

PREFACE

Most of the ethnographic research of this study was done within the period from 1979 to 1981, and all accounts refer to this period. However, two short visits were paid to Kalimpong and Zongu area of north Sikkim in 1986 and 1989, respectively, to collect a few additional data and photographs.

The bibliographic references are limited to works used directly in the text. The demographic figures used in this study could not be stretched beyond 1971, as 1981 census is not fully available and there is no community wise break up of population in 1981 census. Sikkim being a native kingdom till 1975, no proper census enumeration was carried out and the present study has suffered due to that.

All local words that appear in the text are underlined. The words like Lama, Bonthing etc. begin with capital letters in confirmatory to the special status of the individual, rest of the local words begin with small letters. Each word is explained either directly in the text or within parentheses. Local words include both Lepcha and Nepali words which are used by the Lepcha.

One significant event has taken place in the hills of Darjeeling in the mean time. The Gorkhaland movement. The effect of which on the Lepcha of Darjeeling could not be assessed. The Lepcha of Sikkim remain out of this movement.

Change in the ecological and social system has not yet become definitive. I hope that my use of the works of others, and my own

observations do not misrepresent the Lepcha way of life during this time. Any errors of judgement, observation and facts must remain my responsibility.

The continuing research of anthropologists, geographers, human ecologists and others have greatly enriched our knowledge in the field of cultural ecology and social change. This dissertation has drawn on their works. I am grateful to them.

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