

## Tibetan Trade in Pre-Colonial Northeast India

Pinkey Kumari Yadav

*Research Scholar of History North Eastern Hill University, Meghalaya*

Dr. Amrendra Kumar Thakur

*Professor of History North Eastern Hill University, Meghalaya*

**Abstract:** *Tibet played a significant role in the trade practices of Southeast Asia in general and northeast India in particular before the British intervention in the late eighteenth century. The Tibetan trade practices comprised of economic exchange of goods and were influenced by Buddhism as religion, culture, Buddhist institutions, and politics in the region. Since Buddhism was an organized religion, the trade practices were part and parcel of their activities. The locations of the existing monasteries would suggest their linkage with the trans-Himalayan trade. Due to their monastic affiliation, with Tibet, monks had far-reaching networks, facilitating trade across borders. Extending the research on similar lines, the present paper attempts to take a fresh look at the Tibetan trade practices in northeast India and beyond. For this paper data have been collected mainly from Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh and pre-colonial focuses on the developments from the sixteenth century to the coming up of British in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.*

**Keywords:** Tibet, Buddhism, Trade, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh

Several researchers have studied the inter-connections among various aspects of state, society, and trade in pre-colonial northeast India. They have also paid critical attention to economic and cultural contacts that existed among the tribes in the region the problems of transition between the pre-colonial and colonial periods and the resultant break in trade practices during the colonial period.<sup>1</sup> However, not much attention has been paid to exploring the relationships between Tibetan Buddhist institutions and the trade practices in pre-colonial Northeast India. Hence, this paper tries to fill the gap in the existing historiography of pre-colonial northeast India. The close relationship between Buddhism and trade is a well-established fact. Trade routes and urban settlements were closely connected with the spread of Buddhist institutions. During the early three centuries A.D., the distribution of urban centres and monastic sites reveal the interrelation between the development of urban centres and the spread of Buddhism

indifferent constituencies.<sup>2</sup> The Indian northeastern states occupy an important niche in the history and culture of India. Like the western frontiers of India, through which India was linked with western and central Asia, the eastern frontier touching Tibet, China, and Southeast Asia has performed a crucial function in determining India's historical shape and trajectory. Through these routes, men, materials, and ideas entered since pre-historic times, and this process gave rise to the various ethnic groups and cultures.<sup>3</sup> Among the religious cultures of northeast India, Buddhism has played a unique role, which is well reflected in its cultures. It is in this background that this paper describes the unexplored relationship between the Tibetan Buddhist institutions and trading practices of the people of pre-colonial northeast India and how the two helped each other to develop. Thus, this paper will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the history, culture, and economy of pre-colonial northeast India.

The paper comprises three parts. The first part of the paper discusses the theoretical aspect of locating Buddhist institutions and trade. The second part discusses the role of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhist institutions in trading and other economic activities with the people of northeast India. It also elaborates upon the trade routes and commodities. The third part is in the form of a conclusion.

#### **Locating Buddhist Institutions and Trade**

The interaction between Buddhism and trade has been a subject of interest for scholars. Romila Thapar, while reviewing the contribution of D. D. Kosambi to the history of early India has opined that it was Kosambi who first established the relationship between Buddhism and trade.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, several other scholars both in India and abroad have identified this link through their studies. Tansen Sen, a historian, explores the role of Buddhism in shaping diplomatic and trade interactions including the spread of art forms, literary genres, ritual items, geographical knowledge, technologies, and scientific ideas. It also included the transformation of the cultural, political, and social lives of the people.<sup>5</sup> Concerning the Himalayan and Tibetan cultural regions, Matthew T. Kapstein, dealing with the assimilation of cultures in Tibetan Buddhism, has highlighted the three factors—religion, polity, and trade that contributed to the development of a composite mechanism which contributed to the development of Tibetan influence. The cultural, economic, and political developments in Tibet emerged in the form of various centres. The city of Lhasa is considered the politico-cultural centre in Tibet, the largest as well as the oldest city of Tibet, was set up in about AD 400 by King Srong-tsan-Gampo. Lhasa, which was the centre of the Tibetan Buddhist world and the most important centre of pilgrimage also received tributes from Ladakh, Sikkim, Bhutan, and many smaller Kingdoms which connected central Tibet to the regional trade circuits in Asia. The situatedness of central Tibet between significant civilizations and

ecological and trade zones made it an eminently suitable transit corridor for movement at a time when railways and cheap transport by sea couldn't be used for these purposes. Trade was not an everyday necessity but was more or less a luxury practice, with commodities of low weight for value like musk, rhubarb, gold, and precious stones being the most important. Musk was a natural perfume extracted from the locally found muskdeer. From olden times, musk had made Asian and even European long-distance travellers think about trade with Tibet seriously.<sup>6</sup> Medieval Arab sources mentioned it in connection with Tibet. Marco Polo too, knew of it, as did William Finch, an early seventeenth-century merchant. Finch detailed the importance of Tibet in his report (1611).<sup>7</sup> We get to know from the French traveller Tavernier that musk from Tibet was sold at Patna as early as 1692. Additionally, Bogle makes mention of it as one of the important commodities alongside gold dust. Bogle goes on to suggest that the Tibetans paid for their imports from Bengal with the money they received from selling musk. In fact, over the centuries, musk has persisted as a very lucrative business and has even attracted agents from European firms to the Tibetan border areas. Onwards from the 1850s, markets for musk developed in Lichiang, Tachienlu, Sining, and Darjeeling. This entailed that parts of the commodity began to be offered to be in transit from Lhasa.<sup>8</sup> *Melong* (the Tibet Mirror, one of the very first Tibetan language newspapers, which was based in Kalimpong and published from 1925 to 1963), illustrates the scope of the newspaper's reach across the Himalayas. This was the only Tibetan newspaper published in India and read by monks, officials, and leading traders from Tibet, Sikkim, Bhutan, Darjeeling, Northeast India, Kashmir, Ladakh, Almora, Kulu, Himachal Pradesh, Garhwal, and Nepal. Its wide distribution followed paths of trade linking Tibet and other districts far across the Himalayan range. Traders played a key role in both the distribution and consumption of the newspaper, and each issue had tables listing the fluctuating prices of trading goods and services, such as wool, black and white yak tails, red panda hides, pig hair bristles for brushes, gold, white sugar, musk, and mule caravan transport costs. Several Tibetan monasteries were consciously engaged in the organisation of trading caravans and other trade practices. So, for example, even a minor rank-holding monk from a small branch monastery may have served as a guard or a muleteer for a caravan bound for Lhasa. Or, he may have been made to enter India from Tibet to establish a caravanserai which not only generated income for the mother monastery but also functioned as a space of relaxation for the caravaners who traversed the said route. People from the outlying areas travelled through to the centre of Lhasa on account of pilgrimage activities and trade works. Along Tibet's southern boundaries, including Bhutan, Sikkim, northern India, and Arunachal Pradesh, the involvement of common folks in the affairs took other forms too. The monastery, however, remained the focal point. From the monasteries, all routes took the traveller to Lhasa. Consequently, the Tibet orientation has

evolved and been enhanced to signify something or someone beyond the necessary religious sphere in Lhasa and surrounding areas.<sup>9</sup>

### Trading Practices

The earliest reference to commercial relations between India and China through the Assam–Burma routes is found in the accounts of Changkien (200 BC).<sup>10</sup> *Arthashastra* of Kautilya shows commercial contacts between the Northeast and other parts of India, along with China.<sup>11</sup> Assam had been maintaining its trade contact with Tibet and Bhutan too. There were direct trade routes, through the mountain passes of the north, with Tibet and Nepal, extending up to the borders of Kashmir.<sup>12</sup> *Tabaqat-i-Nasir* numbers the number of passes between Assam and Tibet at thirty-five. It also suggests that it is through these passes that horses were brought to the Kamarupa kingdom.<sup>13</sup> The people in the hills and plains of Assam, especially those along the northern border, maintained a rather stable and continuous trade contact with Tibet. There were many mountain passes between Bhutan and Tibet. The Tibetan traders entered the lower lands through various routes that opened on the *duwars* or gateways (connecting the foothills and the hills) like Bijni and Chapaguri in the present Kamrupa district and Borigumma in the Darrang.<sup>14</sup> The Bhutias used to travel through the Valley of Manas River via Tasgong and Dewangiri to Hajo, where a fair was usually held. The name Suvarnakudya is mentioned in *Arthashastra* as a place where fine silk cloths were produced. The place is identified by scholars as Hajo in the district of Kamarupa.

Monks and traders from Tibet frequently passed through the trade route which crisscrossed the Mooraug, Benaras, Sikkim, Kashmir, Nepal, Assam and Bhutan.<sup>15</sup> Even as it became unbearably cold during the winters in the Himalayas, the winters were easily the best season as far as caravan trade was concerned. It hardly ever rained during this time and the riverbeds were dry so that the caravans moved along these beds very comfortably. This significantly reduced their fatalities and effort. Food was easily found on the way, and it was pretty cheap—wheat, barley, wine, and meat were available in an abundant fashion. Winters were also the time when there weren't any significant farmwork-related activities. As a result, farmers had enough time to not only sell their crops but also to opt for subsidiary and temporary livelihoods. Tibetan farmers, for instance, proceeded to the northern parts of the region to lay in their stock of salt. The salt was obtained from the several lakes that were found there. As has been stated,

“Then these men start for Bhutan, Nepal, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh to sell their goods in those places. Despite snow and frost on the route, therefore, ‘winter was the best season to travel to Lhasa’ for trade. The average caravans were led, human beings apart, by a host of animals like mules, ponies, horses, yaks, sheep, etc,

who could negotiate the narrow-rugged paths in mountains".<sup>16</sup>

These movements were of course driven by practical concerns and were seasonal. Herds of yaks, goats, and other cattle were brought down to the plains in winter and returned in spring. Trader pilgrims and monks followed similar rhythms of movement between hills and plains, based on their commercial and ritual calendars.

In the context of the present study, what makes a discussion of pilgrimage so crucial is its very proximal relationship with economic activities, especially trade. It is of course not possible for us to tell whether pilgrimage generated trade or whether trade gave rise to pilgrimage, but it cannot be refuted that the large numbers of pilgrims from Lhasa and some other centres contributed to the development of a chain of international exchange. Regional centres of pilgrimage however were not left too far behind as they drew numerous bands of worshippers. Detailed, step-by-step descriptions of possible pilgrim itineraries around sacred mountains and lakes were available. Pilgrims travelled to Lhasa, Ladakh, the Himalayan border districts of India, the kingdoms of Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Ngari, and Arunachal Pradesh. On account of its diversity and its sheer geographical range, the above-described pilgrim chain resembles the now easily identifiable network of towns and routes.<sup>17</sup> Thus, pilgrimage centres, along with trade centres, were developing rapidly in the pre-colonial Himalayan region.<sup>18</sup>

The Monpa and Sherdukpen, the Buddhist communities of Arunachal Pradesh, also regard Shingri (Dhekiajuli of Assam) as their pilgrimage centre along with Hajo. Hajo, at a distance of twenty km from Guwahati on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, is one of the pilgrim centres of Assam. It is also usually visited by Buddhists from Bhutan and Tibet. The sanctity accorded to Hajo becomes evident from the fact that the first monastery in Tibet was built with clods of earth collected from Hajo.<sup>19</sup> Thus, pilgrimage centres, along with trade centres, were developing rapidly in the pre-colonial period in Northeast India. The significant trade between Assam and Tibet through Arunachal Pradesh and the concurrent rise of Buddhism has received considerable scholarly attention.<sup>20</sup> The commercial involvement of Tibetans in the region was very significant, it went to the extent of monasteries motivating exchange through political strategy.<sup>21</sup> The involvement was key to the founding of newly established centres, the organisation of commercially determined fairs, and even to the formation of the state. In the states of Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, the monastic *lamas* discharged special political functions beginning from the consecration of a king to even fighting wars. In the second place, they were also linked with the administrative headquarters.<sup>22</sup> The link was political, and it aligned with the kinship of the royals with Tibetan nobility and the religion-shaped concordance between Sikkim and Tibet monasteries. All of them had a common Buddhist heritage which facilitated the nature, volume, and

quality of trade.<sup>23</sup>

The Monpa and the Sherdukpen of Arunachal Pradesh performed significant intermediary functions in the trade between Tibet and Assam. They travelled to trading marts in Tibet during the summers and explored the Assamese plains during the winter season. The products such as peaches, handmade paper, chillies, and vegetable dyes, like madder and husked rice, were traded for Tibetan *churpi* (frozen milk cake), wool, and salt. The Monpa traded items such as animal hide, masks, and chillies. These were exchanged with Tibetan wool, woollen clothes, rock salt, and *dao* (iron axe or hatchet). Besides these, local products such as red dye, tobacco, madder, and herbs were carried to Tibet in exchange for symbols, religious bells, and white beads and shells. Even the Sherdukpens are well-regarded for conducting trade with the peoples of Assam and among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh.<sup>24</sup> Their annual migration to Doimara, aimed to escape from the cold climate of their areas of inhabitation in the region, also helped them trade in the Assamese plains. They used to take their cattle, poultry, *jabrang* (local pepper), *daos*, and woven bags to Doimara in search of business. They purchased salt, rice, beads, Assamese *endi* clothes, bangles and metal utensils. Locally, among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, the Sherdukpen used to exchange Assamese *endi* clothes, *mithuns*, cows, and animal skins with the Monpa. The exchange yielded coats, shoes, carpets, butter, masks, blankets, and yak caps. The Sherdukpen also exchanged clothes, salt, and betel nuts with the Khowas for different indigenous goods.

Trade between Assam and Tibet was conducted not only through the tribes inhabiting the frontiers but also there was some direct contact and trade between the two regions. In 1837, J. M. Cosh reported that "during the flourishing period of the Assam dynasty, we [the author and his interpreters] are informed, that the kings of Assam were in the habit of sending presents to Grand Lama and that a caravan consisting of about twenty people annually resorted from Lassa to the Assam frontier; and transacted merchandise to a very considerable amount with the Assamese". The Tibetans were dwelling in a space called Chouna (Tsona). It took about two months to get there from Lassa (Lhasa). The Assamese, in a similar way, resided at Geganshur, which was located at a distance of a few miles. The trade at Lhasa was constituted by a large quantity of rock salt and silver. The silver and the rock salt were exchanged with the Assamese for silk, lac, rice, and other products from Bengal.

The people, especially of the central and western zones, living in the high ridges (the Memba, Khamba, and Monpa of Mago–Thingbu areas) had a very meagre scope for cultivation. Therefore, trade was their principal occupation, and it helped maintain symbiosis with the economy of their neighbouring communities. Here, their geographical and cultural proximity to Tibet proved to be very important. There was trade between Tibet and the village of Shyoin the Tawang district in the pre-colonial and also post-colonial periods. It is important to mention that trade was very popular

among not only the people of high mountainous regions but also those at the foothills. The discovery (fortunate but unexpected) of about 250 silver coins of different sizes, belonging most probably to the rulers of the Shah dynasty of Bengal (official report not yet published), in a ruined fort complex (Bhalukpong) at the foothills of western Arunachal Pradesh, gives important insights into the study of the economic history of the region.<sup>25</sup> Most probably, the fort served as the central place of contact between traders of Bengal and Assam, on the one hand, and those of Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet, on the other. It also influenced Sikkim. Hence, a brief description of Sikkim is provided below to analyse the same in northeast India.

Understood in geographical and political terms, Sikkim is situated directly on the inland trade route between Tibet and India. Noticeably, European travellers' reports composed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries provide very forceful suggestions about the British obsession to establish open trade pathways and build roads between India and Tibet via Darjeeling and Sikkim.<sup>26</sup> Trade was another reason for the migration of Tibetans towards Sikkim. A.C. Sinha has indicated that the traders in Tibet, agriculturists, and lamas were looking for new areas to colonise in time much before the fifteenth century. Sikkim at that time was very sparsely populated by the Lepchas and the Limbus. The grazers from Tibet and the lamas undertaking missionary work were perhaps the earliest groups to immigrate to Sikkim as they looked for newer pastures and also for those people who may have been willing to consider conversion. Looking for those with whom they could barter or exchange their goods, traders followed the grazers and the lamas. Finally, the Tibetan peasants arrived on the scene and they were looking for rich rice fields, *Denzong*, the valley of rice.<sup>27</sup> For centuries Tibet had been the source of the Tibetan salt trade and was the source of rock salt for all the neighbouring areas constituted by the upper Himalayan regions of India such as Nepal, Bhutan, and Sikkim. Not only salt but also gold dust, musk, wool, pashmina, borax, salt, and sheep (meat) were among many highly desired goods and products that constituted the very energetic and thriving trade across the boundaries with Tibet as the prime mover.<sup>28</sup>

Trade between Sikkim and Tibet was conducted mainly through the mountain passes colloquially called *La*.<sup>29</sup> From Sikkim's easily traversed passes, which give access to the Chumbi valley, the comparatively low (15,200 ft) and gently graded approaches of the Nathula (Nathu la Pass) lead directly to the core region of Tibet around Lhasa. The country occupies a commanding position over the historic Kalimpong-Lhasa trade route.<sup>30</sup> Alongside the fabled Nathu-la (*Gnatui*) and the Jelep-la passes, there exist more than twelve other passes (such as Lachen, Lachung, Cho-la, Donkia, Yak-la, Thanka-la, and others) that connect Sikkim with Tibet. Small-scale trade was regularly conducted through these passes. Apart from the objects and products that circulated, these trade routes also became the media

through which cultural and ideological expressions from intellectuals and scholars found their way to others. Sometimes, these men of contemplation travelled with the men of action i.e., the traders. Many British travellers in the nineteenth and the twentieth century have documented the trade through Sikkim. The most comprehensive analysis of this trade was given by Archibald Campbell, Colman Macaulay, and J. Ware Edgar. In *Mission to Sikkim and the Tibetan Frontier*, Colman Macaulay reports that the local inhabitants of the Lachung Valley in North Sikkim often travelled through the Lachen route as the Donkia pass. However, there were impediments sometimes as the pass became impeded during different seasons of the year. Macaulay states that the people usually went to Tibet every six months. They carried timber, *tchen* (*Pahariamanjit*, a creeper which yields red dye), and a little bit of cinnamon to Shigatse and Gyantse. Macaulay also underlines that baskets of *tchen* were made up of loads because they were sold at five rupees per load. The traders collected tea, salt, wool, blankets, pottery, sheep, and goats in return. Some of them took the sheep and wool directly to Darjeeling from Gyantse by Phari and then Jelep-la. The process resulted in getting copper vessels, raw Assam silk, and tobacco in return to Lachung. Other traders went from Lachung to Gangtok carrying Tibetan salt. The salt was sold to people as far as Garh and Limgmoo. In return, they collected Indian corn, *murwa* (fermented local beverage), and rice.<sup>31</sup> The same traffic continued between subjects of the Nyingmapa lineage that governed Sikkim. John Ware Edgar, on a visit to eastern Sikkim to negotiate duty-free markets for British manufactures there, noticed that there was not a day that he did not see people 'either coming from or on their way to, Darjeeling with goods, the value of which at first sight seemed quite disproportioned to the labour that had to be undergone in taking them to market'.<sup>32</sup>

The indigenous tribal communities of Lepcha's and the Bhutia's were actively engaged in this trade. They had good contact with the Tibetans, exchanging grains, cardamoms, orchids, wild honey, and butterflies for salt and other articles.<sup>33</sup> The Lepchas did not have access to or did not produce articles such as salt, metal goods, cloth, and thread. They used to offer the wood they collected from the forest as part of their end of the bargain. They collected the special wood, the red dyewood called *vying*, and took that and whatever cropsurplus that they enjoyed up to the borders with Tibet. From the salt that was collected, some were taken to Darjeeling and exchanged for thread and cloth. Possibly some Lepchas ventured to Tibet in search of salt. Going to Tibet for salt was the theme of many folklore that were popular with the Lepchas.<sup>34</sup>

Northern Sikkim commences at Dikchu in the middle Tista Valley and includes Dzongu (the Lepcha reserve). Northern Sikkim thus comprises about a third of the territory of Sikkim, but the two northern communities (Bhutia's) of Lachen and Lachung<sup>35</sup> performed a very significant function in the entrepot trade. The people of these highland communities frequented this vast territory for trade. Up to 1959 movement in the neighbouring areas

of Tibet was also unrestricted. Before the winter snowfall, they moved their yaks and sheep to safe pastures and came and went freely to such trade marts as Yatung in the Chumbi valley, Gyantse, Shekhar *dzong* and Tingkye *dzong* in Tibet. This free movement made it possible for them to pursue their traditional occupations of trade and animal husbandry. The herders traded wool, Yak tails, butter, cheese, precious stones, horses, dogs, leather and hide, and other light but precious commodities. In terms of traditional beliefs and structures, every Bhutia—inclusive of the monks—enjoyed the right to trade. They were naturally oriented north to Tibet. Tibet was an important place to visit for them for reasons of pilgrimage, trading, and even forming marital bonds. The trans-border trade was very significant for them. During the summer months, they entered Tibet with textiles and a rather limited variety of 'consumer goods' for which there was a ready market in Tibet. They returned with borax, wool, and salt. Many of them had well-established trading partners and, during the time that the border was closed, twenty-seven Lachenpa and twenty-eight Lachungpa traders lost their Tibetan trading investments.<sup>36</sup> These economic and trading relations among the Bhutias and the Lepchas on the one side of the border and the Tibetans on the other were premised on shared trust and amity. A formal relationship ordained with favourable religious sanction was founded so that continuous trade and provision of hospitality and protection in an alien land were ensured. The relationship and the parties who entered into it were called *ingzong* in Lepcha and *thokoo* in Bhutia which means 'like a younger brother'.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, based on the above discussion, it can be said that extensive and efficient trading ties existed between northeast India and Tibet in the pre-colonial period. These ties were marked by exchanges of various commodities and items, including food, clothing, handmade paper, salt, colours and dyes, and livestock. The colonial British power rather rudely interrupted these trading linkages through its profit-making activities. Tibetan monks and monasteries in Tibet have always been involved in trade and often pilgrimage and trade were part and parcel. Due to their monastic affiliation, monks could have far-reaching networks, facilitating trade across the borders. Giuseppe Tucci has rightly argued that monasteries emphasised traveller networks, regional trade routes, and pilgrim itineraries. This made the usual and everyday monastic establishments the basic building blocks of regional organisation in Tibet.<sup>38</sup> In overall terms, the monasteries—especially the larger ones which appeared like self-contained towns in themselves—were the most significant structural features around which regionality in Tibet evolved. The study of the geo-political history of monasteries and monastic institutions in Tibetan Buddhism thus reveals it to have been a solid feature in the administration of Buddhist 'states' like Sikkim, Bhutan, and Arunachal Pradesh.

**Notes and References (End Notes)**

- 1 Amrendra Kumar Thakur, 'State, Society, and Trade: Issues in the Historiography of Northeast India', *Proceedings of North East India History Association*, 35th Session, 2014, pp. 12–25; Amrendra Kumar Thakur, *Pre-Colonial Arunachal Pradesh: Society, Technology and Trade*, Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi, 2016.
- 2 For details, see James Heitzman, 'Early Buddhism, Trade and Empire', in Kenneth Kennedy and Gregory Possehl (ed.), *Studies in Archaeology and Palaeoanthropology of South Asia*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1984, p.121; David Christian, 'Silk Roads or Steppe Roads? The Silk Roads in World History', *Journal of World History*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2000, pp. 1-26
- 3 Babhador Khongdup and A.K. Thakur, 'Buddhism and Trade in the Eastern Himalayas: Some Aspects', *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Vol. 14, No 1, 2023, p.2; Bobby Das and Amrendra Kumar Thakur, 'Buddhist Centres of Early Assam Along Trade Routes: A Preliminary Probe', in Mitali Baruah and Jyotima Phukon (eds.), *Mosaic (A Collection of Research Articles)*, 2014, Dibrugarh, pp. 303-313
- 4 Romila Thapar, 'Early Indian History and the Legacy of D. D. Kosambi', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 43, No. 30 (Jul. 26 - Aug. 1, 2008), pp. 43-51
- 5 For details, see Tansen Sen (ed.), *Buddhism Across Asia: Networks of Material, Intellectual and Cultural Exchange*, Vol. I, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2014, p. 12; Tina Harris, 'Trans-Himalayan Trade', in Jelle J.P. Wouters and Tanka B. Subba (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to North East India*, Routledge, London, 2023, p. 75 and Jason Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks: Mobility and Exchange within the beyond the Northwestern Borderlands of South Asia*, Brill, Leiden, 2011, p. 183
- 6 Wim van Spengen, 'The Geo-History of Long-Distance Trade in Tibet 1850-1950', *The Tibet Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 2, Dharmasala, pp. 44-47
- 7 Sven Hedin, *Southern Tibet: Discoveries in Former Times Compared with my Own Researches in 1906-08*, (Band I-IX), Lithographic Institute of the General Staff of the Swedish Army, Stockholm, 1917-1922, pp. 50-52
- 8 C. R. Markham, *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet and of the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa*, Reprinted, Manjusri Publishing House, New Delhi, 1971, p. 119
- 9 Beatrice D. Miller, 'The Web of Tibetan Monasticism', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2, Michigan, 1961, pp. 197-203
- 10 P. C. Choudhury, *Assam-Bengal Relations*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1988, p. 272
- 11 B. N Mukherjee, *External Trade of Early North Eastern India*, Har Ananda Publication, New Delhi, 1992, p. 12
- 12 D. Sarma (ed.), *Kamrupa Sasanaoli*, Publication Board of Assam, Guwahati, 1981, p. 138
- 13 N. N. Acharya, *Historical Documents of Assam and Neighbouring States*, Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1983, p. 41
- 14 Maheshwar Neog, *Religions of the North-East*, Publication Board of Assam, Guwahati, 2008, p. 87
- 15 Indrajit Ray, and Ratna Sarkar, 'Reconstructing Nineteenth Century Trade Route between Bhutan and Assam: Evidences from British Political Missions',

- Journal of Bhutan Studies*, Vol.13, No.1, 2005, Thimphu, p. 14
- 16 Sarat Chandra Das, *Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet Bibliotheca Himalayan Series 1*, Volume 1, New Delhi (First Published 1902), pp. 85-86
  - 17 Wim van Spengen, *Tibetan Border Worlds: A Geohistorical Analysis of Trade and Traders*, Routledge, New York, 2010, p. 123
  - 18 Alastair Lamb, *British India and Tibet: 1766–1910*, Routledge, New York, 1986, p. 88
  - 19 Maheshwar Neog, *Religions of the North-East*, op.cit., pp. 36-37
  - 20 For details, see Amrendra Kumar Thakur, 'Technology-Aided Trade in Precolonial Arunachal Pradesh'. *Resarun* Vol. 36:7, 2012, p. 14; *idem*, "Polity of Pre-Colonial Arunachal Pradesh: Interactions in Trade, Culture, State and Buddhism" in S. Dutta and B. Tripathy (eds.), *Buddhism in North-East India*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 241-63 and some relevant articles in Kazuharu Mizuno and Tenpa Lobsang (ed.), *Tibetan Buddhist Culture in Arunachal Pradesh: A Study of Monpa*, Springer, Tokyo, 2015.
  - 21 Information collected by Pinkey Kumari Yadav during her field studies at Gangtok in Sikkim during January 2024.
  - 22 P. Carrasco, *Land and Polity in Tibet*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1959, p. 199
  - 23 Vibha Arora, 'Routing the Commodities of the Empire through Sikkim', *Commodities of Empire*, Working Paper No. 9, London, 2008, pp. 5-6
  - 24 M.J.Cosh, *Topography of Assam*, Bengal Military Operation Press, Calcutta, 1837, p. 66
  - 25 Information collected by Amrendra Kumar Thakur during his field works in the 1990s.
  - 26 Vibha Arora, 'Routing the Commodities of the Empire through Sikkim', op.cit., p. 3
  - 27 A. C. Sinha, 'Feudal Polity and Political Development in Sikkim', *Indian Anthropologist*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Delhi, December 1973, pp. 71-87
  - 28 Subhadra Mitra Channa, 'Trading Across Indo-Tibet Border and Its Impact on The Tribes of The Himalayan Borders', *Journal of Sociological Studies*, New Series, No. 2, Bucharest, 2019, pp. 99-110
  - 29 *La* is a Tibetan word meaning mountains pass.
  - 30 H.G Joshi (ed.), *Sikkim Past and Present*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 59-60
  - 31 Colman Macaulay, *Report of a Mission to Sikkim and Tibetan Frontier*, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1885, pp. 27-28
  - 32 Indrani Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends: Monks, Marriages, and Memories of Northeast India*, Oxford University Press, Oxford University, 2013, p. 29
  - 33 L. A Wadell, *Among the Himalayas*, Archibald Constable & Co, London, 1899, p. 45
  - 34 Geoffrey Gorrer, *The Lepchas of Sikkim*, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 2005, p. 118
  - 35 The Bhutias of Lachen and Lachung are called *Ha-Pa*. Like the people of Chumbi Valley in Tibet, they claim descent from immigrants from Ha in Bhutan and follow a mixed agro-pastoral and trade economy.
  - 36 J.S Lall and A.D Moddie (eds.), *The Himalaya: Aspects of Change*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1981, pp. 226-227
  - 37 Geoffrey Gorrer, *The Lepchas of Sikkim*, op.cit., pp. 118
  - 38 G. Tucci, *The Religions of Tibet*, Routledge, London, 1980, pp. 8-12