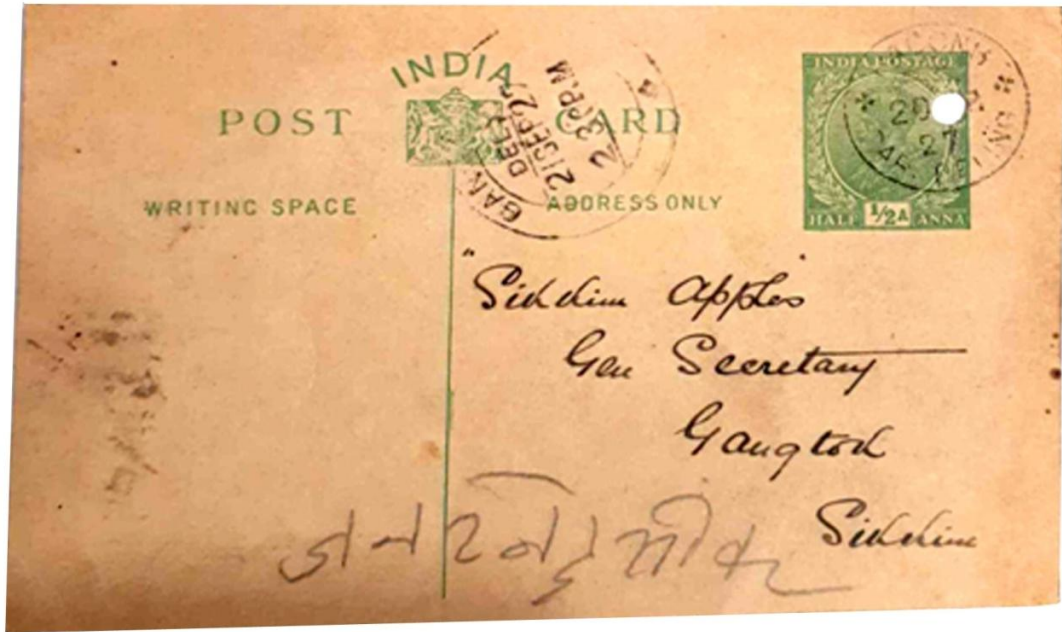
<sup>65</sup> Sikkim State Archive, General Department, Reg. Construction of Chungthang Experimental Post Office, File No., 36, of 1927, Serial No. 3, p.1, 30.

October, the person who is involved in the apple business would arrange with the Superintendent, Post Office for running a daily Special Apple *Dak* by October 1<sup>st</sup> till the end of November. The Apples from Sikkim was supplied to *Kashmir, Tibet, Calcutta, Kalimpong, Shillong, Assam* through the post office. It is found that the Superintendent of Darjeeling Post Office was informed by *Chungthang* Post office regarding the posting of Apple parcels in the archival record. It further mentions that it would make daily arrangements for a *Dak* at *Chungthang* post office to receive the parcel of apples to be sent away to the respective destination of the addressee by the Registered Parcel Post. The maximum weight of apples in each *Dak* should not exceed 60 lbs. The apple parcels posted at *Chungthang* should get through in 12 hours to *Gangtok* and leave *Gangtok* the same evening for *Teesta*. The apple Parcels was carried by the coolies.<sup>66</sup>

---

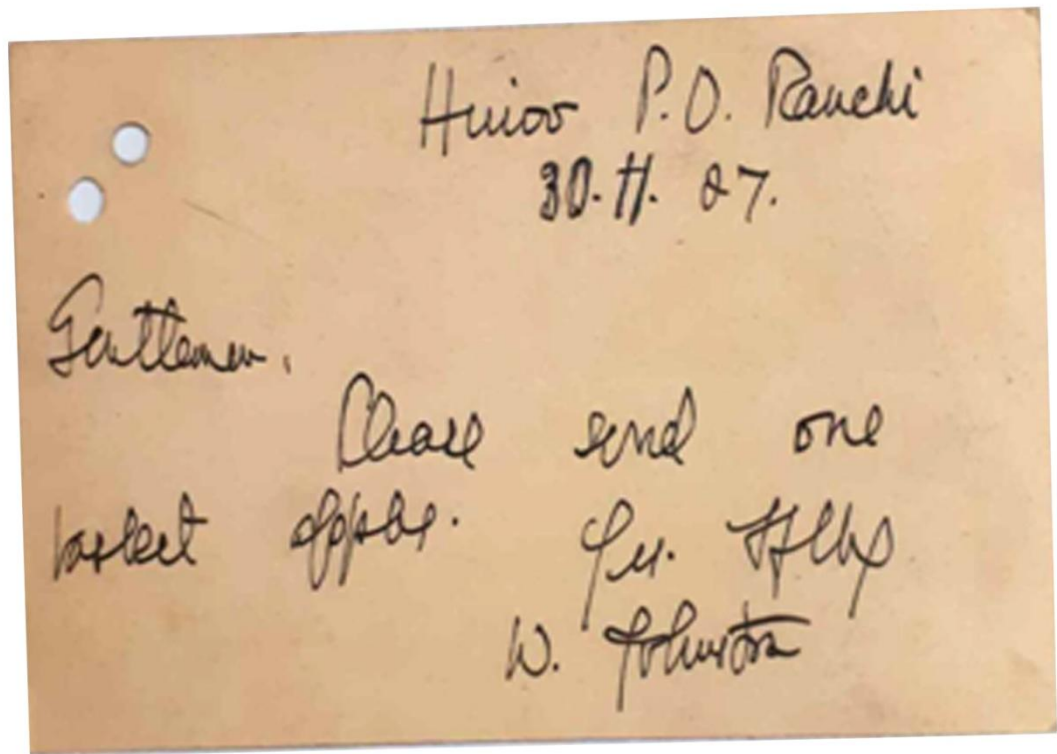
<sup>66</sup> Sikkim State Archive, General Department, Sale of Apples, File No., 9 of 1927, Sl. No. 3, pp. 3-8.





**Fig.3.3.** Postcards showing the demand for apples from Pedong

Source: Picture Collected from State Archive of Sikkim.



**Fig.3.4.** Indian postcard showing the demand for apples of Sikkim from Ranchi

Source: Picture Collected from State Archive of Sikkim.

Gazetteer of Sikkim (2013) defines *Rhenock* Post Office as the first post office of Sikkim established in 1910.<sup>67</sup> However, the post office in *Rhenock* was available since 1888 that served the British Armies in the 1888 Expedition. Rajiva Shanker Shresta (2018) explains that in *Rhenock*, the first post and a telegraph office were established in 1910. He further mentions that *Harka Bhadur Chettri* was appointed as the then Post Master.<sup>68</sup> At the same time, Chandra Nursery was also established in *Rhenock*. It is to be noted that saplings were delivered to different places later through these post offices. The reason behind the establishment of the post office in *Rhenock* was the Silk Route's importance.<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, Dipok Dey, a renowned Philatelist, writes that the first post office in Sikkim was opened at *Dalupchand*.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, in due course of time, the response of the common people towards the development of the post office and its services was encouraging. The numbers of the post offices increased in Sikkim, reaching its network to the remotest villages. According to the Administration report of 1917-1918, four new post offices were opened at *Singtam, Kewzing, Rinchenpong and Namchi*.<sup>71</sup> This suggests that the mushrooming of post offices in different parts of the then kingdom served the royals, the Government, and the common people. The Administration Report of 1927-1928 mentions that no new post offices were built in those years. However, the letterboxes were placed at *Middle Camp* (presently 32 Number), *Melli*, and *Dickchu* for the convenience of the residents of these places.<sup>72</sup> As the common people recognized the services and facilities provided by the post office, the demand for the establishment of

---

<sup>67</sup> Sunita Kharel and Jigme Wangchuck Bhutia, *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Home Department, Government of Sikkim, 2013, p. 402.

<sup>68</sup> Rajiva Shanker Shresta, *Sikkim our Newfound home in the Black Hill- Newars here and There*, Karuna Devi Smarak Dharmarth Guthi, 2018, p.p 126-129.

<sup>69</sup> Rajiva Shanker Shresta, Op.Cit., p. 75.

<sup>70</sup> Dipok. Dey, Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>71</sup> Administration Report from 1917 to 1918, British Library, EAP880/1/1/14, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP880-1-1-14>, p. 7.

<sup>72</sup> Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 21 of 1927, Serial No. 1. File Heading: Administration Report for the year 1927-1928, p.6.

the Post Office also increased at various villages in Sikkim. The Lamas of *Pemayantse* or *Pemiongchi* also requested the government to establish a branch post office in *Gayzing Bazaar*. In their demand, the importance of the *Gayzing Bazaar* was highlighted. It was also mentioned that it was an important commercial hub in Sikkim and for the convenience of the people who would travel 8 or 9 miles from their houses gather on *haat*<sup>73</sup> days.<sup>74</sup> The archival record of 1920 confirmed that on their request, the post office was established at *Gayzing Bazaar* and appointed *Pasang Chiring Lepcha* as the Branch Postmaster at *Gayzing* post office, who was paid Rs. 15 monthly by the Imperial Postal Department.

Tracing the background of the post offices that were established after 1888 in Sikkim, the *Gangtok* Post office is one of the important post offices in Sikkim. In 1888, this post office was established for the military interest.<sup>75</sup> Since then, this post office continued its service to common people. However, in 1919, the Sikkim Government under the then political officer of Sikkim Major W.L Campbell decided to include a new post office within the Residency area in *Gangtok*.<sup>76</sup> The post office in *Gangtok* now has turned into the head office, which serves the people provided with all postal facilities.

The post offices in Sikkim mainly provide their service to the common people. While, on the other hand, post offices like in *Gnatong* have served as the strategic geographical location between Tibet and British India, where Base Camp along with the Field post office of the British troops were set up in the Expedition of 1888, which is 7<sup>th</sup> mile away from *Lingtu*. The Post and Telegraph office in *Gnatong* had its

---

<sup>73</sup> A special market day which use to be organized once a week.

<sup>74</sup> Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 5 of 1920, Serial No, 3, Opening of the post office at Gayzing, p. 2,14.

<sup>75</sup> Dipok, Dey, Op.Cit., p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> 1919, Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 22 of 1919, Serial No. 1 (XIX), File Heading, Inclusion of Telegraph Office and New Post office in the Residency area.

foothold since 1888, which then served for the British army, and later it extended its service for the civilian. Through the post and telegraph office at *Gnatong*, the *Gnatong* Patrol Post used to communicate with Sikkim Darbar regarding the situation of the Sikkim Tibet frontier. In the year 1937, that the request for demarcation of the land of *Gnatong* post office was made by Sub Post Master *Gnatong* to the Superintendent of post offices *Jalpaiguri* Division because of the Tibetan encroachment upon the post office land.<sup>77</sup> K. C Bhanja mentions that the post office in *Gnatong* was located near the Bhutia village.<sup>78</sup>

Till 1938, *Gnatong* Post and Telegraph Office run the Observatory Department, and the *Gnatong* Sub Postmaster was in charge of the Observatory Department. The Patrol Post under Sikkim Darbar used to make patrolling and surveillance in order to prevent foreigners from entering Tibet. No one was allowed to enter Tibet without the permission granted by the British Government of India. The Polices on duty to the Patrol Post at *Gnatong* communicated with Sikkim Darbar through Post and Telegraph Office. However, on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1938, the Indian Postal Department ordered to abolish the Post and Telegraph Office from *Gnatong*. The Sikkim-Tibet Frontier (*Gnatong*) of that side became isolated from the rest of the country. From then onwards postal articles like letters, parcels and money orders for *Gnatong* were collected from *Rangli Bazaar* E.D.B.O.<sup>79</sup>

The responses in establishing the post offices were not only encouraged by the common people in Sikkim. However, the Government officials have also endowed the advantages from postal services. The Governmental offices widely used the postal

---

<sup>77</sup> Sikkim State Archive, General Department, 8/2/1939, Reg. Demarcation of Post Office Land at Gangtok, *Gnatong & Rhenock*, p.18.

<sup>78</sup> K.C. Bhanja, *Mystic Tibet and the Himalaya*, Modern India Press, Calcutta, 1948, p. 134.

<sup>79</sup> Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 8 of 1938, Serial No. 1, Abolition of *Gnatong* C.S.O, p.p 1-4.

services, the official forms and letters were posted through post offices. For instance, the Forest Department's archival report mentions about two packs of 500 copies of lease forms by the registered Parcel post on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1925.<sup>80</sup>

The foreigners who visited Sikkim at different points of time have highlighted the presence of the post office, and their travelogue throws light upon mail routes, time and days for the arrival of postal articles etc. The book *Tours in Sikkim and the Darjeeling District*, by Percy Brown, has highlighted the then post offices situated at various villages in Sikkim. It also mentions the time it used to take to deliver the letter from Darjeeling to Sikkim.

**TABLE 3.1**

**POST OFFICES IN SIKKIM**

<b>POST OFFICE</b>	<b>TIME</b>
Rongli	1 day
Pakyong	3 days
Singtam	3days
Mangan	3 days
Chungthang	3 days
Namchi	2 days
Kewzing	2 days
Rinchenpong	2 days
Rangli Bazaar	2 days

Source: Percy Brown's, *Tours in Sikkim and the Darjeeling District*, p.50.

Note: The table above is taken from the book *Tours in Sikkim and the Darjeeling District* by Percy Brown, which lists the post offices in Sikkim along with the time needed to deliver letters from Darjeeling to Sikkim.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Sikkim State Archive, Forest Department, File No. Nil 1924, Land Laws of Sikkim State, p. 26.

<sup>81</sup> Percy. Brown, *Tour in Sikkim and the Darjeeling Districts*, W. Newman & Co. Limited, Calcutta, 1944, p. 50.

**TABLE 3.2**

**STABLISHMENT OF THE POST OFFICES IN SIKKIM FROM 1907 TO 1937**

Sl. No.	YEAR	NAME OF THE POST OFFICES
1.	1907-1908	<i>Chungthang</i> Post Office was established.
2.	1908-1909	<i>Seriyong</i> Post Office in South-Western Sikkim was established. Till date <i>Pakyong</i> and <i>Chungtong</i> Post Offices were served by the Sikkim Durbar.
3.	1909-1910	Till date the Imperial Post Offices <i>Pakyong</i> , <i>Chungtong</i> , and <i>Seriyong</i> were contributed by the Sikkim Darbar.
4.	1910-1911	Till date the imperial Post Offices <i>Pakyong</i> and <i>Chungtong</i> were contributed by the Sikkim Durbar but Durbar withdrawn the contribution of <i>Seriyong</i> Post Office.
5.	1911-1912	No new Post Office was opened to till date. However, Sikkim Durbar continued the contributions for <i>Pakyong</i> and <i>Chungtong</i> Post Offices.
6.	1912-1913	
7.	1913-1914	
8.	1914-1915	Sikkim Durbar served <i>Pakyong</i> and <i>Chungtong</i> Imperial Post Offices. The Administration Report does not mention the establishment of new post offices in Sikkim.
9.	1915-1916	No new post offices were established. Till date Sikkim Durbar continued its contributions to the Imperial Post Offices in Sikkim.
10.	1916-1917	No new post offices were established.
11.	1917-1918	Four new post offices were established, <i>Singtam</i> , <i>Kewzing</i> , <i>Rinchenpong</i> and <i>Namchi</i> . From 1 <sup>st</sup> April 1918, Sikkim Durbar withdrew the contributions from <i>Chungtong</i> Post Office and declared it as self-supporting. From 1917-1918 only the Imperial Post Office <i>Pakyong</i> was served by the Darbar.
12.	1918-1919	Till date, ten Imperial Post Offices, i.e., <i>Gangtok</i> , <i>Rinchenpong</i> , <i>Rhenock</i> , <i>Namchi</i> , <i>Rangpo</i> , <i>Chungthang</i> , <i>Singtam</i> , <i>Kewzing</i> , <i>Manjitar</i> and <i>Pakyong</i> and one Departmental Government Telegraph Office in <i>Gangtok</i> were there. However, the 1918-1919 Administration Report mentions Sikkim Durbar's contributions to the <i>Pakyong</i> post office.
13.	1919-1920	The Administration Report of 1919-1920 mentions 11 Imperial Post Offices in Sikkim, namely, <i>Gangtok</i> , <i>Rhenock</i> , <i>Gnatong</i> , <i>Rangpo</i> , <i>Rinchenpong</i> , <i>Namchi</i> , <i>Chungthang</i> , <i>Singtam</i> , <i>Pakyong</i> , <i>Kewzing</i> and <i>Manjhitar</i> . From 1 <sup>st</sup> July 1919, Sikkim Durbar withdrew the contributions of Rs. 6 from <i>Pakyong</i> Post and Telegraph office. <i>Rhenock Kazi</i> requested the Durbar to open the post office at <i>Rongli Bazaar</i> .
14.	1920-1921	
15.	1921-1922	
16.	1929-1930	
17.	1936-1937	<i>Gangtok</i> , <i>Pakyong</i> , <i>Rongli</i> , <i>Gnatong</i> , <i>Rhenock</i> , <i>Rangpo</i> , <i>Singtam</i> , <i>Kewzing</i> , <i>Gayzing</i> , <i>Rinchenpong</i> , <i>Namchi</i> , <i>Mangan</i> , and <i>Chungthang</i> were served by the Imperial Postal system. The telegraph offices at <i>Gangtok</i> , <i>Rangpo</i> , <i>Gnatong</i> and <i>Rhenock</i> were present. The letterboxes were placed at Middle Camp, <i>Melli</i> and <i>Dickchu</i> for the convenience of the resident of these places.

Source: Sikkim State Archive, Administration Reports

Note: The table above shows the list of the post offices established in Sikkim from 1907 to 1937. It further deals with the names of the Imperial Post Offices. However, some year does not show any details because the Archival record does not mention any information of Postal Department. It also provides the details till 1937 and the details after 1937 have not been mentioned because of the unavailability of the sources.

### **3.2. CONCLUSION**

The post offices which served the political needs of the British Indian Government in Sikkim during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century turned its services for the common people living far and wide villages from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The common people requested Sikkim Durbar to install post offices in their villages. The response of the common people in establishing post offices is encouraging. However, the post offices rendered their services for political aspects like sending and receiving diplomatic letters. The economic contribution for the State Government through collecting revenues was remarkable. The British government of India introduced the post office as an institution in Sikkim. The impact of the postal services in the society of Sikkim is noteworthy. The people of Sikkim demanded the opening of the post offices in most parts of Sikkim after realizing the services offered by the same. The Sikkim Durbar's initiative of establishing post offices in the nook and corner of Sikkim made it possible for Sikkim's remotest villages to connect with the world. The most important service provided by opening the post offices is in the strategic military stations, which proved successful and advantageous to the British. It is found that the postal system helped the British communicate well with their different military bases and gained victory over Tibet in 1888 and 1903 expeditions. Its service has been observed on the economic aspect of Sikkim. The common people were made aware of starting a



business, saving their profit, and being introduced to schemes postal life insurance. The famous Apple business, particularly in North Sikkim, began with the help of the post office. The postcards placed in this work throw much light in understanding various aspects of the History of Sikkim. Therefore, when we look into the establishment of the post offices in Sikkim, we find that the post offices were installed with requests placed by the common people.

## CHAPTER IV

### ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM OF THE POSTAL DEPARTMENT IN SIKKIM FROM 1888 TO 1947

The Tibetan kings belonging to the Namgyal Dynasty ruled Sikkim, the Himalayan Kingdom for 333 years. Until 1890 the king had absolute power in administering the country. However, the notion of departmental systems for administration was absent, whereby the *Kazis* whom the king appointed used to handle any administrative requirement of the country. The overall administrative system in Sikkim improved after the 1890s, when the British Government of India appointed the Political Officer in Sikkim. The Political Officer in Sikkim took over the power of the king and started improve the administrations. It was for the first time he introduced various departments.<sup>82</sup> John Claude White was appointed as the first Political Officer by the British Government of India in June 1889. In 1908, the British Government of India replaced J.C. White. Hence, Charles Bell became the second Political officer in Sikkim.<sup>83</sup> It was under the administration of J.C White, Sikkim was well organized in every field. His book *Sikkim and Bhutan* mentions that “there were no revenue system, no court of justice, no police, no public works, no educations for the younger generation. The task before me was a difficult one, but very fascinating: the country was a new one and everything was in my hand”.<sup>84</sup> J.C White improved the administration system in Sikkim, along which he constructed the Post and Telegraph

---

<sup>82</sup> Rose, Leo. E, *Sikkim: The Politics of a Buffer State*, Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, British Library, EAP880/1/6/21, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP880-1-6-24>, p.113.

<sup>83</sup> Jigme N. Kazi, *Sons of Sikkim, The Rise and Fall of the Namgyal Dynasty of Sikkim*, Hill Media Publications, Gangtok, 2020, p.144,145.

<sup>84</sup> J. Claude White, *Sikkim and Bhutan*, Pilgrim Press, Varanasi, 2009, p.26.

lines.<sup>85</sup> Before the improvement of the administrative system by J.C. White, the particular postal department in Sikkim has not found. Therefore, due to progressive changes in administrations by J.C. White, the then Maharajah of Sikkim Thutob Namgyal requested the British Government of India to extend his service as Political Officer in Sikkim.<sup>86</sup>

One can note that the postal administration system in Sikkim prior to 1888 is unknown in Sikkim. However, there may exist some systems for communications through which the Chogyal can communicate with other countries. A few sources mention the messengers employed by the Chogyal and high officials for delivering the important message. Moreover, later as the consequence of the Expedition of 1888, the Anglo-Chinese Treaty of 1890-1893 held the discussion over Trade, Communication, and Pasturage between Sikkim and Tibet. According to the Treaty, “any dispatches from the Government of India shall be handed over to the political officer of Sikkim who shall forward it to the Chinese Imperial resident in Tibet by Chinese Frontier officer, who will further send it to the special courier”.<sup>87</sup> This Anglo-Chinese Convention of the 1890s became a reason for the Tibet Mission of 1903-1904. Nevertheless, with the Tibet Mission of 1903-1904, the postal system emerged in Sikkim. In 1903, the postal administration system for the Sikkim-Tibet mission was organized by the Indian Post Offices. They organized the post offices accordingly—Head Post Offices, Sub Post Offices, Branch Post Offices and Experimental Post Offices<sup>88</sup> and the Temporary Post offices<sup>89</sup> were installed on other Governmental

---

<sup>85</sup> Dipok, Dey, Sikkim A Brief Postal History, Postal Himal, 2006, p.2.

<sup>86</sup> Request for the extension of John Cloude White's (PO Sikkim) term as Viceroy, British Library, EAP880/1/7/4, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP880-1-7-4>, p.5.

<sup>87</sup> S.K. Sharma, Usha. Sharma, *Documents on North- East India, An exhaustive survey, Vol. 10: Sikkim*, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 2005, p.22.

<sup>88</sup> Experimental Post offices were opened as a business point of view or to analyze the potential for postal traffic at new locations. The Experimental post offices are opened initially for six month.

<sup>89</sup> Temporary post office was opened for special missions based on the request and guarantee of another Government Department.

Departments for a specific mission. Army Post Offices were established for the field service on the frontier or overseas. Filed Post Offices were treated as sub-offices and Base Post offices as Head Offices.<sup>90</sup> The Sikkim-Tibet Postal administration in 1903-1904 was run parallel by the Indian Postal Department and Military postal department. The different regiments of Indian armies were responsible for opening the Field Post Offices in Sikkim. However, the rules and regulations regarding the system of sending any types of correspondence, parcels, money orders, etc., was led by the Indian Postal Department. Similarly, the other postal facilities like the runners and mail arrangement were also under the administration of the Indian Postal Department. The notification released from British India to the Sikkim Mission On 9<sup>th</sup> December 1903 by H.M. Kisch, Director-General of the Post Office of India, addressed the mode of addressing letters, what items to be sent, the process of payments, delivering methods, fiscal activities, and about the postage Stamps from one Field Post Office to another.<sup>91</sup> Field Post Office (henceforth, F.P.O.) had two streams, the technical and the administrative. The Base Post Master was in control of Accounts, ordering and storing all the F.P.O.s in the force. The Divisional Superintendent and his subordinate inspectors supervised the mail arrangements, looked after the day to day progress of F.P.O.s, make periodical inspections, administered the postal staff and advised the Military pioneer on the postal issues. The Chief Superintendent was overall in-charge of the entire postal administrative system.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> D.S. Virk, Op.Cit., p.9.

<sup>91</sup> D.S. Virk, Op.Cit., pp.27.28.

<sup>92</sup> D.S. Virk, *ibid.*, p. 29.

**TABLE 4.1****SIKKIM-TIBET OPERATIONS 1903-1908****LIST OF POSTAL OFFICERS**

	<b>NAME</b>	<b>POST</b>	<b>DATE</b>
Tibet-Frontier Commission 1903	C.E. White	Inspector	23.6.03 to 5.12.03
Tibet Mission and Escort 1903-1904 (Tibet Mission Force From 1904)	H. Tulloch	Superintendent	14.12.03 to 5.1.04
		Superintendent Advance Division	6.1.04 to 30.6.04
		Offg. Superintendent Base Division	4.3.04 to 24.3.04
		Chief Superintendent	1.7.04 to 29.11.04
	A. Bean	Superintendent Base Division	6.1.04 to 3.3.04
	C.J. Dease	Superintendent Base Division	25.3.04 to 30.4.04
	C.E. White	Superintendent Base Division	1.5.04 to 24.11.04
	C.J.H. Quilter	Superintendent Central Division	17.7.04 to 9.11.04
	A. Angelo	Superintendent Advance Division	1.7.04 to 9.11.04
	H.E.C.C. Wintle	Asst. Superintendent Base Division	27.7.04 to 29.11.04
	C.E. White	Inspector	6.12.03 to 30.4.04
	A. Angelo	Inspector	20.12.03 to 30.6.04
	J.C.O'Loughlen	Inspector	12.03 to 12.8.04
	W.G. Reuther	Inspector	15.2.04 to 16.7.04
	W.G. O'Sullivan Gillespie	Inspector	1.7.04 to 14.11.04
Sikkim-Tibet Division 1904-1908	H.E.C.C. Wintle	Asst. Superintendent	30.11.04 to 28.12.07
	W.G. O'Sullivan Gillespie	Asst. Superintendent	29.12.07 to 22.1.08

Source: D.S. Virk's book *Postal History of Indian Campaigns Sikkim Tibet 1903-1908*, p.64.

Note: The table above gives the detailed list of names of the postal officials along with their posts. The list also provides the details of their tenure. These officials served to the post offices from 1903 to 1908.

Both in the 1888 Expedition and 1903-1904 Tibet Mission, the postal department was administered and maintained by the Indian Postal Department in collaborations with

military forces because, the post offices then in Sikkim were for opened for military purposes. With the end of Tibet Mission, the post offices in Sikkim were established as per the requests made by the common Sikkimese people, which Indian Postal Department administered along with the aid provided by Sikkim Darbar.

Sikkim Darbar financially assisted the Indian Postal Department to establish and maintain the post offices at various places in Sikkim, for instance, the Administration report of 1918-1919 mention ten Imperial Post offices in the following places- *Gangtok, Rinchenpong, Rhenock, Namchi, Rangpo, Chungthang, Singtam, Kewzing, Manjitar* and *Pakyong*. Among which Sikkim Darbar funded the *Pakyong* post office.<sup>93</sup> Further, while analyzing the Administration Report of 1927-28, the Imperial post offices increased their number from ten to thirteen. i.e., *Gangtok, Pakyong, Rongli, Gnatong, Rhenock, Rangpo, Singtam, Kewzing, Gayzing, Rinchenpong, Namchi, Mangan* and *Chungthang* The additional imperial post offices were *Gnatong, Gayzing* and *Mangan*.<sup>94</sup> However, with the following reports, we can analyze that the post offices in Sikkim though administered according to the norms set by the Indian Postal Department. But Sikkim Durbar financially assisted the Imperial post offices in Sikkim.

The Sikkim's Budget Files of years: 1927-1928, 1928-1929, 1929-1930, 1931-1932, 1932-1933, 1933-1934, 1934-1935, 1936-1937, 1937-1938, 1938-1939, 1940-1941, 1948-1949, and 1949-1950, provides the record of the financial assistance offered by Sikkim Durbar for establishing and maintaining the post offices at various places in Sikkim. The table given below gives the detailed accounts of the Budgets:

---

<sup>93</sup> Administration Report from 1918 to 1919, British Library, EAP880/1/1/15, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP880-1-1-15>, p.10

<sup>94</sup> Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No., 21 of 1927, Serial No., 1, File Heading: Administration Report for the Year 1927-28, p.6.

**TABLE 4.2****BUDGET ESTIMATED FOR THE CONSTRUCTIONS OF POST OFFICE IN SIKKIM**

ITEM	YEAR	DETAILED HEAD	BUDGET
Construction of Post Office	1927- 1928	Construction of Experimental Post office at Chungthang	Rs. 800/-
Rent	1928-1929	House rent for the Post Office Building	Rs 300/-
Repair Buildings	1929-1930	Maintenance of Experimental Post Office and outhouse at Chungthang	Rs 40/-
Repair Buildings	1931-1932	Maintenance of Experimental Post Office and outhouse at Chungthang	Rs. 40/-
Repair Buildings	1932-1933	Maintenance of Experimental Post Office and outhouse at Chungthang	Rs. 40/-
Repair Buildings	1933-1934	Maintenance of Experimental Post Office and outhouse at Chungthang	Rs. 40/-
Rent	1934-1935	for post office buildings	-
Rent	1935-1936	House rent for post office buildings	Rs. 75/-
Rent	1936-1937	House rent for post office buildings	-
Rent	1937-1938	House rent for post office buildings	Rs. 200/-
Repair Buildings	1938-1939	Maintenance of Experimental Post Office and outhouse at Chungthang	Rs. 30/-
Repair Buildings	1940-1941	Post office at Pakyoung	Rs. 3/-
Repair Buildings	1948-1949	Maintenance of Experimental Post Office and outhouse at Chungthang	Rs. 20/-
Repair Buildings	1949-1950	Maintenance of Experimental Post Office and outhouse at Chungthang	Rs. 30/-

Source: Sikkim's Budget Files, Sikkim State Archive

Note: The table shows the Budget estimated by the Sikkim Government for the post offices from 1927–1950. In the above table, the amount for some years has not been written because the budget file does not show any amount for the same.

#### **4.1. THE ROLE OF LANDLORDS AND SHOPKEEPERS IN POSTAL SYSTEM OF SIKKIM**

The landlords and the shopkeepers in Sikkim had played an important role in postal services in Sikkim. A notification of Sikkim Darbar 1928 throws light on how the Chogyal had set up a rule whereby the Sikkim landlords in their *Elakhas* must provide free accommodations for the postal authorities. Contrarily, the shopkeepers who earned most of the profit with the presence of the post offices were supposed to help the Darbar in repairing the post offices located in their areas. The archival record mentions the names of the shopkeepers, who financially supported in construction of the new post office at *Mangan*, namely,

Rs. 50/- by Mr. Jetmull and Bhojraj

Rs. 20/- by Babu Rama Shanker Prasad

Rs. 10/- by Brahmadeo Prasad

Rs. 5/- by Norden Tshering

Rs. 15/- by Mahabir Prasad Rameshwar<sup>95</sup>

On the other hand, the post offices established in villages of Sikkim did not have premises of their own. The offices were set up at the private buildings in rent, for which the Sikkim *Darbar* paid to the owner of the houses. The archival records further hold that most of the Shopkeepers also earned much profit from the post offices in Sikkim. The postal authorities did not pay the rent. The Durbar, landlords and shopkeepers primarily benefitted from the Branch Post Offices. If these post offices were closed, the communication with the landlords and the police outpost

---

<sup>95</sup> Sikkim State Archive, General Department, Arrangement for providing free accommodations to the post office staffs, File. No. 14 of 1928, Serial No. 4, p. 95.



would be stopped. The Darbar had to maintain extra *chaprises*,<sup>96</sup> which would cost heavy expense to the *Darbar*. So in such circumstances, the postal authorities suggest that the *Darbar* should pay the rent of the post offices of the state-controlled *bazaars*. The landlords would bear the postal accommodations that are situated in their *Elakhas*.<sup>97</sup> The Sikkim Darbar in the year 1929-30 provided Rupees 300 for rent of post office.<sup>98</sup>

The *Census report of India, 1931 Bengal and Sikkim*, states that the Anglo-Indians were employed mainly in post and telegraph offices in Bengal and Sikkim.<sup>99</sup> However, the case in Sikkim was different. In the letter dated 25/11/20, written by the Inspector of Post Offices, Darjeeling Sikkim-Tibet Sub-Division to the General Secretary to his highness the Maharaja of Sikkim stated that the local landlords were also given the responsibility to recruit a person for the post of Branch Postmaster from his areas and according to the norms of Indian Postal administration candidate for Branch postmaster must be familiar with English and Hindi languages, also once, the candidate were selected for the post of Branch Postmaster he was trained at *Gangtok* Post Office for at least fifteen days.<sup>100</sup> It is interesting to point out that the same letter that the Buddhist monks or commonly known as the lamas were also given the authority to administer the particular area, for instance, the *Gayzing* post office which was established in the year 1920 by the request of the *Pemiongchi* lamas for the convenient of the people living in an around Gayzing Bazaar. The entire area of *Gayzing* was under *Pemiongchi* monastery; therefore, the religious head of the

---

<sup>96</sup> A low-ranking office worker.

<sup>97</sup> Sikkim State Archive, General Department, Reg. Arrangements for providing free accommodation to the post office staffs, File No. 14 of 1928, Serial No. 4, p.p 8-9.

<sup>98</sup> Sikkim State Archive, General Department, Reg. Budget Estimate for 1928-30, File No. 34 of 1928, Serial No. 1.

<sup>99</sup> A.E. Proter, *Census Report of India, 1931 Volume V, Bengal and Sikkim part I*, Usha Publication, Calcutta Central Publication Branch, 1933, p.282.

<sup>100</sup> Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 5 of 1920, Serial No. 3, Opening of a Post Office at Gayzing, 1920, p.22.

*Pemiongchi* monastery was responsible for providing the accommodations and the other facilities to the post office and its postal staff.<sup>101</sup>

#### 4.2. RUNNERS OF SIKKIM

The romance of the post office lies with the runners. They are the backbone of the postal service all over the world. For centuries the “post-boy”, as often called by the British Officials in India as the runners, provided their service to the Postal Department all over India. Despite many difficulties, these runners had to deliver mails at a given time. The runners are known by various names in different places, e.g., *Dauriyas* in Oudh and *Mewat*. Traditions of running as runners belong to a caste-like, *Kharas* in North and East India, *Pattamars* in the South, and *Mahars* in the west.<sup>102</sup>

Sikkim also witnesses the presence of runners since the Namgyal rule. While interviewing with *Adup Tshering Bhutia*, State Manager Private State Palace, with his limited ideas about the Postal Services in Sikkim, stated that the then kingdom Sikkim witness ‘*Orderly system*’. *Orderlies* were the sepoy of Sikkim who not only acted as sepoy but he also acted as “Runner”. These Orderlies use to wear Lepcha attire and always tied long hair.<sup>103</sup> Further, in an interview with Captain *Sonam Yongda*, he states that the British used the term *Orderly*, for the Sikkimese armies. Sikkim, as a Buddhist country, had no conventional army or regular army. However, there were ceremonial troops who were called *Orderly*. They mainly were native people, and the dress of Orderly was native Lepcha dress.<sup>104</sup> In the above interview, it has been found

---

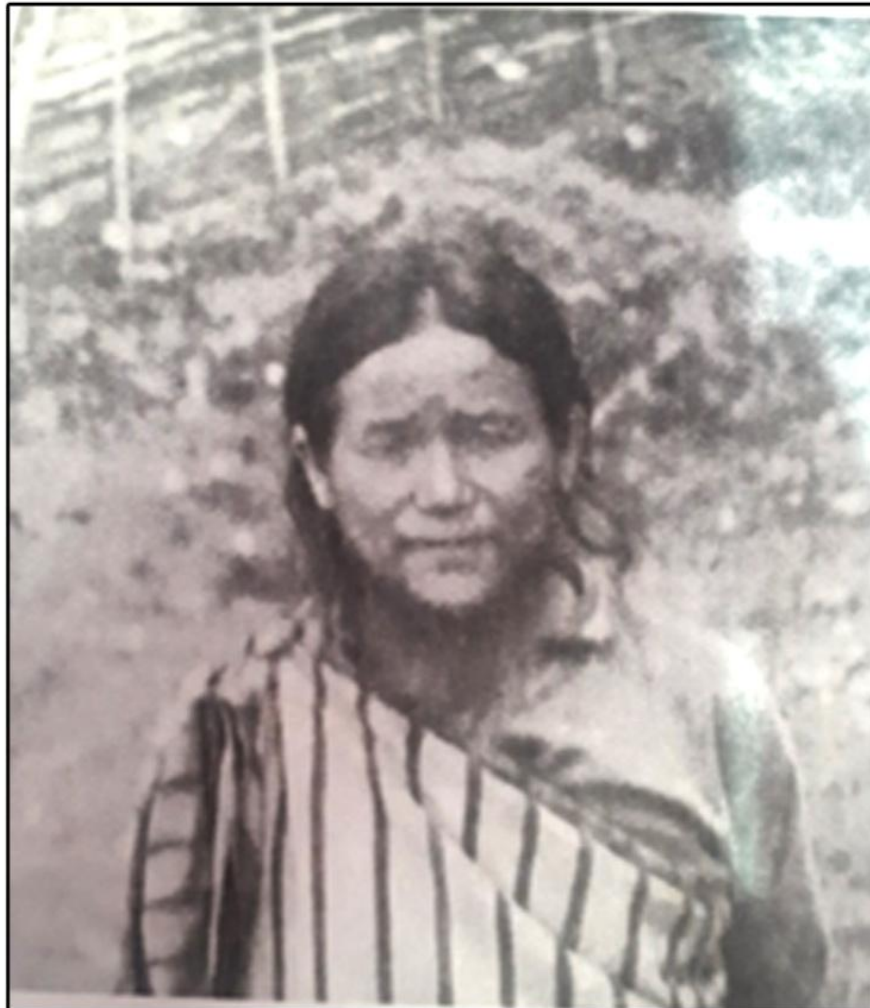
<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>102</sup> Chitra. Joshi, “Dak Roads, Dak Runner, and the reordering of communication networks”, *Cambridge University Press, Vol.57, No.2 (August 2012)*, p.170.

<sup>103</sup> Interview, Name- Adup Tshering Bhutia, Age-53, Male, Private State Manager Palace, Resident of Gangtok, Interviewed on Date: 30<sup>th</sup> March 2019, Time: 3 p.m.

<sup>104</sup> Interview, Name- Sonam Yongda (Captain Yongda/ Yapo Captain), Age-79, Male, Social Worker, Pemayantse Monastery, Interviewed on Date: 29<sup>th</sup> December 2019, Time: 12 noon.

out that the *Orderly* or the Sikkimese Army also acted as the runner in Sikkim. *Himalayan Village An Account of the Lepchas*, written by Geoffrey Gorer, highlights a person named *Tempa* who was from a village, *Lingthem*, Dzongu, a reserved estate of North Sikkim. *Tempa* served as a servant in Tibet. After he returned to Sikkim, he was appointed he was appointed as *Muktair* of the five *Talung* villages by the then *Rhenock Kazi* and political officer of Sikkim because of his fluency in Tibetan and Nepali language. Part of his service also consisted of carrying letters.<sup>105</sup>



**Fig.4.1.** The above picture is of Tempa, who had carried letters of the King in Sikkim.

Source: Geoffrey Gorer's, *Himalayan Village an Account of the Lepchas*, p.128

---

<sup>105</sup> Geoffery. Gorer, *Himalayan Village An Account of the Lepchas of Sikkim*, Pilgrims Publishing, Varanasi, 2005, pp. 124-125.

The service provided by the mail runner during the Tibetan Mission 1903-1904 is noteworthy. According to D.S. Virk, the military train, adopted the cart road along the *Teesta River* via *Sevoke, Riang, Teesta Bridge, Tarkhola* to *Rangpo*, and from *Rangpo* the new track to *Rorathang, Rhenock Ridge, Rongli, Lingtam/Sedongchen, Gnathong, Jelep La, Langram* and *Rinchingong* to *Chumbi Valley*. In 1903 the mail route was also opened from *Nathu La*. However, there was lots of trouble due to roadblocks and natural calamities. According to the post norms the runners worked in a group who used to carry the mail for about 10 miles and handed over that mail to the next runner, and that those same runners were supposed to wait for the mail and carry it back again. Since the runners had to wait for the mail to be taken back the hut was built for them on every stage. The punctuality of the runners was administered by mail Overseers and Inspectors. The mail item which was to be delivered further to Tibet was carried daily by the post runners employed from Sikkim.<sup>106</sup>

Sikkim Darbar provided the huts for the runners in Sikkim. The Sikkim archive records, File No. 29 of 1918 states, for the mail runners who use run every day to deliver the mails in the given period, therefore the runners were also provided with a hut to stay by the postal department. The land for the construction of such huts was in the donated land free of cost.<sup>107</sup>

The Post and Telegraph Department all over British India use to run on a commercial basis, and a similar system was also applied for the post offices in Sikkim. It was necessary that the income should justify the expenditure of the Post and Telegraph Department. However, in Sikkim by 1927, the Branch Post Offices were not remunerative. Therefore, the notification of File No. 14 of 1928 mentions that the

---

<sup>106</sup> D.S. Virk, *ibid.*, p.p. 29,30.

<sup>107</sup> Sikkim State Archive, General Department, Repairs of Namchi Post Office building and allotment of a piece of land free of rent for runners hut, File No. 29 of 1918, Serial No. 3 (XIX), 1918, p.84.

Indian Postal Department asked Sikkim Durbar to provide accommodations to the post offices and its staff free of rent. If failed to do so the post offices which cannot pay their expense must be closed. Therefore, as per the order of the Indian Postal authorities, Sikkim Durbar should provide free accommodation to the post offices and their staff in the following places:

1. In *Singtam*, free accommodation for Runner
2. At *Namchi*, free accommodation for Postman
3. At *Mangan*, free accommodation for Runner's hut

Therefore, the State Darbar accepted the order and free accommodations were provided from 1<sup>st</sup> April 1928.<sup>108</sup>

The postal runners in Sikkim contributed significantly towards the Indian Postal Department in general and Sikkim Postal Department in particular. In the interview with *Pritam Mukhia*, who is presently working as a postal assistant in Gangtok post office, he said that his grandfather *Thendup Bhutia* from West Sikkim, was a runner of Indian Postal Department, Sikkim. He stated that his grandfather suffered a cataract in his eye, which developed while serving as a runner in *Sherathang*. He further said his grandfather suffered as he had to walk in the snow for many hours to deliver the mail at *Yadong* post office, China.<sup>109</sup>

---

<sup>108</sup> Sikkim State Archive, General Department, Reg. Arrangements for providing free accommodation to the post office staffs, File No. 14 of 1928, Serial No. 4, p.p 8,9.

<sup>109</sup> Interview, Name- Pritam Mukhia, Age- 36, Male, Postal assistance, Gangtok Post Office, Interviewed on Date: 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020, Time: 12:47 p.m.



**Fig. 4.2.** Photograph of a post runner Thendup Bhutia  
Source: Private Collection of Pritam Mukhia

### **4.3. DAK-BUNGALOWS IN SIKKIM**

*Dak-Bungalows* or *Dak-Ghar* provide one of the important services for the Postal Department. This *Dak-Bungalow* was under the administrations of the Postal Department till 1863- 64. It serves as the rest houses where the travellers would stay,

and the porters used to arrange the water and wood. The travellers had to pay rent in order to stay in the *Dak-Bungalow*.<sup>110</sup>

In Sikkim, there are many *Dak-Bungalows* at different places till date, which has its origin since the British incumbency. Sikkim Darbar maintained the *Dak-Bungalows*. The Archival records mention that the Forest Department under Sikkim Darbar purchased furniture for *Dak-Bungalow* during the visit of the Governor of Bengal.<sup>111</sup> The travellers who visited Sikkim and stayed in *Dak Bungalows* had to pay rent, and they were supposed to have the passbook along with them. David Macdonald, in his book, *Touring in Sikkim* has mentioned that Rs. 2 was the fees per individual for one day and night, and in order to visit Tibet Bungalows, the fee was Rs. 1 individual for 24 hours. However, passes were issued by the Political Officers in Sikkim. These Bungalows were taken care of by the *Chowkidar*, who provided the essential goods such as firewood and milk to the tourist. The rules were similar for both Sikkim and Tibet *Dak-Bungalows*.<sup>112</sup> The rules were maintained and followed very strictly by every individual irrespective of their status follows the norms set for the *Dak-Bungalows*. The archive record states that Major W.L Campbell, the then Political Officer in Sikkim, had sent a notice to the Darbar saying that Mrs Dracoot, who belongs from the royal family visited the *Karponang Dak-Bungalow* in June 1918 without Pass. In this case, Campbell made strict enquiry in Sikkim Darbar and notified that the rules related to *Dak-Bungalows* should be followed equally by all individuals.<sup>113</sup>

---

<sup>110</sup> Shailendra. Das, Op.Cit, p. 158.

<sup>111</sup> Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No., 35, of 1924, Serial No. 2, Reg- Budget Estimate for 1925-1926.

<sup>112</sup> David. Macdonald, *Touring in Sikkim and Tibet, Asian Educational Services*, New Delhi, 1999, p.p 30-31.

<sup>113</sup> Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 6 of 1918, Serial No. 7 (VI), No State Dak-Bungalows should be occupied without a pass by the families of Sikkim Officials, 1918, p.2.

Rangpo Dak-Bungalow is one of the oldest among the other *Dak-Ghars* in Sikkim, constructed in 1896.<sup>114</sup> This *Rangpo Dak-Bungalow* has also caught the attention of many foreign travellers. The author John Easton, who travelled to Tibet through Sikkim around the 1920s, had described the location of *Rangpo Dak-Ghar*, which stood some two hundred feet above the village and where the author had to rest for his next journey to Tibet.<sup>115</sup>

The other *Dak-Bungalow* in Sikkim was *Kupup Dak-Bungalow*, which was under the Indian Government. If any issue like, for instance, collection of rent by the State Government was to be discussed prior with the Government of India.<sup>116</sup>

#### **4.4. REVENUE STAMPS OF SIKKIM**

Sikkim had no postal stamps of its own; Sikkim was using the Ordinary Indian Stamps. For the year 1931-32, the Annual Administration Report of Sikkim mentions that the state does not make its stamps in any State Stamp Manufactory but was imported from England, designed on its own approved blocks. In 1931-32 the state had the imported stamps having four denominations of the face value of Rs. 5 on brown ground, Rs. 1 on red ground, Eight Anna on the blue ground and one Anna on the yellow ground. The Stamps used for non-judicial purposes are marked 'R', while unmarked stamps was affixed on the court fee.<sup>117</sup> The letters dated 30<sup>th</sup> June 1946, from E.A. Smytnies to the then political officer of Sikkim, A.J. Hopkinson, throws

---

<sup>114</sup> Sikkim State Archive, General Department, Proposal to sell the half share of the old Rungpo Dak-Bungalow go Government, File No. 17 of 1919, Serial No. 6 (VI), p.11.

<sup>115</sup> John, Easton, *An Unfrequented Highway Through Sikkim and Tibet to Chumolaori*, Pilgrims Publishing, Varanasi, 2005, p.6.

<sup>116</sup> Sikkim State Archive, General Department, Removal of a private hut lying within the Dak-Bungalow compound at Kupup and the cultivation of land by Chawkidars within Dak-Bungalow compinds, File No. 3 of 1920, Serial No. 7 (VII), p.7.

<sup>117</sup> Sikkim State Archive, Land Revenue Department, File No. 11 of 1932, Serial No. 12, Annual Administration Report for the year 1931-31, p.p 32-33.



light on the issuance of both Ordinary and Service Stamp in Sikkim. Mr E.A Smytnies was a renowned philatelist from *Kathmandu, Nepal*. A.J. Hopkinson asked him as to how Sikkim could issue its stamps. Smytnies explained in his letter that the stamps issued by the Indian States were categorized into two forms. He wrote that the five states, *Chamba, Gwalior, Jind, Nabha, and Patiala*, have used Indian issued stamps, both ordinary and service stamps. These were printed in various ways at the Nasik Security Press for use in their states and those stamps have franking power throughout British India and not beyond it. He wrote that the other category of issuing stamps was that about 30 States from *Alwar to Waghwan* issued their own designs and these stamps also frank throughout British India and not beyond it. He further suggested that to join the first category an agreement or convention should be made with the British Government of India, to recognize Sikkim overprints and provide Sikkim franking power throughout India. He also suggested that Sikkim Government agree with the Nasik Press for overprinting and supplying the stamps. He suggested that the limiting values to Rs. 5/- for Ordinary or Services stamps would be suitable.<sup>118</sup>

However, Sikkim had Revenue Stamps of its own, which was first introduced in the year 1917. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 1916, the Government of India informed that the Maharajah of Sikkim, Sir Tashi Namgyal, was authorized the control over the Judicial and Revenue Stamps Departments.<sup>119</sup> Sikkim introduced the sale of revenue and judicial stamps from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1917. According to the archival source of 1916, the norms were clarified to the public of Sikkim that they were not supposed to pay court fees in cash but must purchase the stamps of the proper value and affix them to their required papers. They were advised to buy stamps from the landlords or any servants approved

---

<sup>118</sup> Sikkim State Archive, Financial Department, Issue of Stamps by the Indian States, File No. 18 Of 1946/47, Serial No. 1, p.p 6-8.

<sup>119</sup> Sikkim State Archive, General Department, Transfer of control of Excise, Income tax, Police, Jail, Judicial and Revenue Departments, to H.H., File No. 28 of 1916, Serial No. I (VIII), p.5.

by His Highness the then Maharaja of Sikkim, Sir Tashi Namgyal. It was notified that even the stamps bought from the post office were not attended until the landlord or duly approved servants is present in Gangtok to take over the stamps. The landlords had to submit the list and price of the sold stamps to Maharajah every month. The landlords were also given a commission for selling the stamps.<sup>120</sup> In the year 1920-21, Anna Stamps to the value of Rs. 7500/- were obtained from Messrs De La Rue, London. The stamps were used for judicial purposes. Stamps to the values of Rs. 2802-8-0 were issued to the various courts of landlords in Sikkim, for sale, as against Rs. 1,288/4/- worth was issued in the previous year.<sup>121</sup> Stamps sale account for 1920-21: Balance in the hands of Landlords on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1920 was 704-8-6, and the Stamps issued to the Landlords during the same year were 2802-8-0, making the total of all 3507-8-6. The stamps that the landlords sold during the year 1920-1921, were 1411-5-6 and balanced in hands on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1921 was 2095-11-0 making, total of a 3507-0-6.<sup>122</sup>



**Fig.4.3.** Revenue Stamps of Sikkim, the value of Eight Annas and Ten Paise

Source: Personal collection of Shital Pradhan, Sikkim Philatelist, Singtam East Sikkim

<sup>120</sup> Sikkim State Archive, Darbar Department, Introduction of Court fee Stamp, File No. 7 of 1916, Serial No., 9 (V), pp.11-12.

<sup>121</sup> Sikkim State Archive, Land revenue, Annual Report of Miscellaneous Department for the year 1920-21, File No. Nil/1920, Serial No, 69, p.3.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p.13.

### Sikkim Revenue Stamp

Though Post Offices were in existence from 1888, only British stamps were sold from the counters for postal use. This was because Sikkim never had postage stamps of its own or print them. They however had Revenue stamps of their own. These were first introduced in 1917. The central design of the stamp was the south-east face of Mountain Siniolchu, in the north of Gangtok. Taken from a photograph by Hoffmann, the photograph was used to illustrate Claude White's book "Sikkim and Bhutan". It was not climbed until 1936 and is considered the world's most beautiful mountain.



One of the rare pre-merger post mark cancellaton from Sikkim. This George V service stamp was officially dispatched from the office of the Political Officer at Gangtok towards Pakyong. The letter was posted from Gangtok on 22nd September, 1932 and reached Pakyong on 24th September, 1932.

The Royal Durbar had difficulties in collecting court fee in cash as such there was an introduction of a court fee stamps for it. From 1st January 1917, the Sikkim State introduced it's first court fee stamps. The values of the Stamps introduced were as follows :-

- One Anna (Yellow colour)
- Eight Annas (Blue violet colour)
- One Rupee (Red colour)
- Five Rupees (Violet Brown colour)



One Anna



Eight Anna



One Rupee

Fig.4.5. Revenue Stamps of Sikkim

Source: Personal Collection of Shital Pradhan, Sikkim Philatelist, Singtam East Sikkim

The role of postal services has an enormous impact on the economy of India.<sup>123</sup> Likewise, in Sikkim, where the regular postal services unfold from the nineteenth century onwards, it has its economic impact. There are various aspects of the contribution of the postal service to the economy of Sikkim under the British Government of India (1888-1947).

On the other hand, Postal Life Insurance in India has made some economic awareness even to remotest villages in India. It is considered one of India's oldest insurance institution, which has its origin on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1884, by F.R. Hogg, the then Director-General of Post Offices. This scheme was initially started only for the benefit of the postal workers, but by 1888 the workers from Telegraph Department also enjoyed the Postal Life Insurance Scheme. Similarly, in 1898, the Government servants, armies, civil staff were also given the privilege to take advantage of the scheme. After 1898, this privilege was also given to the villagers. Since then, the villagers are continuing to reap the benefit out of this scheme.<sup>124</sup> The archival record of 1920-21 mentions that the Postal Life Insurance Scheme was also introduced in Sikkim.<sup>125</sup> In Sikkim, the presence and establishment of the Post offices were significant for identifying or giving the proper address. It was seen that the Bankers who had to make payments of several contingent bills requested the appropriate names of the payees with their correct addresses mentioning the name of the nearest Post Office so that the danger of wrong payment would be avoided.<sup>126</sup>

---

<sup>123</sup> Adithya Krishna Chintapanti, Postal Regulation Issues and Options, *Economic & Political Weekly*, September 8, 2012, Vol. XLVII No. 36, p. 15.

<sup>124</sup> Arvind Kumar Singh, *India Post A Journey through Ages*, translated by Shailendra. Das, National Book Trust, India, New Delhi, 2009, p.p260-261.

<sup>125</sup> 1919 Sikkim State Archive, Finance Department, File No. 23 of 1920-21, Serial No. 1, Postal Insurance Policies Bonus Certificate, p. 3.

<sup>126</sup> Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 12 of 1933, Serial No. 4, Miscellaneous circular, orders, etc., from various departments, p. 45.

On the other hand, the customs duty on postal parcels in service stamps was collected by the post office all over India prior to October 1930. However, this system was changed and discontinued from 1<sup>st</sup> October 1930. Moreover, Sikkim Darbar had no objection to the changes made at the payment of customs duty on postal parcels in service stamps.<sup>127</sup>

#### **4.5. CONCLUSION**

The overall administrations in Sikkim were improved by the first Political Officer, J.C. White. He also improved and constructed the Post and Telegraph lines in Sikkim. The postal administrative system in Sikkim from the Sikkim Expedition of 1888 till the Younghusband Mission of 1903-1904 was run by the British Indian Postal Department and Military Postal Departments. The Experimental Post offices, Temporary Post offices, Field Post offices etc. were built for the benefit of the British Armies. The offices like Divisional Superintended and Subordinate Inspectors used to supervise the mail arrangements, and the Chief Superintend was the overall in-charge of the entire postal administrative system. After the Younghusband mission, came to an end the British troops abdicated the camp along which the post offices were closed. After the end of the Tibet Mission the postal department was administered completely by the British Indian Postal Department and was assisted by Sikkim Durbar. The landlords, Kazis, Lamas and the Shopkeepers had their utmost role in administering the postal system in Sikkim. Sikkim Durbar financially supported the development of the postal system in Sikkim. The Sikkim Budget files of different years provide the details about the budget estimated for the rent payment to the private house owners as the post offices were set up in the rented house. Further, the Budgets files also show the amounts for the repair and construction of the post offices. Runners played their

---

<sup>127</sup> Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 14 of 1930, Serial No. 23, Proposal to discontinue the practice of paying customs duty of Postal Parcels in service stamps, p.p 1-4.

leading role in the postal development in Sikkim. In Sikkim, the *Orderlies*, who actually were sepoy, but also worked as runner. Durbar provided free accommodations for the mail runners in Sikkim. On the other hand, Sikkim had no stamps of its own. However, in the year 1917, the first Revenue Stamps were first introduced in Sikkim. *Dak-Bungalows* are the important heritage whose stories are associated with the post offices. Sikkim also witnesses the presence of the many *Dak-Bungalows*. However, *Rangpo Dak-Bungalow* is considered one of the oldest *Dak-Bungalows* in Sikkim.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

The Post office is one of the major communication systems that connect people all over the world. The Postal system of communications has become a backbone to every country at a different point in time. Articulating the varied patterns of communications starting from dactylology to pictorial or visual communications, speaking to written communication, there are drastic changes and developments in methods of the communication system. This development in the communications system has played a leading role in human civilizations, cultural exchanges, and economic developments throughout the world. From communicating through sign languages in ancient days to written letters in modern days, the positive result is the burgeoning of post offices.

Moreover, while looking at the new means of communications, there are ample ways, for instance, technical communication services through which we get connected with the world within a nanosecond. However, one should analyze that the post office is the mother of all technical communications. Studying the vast context of the post office as one of the means of communication system all over the world, we see the shift and changes in the means of communications over a period of time, for instance, pigeon post in ancient days to runners in the modern era and which is now subdued by other technologies. With regard to postal services, we limit our knowledge only to sending letters. However, its service has extended and uplifted from sending letters to financial service, transportations and render many valuable services. Therefore, the extension and development of the post offices increased throughout the world.

In Sikkim, the method of communication before to the British invasion was through messengers. However, Sikkim had its regular and systematic postal system after the British incursion. The British Indian Government held its power after 1817 in Sikkim. Their trading interest with Tibet instigated many historical events in Sikkim history, like, military expeditions, administrative changes, upliftment in economic status and strengthening and developing communication networks. However, the military expeditions, i.e., the Sikkim Expedition of 1888 and the Younghusband Mission of 1903-1904, are remarkable historical military events that played a significant role in strengthening and developing the communication system particularly, the post office in Sikkim. The post offices at various military routes were established during the Sikkim Expedition of 1888. With an ultimatum put forward by the then Viceroy of India, Lord Dufferin, to vacate *Lingtu*, which was occupied by the Tibetan troops and the latter, refusing to comply with the ultimatum, compelled the British troops to disperse toward Sikkim from *Pedong*, resulting in Sikkim Expedition of 1888. While on the mission to *Lingtu*, the British Indian troops installed their military camp along with Field post offices on the route. The Philatelic studies on Sikkim's postal history, mentions various Filed Post Offices developed in 1888, for instance, *Dulapchin* or *Dalapchand*, *Gnatong*, *Sedonchin*, *Gangtok*, *Rhenock Bazaar*, and *Pakyoung*, were the post offices was built. Among all these places, the first post office was established at *Dulapchin (Dalapchand)*. The other important source through which the postal history of Sikkim can be examined is the correspondence of Arthur Edmund Sandbach, who joined the Sikkim Expedition of 1888 in the year 1889. His correspondences, marks "Experimental P.O. C-7", "Experimental P.O. C-3", "Experimental P.O. C-22" strikes and these cancellations were used within Sikkim at



*Gnatong, Rangpo, and Rhenock Ridge*, respectively. The post offices, established in Sikkim after the Sikkim Expedition of 1888 had their head office at Darjeeling.

Unlike the Sikkim Expedition of 1888, the Younghusband Mission of 1903-1904 has its influence in developing of the post offices in Sikkim. This mission was held under the directions of Col. F.E. Younghusband, who was helped by the other officials; General Macdonald, J.C. White, Walsh, and Captain O'Connor. In this mission, the British Indian troops carried all essential items along with field hospitals and Telegraph, and Postal and Survey Departments. During this mission, the post offices were established at *Siliguri, Sevoke, Rieng, Tarkhola, Rangpo, Rorathang, Lingtam, Zuluk, and Gnathong*. However, *Gangtok, Singtam, Tokul and Pakyong* post offices also provided their service for the British Troops in the Younghusband Mission of 1903-1904. The temporary field post offices were under the supervision of the Superintendent of Post Office, *Jailpaiguri* Division. However, from 6<sup>th</sup> January 1904, the postal services of Sikkim-Tibet Mission Force were divided into two postal divisions. These field post offices were coined by various numbers, such as, F.P.O.s Nos. 24, 25, 26, 27 etc.. Since the post offices were established for a temporary purpose, therefore, some post offices were closed after the British Indian Troops abdicated the place. Though the field post offices on the Mission of 1903-1904 came across many problems, they provided satisfactory services to the British Indian troops. It is found that the post offices in Sikkim that were establish till 1903-1904 were mainly for military purpose. However, after 1904, these post offices started to give services to the civilian. The then political officer, John Claude White, played a vital role in developing the post and telegraph lines in Sikkim.

The common people recognized the importance of the postal services in various aspects. Therefore, they responded by demanding the establishment of a post office in

their villages. People living in the northern part of Sikkim, for instance, *Lachen*, *Lachung*, and *Ringim*, requested Sikkim Durbar to open the post office at a convenient place from where they can easily access the postal service. Therefore, the post office for civilian of *Lachen*, *Lachung*, and *Ringim* was established at *Chungthang*. Similarly, *Gyazing Bazaar* of west Sikkim, was a commercial hub, and people from distant villages gathered on a *haat* day. Therefore, looking at the requirement of postal service for the common people, the *Pemayantse* or *Pemiongchi* lamas requested Sikkim Durbar to establish a post office at *Gyazing Bazaar*. The Administration Report of 1917-1918, mentions four new post offices i.e., *Singtam*, *Kewzing*, *Rinchenpong*, and *Namchi*. However, for the convenience of the people, the letterboxes were installed in different places like *Middle Camp*, *Melli*, and *Dikchu*. While researching at the demand made by the common people in establishing the various post offices in Sikkim, it has been found out through interviews that the post office at *Tashiding* was established after 1957. In 1957, the numbers of students at *Tashiding* School increased. Since the school had to correspond with the Sikkim Government, the then Headmaster, *Man Bhadur Rai*, consulted with the villagers to open the post office. Accordingly they requested Sikkim Darbar, and their demand was taken into consideration. Thus, a post office was established at *Tashiding*. The year of the establishment of the post office at *Tashiding* does not comply with the timeline of present research work. However, the research shows that the opening of school was also a reason to demand the post office's establishment at the villages in Sikkim. The role of postal services on the common people in Sikkim is noteworthy. It further encouraged common people in pursuing business far and wide and developing the economy of Sikkim and its people, respectively. The post office encouraged the Apple Business in north Sikkim. It is found that Sikkim exported Apples to *Kashmir*,

*Tibet, Calcutta, Kalimpong, Shillong and Assam* etc., through post offices. Likewise, in *Rhenock* East Sikkim, Chandra Nursery was established in 1910. This Chandra Nursery supplied orchid saplings to different places through the post office. It can be said that the establishment of the post offices in Sikkim encouraged people to start a business and it also helped the common people to stay connected by sending letters, telegrams, parcels etc.,.

The postal department in Sikkim flourished with the British invasion. The 1890 Convention permitted British Indian Government to have control over the communication system. Therefore, the post offices in Sikkim were under the administration of the Indian Postal Departments. The post offices in Sikkim use to administer according to the norms of the Indian Postal Department. However, the post offices in Sikkim were run by the assistance provided by the Sikkim Darbar. Further, the research has found out that the landlords or Kazis and shopkeepers have a tremendous role in administering of the post offices in Sikkim. The landlords of a particular *Elakas* use to provide free accommodations to the runners and the post masters. They also provide a house for installing post office. The landlords were given a right by Sikkim Durbar to sell the Revenue Stamps.

Further, the landlords were given the privilege to choose a candidate for the post of runner and postmaster of their *Elakas*. On the other hand, the shopkeepers provided financial assistance in constructing and repairing the post offices in Sikkim. The post offices that were established in private houses, the Sikkim Darbar paid the rents to the house owner. The other interesting finding of this work is the role of the runners in the post offices in Sikkim. A book, *Himalayan Village An Account of the Lepchas*, highlights a native Lepcha man from Dzongu called *Tempa*. He served as a runner to the Sikkim Durbar. It has been found through an interview that a person called

*Thendup Bhutia* from *Gangtok* served as the runner before 1975. Interestingly, in Sikkim the post of a runner is continuing *Bhim Bahadur Tamang*, from *Sherathang*, is a runner who carries mail every week across the mountainous border pass of Nathu La in Sikkim to China.

*Dak-Bungalows* are another vital part of the Indian Postal Department. The *Dak-Bungalows* in Sikkim have their importance. There are many *Dak-Bungalows* established in Sikkim by the British Officials. *Rangpo Dak-Bungalow* is one of the oldest *Dak-Bungalows* in Sikkim, which caught the attention of various foreign travellers. The postal goods were kept in *Dak-Bungalows* from where the postal servants use to take to their destinations. It has been found out that the rules and regulations of *Dak-Bungalows* were followed strictly by every individual irrespective of their status who halted their nights there.

The Administration Reports (1907-1908, 1908-1909, 1917-1918, 1918-1919, and 1919-1920) of Sikkim mention the names of the imperial post offices which were under the Sikkim Durbar. Further, the Budget files of Sikkim (1927-1928, 1928-1929, 1929-1930, 1931-1932, 1932-1933, 1933-1934, 1934-1935, 1935-1936, 1936-1937, 1937-1938, 1938-1939, 1940-1941, 1948-1949 and 1949-1950) throw light upon the financial aid that was estimated in repairing and developing the different post offices.

Lastly, it is found that the postal administration developed in many ways; for instance, though Sikkim had no stamps of its own, however, by 1917, the revenue stamps were issued by the Sikkim Durbar. After which, the then Chogyal of Sikkim, Sir Tashi Namgyal made it became compulsory to affix the revenue stamps in all the official documents. Another very interesting and historical event of the post office in Sikkim is the Experiment of Rocket Mail, by Stephen H. Smith. The same experiment was

done in other parts of India, which proved to be an unsuccessful experiment. However, Sikkim was the place where it got its successes.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### PRIMARY SOURCES

1. Administration Report from 1917 to 1918, British Library, EAP880/1/1/14, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP880-1-1-14>.
2. Administration Report from 1918 to 1919, British Library, EAP800/1/1/15, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP880-1-1-15>.
3. Kharel. Sunita and Jigme Wangchuck. Bhutia, *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Home Department, Government of Sikkim, 2013.
4. Leo. Rose E, Sikkim: The Politics of a Buffer State, Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, British Library, EAP880/1/6/21, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP880-1-6-24>.
5. Maharaja Thuthob Namgyal and Maharani Yeshe Dolma, *History of Sikkim*, Research Institute of Tibetology, Translated by Kazi Douasandup, (Unpublished Work), 1908.
6. Memorandum of the Government of Sikkim, 1947, British Library, EAP880/1/1/39, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP880-1-1-39>, Domestic Affair (1875-1975).
7. Proter. A.E., *Census Report of India, 1931 Volume V, Bengal and Sikkim Part I*, Usha Publication, Calcutta Central Publication Branch, 1933
8. Request for the Extension of John Cloud White's (PO Sikkim) term as Viceroy, British Library, EAP880/1/7/4, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP880-1-7-4>.
9. Sikkim State Archive, Darbar Department, File No. 7 of 1916, Serial No. 9 (v), Introduction of Court Fee Stamps, 1916.

10. Sikkim State Archive, Finance Department, File No. 18 of 1946/47, Serial No. 1, Issue of Stamps by the Indian States.
11. Sikkim State Archive, Finance Department, File No. 23 of 1920-21, Serial No. 1, Postal Insurance Policies Bonus Certificate, 1919.
12. Sikkim State Archive, Forest Department, File No. Nil 1924, Land Laws of Sikkim State, 1924.
13. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 12 of 1933, Serial No. 4, Miscellaneous Circular, Orders, etc., from Various Departments, 1933.
14. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 13/1/1938, Sl. No. 1, Administration Report for the year 1938.
15. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 14 of 1928, Serial No. 4, Reg. Arrangements for Providing free Accommodation to the Post Office Staffs, 1928.
16. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 14 of 1930, Serial No. 23, Proposal to Discontinue the Practice of paying customs duty of Postal Parcels in Service Stamps, 1930.
17. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 17 of 1919, Serial No. 6 (VI), Proposal to sell the half share of the old Rungpo Dak-Bungalow to Government, 1919.
18. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 20 of 1931, Serial No. 1, Reg. Budget Estimated for the year 1932-33.
19. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 20 of 1932, Serial No. 1, Reg. Budget Estimated for the year 1933-34.
20. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 20 of 1932, Serial No. 1, Reg. Budget Estimated for the year 1948-49.

21. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 20 of 1937, Serial No. 1, Reg. Budget Estimated for the year 1938-39.
22. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 20 of 1937, Serial No. 1, Reg. Budget Estimated for the year 1938-39.
23. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 20 of 1939, Serial No. 1, Budget Estimated for the year 1940-41.
24. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 21 of 1927, Sl. No. 1, Administration Report for the year 1927-1928.
25. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 22/1(XIX)/1919, Sl. No. 1, Inclusion of Telegraph Office and New Post Office in the Residency Area, 1919.
26. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 23 of 1930, Serial No. 1, Reg. Budget Estimated for the year 1931-32.
27. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 28 of 1916, Serial No. I (VIII), Transfer of Control of Excise, Income tax, Police, Jail, Judicial and Revenue Departments, to H.H., 1916.
28. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 29 of 1918, Serial No. 3 (XIX), Repairs of Namchi Post Office Building and allotment of a piece of Land free of rent for runners Hut, 1918.
29. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 3 of 1920, Serial No. 7 (VII), Removal of a private hut lying within the Dak-Bungalow compound at Kupup and the cultivation of land by Chawkidars within Dak-Bungalow compounds, 1920.
30. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 34 of 1928, Serial No. 1, Reg. Budget Estimate for 1928-30.



31. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 35 of 1924, Serial No. 2, Reg. Budget Estimate for 1925-1926.
32. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 36/3/1927, Sl. No. 3, Reg. Construction of Chungthang Experimental Post Office, 1927.
33. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 5 of 1920, Serial No. 3, Opening of the Post Office at Gayzing, 1920.
34. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 6 of 1918, Serial No. 7 (VI), No State Dak-Bungalows should be occupied without a pass by the families of Sikkim Officials, 1918.
35. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 7 of 1934, Serial No. 3, Profose Visit of Stephen H. Smith, Rocket Mail Experimentation, 1934.
36. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 8 of 1938, Sl. No. 1, Abolition of Gnatong C.S.O., 1938.
37. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 8/2/1939, Reg. Demarcation of Post Office Land at Gangtok, Gnatong, & Rhenock, 1939.
38. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 8/3/1938, Sl. No. 3, Postal Facilities in rural areas in Sikkim, 1938.
39. Sikkim State Archive, General Department, File No. 9 of 1927, Serial No. 3, Sale of Apples, 1927.
40. Sikkim State Archive, Land Revenue 1890-1909, File No. 2/XIX/190, Sl. No. 17, Reg, Opening of Post Office at Chungthang, 1909.
41. Sikkim State Archive, Land Revenue, File No. 11 of 1932, Serial No. 12, Annual Administration Report for the year 1931-32.
42. Sikkim State Archive, Land Revenue, File No. 2/XVII/1910-11, Serial No. 33, Reg. Sikkim State Budget for 1911-12.

43. Sikkim State Archive, Land Revenue, File No. 26/XVII/1909, Serial No. 25,  
Reg. Sikkim State Budget for 1909-10.
44. Sikkim State Archive, Land Revenue, File No. Nil/1920, Serial No. 69,  
Annual Report of Miscellaneous Department for the year, 1920-21.

## SECONDARY SOURCES

### Books

1. Awasty. Indira, *Between Sikkim and Bhutan*, B.R. Publishing, Delhi, 1978.
2. Bajpai. G.S., *China's Shadow Over Sikkim The Political Of Intimidation*, Sona Printers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1999.
3. Bell. Charles, *Tibet Past and Present*, Motilal Banarasidass Publishers, Delhi, 1992.
4. Bennett. Edward, *The Post Office and its Story*, Seeley Service & CO.LTD, London, 1912.
5. Bhanja. K.C., *History of Darjeeling and the Sikkim Himalaya*, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 2015.
6. Bhanja. K.C., *Mystic Tibet and the Himalaya*, Modern India Press, Calcutta, 1948.
7. Borgia. Steve, *Pigeons to Post*, Indeco Leisure Hotels Pvt. Ltd., 2011.
8. Brown. Percy, *Tour in Sikkim and the Darjeeling Districts*, W. Newman & Co. Limited, Calcutta, 1944.
9. Chattopadhyaya. Basudeb, *A Jingle of Bells- A Short History of the General Post Office Kolkata*, K P Bagchi and Company, Kolkata, 2004.
10. Clarke. Geoffery, *The Post Office of India and its Story*, Abhishek Publications, New Delhi, 2018.

11. Cooke. Hope, *Time Change An Autobiography*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1980.
12. Copper. Jal, *Stamps of India*, Pereira at the Examiner Press, Bombay, 1968.
13. Easton. John, *An Unfrequented Highway Through Sikkim and Tibet to Chumolaori*, Pilgrims Publishing, Varanasi, 2005.
14. Fleming. Peter, *Bayonets to Lhasa*, Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1961.
15. Galuti. M.N. Colonel, *Tibetan War Through Sikkim, Bhutan, and Nepal*, Manas Publications, New Delhi, 2003.
16. Gorer. Geoffery, *Himalayan Village an Account of the Lepcha of Sikkim*, Pilgrims Publishing, Varanasi, 1938.
17. Hooker. J.D., *Himalayan Journals or Note of a Naturalist in Bengal, the Sikkim and Nepal Himalayas, the Khasia Mountains*, Bradbury and Evans, London, 1885.
18. Jatia. D.N, *From the Dairy of Stephen Smith*, The Philatelic Congress of India, New Delhi, 1980.
19. Jha. P.K., *History of Sikkim (1817-1904)*, OPS Publishers, Calcutta, 1985.
20. Kapadia. Harish, *A Passage to Himalaya*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2001
21. Kazi. Jigme N., *Sons of Sikkim, The Rise and Fall of the Namgyal Dynasty of Sikkim*, Hill Media Publications, Gangtok, 2020.
22. Khenpo. Tshering. L, *A Sage of Sikkim's Supremely Revered four pioneer Nyingmapa Reincarates and their Torchbearers*, Khempo L. Tshering, 2002.
23. Kotturan. George, *The Himalayan Gateway History and Culture of Sikkim*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1983.
24. Leifer. Walter, *Himalaya, Mountains of Destiny*, Galley Press, London, 1962.

25. Macaulay. Colman, *Report of a Mission to Sikkim and the Tibetan Frontier: With a Memorandum on our relations with Tibet-Primary Source Edition 1885*, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1885.
26. Macdonald. David, *Touring in Sikkim and Tibet*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1999.
27. Malley. LSS, *Bengal District Gazetteers Darjeeling*, Logos Press, New Delhi, 1907.
28. Sethi. Vishal, *Communication Services in India 1947 to 2007*, New Century Publications, New Delhi, 2006.
29. Sharma. S.K, Usha Sharma, *Documents on North-East India, An Exhaustive Survey, Vol. 10: Sikkim*, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 2005.
30. Shresta. Shanker. Rajiva, *Sikkim our Newfound home in the Black Hill-Newars here and There*, Karuna Devi Smarak Dharmarth Guthi, 2018.
31. Singh. Arvind Kumar, *India Post A Journey Through Ages*, translated by Shailendra Das, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 2009.
32. Sood. Shubhi, *Younghusband Troubled Campaign*, India Research Press, New Delhi, 2005.
33. Virk. D.S., *Postal History of Indian Campaigns Sikkim Tibet 1903-1908*, Philatelic Congress of Indian Army Postal Association, New Delhi, 1989.
34. White. John Claude, *Sikkim and Bhutan*, Pilgrim Press, Varanasi, 2009.
35. Younghusband. Francis, *India and Tibet*, Book Faith India, Delhi, 1998.

## Articles

1. Chintapanti. Krishna Adithya, Postal Regulation Issues and Options, *Economic & Political Weekly, September 8, 2012, Vol. XIVII, No, 26*, pp. 15-19.
2. Clark. Geoffery Rothe, Postal and Telegraph Work in India, *Journal of Royal Society of Arts, Vol. 71, No. 3680 (June 1, 1923)*, pp. 483-498.
3. Dey. Dipok, Sikkim A Brief Postal History, 2006, Postal Himal.
4. Esin. Simge and Oguzhan Oaeon, From Post Office to Public Communication Points: A Study on the Spatial Transformation of Public Buildings Due to Decreasing Functionality With Regard to Recent Developments in Information Technology, *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research, Summer, 2010, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Summer, 2010)*, pp. 163-180.
5. Flack. Geoffery, Sikkim Field Force 1888-89, Postal Himal Quarterly of the Nepal and Tibet Philatelic Study Circle, No. 78, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 1994.
6. Gupta. Devyani, Postal Relations between Princely States and British India: Military lines, Communication Networks and the Residency System, C. 1750-1850, *Indian History Congress, 2010-2011, Vol. 71 (2010-2011)*, pp. 568-576.
7. Headrick. Daniel, A Double-Edged Sword: Communications and Imperial Control in British India, *GESIS-Leibniz Institute for the Social Science, 2010, Vol. 35, No.1.* pp. 51-65.
8. Joshi. Chitra, Dak Runners, and the Reordering of Communication Networks, *Cambridge University Press, Vol. 57, No.2 (August 2012)*, pp. 169-189.
9. Rhodes. Nick, Notes on the Postal History of Sikkim (1888-1947), Postal Himal, NO. 85, 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 1996.

## **INTERVIEWS**

1. Adup Tshering Bhutia, Age: 53, Male, Occupation: Private State Manager Palace, Place: Resident of Gangtok, Date: 30<sup>th</sup> March 2019, Time: 3 p.m.
2. Pritam Mukhia, Age: 36, Male, Occupation: Postal Assistance at Gangtok Post office, Place: Ganagtok, Date: 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020, Time: 12:47 p.m.
3. Sonam Yongda (Captain Youngda/Yapo Captain), Age: 79, Occupation: Social Worker, Place: Pemayantse Monastery, Date: 29<sup>th</sup> December 2019, Time: 12 noon.

## **DICTIONARY**

1. Roshan. Prasad, *The Stamp Collectors's Dictionary, A guide to the words and abbreviation in common use among stamp collectors*, Department of Posts, Sikkim Division, Gangtok, 2019.