

SIKKIM: A CONCISE CHRONICLE

INTRODUCTION

First published on 20 March 1963 by the Royal Wedding Committee, *Sikkim: A Concise Chronicle* offers a brief and easy to understand history of the Kingdom of Sikkim and its rulers from the time of its foundation up to the mid-1960s. Originally published on the occasion of the 1963 royal wedding of the Twelfth Chogyal of Sikkim Palden Thondup Namgyal and Miss Hope Cooke, this history booklet was updated and occasionally republished in subsequent years. *Sikkim: A Concise Chronicle* was read by Sikkimese school students until Sikkim's 1975 integration within the Union of India. The booklet has since become a collector's item.

Today, if students are required to read a brief history of Sikkim's Chogyals, they usually turn to the *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, a colonial publication dating from 1894, with a chapter titled 'History of Sikkim and its Rulers' (p. 5-38). Several books on the history of Sikkim have since been published,¹ however these are either academic in nature, or too detailed and lengthy for the needs of school students. Keeping this in mind, *Sikkim: A Concise Chronicle* is being republished for the benefit of young readers eager to learn about the royal history of their former kingdom, as seen from the viewpoint of the Royal House of Namgyal.

The updated version reproduced below is an undated version published shortly after the demise of the Eleventh Chogyal Tashi Namgyal in 1965 and the coronation of his second son Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal. Except for the corrections of the few typos and added punctuations, the text of *Sikkim: A Concise Chronicle* has been faithfully reproduced with the addition of photographs, footnotes and a few words, the latter two as indicated in brackets [...]. In order to follow the order of the successive Chogyals, instead of starting with the reign of the Twelfth Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal, the text now concludes with it as the reign of the last ruling monarch.

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¹ See Saul Mullard (2011), *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History*, Leiden: Brill and Gangtok: Rachna. Alex McKay (2021), *The Mandala Kingdom*, Gangtok: Rachna. John Ardussi, Anna Balikci-Denjongpa, Per Sørensen (2021), *The Royal History of Sikkim: A Chronicle of the House of Namgyal*, Chicago, Bangkok: Serindia.

KINGDOM OF SIKKIM

The Namgyal House who came to Sikkim from Minyak (Kham; Eastern Tibet), trace their descent from King Indrabhūti who was a ruler of what is today Himachal Pradesh, India. East-ward migrations of Western Himalayan tribes under adventurous princes are well-known in history, and this was particularly so during the decline of Buddhism in India. A prince from the far west is known to have founded the Minyak Kingdom towards the ninth century of the Christian era. Twenty-five generations later, in the first half of the fifteenth century, a scion of the Minyak House went on a pilgrimage westward with his five sons. At Sakya, a son named Gye-Bumsa married the daughter of the Hierarch. Gye-Bumsa settled in the nearby Chumbi Valley which became the nucleus of the later kingdom of Sikkim in the first decade of the sixteenth century. Phuntshog Namgyal (born 1604) was the first Consecrated Ruler of Sikkim and set up the first centralized government roughly at the same time as the settlement of Pilgrim Fathers in North America. The kingdom was then many times its size today. In the north it extended to Tang La (near Phari, Tibet), in the east to Tagong La (near Paro, Bhutan), in the south to Titalia (near the borders of Bihar and Bengal, India), and in the west to Timar Chorten (Tamur river, Nepal). In the eighteenth century, Sikkim lost considerable territories first to Bhutan and then to Nepal due to internal feuds and foreign aggressions. The Gorkha expansion under Raja Prithvi Narayan Shah led to loss of all Lepcha and Tsong lands in what was then Western Sikkim. There were border disputes with Tibet also. In 1817 and in 1834-1835, territories constituting Darjeeling district and southern borders were acquired by the British East India Company. In 1880s, Sikkim's right to the Chumbi Valley were surrendered to Tibeto-Chinese authorities by the British authorities in India. Sikkim today covers an area of 2,818 sq. miles and is situated roughly along longitudes 88 and 89 East and latitudes 27 and 28 North.

GYALRAB [ROYAL HISTORY]

Gye-Bumsa ("Strength of a Hundred Thousand") earned this name because he set up the four immense pillars of the Sakya monastery. After marrying the Sakya Hierarch's daughter he settled at Phari, while his brothers went further south into present [day] western Bhutan. Gye-Bumsa then came in contact with the Lepchas and a deep friendship between the new comers and the Lepchas grew. A blood brotherhood was sworn, in blood, between Gye-Bumsa and Thekongtek, the Lepcha Chief, at Kabi Longtsok.

Mipon Rab, the third son of Gye-Bumsa, succeeded to the chiefship on his father's death. He had four sons from whom the four principal clans of Sikkim, Tongdu-rushe are descended.²

Guru Tashi, fourth son of Mipon Rab succeeded Mipon Rab and shifted to Gangtok. The Lepchas, after the death of Thekongtek, were breaking up into minor clans who gradually turned to Guru Tashi for leadership and protection. His principal Lieutenant and Advisor was a Lepcha by the name of Sambar. His rule marked the absorption of the foreign ruling house into the native soil and paved the way for a regular monarchy. He became the first ruler of Sikkim.

Guru Tashi, was followed by Jowo Nagpo, Jowo Apha and Guru Tenzing who pursued the tradition of becoming one with the Lepchas.

Phuntshog Namgyal, the next ruler [and First Chogyal] was born at Gangtok in 1604 and had his capital moved to Yuksam since it was more central and Yatung Valley was no longer a focal point. Phuntshog was consecrated as King (Gyalpo) by three Lamas in 1642. In the previous year, these Lamas had consolidated Buddhism as the established religion in Sikkim. Phuntshog Namgyal instituted the first centralized administration, divided the Kingdom into 12 Dzongs (districts) placed each under a Lepcha Dzongpon (governor) and had a council of 12 ministers.

Tensung Namgyal, [Second Chogyal] (born 1644), was consecrated in 1670, had the capital moved to Rabdentse. He had taken three consorts, Bhutanese, Tibetan and Tsong, and the quarrels between the offspring of the different Queens led to feuds and foreign invasions. He set up the first popular Government with the representatives of the eight clans as councillors.

Chador Namgyal, [Third Chogyal] born in 1686 to Tensung Namgyal's second wife, the daughter of a neighbouring chief, succeeded on the death of his father in 1700. A daughter, Pedi Wangmo, born of the first wife, who came from Bhutan, opposed the succession and invited a force from Bhutan to assassinate the boy king. A loyal minister Yugthing Yeshe carried off the minor to Lhasa via Elam and Walung (then in western Sikkim and now in eastern Nepal). During his asylum in Lhasa, Chador Namgyal distinguished himself in Buddhist learning and Tibetan literature and even became the state astrologer to the Sixth Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama bestowed high honours and titles on the young king and gave him

² [The *Tongdu Rushi* or "the four clans of a thousand each" consist of the Zhangpodar, Tshechudar, Nyima Gyalpo and Guru Tashi.]

estates in Central Tibet with sovereign rights. Meanwhile Rabdentse Palace had been captured by Bhutanese forces who held it for eight years and the minister Yugthing Yeshe's son was taken prisoner. Eventually the Deb Raja of Bhutan withdrew the Bhutanese expedition on the mediation of Tibet Government. Chador Namgyal then returned and started to drive out the remainder of the Bhutanese forces. But areas in the southeast were lost to Bhutan as they were heavily colonized. Bhutan made another invasion, and though Chador Namgyal was able to clear much of the country under Bhutanese occupation, what is today Kalimpong and Rhenock were lost. Chador founded the great monastery of Pemayangtse which recalled Mindoling with which he was intimate as a refugee in Tibet. Chador had the habits and mental make-up of a Lama. He commanded that the second of every three sons of a Bhutia family must be ordained a monk of the Pemayangtse Monastery, which was also open[ed] to the Tsongs. He not only built the Guru Lhakhang Tashiding (1715) and patronized the sacred places but also adapted the religious dances (mystery plays) to keep alive the martial and native traditions and invented an alphabet for the Lepchas. Chador's half-sister was however not reconciled. While the king was at Ralang Hot Springs in 1716, Pedi Wangmo conspired with a Tibetan doctor to cause bloodletting from a main artery and thus caused the King's death. A force was sent to Namchi, the doctor was executed and Pedi Wangmo strangled to death with a silk-scarf. Lama Jigme Pao became Regent.

Gyurmed Namgyal, [Fourth Chogyal] (born 1707) succeeded his father Chador in 1717. In 1718, as a sequel to Mongol (Dzungar) invasion of Tibet leading to the persecution of Nyingma sect, the Mindoling abbot's family sought asylum in Sikkim. Gyurmed's marriage with the Mindoling abbot's daughter ended the wandering of the king as a mendicant. This reign saw the loss of Limbuana—now in eastern Nepal. Conscription of labour for rebuilding and fortifying Rabdentse and other places on account of Gorkha and Bhutanese raids forced many of the Tsongs (settler from Tsangpo Valley in Tibet) to flee to Limbuana, which became a rebel district and broke away from Sikkim even before the Gorkha expansion. There was also a boundary dispute with Bhutan. In the southwest, one Tashi Bidur rose in rebellion with the aid of a Magar Chieftain and was subdued. The reign saw the establishment of Kagyu sect (Mahayana). Gyurmed had no heirs and gave out on the eve of his death (1733) that a nun in Sanga Choling was carrying his son.

Namgyal Phuntshog, [Fifth Chogyal] posthumous son of Gyurmed, succeeded (1733) as desired by Gyurmed. The Royal Treasurer Tamding opposed this on plea of illegitimacy and declared himself

king. The Lepchas backed the baby and fought the pretender under the leadership of Chagdzod Garwang. Tamding was defeated and fled to Tibet (1740). The Tibetan government, in compliance with a request from Sikkim, sent Rabten Sharpa³ to work as Regent during the minority of the boy king. A convention representing all elements of the population was held; it defined the functions and responsibilities of the government and its constituent bodies and for the first time introduced annual taxation. On the death of their chief, the Magars asked for the regent's authority to install the son of the Chief as successor; the Sikkim Gyalpo being the overlord of the Magar. Rabden Sharpa, in ignorance of this relationship, refused to comply and the Magars sought the protection of Bhutan. The Deb Raja of Bhutan then planned an invasion of Sikkim in conspiracy with the Magars. Though the invasion did not materialize the Magar allegiance was lost forever. About 1752, a Tsong uprising took place which was put down by Chagdzod Garwang and their loyalty won back by tactful diplomacy. At the same time the rise of the Gorkha kingdom held a new threat for Sikkim. Namgyal Phuntshog's later years witnessed the Gorkha inroads under Raja Prithvi Narayan Shah of Nepal who fomented the rebellious elements in Sikkim. Bhutan also invaded and occupied all land east of Teesta but suffered defeat at Phodang and withdrew to present boundaries after negotiations at Rhenock. Under the leadership of Chugthub (Satrajit), the Gorkha invasion was beaten back 17 times at Bishapur and Tob Dzong [Taplejung]. After this a peace treaty was signed (1775) with Nepal; and the Gorkhas promised to abstain from all armed raids as they were doing in collaboration with the Bhutanese. The Sikkim-Nepal boundaries was fixed at Sango Chu, Sangdi Dzong, Malliayang and Lhachu also called the Kanika river. The Gorkhas however broke the Treaty and occupied Elam and Tob Dzong. Although the Nepalese suffered heavy losses, they advanced further and occupied Western Sikkim. Namgyal Phuntshog married thrice; the first Queen died without issue. The second Queen gave birth to one daughter only and the third Queen gave birth to Tenzing Namgyal in 1769.

Tenzing Namgyal, [Sixth Chogyal] (born 1769), sixth Consecrated Ruler, ascended in 1780. He married the daughter of Chagdzod Garwang and a son, Tsugphud Namgyal, was born in 1785. The Sikkimese regrouped in 1780 for expelling the Nepalese. A Bhutia force led by Dragkar Chagdzod⁴ was to attack through Singalila;

³ [Rabten Sharpa came from the influential private estate of Rabten Shar located in lower Yarlung, whose master was on close terms with the Seventh Dalai Lama (*The Royal History of Sikkim* 2021: 174).]

⁴ [Dragkar Deba Tshang Rigdzin died in battle by the Arun river in eastern Nepal c.1787 (*The Royal History of Sikkim* 2021: 128).]

Chagdzod Chugthub leading a Lepcha force was to attack from the south; the two forces constituting a pincer movement. The Bhutia force, which had captured eight dzongs and had gone as far as the Arun river were disheartened by the death of their leader and shortage of ammunition and could not complete the pincer movement and broke up. The force under Chagdzod Chugthub had also won many victories and defeated the main body of the Gorkhas in Morong in the Terai. There was however no decisive victory. In 1788 the Gorkhas again invaded southern Sikkim under Purna Ali through Elam and reoccupied southern Sikkim, and a force under Johar Singh captured Rabdentse by a surprise attack. Heavy Gorkha reinforcements arrived under Damodar Panday and devastated and occupied the entire lower Teesta. Tenzing Namgyal retired to Kabi and thence to Lhasa. Deb Raja of Bhutan assisted the Sikkim King while at Kabi with some supplies. In 1790, Chugthub and [his brother] Dzomgyal again succeeded in repelling the Nepalese. The Nepalese pressure relaxed somewhat due to Nepalese involvement in Tibet, while three forces of Tsong, Lepcha and Bhutia combined against Gorkhas to expel the aggression and succeeded considerably. Sikkim was involved in the Sino-Tibetan invasion of Nepal but Sikkim's claims were ignored in the Sino-Nepalese Treaty. Tenzing Namgyal died in Lhasa (1793).

Tsuphud Namgyal, [Seventh Chogyal] (born 1785) was the seventh Consecrated Ruler and had the longest reign (1793-1864). He accompanied his father to Lhasa (1870) and returned on the death of his father in 1793. He was said to be a brilliant boy and took over the administration at the age of twelve. Many considered him an incarnation of Manjushri (Bodhisattva of Wisdom). His reign witnessed the penetration of the British power into the Himalayas and of British trade efforts across the Himalayas into Tibet. Sikkim became involved in British diplomacy and the Ruler subjected to heavy pressure from the British on one hand and the Tibeto-Chinese authorities on the other. Sikkim was involved in the Anglo-Nepalese war and was considered an ally of the British. Nagri Dzong was recaptured about 1814, and in 1815 the British helped to drive out the Gorkhas from many parts of southwest Sikkim. In 1817, the Treaty of Titalia was signed between the British and Nepal whereby the boundary between Sikkim and Nepal was laid along the Mahanadi and Mechi rivers and the Singalila range. This did not conform to the Sikkimese wishes and left large tracts of land still in the hands of Nepal and did not restore the Sikkim territories around Titalia, which the British acquired from Gorkhas but kept to themselves.

In 1814 Rabdentse being considered too close to the Nepalese frontier, the capital was shifted to Tumlong. A son was born in 1812 who subsequently died.

A second son, Sidkeong Namgyal, was born in 1819 and a third son, Risung Namgyal, was born in 1821. Their mother, the Queen, was a sister of the then Tashi Lama (Tenpai Nyima, the Fourth Panchen Lama). The relations with Tibet however grew cold as the Panchen Lama and the then Regent of Tibet, Tsemonling, were not on good terms. Chagdzo Bholod, who was the [maternal] uncle of the Ruler became the Prime Minister. His rise to eminence created many jealousies which resulted in the assassination of his family (1826). Relations of Bholod fled to Elam and foiled in their appeal to the Ruler, sought protection of the King of Nepal and thus the loss of Elam was finalised. There were constant clashes between the Kotapas (the relations of Bholod) and the Sikkimese forces. The Kotapas were extradited to Sikkim through Tibet on Tibetan mediation with the Nepalese Government. On being granted pardon the Kotapas reaffirmed their loyalty and went to Elam to bring back their followers. However, due to their feud with Khangsa Dewan, who threatened and persecuted them on their way to Elam, they did not return but continued reprisals and harassing raids.

The British first noticed Darjeeling in 1828, when some officers came to inquire into a boundary dispute between Sikkim and Nepal. Tsugphud Namgyal gave Capt. Lloyd a deed giving the hill of Darjeeling for a sanatorium to the East India Company out of friendship to the Governor General but at the same time, on the consideration that the boundary dispute, would be favourably concluded and that an equivalent land would be given in exchange (Debgong). The company however, forced a rent on the Ruler, which he was constantly refusing. Relations with the [Superintendent] of Darjeeling (Dr. A. Campbell) deteriorated on the question of extraditing slaves and criminals as also the illegal collection of tax of Sikkim Morang by the [Superintendent]. This eventually led to the detention of Drs. Campbell and Hooker when they were on an unauthorized exploration inside Sikkim (1859). This resulted in a punitive expedition after the return of Drs. Campbell and Hooker and the whole of Darjeeling and Morang were annexed (1860). Another expedition followed next year. The Treaty [of Tumlong] of 1861 was forced on Sikkim and the annexation of Darjeeling confirmed. The Treaty was signed by Sidkeong Namgyal, while Tsugphud was still in Chumbi. Tsugphud died in 1863. Tsugphud had contracted five marriages. The second and third consorts were sisters of the Tashi Lama. Sidkeong Namgyal, eldest surviving son, was born of the second consort. The fifth consort, a lady from Tanak, bore a son, Thutob Namgyal.

Sidkeong Namgyal, [Eighth Chogyal] (born 1819) succeeded as the eighth Consecrated Ruler in 1863. He was an incarnate of a famous Karmapa Lama of Kham and recognized as such. Due to his father being infirm and old, he looked after the administration towards the end of his father's reign. A grazing dispute between Sikkim and Tibet was successfully solved as also two minor disputes with Bhutan. His efforts at improving the strained relations with the British were successful only in 1873, a year before his death, when he made a state visit to Darjeeling and met the Governor of Bengal. He was however not successful in negotiating the reorganization of the Sikkim army which he desired to be trained by the British and equipped with modern weapons. He was succeeded by his step brother Thutob Namgyal.



The Eighth Chogyal Sidkeong Namgyal (1819-1874)

CHOGYAL THUTOB NAMGYAL



The Ninth Chogyal Thutob Namgyal (1860-1914)

Thutob Namgyal, [Ninth Chogyal] born 1860, succeeded as the ninth Consecrated Ruler in 1874 and ruled till his death in 1914. He had two consorts both from the Tibetan nobility, the first wife was from Tashi Lhunpo and bore him two sons, Tsoda Namgyal (born 1878) and Sidkeong Tulku (born 1879) and died in 1880. The second wife was from the Lhading House of Lhasa and became the Maharani in 1888 and was the mother of Tashi Namgyal (born 1893) and Chuni Wangmo (born 1897). This consort was a woman of much ability and wisdom and most ably shared Thutob's ordeals and vicissitudes.

At the time of Thutob's accession (1874) the British Empire in Asia was the paramount power and Sikkim was already under the full blast of British diplomacy. Thutob was then only fourteen while his opposition numbers in Darjeeling and Calcutta were men of age and experience, men who would not shrink from instigating or employing interested elements within Sikkim to work on unpatriotic and treasonable lines.

Gorkha chauvinism from the days of Raja Prithvi Narayan worked first for conquest of lands from neighbouring countries and second for colonization in other countries. Sikkim was not immune from the second process also. The seventh Ruler Tsugphud Namgyal had therefore prohibited the settlement of Nepalese in Sikkim. Now, while Thutob was just on the throne, a powerful local magnate named Tseepa Lama, in clear defiance of the ban, settled Nepalese in Chakung for personal gain. The example was soon followed by Lasso Athing and the brothers Khangsa Dewan and Phodong Lama. The natural reaction was a counter-movement by the native of the soil to eject the immigrants settled unlawfully. Dalam Athing, Densapa and Pemayangtse Dratsang Lamas thrice ejected the Nepalese along Teesta. The Khangsapa brothers however worked their way to the favour of the young Ruler and even became virtual Prime Ministers. Thutob, however, resisted the pressure of the British Deputy Commissioner (Darjeeling) who recommended the Khangsa policy of settling the immigrants. The Khangsa brothers had meanwhile struck a deal with Newar traders, [the] Laximidas Brothers. An embezzlement charge was laid against Lasso Athing, an enquiry was staged and all his lands were attached. When these attached lands were handed over to the Newar brothers, all the other leading men were incensed. Exasperated, Sikkim made an approach to Ashley Eden, British Governor of Bengal. There was a meeting at Kalimpong between Thutob Namgyal and Ashley Eden. Eden agreed with the policy of prohibiting settlement of immigrants and even advised that even if the waste lands were to be thus settled, the immigrants should never be allowed to hold any office or village headship. The Sikkim Assembly (Lhadi Medi) met at Kalimpong and drew up a document prohibiting

such settlements; this was to be exchanged between the Sikkim Ruler and the British Deputy Commissioner on appropriate seals and signatures. The Khangsa brothers obtained Thutob's consent with the outer seal and added in Tibetan these words "according to the Governor's desire I promised to abide by the policy of allowing the Gorkhalese to settle in uninhabited and waste lands of Sikkim" (1878). The Khangsa brothers in collusion with the Darjeeling Deputy Commissioner then started settling Nepalese in Rhenock. A body of Sikkimese led by the Dratsang Lamas came to Rhenock to turn out the new settlers. Phodong Lama built a small force with arms from Tumlong Palace and marched on Rhenock. Failing to win the Pemayangtse Lamas with huge cash presents, the Phodong group opened fire and drove back the Pemayangtse group with some casualties. In pursuing the Pemayangtse [Lamas] vindictively, the Phodong group even desecrated a branch monastery of Pemayangtse at Yangang. Supported by the British officers at Darjeeling, Khangsa Dewan got the dispute settled in favour of his brother Phodong Lama. This led to increased settlement of Nepalese.

The young Ruler in frustration chose Chumbi for his summer retreats. His two sons born of the deceased first wife were happy to be nearer Tashi Lhunpo than Darjeeling. The British offered to increase the Darjeeling subsidy by fifty percent if Thutob would not move to Chumbi in summer and the administration was handed over to the Khangsa brothers and Shew Dewan. In 1885-1886 the British were engaged in exploiting a dispute between Tibet and Bhutan and thus got involved in a quarrel with the Tibetan authorities. If it led to war, Sikkim would suffer as the battleground and therefore Thutob, while at Chumbi, made all efforts though in vain to mediate.

Even before the accession of Thutob, the British were looking for trade marts in Tibet. In 1884-1885 they sent a mission for the purpose, led by Colman Macaulay. In 1886 the Macaulay Mission entered Sikkim en route to Tibet. The Tibetans occupied Lungthu. On Thutob's mediation the Mission was withdrawn. The British remained sullen and disgruntled because of their failure to open up Tibet and the Tibetan authorities could not accept British military posts near Tibetan borders, while they themselves were evicted from Lungthu. Thutob became *persona non grata* with both parties. The Tibetans stopped the yearly presents for the Sikkim Raja. The British not only discontinued payment of Darjeeling subvention but also demanded return of Thutob from Chumbi on pain of annexation of Sikkim. Thutob returned but failed to bring about reconciliation between the two parties. While the British brought reinforcements in Sikkim, the Tibetans made themselves strong in Chumbi, which was till then a part of Sikkim.

Armed clashes took place at Gnatong, Rinchengang and Chumbi (1888). Neither side scored any decisive point.

In 1890 the British made a convention with the Chinese. The Chinese acknowledged the British protectorate over Sikkim, while the British accepted the Chinese delimitation of Sikkim-Tibet boundary as the crest of the mountain range on the watershed. Sikkim's claims to Chumbi Valley were thus given away. Sikkim was not a party to this convention. Thutob was then under virtual detention of the British and Claude White, the British Political Officer, was the virtual ruler of Sikkim.

Claude White came to Sikkim in 1887 as the leader of a British expedition. On White's arrival at Gangtok, Thutob retreated to Lagyap en route to Chumbi. White stormed the Palace, drove out loyal officials and formed a council of three composed of himself and the Khangsa brothers who had usurped the Government authority. All income for the Ruler was frozen. Thutob was persuaded to return from Chumbi. On his arrival at the capital, White demanded that Thutob should act according to advice of the Khangsapa brothers and must dissociate himself from the loyalist elements like the Pemayangtse Lamas. Thutob was allowed a retinue up to twenty and a paltry pension. Shortly afterwards, Their Highnesses (Thutob and Maharani) were arrested and taken down to Kalimpong. In Kalimpong, Thutob was confronted by White and British officers besides the Khangsa brothers. Thutob was told that unless he got back his elder sons from Chumbi, Their Highnesses would be removed to Calcutta. Their Highnesses agreed to send for the sons. Thutob was also asked to explain the Tibetan presents and the Chinese title he had. The Tibetan presents did not involve any tribute or homage but were in nature of barter of Sikkim produce against tea, butter and salt from Tibet. On the occasion of Thutob's betrothal the Chinese Button of First Rank⁵ was presented by the Chinese Ambans to the Sikkim delegation who had gone to Lhasa to bring the bride. Thutob's sons were held back by their maternal grandmother when she got reports of the treatment meted out to Thutob and Maharani. The British stopped the Tibet-Sikkim barter to open up the trade themselves. The British resented the acceptance of the Chinese Button while they themselves were negotiating with the Chinese matters relating to Tibet trade and Sikkim-Tibet borders.

⁵ [The hat reflects the Manchu court tradition of instantiating a badge of honour, usually worn on summer and winter Mandarin hats. The tradition was also introduced in Tibet featuring slightly different hat styles where the status of the badge was indicated by gemstones of different quality mounted as hat finial or button. In Tibet, the 1st rank consisted of a hat topped with a plain (i.e., pure) coral finial button, and a three-eye or two-eye peacock plume (*The Royal History of Sikkim* 2021: 524).]

While Their Highnesses were in detention in Kalimpong, Claude White with his Sikkimese protégés embarked upon a policy of destroying the ancient economy of Sikkim. The Private Estates of the Royal House and the lands of loyalist elements were being liquidated and distributed among pro-British elements. A number of lessee landlords were created and en bloc settlement of Nepalese in different areas was made; often the Bhutias, Lepchas and Tsongs were deprived of their lands.

After several months of detention at Kalimpong, Their Highnesses were allowed to return. The British however demanded return of the sons from Chumbi and rapprochement with Khangsa brothers. Their Highnesses were then residing at Nabey because of an epidemic in Gangtok. Meanwhile, a son became seriously ill in Chumbi and the Maharani hastened there. This annoyed Claude White. Thutob was brought to Gangtok under arrest, the entire party was disarmed and even their personal daggers on their mantles were removed. Thutob was kept in solitary confinement for 13 days when even food and water could be had only after repeated requests. Even after release he was subjected to hardships. The second son (Sidkeong Tulku) and the Maharani came back to Gangtok.

In 1890 Claude White approached Thutob with the deeds of land grants by which new landlords were created. Since these grants were made without consulting the Ruler and since several acts of injustice were perpetrated, Thutob refused to affix his seal or signature.

Frustrated by the usurpation of governmental authority and impoverished by stoppage of income, Their Highnesses went on a pilgrimage in Sikkim. In 1891, while Thutob was at Rabdentse, White accused him of having used forced labour and threatened action. Thutob addressed the British Governor at Calcutta detailing the maltreatment and preposterous charges of White. White was incensed and with Kangsa brothers sought to bring Thutob back to Gangtok by threats and inducements. Thutob planned a retreat to Dobta, a Sikkim enclave near Khampa Dzong in Tibet. The Nepalese stopped him in Walung Valley and handed him over to the British. Thutob was kept in solitary confinement for some time in Ging and then for two years in Kurseong, where only the Maharani and few personal attendants were allowed to stay. The late Ruler, His Highness Tashi Namgyal, was born here (1893).

In 1894, it was discovered through Commissioner Nolan that Claude White's excesses were contrary to the policy of the British Government who had even expressed displeasure at the usurpation of the Sikkim Raja's authority. Thutob, with his characteristic realism, sent an apology to the British Government for any misunderstanding. This engendered better relations between Sikkim and the British.

In 1895, Their Highnesses were removed to Darjeeling and after six months of confinement there, they were released for return to rule Sikkim. On their arrival at Gangtok, the British Political Officer (White) received them with gifts, requested them to forget the past treatment and assured assistance. In spite of a Ten-Clauses Agreement for restoration of the usurped authority which was proclaimed before Thutob's return, White transferred only the judiciary to His Highness. In 1897, the whole country offered prayers for Thutob's long life, and for purification for misdeeds and disloyal acts done in the past.

In 1899, the British Governor of Bengal was appealed about the wrongful administration and punitive foreign settlement by Claude White. The Governor (John Woodburn) wanted all necessary documents and in 1901 visited Sikkim. He had promised redress but his death on return to Bengal left things as they were.

The change in British attitude to Sikkim was no less due to their quest for smooth passage to Tibet. The British had, in spite of their treaties (1890 and 1893) with the Chinese, not made much headway in opening Tibet. The British now looked for Sikkim's aid in the matter again. A British Commissioner (Nolan), while visiting Sikkim in 1901, spoke of the custom of peace being made by the Queens and requested Her Highness to mediate between Tibet and British. While Their Highnesses were exploring the alternative possibilities, the British hastened the conflict by dispatching an armed mission under Francis Younghusband. This resulted in the Lhasa Expedition (1904).

The impact was felt by the Sikkimese too; large numbers of Sikkimese were conscripted for road building and transport for the expedition.

In 1905, Their Highnesses, the Panchen Lama and the Deb Raja⁶ of Bhutan were invited to meet the British Heir Apparent (Prince of Wales) and his consort at Calcutta. Their Highnesses brought to the notice of British Viceroy and the higher authorities the question of restoration of administrative powers. On their return to Sikkim, the Political Officer handed over the Council and part of the administration but retained the power to review any transaction. By this time Claude White and Phodong Lama had fallen out. Thutob allocated the responsibility of administration among several ministers and set up a secretariat.

In 1906 the first English school was set up in Gangtok and the late Ruler [Chogyal Tashi Namgyal] was among the first batch of students. In the same year, Sidkeong Tulku was admitted to Oxford. In 1908, their Highnesses went on pilgrimage to Nepal and rebuilt the

⁶ [Ugyen Wangchuck was crowned Druk Gyalpo or King of Bhutan in 1907. He was the 12th Trongsa Penlop at the time of his 1905-1906 visit to Calcutta.]

Swayambhunath. A blood brotherhood was sworn with Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher by exchange of Knives.

In 1908, Sidkeong Tulku returned and took over the administration of Forests, Monasteries and Education. A few more schools were established and forest laws were codified. A boundary dispute arose meanwhile. Rhenock Athing was deputed to negotiate and the matter was happily solved and settled permanently with the help of Basil Gould.

Her Highness died in 1910. She had lately been much engaged in literary and cultural work and extended active patronage to the Asiatic Society (Calcutta) for their Tibetan studies.

Thutob passed away in 1914.

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Gyalmo Yeshe Dolma of Sikkim (1867-1910)

A PROMISING LIFE



The Tenth Chogyal Sidkeong Tulku (1879-1914)

Sidkeong Tulku [Tenth Chogyal] (born 1879) succeeded as the tenth Consecrated Ruler in February 1914. While an infant he was recognized as the incarnate of Sidkeong Namgyal (the eighth Consecrated Ruler 1863-1874), that is, a reincarnate of a famous Karmapa Lama of Kham. The prince Tulku was indeed an extraordinary man. While yet a boy, he had developed high intelligence and a forceful personality. His traditional (monastic)

schooling was but a prelude to modern education. He was admitted to Oxford in 1906 and during his two years' stay there he distinguished himself in the corporate life of the university. On his return in 1908, he was given charge of Forests, Monasteries and Schools. During the last couple of years of Thutob's rule Sidkeong Tulku was at the helm of affairs. Thutob was losing his sight and was infirm. Two important transactions of 1913 were no doubt due to Sidkeong Tulku. One was abolition of imprisonment as a penalty for non-payment of debts and the other was the record in the Council Proceeding of the ban on settlement of plainsmen.

On becoming the Maharaja, Sidkeong Tulku made no secret of his desire to remove vested interests as well as to work for the unity of all Buddhists (Northern and Southern). He strove to make the monasteries alive to their social duties. The sister (Chuni Wangmo) who had undergone monastic education was given all facilities for modern and western education. His proposal to liquidate landlordism created stern enemies among a large number of landlords, both ancient feudal and modern lessee. In addition, his spirit of independence and assertive nature strained relations with the Political Officer, Charles Bell.

In December 1914, while somewhat indisposed, a British physician from Bengal administered a heavy transfusion of brandy and put him under a number of blankets; at the same time a fire was kept beneath the bed. Death came in the hour. Thus ended prematurely a promising career in most suspicious circumstances.

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THE WELFARE STATE



The Eleventh Chogyal Tashi Namgyal (1893-1963)

Tashi Namgyal, [Eleventh Chogyal] born on 26 October 1893, succeeded Sidkeong Tulku on 5 December 1914 as the eleventh Consecrated Ruler of Sikkim. His Highness was educated at Gangtok

School, Darjeeling (St. Paul's) and Ajmer (Mayo College); married on 8 October 1918 Kunzang Dechen daughter of Ragkashar House, Lhasa; first son Paljor Namgyal (born 26 November 1921, died 20 December 1941); second son Palden Thondup Namgyal born 22 May 1923—Heir Apparent; first daughter Pema Tsedeun born 6 September 1924; second daughter Pema Choki born 25 December 1925; youngest daughter Sonam Padaun born 27 May 1927; youngest son Jigdal Tsewang Namgyal born 23 August 1928. His Highness's sister Chuni Wangmo (now Rani Dorji) was married (1917) to Raja Sonam Topgye Dorji, late Prime Minister of Bhutan.

Immediately after his accession His Highness took up the subject of social and economic reforms. A modern type of court, designated chief court, was set up and a whole time judge appointed (1916). The judicial functions of the landlords thus came under supervision of a superior court. By a Charter, in April 1955, a High Court was set up and separation of higher judiciary from executive completed. Prior to this in 1953-1954 modern procedures modelled on Indian Civil and Criminal Codes had been introduced. The Indian Penal Code was adopted; provision relating to capital punishment for murder during life sentence was deleted; provisions about marriage offences being not in conformity with our customary laws were also deleted. The judicial and magisterial functions of the landlords were completely abolished by 1948.

At the accession of His Highness, it was found that the British had not yet restored all governmental authority to Sikkim Darbar. In 1918, complete restoration was obtained and His Highness was invested with full ruling authority.

Measures to eradicate social evils and inequity followed. Public gambling was made illegal in 1921, and in 1924, use of unpaid labour was prohibited. In 1937, the personnel of the landlords' courts were stopped from functioning as police. The period of lessee landlordism expired in 1940 and decision was taken to terminate it when the War was over. A form of conscripted labour for Governmental work on payment called Jharlangi had much grown due to the British Government's requirements during the Younghusband Expedition and the War. In 1945, the use of such labour was curtailed. In 1946, the landlords were forbidden the use of Jharlangi from the peasants. In 1947, Kurwas, obliged labour in attendance at staging points in anticipation of officials and tourists, was abolished.

At the end of the War (1946), land reforms were taken in hand. A trigonometrical survey of all lands was made. As the landlords were not forthcoming to relinquish their estates, His Highness started clipping their powers and functions. The landlords' courts and their powers of registration of lands and deeds were abolished in 1948. The

lessee system was dropped and the people were given the right to pay tax direct to the state. Many of these reforms were delayed due to the War.

The Second World War broke out in September 1939. His Highness placed the resources of the state into the war-efforts on the side of the Allies. More than 6,000 Sikkimese joined the armed forces. The then Heir Apparent, Paljor Namgyal took a Commission in the Air Force and was killed in active service in 1941. Sikkimese distinguished themselves by winning a V.C., and M.C. and bar besides many other decorations for valour.

Even when the War was not over, His Highness had plans for development of the country (1944-1945). In 1944 was born the Sikkim Nationalised Transport; and this venture today constitutes the largest single source of revenue. A Development Plan drawn up in 1945 could not be put into effect for lack of funds. Negotiations were taken in hand with India since 1947. In 1952, His Excellency Jawaharlal Nehru visited Sikkim. His Highness had concluding talks and the Prime Minister of India agreed to provide necessary loans, which were later given as aid. The two successive Plans 1954 and 1961, and the financial implications as well as many items of administration are described in the brochure *Sikkim – Facts & Figures* published simultaneously.

While the delay of the socio-economic reforms during the War created some natural resentment among the people, the implementation of reforms at the conclusion of the War annoyed some interests. Formation of political parties followed. The newly born Sikkim State Congress agitated for (i) the abolition of landlordism which *de facto* was already being achieved except in name and their income for the Estates (ii) full responsible government and (iii) accession to India. His Highness had enlarged the State Council, hitherto composed of only landlords and some government officials with members of the public in 1947. Three Congress members nominated by the Congress and representing Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepalese were appointed Secretaries to the Government in keeping with the then (1948) Congress policy. But these members were expelled from the Party several month later due to differences and had to resign. The State Congress demand for accession to India led to the creation of Sikkim National Party opposing accession but desiring a Treaty relationship. The final persuasion of the landlords to formally give up their status in spring 1949 failed and anticipating their immediate formal abolition, which would end their financial interests, a number of them joined the Congress. A demonstration was called on 29 April 1949 by the Congress on the plea that the then West Bengal Governor was going to announce the acceptance of the threefold

Congress demand. The Political Officer mediated between the Darbar and the Congress and a Ministry was formed under the Congress on 1 May 1949. Due to their lack of experience and unconstitutional action His Highness dissolved the Ministry with a request to Government of India for a Dewan. Meanwhile, the administration was taken over by the Political Officer until the arrival of the Dewan in August 1949. Measures for direct collection of tax were introduced. Bethi was abolished and House Tax reduced in 1949, which was later totally remitted in 1950. The Indo-Sikkim Treaty negotiations started in 1949 and ended with the signing of a Treaty governing the relation between Sikkim and India in December 1950. Village Panchayats were to be elected but as no safeguards were given to the indigenous population, the election was boycotted by the Sikkim National Party and resulted in only a handful of Panchayats functioning. Negotiations with the two political parties viz. Sikkim State Congress and Sikkim National Party were conducted for an elected State Council. An All Party Agreement was reached in May 1951, agreeing that the Council should number 17, reserving 6 seats for Bhutia-Lepcha, 6 seats for Nepalese and 5 seats to be nominated by His Highness at his discretion, which was followed by an All Party Agreement regarding the electorate and method of election in January 1952. Based on this Agreement a Proclamation defining the constitution and functions of the State Council was issued on 23 March 1953 under which a Council was elected and Executive Council formed to govern Sikkim. This Constitution was modified in 1958 after the then Dewan had obtained the agreement of all parties and a proclamation embodying the Agreement was issued on 16 March 1958. The Constitution at present stands as such.

Sikkim joined the 2,500 Buddha Jayanti Celebrations of India and received the largest number of Tibetan pilgrims en route to India. The pilgrimage was led by His Holiness the Dalai Lama the incarnate of Chenrezig (Avalokitesvara). On his return journey His Holiness was pleased to spend a few weeks in this land sanctified by the presence of Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava). His Holiness resided in the Palace Cathedral and gave special sermons and blessings to the thousands who came for audience.

The Indo-Sikkim Treaty of 1950 concluded in a climate of goodwill has opened a new chapter of collaboration in material and cultural spheres. Understanding and friendship with India has steadily been growing not only between the heads of States but also between the peoples as also further afield.

His eventful rule and busy administration did not however prevent the Chogyal from cultivation of letters and arts, a taste inherited from a gifted mother. Scholars from all the world, scholars engaged in

Buddhist studies as well as scholars engaged in exploring nature's bounty in Sikkim had enjoyed his ready patronage. Himself a devout follower of the Mahayana Nyingma tradition, the Chogyal never suffered bigotry or intolerance in the administrative or academic fields. His patronage to the Gyalsey Rinpoche's project for study of Buddhism in its totality made possible the establishment of Namgyal Institute of Tibetology. In his private leisure hours, which were not many after prayers and meditations, the Chogyal devoted himself to paintings of landscapes and had developed a style of his own. This stood for realistic representation of the Himalayas focused to a mystic symbolism.

Chogyal Tashi Namgyal died on 2nd December 1963, and 50 years of a great and glorious reign came to an end.

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Chogyal Tashi Namgyal and Gyalmo Kunzang Dechen Tshomo Namgyal, 1926. Clockwise from right: (Seated on Gyalmo's lap) Sem Pema Choki (b.1925), Sem Pema Tsedeun (b.1924), Gyalsey Kunzang Paljor Namgyal (b.1921) and Sey Palden Thondup Namgyal (b.1923).

CHOGYAL PALDEN THONDUP NAMGYAL



The Twelfth Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal (1923-1982)

Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal, Twelfth Consecrated Ruler of Sikkim, Incarnate of Chogyal Sidkeong and Re-Incarnate of the famous Karmapa Lama of Kham, was born at Gangtok on the Twenty Second of May, 1923. The Denjong Chogyal is the second son of the late illustrious Chogyal Sir Tashi Namgyal, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E.; who will always be remembered as Sikkim's gracious, enlightened and benevolent ruler.

The Chogyal of Sikkim entered Saint Joseph's Convent, Kalimpong, at the age of six but had to discontinue his studies because of severe attacks of malaria. He studied for the monkhood from 1931-1934 under his uncle, Lhatsun Rinpoche, at which time he was recognized as the spiritual leader of Phodong and Rumtek Monasteries in succession to Chogyal Sidkeong.

In 1935, he continued his studies at Saint Joseph's College, Darjeeling, and completed his studies at Bishop Cotton School, Simla, in 1941. Plans and preparations had been made for his advanced

science studies at Cambridge University, England, but the plan could not be approved because of the untimely demise of Prince Paljor, The Heir Apparent, who was then serving as an officer in the Royal Indian Air Force.

As The Heir Apparent, Gyalsey Palden Thondup Namgyal undertook the Indian Civil Service Training Course at Dehra Dun in 1942 and thereafter returned to his country to take on the task of administering to the needs of his people. In this work he was ably assisted by Athing Tashi Dahdul Densapa of Barmiok. In a short while the young prince had become The Chogyal's principal adviser in judicial and executive matters and in 1944 he was selected as the President of Sikkim's State Council, an office he held until 1949.

Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal has always been keenly alive to the special needs of his people and country; and as Heir Apparent had exercised direct personal supervision over various Departments of the Government of Sikkim. He was his father's Adviser on External Affairs and led the Sikkim Team which negotiated the Treaty with India in 1949-1950.

The Chogyal is connected with a number of cultural and academic bodies in Sikkim, India and abroad. He had been the President of the Mahabodhi Society of India since 1953 and he led the Sikkim Delegation to the Sixth Buddhist Council that was held in Burma in 1954. He participated in the 2,500 Buddha Jayanti Celebrations in India in 1956, and was the only member of the Working Committee who was not a Government of India Member. In March 1959, he attended the 2,500 Buddha Jayanti Conference in Japan and represented Sikkim at the Sixth World Fellowship of Buddhists Conference in Cambodia in 1961. In 1958, under the patronage of the late Chogyal Sir Tashi Namgyal, he set up a centre for Mahayana and Tibetan studies at Gangtok; and this world-famous centre bears the name of 'Namgyal Institute of Tibetology'.

In 1959, he headed the Sikkim Delegation to the World Anti-Tuberculosis Conference at Istanbul and in 1960, he was the alternate leader of the India delegation at the 25th International Congress of Orientalists at Moscow.

He is a founder-member of and Sikkim representative to the Mountaineering Institute, Darjeeling, and was the Chairman of the Sikkim Mining Corporation. He is President of the Sikkim Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen's Board.

In August 1950, he married Sangey Deki, daughter of Yapshi Samdu Phodrang of Tibet. Sangey Deki died in June 1957. In March 1963, he married Miss Hope Cooke, grand-daughter and ward of Mr. and Mrs. Winchester Noyes of the United State of America. The

Chogyal has three sons and one daughter; Prince Tenzing, Prince Wangchuk, Prince Palden and Princess Yangchen.⁷

Among the honours and distinctions, The Chogyal holds are: Order of the British Empire (1947); Padma Vibushan, India (1954); Commandeur de l'Ordre de l'Étoile Noire [Order of the Black Star], France (1956).

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A 1972 portrait of Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal with his three children from his first consort—Crown Prince Tenzing, Prince Wangchuk and Princess Yangchen—together with his second consort Gyalmo Hope Cooke, their son Prince Palden Gyurmed Namgyal and daughter Princess Hope Leezum Namgyal

⁷ [A second daughter, Hope Leezum, was born in 1968.]

