

**EAP281: Locating and identifying Lepcha manuscripts as a first step
towards their preservation**

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£9,346 for 7 months

Further Information

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EAP 281 PILOT PROJECT
Locating and identifying Lepcha manuscripts
as a first step towards their preservation

SURVEY OF RESULTS

1. Introduction

This pilot project was directed at the investigation of the survival of Lepcha manuscripts kept in private or institutional collections in the areas inhabited by Lepcha people. During a three-month stay from early October till late December 2009, the investigator visited Lepchas who live in and around Kalimpong, Gangtok and Darjeeling (in West Bengal and Sikkim, India) and attempted to locate collections of Lepcha manuscripts, identify the manuscripts that were located and discuss with the owners the possibility of digitizing their manuscript materials. This survey briefly describes the seven collections of Lepcha manuscripts that were located during this pilot project, altogether 155 manuscripts. The survey is accompanied by copies of digital photographs of 40 manuscripts, which may serve as preservation copies. The survey also introduces a number of other collections and discusses the viability of a future more major preservation project aimed at Lepcha manuscripts.

2. Manuscript collections

The seven collections of Lepcha manuscripts that were located during this pilot project will each be introduced briefly below, followed by a characterization of the manuscripts in the collection. Although it was not possible to collect full descriptive details for all manuscripts located during this pilot project, the description of individual manuscripts may include the following points, in the following order:

- EAP number
- English translation of the title of the text(s) found in the manuscript
- Lepcha title of the text(s) in transliteration
- Approximate dimensions of the ms in millimetres
- Number of pages
- Shape and form of the manuscript
- Remarks on paper used
- Identification of scribes and/or date of transcript
- Condition of manuscript: good, reasonable, poor
- Labels, Marginalia, Illustrations
- [Private collection or reference number]

All Lepcha manuscripts are written on paper, either machinemade paper or handmade paper (often daphne paper). A single manuscript may hold more than one Lepcha text, in other words a single manuscript volume may contain several literary or religious works. In the collections described below, four general types of manuscripts are distinguished:

- Exercise books
These are machinemade exercise books or note books and range from simple booklets of one or two quires to more ornate books with a hard cover. Often, the original cover of such notebooks is covered with fabric or paper, which is glued on the original cover.
- Oblong bookform

These are shaped like a simple handmade book, made out of one or more quires of handmade or machinemade paper. The sheets are usually folded over and stitched together. Some of these handmade manuscripts have a hard cover, but more often the cover is simple and soft.

- Concertina-style

These manuscripts are made out of long sheets of paper, which are folded up and down in equal sections, much like the central part of a harmonica. Concertina-style books are first read from top to bottom on one side, then turned and read on the other side.

- Loose sheets

These manuscripts consist of loose sheets, sometimes kept in a separate loose cover or file.

For all types of Lepcha manuscripts, the oblong or rectangular shape, a shape with greater length than breadth, is the preferred form. The texts are generally written in black, brown, browned, purple or blue ink, though sometimes a different colour of ink is used to highlight parts of sentences or text passages, especially for set religious phrases or short prayers.

In some cases the titles of texts are written on the cover of the manuscript or noted inside the manuscript. This was sometimes done by the scribe, but more often by the collector or owner. Likewise, sometimes dates or the names of either the scribe or the owner of the manuscript are noted down on the cover or in the margin. In some Lepcha manuscripts we find a *colophon* at the beginning or end of a text or manuscript volume. The colophon is typically a text passage in which the name of the scribe, the place, year, month, day and sometimes even the time of the transcript is given. If the text was not copied from another volume, but written down by a scribe whilst being narrated by someone else, this may also be mentioned in the colophon. In addition to some personal words, the colophon typically contains certain solemn phrases and prayers, and sometimes the title of the text is given. The identification of titles and scribes is challenging when time is short and when manuscripts are incomplete, hence many titles of Lepcha texts that were located during this pilot project have not yet been identified and many of the scribes of the texts remain unknown for the moment, though notes that may aid the identification of scribes and titles have been made explicit in the descriptions below.

The titles of Lepcha texts in this survey below follow the standardized titles of Lepcha texts given in Plaisier's 2003 description of Lepcha manuscripts, which also contains a description of Lepcha literature (Plaisier 2003). For a small number of newly identified titles direct translations or short descriptions have been used, which are indicated between quotes i.e. 'THE BOOK OF MÁNÍ': *máni sá cho*, 'ASTROLOGY': *yúkcho nyókbú sá cho*, 'ASTROLOGY': *kyârngâk shang sá tsu*, etc.

Below, brief comments on the condition of the manuscript are given. Dog-ears, small stains in the paper, mould, insect and worm attacks, weakening of paper, discoloration of the ink, grease stains, damp stains and water spots occur in almost all of the manuscripts and only the most conspicuous of which have been made explicit below. In this survey, the condition of the manuscripts is assessed according to a simple scale, ranging from good to reasonable to poor.

In titles and direct quotations from Lepcha, Lepcha text is transcribed according to the conventions of the Plaisier transliteration, (Plaisier 2007: 38-44). However, when Lepcha text is quoted in transcription, the transcription of the original author is maintained.

2.1 Foning Collection

The Foning Collection consists of 23 Lepcha manuscripts that belonged to the late Arthur Foning. Arthur Tenzi Rabge Foning (1913-1987) was a renowned Lepcha scholar who published the popular book *Lepcha, my vanishing tribe* (Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1987; reprinted Kalimpong: Chyu-Pandi Farm, 2003) and various other papers on Lepcha culture.

The Foning Collection is kept at Chyu-Pandi Farm, the family home of the late Arthur Foning in Mongbol Busty in Kalimpong, which is now inhabited by several of Arthur Foning's children and their families. The Foning archives also include personal letters, research notes and papers, which have not been described here. The Foning Collection is a representative collection which holds mostly well-known titles of Lepcha manuscripts, as well as a number of lesser-known astrological texts.

The manuscripts in this collection are mostly in good condition, and they are kept locked in a trunk in the main house of the farm. The manuscripts are kept in no particular order, they are not numbered and the order imposed in this survey serves for identification purposes only. The Lepcha manuscripts have been in the Foning family for several generations, some of them are signed by Rapdensing Foning, who was an uncle of the late Arthur Foning. Rapdensing Foning appears to have copied most of the manuscripts in this collection for his own purposes and has made notes to this effect in the original manuscripts.

The principal contact for this collection is Dr. Mikú Foning of Chyu-Pandi Farm in Mongbol Busty in Kalimpong. Although the 23 Lepcha manuscripts in this collection have already been digitally photographed in full during this pilot project, Dr. Mikú Foning is willing to be involved in a future project aimed at the preservation of Lepcha manuscripts.

281_FoningManuscript1

'ASTROLOGY': *ngó sá* □áhláp, *sherbá ngâk shang sá tsu*, *chotshât ngâk shang sá tsu*, *rá cen ngâk shang sá tsu* and *suknyi ngâk shang sá tsu*

187×77 mm; 24 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, one quire with separate brown paper cover, stitched; handmade paper; text in black ink; scribe Rápdenshing Foning, p. 21 ms signed in Lepcha □ár fanying rumsang mú [R. Foning Rumsangmú], further notes in black ink on cover and throughout ms give name of Rápdenshing Foning Rumsangmú from Kalimpong, i.e. on cover in Lepcha *rápdenshing farumsangmú kálenpang*, □ár. dri. □esa. fanyung, in English *R.D.S. Foning*, in Lepcha *ca ca cút*, p. 1 notes in Lepcha *sing foning*, in English *Kalimpong Darjeeling*, in Lepcha *rápdyen shing fanyung*, *rápden shing*, p. 2 notes in Lepcha *rápdenshing fanyung rumsangmú kálen pang*, in English *R.D.S. Foning*, in Lepcha □ár. dri. □esa. fonyung, p. 16 in Lepcha *ráp rápdenshing*; condition good, some rust marks from a staple; throughout ms pages are stamped with ink stamp *COPIED*, p. 12 written note in margin *Copied*.

281_FoningManuscript2

'ASTROLOGY': *sherbá ngâk shang sá tsu*, *nákpú*, *chotshât ngâk shang sá tsu*, *rá cen ngâk shang sá tsu*, *suknyi ngâk shang sá tsu*, *lombá tân ngâk shang sá tsu* and *ngó hláp sá tsu*

131×60 mm; 22 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, one quire, stitched; machinemade paper; text in black and blue ink; scribe Rápdenshing Foning, p. 20 ms signed in Lepcha *5.5.30 rápden síng fanyung rumsangmú kálenpang* [5 May 1930 Rápdensing Foning Rumsangmú, Kalimpong], cover notes give title, name of scribe and date in Lepcha *sherbá tsu ngâk shing* □an ngó hlápshing sa chó gum yang shu ma □o, *rápdensing fanyum rumsangmú kálenpang*, in English *1st May 1930*; condition good; throughout ms pages are stamped with ink stamp *COPIED*, some text fragments underlined, note on reverse cover *X N.R.*

281_FoningManuscript3

ENCOURAGEMENT OF FORTUNE: *cângbú lecot*

210×91 mm; 44 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, two quires, stitched; machinemade paper; text in black ink, notes in pencil, blue and purple ink; scribe unknown, inside front cover in pencil ms dated according to Lepcha calendar in Lepcha *cângbú lyú shet, món nám lavo glú nyóm tsha kati kakyót tháp sa* □*yák zá hlák bú chú tshât kajú sa chú tshât* [*cângbú lecot*, the hour of the dog, Wednesday, the nineteenth day of the ninth month in the year of the boar]; condition reasonable, some pages torn at edges, some water, ink and dirt stains, abrupt text ending suggests ms is incomplete; some text fragments underlined, illustrations on front cover, front cover notes in Tibetan *om mani padme hung hri*.

281_FoningManuscript4

'ASTROLOGY': *mutli dibá ngâkshang sá tsu, chotshât ngâk shang sá tsu, za khya sá tsu, dakbú sá tsu kyân, párkho sá tsu* and *lavo púmtúng sá tsu*.

191×110 mm; 93 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, consists of separate cover and several quires, stitched; handmade paper; text in black ink, faded to brown, notes in purple ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable, water, ink and dirt stains, insect attacks; orange decorations mark sentence endings in text fragments, throughout ms pages are stamped with ink stamp *COPIED*.

281_FoningManuscript5

EIGHT GODDESSES CALCULATIONS: *hlámo gyá sá tsu*

211×112 mm; 101 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, separate cover, stitched, last page glued onto cover; machinemade paper; text in black ink; scribe unknown, p. 101 ms dated in Lepcha *thón lavo tsha kati sám thák ká pe shu lyel ma* □*o, suknyi zá phúr pú sahu shotshât ká pe shu lyel ma* □*o, tarik 14-4-1925 sálká gum* [written on a Thursday, the 13th day of the 3rd month, hour of the monkey, European date 14/4/1925]; condition good, edges of paper slightly worn and torn, some dirt and water stains; decorations in pink and blue pencil notes throughout text.

281_FoningManuscript6

THE LEGEND OF CENREJÚ: *cenrejú sá námthár*

210×85 mm; 80 pages plus 7 loose pages attached; ms handmade, oblong bookform, cover wrapper made of red cloth with golden leaf print, stitched; machinemade paper; text in black ink; scribe Núrshíng Lepcha, loose page signed in Lepcha *núrshíng go nun pi tho ma, nám sá sám kati falí tháp nung ká pi mo* □*o yang shu* [written by me, Núrshíng, written on the thirteenth of the third year]; condition reasonable, some pages slightly torn and stained, ms incomplete; decorations in red and blue pencil throughout text.

281_FoningManuscript7

PARKHÓ CALCULATIONS: *parkhó sá tsu*

229×92 mm; 76 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, stitched, hard cover in with black cloth; machinemade paper with the text *Gangtok, Sikkim, The ... 19 ...* and *D.O. No. ...* printed on some of the pages; text in black and blue ink; scribe Núrshíng Lepcha, pp. 20, 26, 30, 35 ms signed Núrshíng Lepcha; condition good, ink and water stains, traces of mould; decorations in black ink, red and blue pencil throughout text.

281_FoningManuscript8

THE STORY OF LORD TASHE: *tashe sung* (pp. 1-229)

THE LEGEND OF GÚRÚ CHO-ÓNG: *gúrú cho-óng* (pp. 232-316)

165-170×215-225 mm; 316 pages; exercise book, hard cover wrapped in black cloth; machinemade paper; black and purple ink; scribe unknown, p. 3 ms dated 1892, p. 211 colophon in Lepcha; condition reasonable to poor, dirt and ink stains, pages torn at edges, loose pages, possibly incomplete; pp. 210, 214 and 230-231 marginal notes and small illustrations in pencil, throughout ms marginal notes in pencil, blue and red ink.

281_FoningManuscript9

'THE BOOK OF MÁNI': *máni sá cho* (pp. 1-31)

'ASTROLOGY': *yúkcho nyókbú sá cho* (pp. 33-53)

THE LEGEND OF THE ANTS: *tukfyíl sá námthár* (pp. 55- 80)

PRAYERS TO THE CHÖRTEN: *chotyen munlóm* (pp. 82- 141)

FUNERAL CALCULATIONS: *líkbá sá tsu* (pp. 142-150)

291×85 mm; 151 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, cover wrapped in brown cloth, stitched; machinemade paper; black and red ink; scribe Núrshíng Lepcha, p. 31 and p. 141 ms signed Núrshíng Lepcha; condition good, few pages torn, some dirt, water and ink stains, slight traces of mould; p. 82 illustration of three chörtens in colour, decorations in black ink, pink and blue pencil throughout ms.

281_FoningManuscript10

'ASTROLOGY': *tsu*

125×98 mm; 23 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, one quire, no cover, stitched; handmade paper; black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition poor, ms incomplete, dirt, water and ink stains, insect attacks, some pages damaged and torn.

281_Foning_Manuscript11

LÂZÓNG, BOOK ON THE LEPCHA ALPHABET: *lâzóng*

206×107 mm; 94 pages; handmade, oblong bookform, one quire, stitched with blue cord; handmade paper; black ink; scribe N.S. Kárthák (which is possibly the same as Núrshíng Kárthák, i.e. Núrshíng Lepcha, as some mss above), p. 1 signed N.S. Kárthák 25/6/1948; condition good, some pages torn and damaged, some ink stains.

281_Foning_Manuscript12

'ASTROLOGY': *hlámo gyá sá tsu* and *parkhó sá tsu*

225×102 mm; 47 pages; handmade, oblong bookform, stitched, brown paper cover; machinemade paper; black and red ink, notes in black ink and pencil; scribe Núrshíng Lepcha, p. 41 ms signed Núrshíng Lepcha; condition reasonable, ink and water stains throughout ms; decorations in black ink and red pencil throughout ms, p. 17 note *Copied on the 15th June 1933 R. Foning*, p. 27 note *15-6-33*, pp. 1-2 notes in Nepali, p. 47 notes in Tibetan.

281_Foning_Manuscript13

THE LEGEND OF THE GODDESS NÁNGSE: *rummít nángse sá námthár*

283×100 mm; 230 pages plus one loose page attached; ms handmade, oblong bookform, three quires and cover, of beige cloth stitched; machinemade paper; black, blue, purple and red ink; scribe Núrshíng Lepcha, p. 225 ms signed Núrshíng Lepcha, in Lepcha *núrshíng róngkup go nám khá sám sa fali nóng re ká pi tho ma yang* [Núrshíng Lepcha, I completed this writing at the age of 64], p. 225 dated in Lepcha 1919, p. 225 in Lepcha *róng nám luk nám* □*yít lavo tshu kati kakyók tháp zo pá sung tshóng pi tho ma o* [I finished writing on Friday, the seventeenth of the tenth month of the Lepcha year of the sheep]; condition good to reasonable, mould, ink, water, dirt stains, some loose pages, possibly a few pages missing; notes mentioning the copying of this ms by Rápdenshíng Foning, p. 10 *R.F.*, p. 18 *2/10/33*, p. 77 *RDS Foning*, p. 103 *25/10/33*, p. 226 in Lepcha *botím sa róng cho pang go nun pá shúng lóm 21/5/33 tsóng chobo lyáng nun bu yu ma, hik nám blúng lavo* [I completed the copying of my eldest paternal uncle's Lepcha books, originally from Chobo, in the sixth month of the year of the Chicken, on 21/5/1933], p. 230 text in Nepali, signed by A. Singh Lepcha [Bhidus].

281_Foning_Manuscript14

'ASTROLOGY': *khyenrúng dítng ngá sá tsu kyón sá cho*

227×111 mm; 38 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, one quire and brown paper cover, stitched, small pouch of red cloth (filled with dried peas) attached to stitching as paperweight for ms; handmade paper; black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable, water, dirt and ink stains, some insect attacks; reverse cover notes in Lepcha, *rápdyenshíng fayíng rumsangmú dorjiláng* [Rápdenshíng Foning, Darjeeling], throughout ms pages stamped with ink stamp *COPIED*.

281_Foning_Manuscript15

Title unknown, possibly THE LEARNED MASTER BÍRÚTSÁNÁ: *lopân bírútsáná sá sung*

190×117 mm; 75 pages, but some pages torn; handmade, oblong bookform, no cover, one quire, stitched; handmade paper; black and purple ink; scribe and date unknown; condition poor, ms incomplete, majority of pages damaged, some pages torn, ink, water and dirt stains, traces of mould; p. 39, 41 and 43 small illustrations in ink.

281_Foning_Manuscript16

'ASTROLOGY': *kyârngâk shang sá tsu*

183×124 mm; 24 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, one quire, stitched, cover, opening and closing pages missing; handmade paper; black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable to poor, ms incomplete, pages damaged at edges and near binding, insect attacks, water, ink and dirt stains.

281_Foning_Manuscript17

'ASTROLOGY': *sherbá ngâkshang sá tsu, lóm zá ngâk shang sá cho*

208×54 mm; 27 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, one quire, stitched, cover pasted on rest of ms, cover consists of sheet of machinemade paper with printed text in Hindia and English, *Civil Process No. 24C [Old No ...] Notice to Show cause why warrant of arrest should not issue*; handmade paper; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable, ink and water stains, some insect attacks; throughout ms pages are stamped with ink stamp *COPIED*.

281_Foning_Manuscript18

THE LEGENDARY ORIGIN OF TOBACCO: *tangku námthár* (pp. 5-67)

THE STORY OF THE LEARNED MASTER BÍRÚTSÁNÁ: *lopân bîrútsáná sá sung* (pp. 68-122)

340×115 mm; 132 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, one quire and cover, stitched; handmade paper; black and red ink; scribe Tshángdo Tshering Lepcha, p. 65 ms signed Tshángdo Tshering Lepcha in Lepcha *rúmtashe thîng sa zónnyínkup tshángdo tshurîng suhu nám gonun pe shu lyel mu o* [I, Tshángdo Tshurîng, human son of Lord Tashe completed this writing in the year of the monkey], p. 92 signed and dated in Nepali and English *Chhandoo Lepcha Parbang Basty Kalimpong 1-11-24*, p. 121 signed in Lepcha *róngkup tshángdo tsharîng go nun pe shu* [written by me, Tshángdo Tshering Lepcha], p. 122 signed in Lepcha *cho áre múttuncî róngkup sahu nám tshángdo tsharîng go lyembyí kup pur vang kyangpóng bâm bá kalók nám lavo rányóm tsha kati phongo tháp sudyer suknyi sudyer chotshât ká líkka bú go do sa katánun cho áre tsúmlyel tho ma o* [I, Tshángdo Tshering, of the Lepcha year of the monkey, son of Lyembyí, in Purváng in Kalimpong, completed this book by myself on the fifteenth of the eleventh month of the year of the rat, calling out to the day and the time of the thunder]; condition good, some insect attacks, mould and water stains; some text fragments underlined.

281_Foning_Manuscript19

'WEDDING ASTROLOGY': *bri sá tsu*

324×140 mm; 76 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, cover missing, two quires, stitched; black ink, corrections in blue and red ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable, possibly incomplete, water and ink stains, some insect attacks.

281_Foning_Manuscript20

THE LEGEND OF THE GODDESS QUEEN: *rum pundi sá námthár*

338×143 mm; 170 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, four quires and brown paper cover, stitched, whole ms wrapped in loose dark green cotton scarf; handmade paper; black ink; scribe Nákphye Lepcha, p. 94 ms signed Nákphye Lepcha in Lepcha *zónnyínkup nákpnye go nun* [I, the human creature Nákphye], p. 160 ms dated 1894-1895 in Lepcha; condition reasonable, dirt and water stains and insect attacks, traces of mould; p. 49 notes in blue ink in Lepcha signed Rápdenshing Foning, pp. 165-168 different handwriting.

281_Foning_Manuscript21

THE LEGEND OF TRIMÍK KUNDEN: *trimík kundyen*

360-363×172 mm; 126 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, one quire and hard cover, stitched, cover of paper and brown cloth, cover flap wraps around ms and can be tightened with string; handmade paper; black ink, notes in blue ink; scribe Mungtem Lepcha, p. 126 ms signed Mungtem Lepcha in Lepcha *róngkup mungtem go nun*, p. 126 ms dated 1/4/1934 in Lepcha *suknyi zányimá gum, lavo thón gum, nám kajú gum, tsha kati tarak tháp gum, tárík 1-4-1934, sál gum* [the day is Sunday, the month is the third, the year is the dog, the date is the 16th, the European date is 1/4/1934]; condition reasonable to poor, many insect attacks, water, dirt and ink stains; front cover and p. 1 notes mention title, p. 3 decorated text opening.

281_Foning_Manuscript22

Title unknown, possibly:

THE STORY OF LORD TASHE: *tashe sung*

THE STORY OF PRIESTRESS NYOLIK NYOSONG: *nyolik nyosung mun sá sung*

342×215 mm; 192 pages; ms not bound, consists of loose sheets in machinemade folder; machinemade paper; black, purple and blue ink, notes in red ink; scribe Khám bú Lepcha, p. 1 notes *Kalimpong [Bong] Basti Khamboo Lapcha [...] 1894*, p. 192 notes Khambu Singh Lepcha; condition reasonable to poor, dirt stains and insect attacks, some pages torn, ms possibly incomplete and pages not in original order.

281_Foning_Manuscript23

THE STORY OF LORD TASHE: *tashe sung* (pp. 1-153)

'CELEBRATORY SONG': □ápryá vâm (pp.155-158)

WORSHIP OF EKÁDOSHI: □ekádoshi sá munlóm (pp. 158-187)

'THE STORY OF THE KING OF DEATH': *rúkáng pano sá sung* (pp. 188-225)

210×140 mm; 227 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, stapled, taped, and stitched, cover of cowskin; handmade paper; black ink, notes in red and blue ink and pencil; scribe Rápdenshíng Foning, p. 153 and p. 225 ms signed Rápdenshíng Foning, p. 13 dated 22-10-1934, p. 225 dated 1935; some marginal notes and notes inside front and reverse cover by Arthur Foning, note inside front cover gives titles, note inside reverse cover 8/6/78, □ákáp shuk sanyi or □ákom, added page numbers in red not always correct, annotations and english translations form part of text.

2.2 The Namchu Collection

The Namchu Collection is held by Óng Tshering Namchu of Mane Gombú village, 10th mile, Kalimpong, who is also the principal contact for this collection. Although 68 manuscripts were shown to the investigator, the owner mentioned that there were more manuscripts in his collection. Below, 43 of these 68 manuscripts are described, the remaining 25 manuscripts were identified as being near to identical copies of the manuscripts described below.

The Namchu Collection consists mainly of newly made copies of Lepcha texts, copied by O.T. Namchu himself, although three older Lepcha manuscripts also form part of this collection. These three older Lepcha manuscripts are listed as 281_NamchuManuscript1-3 below. The manuscripts in this collection are generally in a good condition. The owner did not show the investigator where and how he kept the manuscripts, but presumably they were stored in locked metal shelves in his house. The manuscripts are kept in no particular order, they are not numbered and the order imposed in this survey serves for identification purposes only.

Óng Tshering Namchu is a well-known literary figure in the Lepcha community of Kalimpong and apart from being active as a copyist and writer, he also performs as a traditional Lepcha religious specialist, a *bóngthíng*. For purposes related to his work as a *bóngthíng*, he has committed to paper various prayers and ritual texts that are traditionally reproduced only orally. The Namchu collection of manuscripts holds a number of these important traditional Lepcha religious works.

In principle, Óng Tshering Namchu is willing to be involved in a future major preservation project, although the investigator notes that this may well depend on the circumstances described below in section 3.

281_NamchuManuscript1

'ASTROLOGY': *párhó sá tsu, lavo munzun sá chotsu and lótnót ká lómbá ngu sóng sá plíngríl sá tsu*

280×84 mm; 63 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, one quire with paper cover, stitched; handmade paper; black red and purple ink, blue pencil; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable, water stains, some pages torn towards end of text, note in Nepali p. 1 *mamā lepjhā*.

281_NamchuManuscript2

THE STORY OF LORD TASHE: *tashe sung*

190×95 mm; 33 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, one quire, stitched; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable, rust, ink and dirt stains, some pages slightly torn; p. 32 notes in Lepcha *khúng lávo tsha kati fango tháp* [the first month, the fifteenth day], front cover notes in Lepcha *cho □áre □ánum kántshá cumbú ná gusum rók □ó linun □ó.tri. íngrem bó ma □ó, feb 1991 Rebong Busty* [This book from my youngest uncle was given to me, young O.T., to read, February 1991, Rebong Village].

281_NamchuManuscript3

WORSHIP OF EKÁDOSHI: *□ékádoshi sá munlóm*

245×125 mm; 100 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, loose paper cover, several quires, stitched; combination of handmade and machinemade paper; black, purple and blue ink, notes in red ink; scribe and date unknown; condition poor, many pages damaged, some pages torn, some insect attacks, water stains, dirt and ink stains; notes p1. in Lepcha and Nepali, *cho □áre □ekdoshi sa cho gum, doshi munlóm sa cho gum, □áre 'Sonam Lepcha NamRing Busty', Sonam Lepcha ko kitap* [This is the book of □ékádoshi, the prayerbook *doshi*, this is Sonam Lepcha from Namring village, Sonam Lepcha's book].

281_NamchuManuscript4

WORSHIP OF EKÁDOSHI: *□ékádóshi sá munlóm*

250×145 mm; 114 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, stitched; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p.110 ms signed *Dec. 1990 Ongdi Tshering Lepcha*; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript5

Title unknown: púmsá ámyel áso cho

215×116 mm; 12 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, taped; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 12 ms signed *Mr O.T. Lepcha Namchumo 1999*; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript6

'DEATH RITUALS': *nyo thínng kurwóng la thúp sá munlóm*

215×121 mm; 14 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate cardboard cover, oblong; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 14 ms signed and dated in Lepcha *□óngde tshering róngkup parvím láwo 2003* [Óngde Tshering Lepcha, the eighth month 2003]; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript7

PÁRKHÓ CALCULATIONS: *párhó sá tsu*

180×140 mm; 122 pages; machinemade notebook, oblong; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 122 ms signed and dated *O.T. Namchu 29-01-99*; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript8

THE LEARNED MASTER BIRÚTSÁNÁ: *lopun birútsáná sá námthár*

248×113 mm; 32 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 32 ms signed and dated *O.T. Namchumo 1999*; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript9

THE STORY OF LORD TASHE: *tashe sung*

345×115 mm; 164 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate cover; machine made paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 164 ms signed and dated *O.T. Lepcha Namchumo 2004*; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript10

THE STORY OF LORD TASHE: *tashe sung*

358×140 mm; 135 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate cover; machine made paper; black and red ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 134 ms signed and dated *O.T. Lepcha Namchumo 1992*; condition good; p. 1 illustrations of buddhas, unnumbered page with colour illustrations of chörtens.

281_NamchuManuscript11

THE LEGEND OF GÚRÚ CHO-ÓNG: *gúrú cho □ óng sá námthár*

330×1120 mm; 136 pp; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate cover; machine made paper; black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript12

THE LEGEND OF GÚRÚ CHO-ÓNG: *gúrú cho □ óng sá námthár*

360×145 mm; 148 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate cover; machine made paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 148 ms signed and dated *O.T. Namchu [signature], 1997*; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript13

THE STORY OF KÁRMÁ ÓNGJUN: *kármá □ óngjun sá cho*

330×105 mm; 324 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets; machine made paper; black ink; condition good; ms signed and dated p. 324 *O.T. Namchu [signature] 17-12-1994*, colophon in Lepcha.

281_NamchuManuscript14

'PRAYER TO GIVE THANKS AFTER OFFERING': *yunbá do sá sá wo cho*

193×70 mm; 5 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets; machine made paper; black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript15

'MORNING PRAYER': *cho jeng shong nahan rok □ ó*

225×75 mm; 10 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets; machine made paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 10 ms signed and dated *O.T. Namchu [signature] 14.11.03*; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript16

'MORNING PRAYER': *lúkhróng kro sá rum gom □ un chozeng bála nahán gum rok □ o*

241×73 cm; 12 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, one quire, stitched; machine made paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 12 ms signed and dated *O.T. Namchu 13/9/1993*, in Lepcha *o.tri. námtsumú*; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript17

'EVENING PRAYER': *náp ún sá rumgomsóng*

210×80 mm; 8 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets; machine made paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 8 ms signed and dated *O.T. Namchu 14/11/02*; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript18

BOOK OF BURNING INCENSE IN RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES: *sóngtóng cho*

204×92 mm; 18 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate hard cover; machinemade paper; black and red ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 18 ms signed and dated *O. Namchumo Lepcha 2002*; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript19

'ASTROLOGY': *khyenrúng dǐng nga sá tsu*

210×69 mm; 6 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, one quire, stitched; handmade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 6 ms signed *O. Namchumo*; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript20

'ASTROLOGY': *khyenrúng dǐng nga sá tsu*

211×70 mm; 16 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, one quire, stitched; handmade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, pp. 4-5, 9 ms signed in Lepcha *o. tri. námsumú*, p.15 *O.T. Namchu* [signature]; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript21

'ASTROLOGY': *rumlotbú sá tsu, sánre nóng tsu and súkcet bú zómbo múng lát tsu*

227×71 mm; 14 pages; notebook, oblong bookform, one quire and cover; machinemade paper; black and red ink; scribe and date unknown; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript22

'PRAYER BEFORE BURNING DEVOTIONAL CANDLE': *chomi phu mânlóm cho hán cho áre rok*

214×87 mm; 17 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate hard cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 1 ms signed in Lepcha *o.tri. námsumú róngkup* [*O.T. Námchú Lepcha*], p. 17 ms dated 1998; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript23

THE LEGEND OF THE GODDESS NÁNGSE: *rummít khánrú nangse sá námthár*

355×140 mm; 153 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate pink paper cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 153 ms signed and dated *O.T. Namchu* [signature] 19/2/1999, in Lepcha *go óngdi tsharíng numtsumú* [*I, Óngdi Tshering Namchu*]; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript24

THE LEGEND OF THE GODDESS QUEEN: *rum pundi sá námthár*

355×140 mm; 184 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate pink paper cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 184 ms signed and dated *O.T. Namchu* [signature] *Mr O.T. Lepcha July 1999*, colophon in Lepcha; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript25

THE STORY OF LÍNGSE CHOKÍT: *língse chókyít*

355×140 mm; 142 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate pink paper cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 142 ms signed and dated *O.T. Namchu* [signature] 1999, colophon in Lepcha; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript26

THE LEGEND OF THÓNGSAL DRAMMO: *rummít thóngsál drammo sá námthár*

287×122 mm; 20 pp; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate pink paper cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 20 ms signed and dated O.T. Namchu [signature] *Mr O.T. Lepcha (Namchumo) 19/11/1999*, colophon in Lepcha; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript27

BOOK OF PROPHECIES: *gyánók námyuk*

283×91 mm; 29 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate pink paper cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 29 ms signed and dated O.T. Namchu [signature] *Mr O.T. Lepcha 18/12/1997*, colophon in Lepcha; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript28

THE STORY OF MINISTER ÚKDRE: *kárthák □úkdre sá sung*

283×91 mm; 36 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate pink paper cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 35 ms signed and dated O.T. Namchu [signature] *Ex-Army Ongdi Tshering Namchumo 16/11/1999*, colophon in Lepcha; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript29

'DEATH RITUALS': *rumdár sǒng sá munlóm ryák chó thúbró cho*

214×85 mm; 34 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, one quire, folded; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 34 ms signed and dated O.T. Namchu [signature], *Feb. 1992*, colophon in Lepcha; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript30

'PRAYER READ AFTER OFFERING': *rumká sáwó pha chó*

204×86 mm; 12 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, one quire, stitched; machinemade paper; black and red ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 12 ms signed and dated *O.T. L 1992*, colophon in Lepcha; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript31

'PRAYER READ AFTER OFFERING BEFORE REMOVING FRUIT OR WATER': *tsho thámpot hryú □úng lá frubá sá cho*

187×86 mm; 18 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets, separate paper cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 18 ms signed O.T. Namchu [signature]; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript32

'DEATH RITUALS': *rumlátbú fátká tyekbá tháp tyetká roksong cho gum*

200×90 mm; 14 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, one quire, folded, separate paper cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 14 ms signed and dated *O.T. Lepcha Namchumo 2002*, colophon in Lepcha; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript33

'DEATH RITUALS': *rumlátbú sá púmlom net cho*

285×100 mm; 11 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate pink paper cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript34

'DEATH RITUALS': *rumlát bú sá tór sá munlóm cho*

212×124 mm; 22 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate cardboard cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 21 ms signed and dated *Mr O.T. Lepcha 14-4-1992*, colophon in Lepcha; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript35

BOOK OF BURNING INCENSE IN RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES: *sóngtóng cho [rumlótúbú sá ngó tóng sóng púm lóm net cho]*

280×90 mm; 22 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, one quire, folded; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 20 ms signed in Lepcha □*o.tri. róngkup námtrumú* [O.T. Namchu Lepcha]; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript36

'PRAYER READ TWO OR THREE DAYS AFTER CREMATION': *purdu tsúnbá rok*

227×100 mm; 20 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate cardboard cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 19 ms signed O.T. Namchu [signature]; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript37

'THE LEGEND OF THE FLAG CEREMONY': □*áryúm sá tórshet sá námthár*

280×92 mm; 31 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate cardboard cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 31 ms signed and dated *Lepcha O.T. Namchumo sep 2002*, O.T. Namchu [signature]; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript38

'DEATH RITUALS': *chosá pano ká sáwo*

214×117 mm; 18 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate green paper cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 18 ms signed and dated O.T. Namchu [signature] 1999, colophon in Lepcha; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript39

THE STORY OF LORD TASHE: *tashe thing sá ágyen sá kup cangbo lá chet sá cho námthár*

265×111 mm; 28 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate paper cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 18 ms signed and dated O.T. Namchu [signature] 2008, colophon in Lepcha; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript40

PRAYERS TO THE CHÖRTEN: *chotyen munlóm*

290×95 mm; 35 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate pink paper cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 35 ms signed and dated *Mr Ongdi Tshering Lepcha Namchumu*, O.T. Namchu [signature], *30-5-2004*, colophon in Lepcha; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript41

THE LEGEND OF TRIMÍK KUNDEN: *gebú trímík kundyen sá námthár*

333×112 mm; 76 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate paper cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 76 ms dated 2000, colophon in Lepcha; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript42

THE LEGENDARY ORIGIN OF TOBACCO: *tángku námthár*

280×93 mm; 92 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate pink paper cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 92 ms signed and dated *O.T. Namchumu, 24/12/1997*, O.T. Namchu [signature], colophon in Lepcha; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript43

'DEATH RITUALS': *nyú thínj lóm frón*

180×140 mm; 11 pages; ms handmade, one quire, stitched; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Óng Tshering Namchu, p. 12 signed in Lepcha *nyúthínj lóm frón, O.T. Namchumo*; condition good.

2.3 The Adyenmu Collection

The Adyenmu Collection is owned by Dendrup Adyenmu Lepcha, originally from Mane Gombú in Kalimpong, but now resident in Gangtok, Sikkim. Dendrup Lepcha is a wellknown literary figure and journalist in Gangtok. Dendrup owns three Lepcha manuscripts, which are carefully kept among his other papers. The manuscripts are in a reasonable condition, their provenance is as yet unknown. Dendrup Lepcha would be willing to participate in a future preservation project.

281_AdyenmuManuscript1

Title unknown, possibly THE STORY OF LORD TASHE: *tashe thínj sá sung*

310×108 mm; 68 pages; ms handmade, concertina style, folded and stitched; handmade paper; black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable, covering pages damaged and illegible because of dark colouration, water, ink and dirt stains.

281_AdyenmuManuscript2

Title unknown

361×133 mm; 44 pages; ms handmade, bookform, one quire and paper cover, stitched; machinemade paper; black and blue ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable, covering pages damaged and torn at edges, water, ink and dirt stains, text opening difficult to read, part of pages missing and water and ink stains.

281_AdyenmuManuscript3

'ASTROLOGY': □ *álók thámdun nung tsu*

205×80 mm; 44 pages; ms handmade, concertina style, folded and stitched; handmade paper; black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable, ink, water and dirt stains, traces of mould, some pages slightly torn and damaged.

2.4 Chuksung Collection

The Chuksung Collection is owned by Chuksung Lepcha, who resides in Lower Burtuk (near helipad) in Sikkim. The 11 manuscripts in this collection were acquired by Chuksung several years ago from villages all over Sikkim, further details about their provenance were not available. The collection holds some very interesting manuscripts, which are unfortunately in a very poor state, for example the extensive concertina-style manuscript (281_ChuksungManuscript11), which unfortunately was too fragile to be handled and photographed during the time of the pilot project. Chuksung Lepcha did not express a positive interest in being involved in a future preservation project.

281_ChuksungManuscript1

THE STORY OF THE RESURRECTION OF SAKON: *sakon delúk sá sung*

215×125 mm; 50 pages; ms handmade, bookform, black cloth cover, stitched; handmade paper; black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable to poor, many dirt, ink and water stains, some pages torn, traces of mould.

281_ChuksungManuscript_2

Title unknown

185×76 mm; 28 pages; ms handmade, bookform, one quire, stitched; handmade paper; scribe and date unknown; condition poor, discolouration, dirt, ink and water stains, traces of mould, text difficult to read; p. 27 illustration of chörten and flowers.

281_ChuksungManuscript3

PRAYERS TO THE CHÖRTEN: *chotyen munlóm*

177-8×127 mm; 44 pages; ms handmade, bookform, one quire and cover, stitched; handmade paper; black ink; scribe P.T. Lepcha, p. 2 and inside reverse cover ms signed P. T. Lepcha and dated 30/4/62; condition reasonable, slight damage to paper, dirt and water stains, traces of mould; inside front cover, p. 1 and closing lines inside reverse cover notes in Nepali.

281_ChuksungManuscript4

Title unknown

194×90 mm; 58 pages; ms handmade, bookform, one quire, cover missing; handmade paper; black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition poor, ms incomplete, water and ink stains, pages missing, first and last pages damaged and illegible.

281_ChuksungManuscript5

Title unknown

180×125 mm; 30 pages; ms handmade, bookform, one quire, cover missing; handmade paper; black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition poor, ms incomplete, water and ink stains, pages missing, last page torn, some pages illegible because of fading.

281_ChuksungManuscript6

THE STORY OF LORD TASHE: *tashe sung*

205×115 mm; 42 pages; ms handmade, bookform, one quire and paper cover, stitched; handmade paper; black and blue ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable to poor, possibly incomplete, some loose pages, ms partly illegible because of fading and water stains; pp. 17-18 illustrations of chörtens.

281_ChuksungManuscript7

'ASTROLOGY': *chotshât ngâk shang sá tsu*

255×125 mm; 30 pages; ms handmade, bookform, one quire, stitched, front paper cover present, back cover missing; blue ink; scribe and date unknown; condition poor, partly illegible because of fading, some pages torn, ms incomplete; p. 13 illustration of chörten and plants.

281_ChuksungManuscript8

Title unknown: ni tyu juk sá cho, mu wúng nung sá tyú júk thó ká thing wung cho, sá tyú júk thó ká thi wung cho

343×110 mm; 68 pages; ms handmade, bookform, one quire, stitched, loose paper cover; machinemade paper; black, red and blue ink; scribe Thilok Lepcha, p. 67 ms signed in Lepcha and Nepali *thilúk róngkup THILOK thiluk lapche*, p. 68 ms dated in Nepali 30-4-85 *pucho lapche*; condition reasonable, water stains; p. 2 notes in Nepali.

281_ChuksungManuscript9

'ANCESTRAL WORSHIP': *thíkúng nyikúng □ítsá rumfát*

184×106 mm; 36 pages; ms handmade, bookform, one quire, stitched; machine made paper; black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition poor, ms eaten away by rodents, all pages damaged, making text partly illegible.

281_ChuksungManuscript10

Title unknown, possibly THE STORY OF LORD TASHE: tashe sung

285×95 mm; 79 pages; ms handmade, pages not folded but separate, loosely stitched; machinemade paper; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable, incomplete, last pages damaged, some traces of mould, some water, ink and dirt stains.

281_ChuksungManuscript11

Title unknown

200×100 mm; ms handmade, concertina-style; handmade paper; scribe and date unknown; condition poor, ms incomplete, insect attacks, paper damaged and brittle.

2.5 Tamyong Collection

The Tamyong Collection is held by Tamyong Lepcha, who resides in Linge Payong in South Sikkim, a village which in Lepcha is known as Luknyi. Tamyong Lepcha Támsángmú is a traditional religious specialist, a *bóngthing*, who is well-known throughout Sikkim for his knowledge of traditional Lepcha religion and of old Lepcha texts. He displayed 8 Lepcha concertina-style manuscripts, 7 of which are described briefly below, the 8th being a copy of 281_TamyongManuscript1. All of these manuscripts were written down by Tamnyong's own forefathers in Luknyi and all are well-known traditional Lepcha texts. The manuscripts are being kept as safely as is possible in Tamyong's house, wrapped in protective cloth, but are unfortunately all badly damaged by insects. One manuscript was photographed entirely for preservation purposes. Tamyong Lepcha expressed a positive interest in a future preservation project, he would serve as the principal contact for this collection.

281_TamyongManuscript1

WORSHIP OF EKÁDOSHI: *□ekádoshi sá munlóm*

270×80 mm: 90 pages; ms handmade, concertina-style, folded and stitched; handmade paper; scribe and date unknown; condition very poor, paper damaged and brittle through insect attacks, text difficult to read.

281_TamyongManuscript2

THE STORY OF MINISTER ÚKDRE: *kárthák □úkdre sá sung*

260×80 mm; concertina-style, folded and stitched; handmade paper; scribe and date unknown; condition very poor, paper damaged and brittle through insect attacks, text difficult to read.

281_TamyongManuscript3

THE STORY OF LORD TASHE: *tashe sung*

285×75 mm; concertina-style, folded and stitched; handmade paper; scribe and date unknown; condition very poor, paper damaged and brittle through insect attacks, text difficult to read.

281_TamyongManuscript4

THE LEGEND OF GÚRÚ CHO-ÓNG: *gúrú cho □óng*

315×80 mm; concertina-style, folded and stitched; handmade paper; scribe and date unknown; condition very poor, paper damaged and brittle through insect attacks, text difficult to read.

281_TamyongManuscript5

THE LEGEND OF TRIMÍK KUNDEN: *trimík kundyen*

320×90-95 mm; concertina-style, folded and stitched; handmade paper; scribe and date unknown; condition very poor, paper damaged and brittle through insect attacks, text difficult to read.

281_TamyongManuscript6

PRAYERS TO THE CHÖRTEN: *chotyen munlóm*

290×80 mm; bookform; scribe and date unknown; condition very poor, paper damaged and brittle through insect attacks, text difficult to read.

2.6 Chong Collection

The Chong Collection is owned by Chong Róngkup, who formerly was in the Indian Army, but now practices as a traditional religious specialist, a *bóngthing*. Chong Lepcha lives in Pulungdung, Tongsong Lepcha Busty, near the Dooteria Tea Estate in Darjeeling. The manuscripts in the Chong Collection were written by his grandmother's father and have always stayed in the family. Although he owns more, 13 manuscripts which were put on display. Only the titles of these are given below, as it was not possible to photograph and describe the manuscripts during a first meeting and the fieldwork had to be shortened due to political unrest in the Darjeeling hills. The 13 manuscripts are all fairly well-known traditional Lepcha texts. Chong Lepcha would be willing to be involved in a future preservation project and would be the principal contact for this collection.

281_ChongManuscript1

THE STORY OF MINISTER ÚKDRE: *kárthák □úkdre sá sung*

281_ChongManuscript2

THE STORY OF THE RESURRECTION OF SAKON: *sakon delúk sá sung*

281_ChongManuscript3

PRAYERS TO THE CHÖRTEN: *chotyen munlóm*

281_ChongManuscript4

'ASTROLOGY': *bóng tóng tshe tsu*

281_ChongManuscript5

THE STORY OF LORD TASHE: *tashe sung*

281_ChongManuscript6

A NUN'S RETURN FROM HELL: *nungyang mun delúk*

281_ChongManuscript7

THE LEGEND OF GÚRÚ CHO-ÓNG: *gúrú cho□óng*

281_ChongManuscript8

LAZONG, BOOK ON THE LEPCHA ALPHABET: *lâzóng*

281_ChongManuscript9

LAZONG, BOOK ON THE LEPCHA ALPHABET: *lâzóng*

281_ChongManuscript10

THE LEGEND OF TRIMÍK KUNDEN: *trimík kundyen*

THE GODDESS OF DESTINY: *rummít kíngtsúm dármit*

281_ChongManuscript11

THE STORY OF KÁRMÁ ÓNGJUN: *kármá □óngjun sá cho*

281_ChongManuscript12

THE STORY OF LORD TASHE: *tashe sung*

281_ChongManuscript13

THE STORY OF LORD TASHE: *tashe sung*

2.7 Namgyal Institute of Tibetology Collection

The Namgyal Institute of Tibetology (NIT) in Gangtok in Sikkim serves as the local archival partner for this pilot project. During the fieldwork for this pilot project, the Lepcha manuscripts in the NIT's own collections were scanned for preservation purposes. These scans are available at the NIT. Although some of the manuscripts show the remains of labels with a numbering system, the manuscripts are listed below according to the numbers used by the NIT when the Lepcha manuscripts were scanned.

Some of the labels pasted on the Lepcha manuscripts and paper notes inserted into the manuscripts in this collection display notes on the contents and value of the Lepcha manuscripts which are signed by D.K. Luksom on various dates in 1972. D.K. Luksom was a well-known literary figure in Gangtok.

The Lepcha manuscripts are kept in two different locations in the NIT; the display cabinet in the museum building holds 11 Lepcha manuscripts and one photocopy of a Lepcha manuscript, and the Tibetan library holds 18 Lepcha manuscripts and several unidentified loose pages of Lepcha manuscripts. The provenance of the manuscripts is as yet unknown and although the manuscripts are now kept under good and stable circumstances, they have been damaged in the past, presumably before they were collected, and are not all in good condition.

281_NITManuscript1

Title unknown

215×330 mm, cover 220×345 mm; 75 pages; exercise book, hard cover; machinemade paper; text in black, red and blue ink; scribe unknown p. 2 ms dated 1884; condition good, some dirt stains, ink stains and insect attacks; remains of one label on reverse cover; p. 2 *gyebo gyethúk gyek kung sa sung gum, lâmbó sa sung gum, yúkmun sa sung gum, lâmbó cho[gyík]sa sung gum, gye lenchi lâmbó sa sung gum, chí lín sa sung gum, [lúngtyen sa sung pang ábi rima núrting go zúk lung tho ma ákup ázón yâmbó ngâk lung hláp lung mát zúk ya la ma ta zo yang shu].* [NIT scans 1: 1-37]

281_NITManuscript2

PRAYERS TO THE CHÖRTEN: *choten munlóm* (pp. 1-33)

THE STORY OF LORD TASHE: *tashe sung* (pp. 34-54)

THE STORY OF MINISTER ÚKDRE: *kárthák □úkdre sá sung* (pp. 55-71)

342×154 mm; 71 pages and cover; ms handmade, oblong; cover machinemade paper, ms handmade paper; black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable, water stains, dirt stains, front cover torn; front cover shows two labels, label 1 *Mss No 3 Mic Room A1 No1 Cat No2*, label 2 (*worth purchasing*) 1. *Book of Chorten* 2. *Story of Tashe Thing and two Gyalongs (lamas)*; 3. *Story of King and his Karthak (minister) (L.bible) D.K. Lucksom 21/12/72*; p. 35 note *Story of Tashey Thing (Lepcha God) and the story of the Gyalung (lamas) Story of King Ka[r]ma Dewa*, note pinned to p. 55: *Story of a King and his Karthak, the minister*, inside reverse cover note *bri go [...] sa kú mír gum shám kú gum □ágyít re yúp do hángmu gum.* [NIT scans 2: 38-77]

281_NITManuscript3

LAZONG, BOOK ON THE LEPCHA ALPHABET: *lâzóng* (pp. 0-44 and 76-77)

THE GODDESS OF DESTINY: *rummít kíngtsúm dármit* (pp. 47-61)

THE STORY OF THE RESURRECTION OF TRIMÍK: *trimík delúk sá námthár* (pp. 63-75)

300×105 mm; 91 pages and cover; ms handmade, one quire, soft cover; machinemade paper; text in black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable, water, dirt and ink stains, first and last pages damaged and torn, text occ. difficult to read, some loose pages; front cover shows two handwritten labels, label 1 *Mss No 4*, label 2 (*worth purchasing*) 1. *Lepcha Grammar* 2. *Kingchum Darmit (Book of Fate)* 3. *Sunglyon (Death ceremony) D.K. Lucksom 20/12/72 (worth purchasing)*; p. 3 and p. 228 notes in Nepali, pp. 80-82 notes, pp. 89-91 notes. [NIT scans 3: 78-125]

281_NITManuscript4

THE LEARNED MASTER BIRÚTSÁNÁ: *lapân birútsáná*

230×214 mm; 57 pages; ms handmade, notepad-style, cover made out of fabric material; machinemade paper; text in black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable, some insect attacks; two labels, label 1 *Mss No 5*, label 2 *Story of : - Lupen (Guru) Birochana (Legible) (worth purchasing) D.K. Lucksom 22/12/72*; p. 3 note *lopân birotsáná sa sung námthár kát nóng ma □o.* [NIT scans 4: 126-146]

281_NITManuscript5

THE STORY OF LORD TASHE: *tashe sung*

297×80 mm; ms handmade, concertina-style; handmade paper; text in black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable, pages not in original order, some loose fragments of ms, ms possibly incomplete; two labels on original cover, now in middle of the pile of pages, label 1 *Mss No 20*, label 2 1. *Taseything, Lepcha god.* [NIT scans 5: 147-216]

281_NITManuscript6

THE GODDESS OF DESTINY: *rummít kíngtsúm dármit*

212×150 mm; 144 pages and cover; ms handmade, 4 quires; handmade paper; text in black and red ink; scribe and date unknown; condition poor, reverse cover missing, some pages torn, mould and insect attacks, paper soft and fragile, occasionally brittle and decayed, water stains; 2 labels on reverse cover page, label 1 *Mss No 21*, label 2 *Kingchum Darmít (book of fate)*; p. 0 illustration of chorten, partly missing. [NIT scans 6: 217-291]

281_NITManuscript7

'ASTROLOGY': *tsu*

202×91 mm; 102 pages; ms handmade, four quires; handmade paper; text in black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition very poor, extreme insect attacks; traces of label on reverse cover. [NIT scans 7: 292-346]

281_NITManuscript8

Title unknown, possibly THE LEGEND OF THE ANTS: *tukfyíl sá námthár*

350×147 mm; ± 72 pages; ms handmade, three quires; handmade paper; text in black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition poor, first pages badly damaged, last pages illegible, half of front cover missing, mould, dirt, insect attacks, some pages difficult to read or illegible because of fading of ink; front cover shows two labels, label 1 *Mss No 9*, label 2 *1st two pages are worn out (illegible to read - Rest are o.k. Chogey Pano (Yumraj) Judgement of Chogey Pano to the soul of human beings. D.K. Lucksom. 26/12/72.* [NIT scans 8: 347-385]

281_NITManuscript9

THE STORY OF LORD TASHE: *tashe sung*

285×125 mm; 228 pages; handmade, four quires and cover; handmade paper; black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable to poor, dirt and ink stains, some insect attacks, some paper decay; front cover shows one label: *Mss No 26*, inside front cover some notes in Tibetan, p. 23 red ribbon pasted on paper as page marker, p. 115 note *story of Matamtuta and Guru Padmasamhawa's Prediction on Tibet*, text closes on p. 223, last few pages difficult to read. [NIT scans 9: 39-161]

281_NITManuscript10

Title unknown

Photocopy of ms kept in British Museum, London, difficult to read. [NIT scans 10: 162-193]

281_NITManuscript11

Titles unknown, possibly THE GODDESS OF DESTINY: *rummít kíngtsúm dármit* and THE STORY OF LORD TASHE: *tashe sung*

120×105 mm; 28 pages; handmade, no cover; handmade paper; black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable, ms appears to be incomplete, ink, water and dirt stains, minor damage to paper; label: *Mss No 31*. [NIT scans 11: 194-207]

281_NITManuscript12

FUNERAL CALCULATIONS: □ *olák líkbá ngâk shang sa tsu*

194×65 mm; 32 pages and cover; handmade, cardboard-like cover; handmade paper; black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition good; inserted note *Mss No 29 Book of omen very good book (complete) D.K. Lucksom.* [NIT scans 12: 208-225]

281_NITManuscript13

THE LEPCHA BOOK OF THE DEAD: *thúkdra munlóm*

189×115 mm; 15 pages; ms handmade, one quire, stitched, no cover; machinemade paper; black and blue ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable, water, ink and dirt stains. [NIT scans 13: 226-235]

281_NITManuscript14

Title unknown

Two loose pages of unknown ms, condition poor. [NIT scans 14: 236-237]

281_NITManuscript15

Title unknown

165×205 mm; 62 pages; quire of exercise book; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe unknown; colophon in Lepcha on last page, ms dated 1933; condition reasonable, ms incomplete, loose pages; p.1 two labels, label 1 *Mss No 13*, label 2 *Judgement of Chhogeý Panu (Yumraj) 1st page and some last pages are missing (Legible) D.K. Lucksom 22/12/72.* [NIT scans 15: 238-272]

281_NITManuscript16

Title unknown: contains párshet lóm su, gyo dúm pú párcet kunsám cho, sámbá hlyenrúp zúng shet

120×177 mm; ±35 pages; quire of exercisebook with some extra pages attached; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe unknown, front cover ms dated 11/13/63; condition poor, paper damaged, water and ink stains, incomplete; inserted note *4 Tibetan written in Lepcha.* [NIT scans 16: 273-291]

281_NITManuscript17

TIBETAN PRAYER BOOK IN LEPCHA SCRIPT: *máni sol dyep kát jú*

220×100 mm; 15 pages; handmade, limp paper cover folded over one quire stitched together; machinemade paper; text in black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable, some damage from insect attacks; front cover shows label: *Mss No 10*, p. 8 inserted note *Another Prayer of Avalokite Swara*, to which added: *Avalokiteshvara*; inside front cover decorated text frame in pencil, text in black ink: *mani sol dyep kát jú ma □o*, p. 13 illustrations of chörtens in text. [NIT scans 17: 292-299]

281_NITManuscript18

Title unknown

Two loose pages, appear to be part of 281_NITManuscript28. [NIT scans 18: 300-301]

281_NITManuscript19

Title unknown, note pad; does not contain much running text, contains lists, scattered notes and short text fragments, possibly astrological notes.

120×140 mm; 19 pages; no pagination; handmade, one quire, stitched together, oblong; machinemade paper; text in black and purple ink, pencil; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable, bottom right corner torn, bottom edge of ms damaged, further damage to the paper by dirt and water stains. [NIT scans 19: 302-317]

281_NITManuscript20

fragments of several unidentified texts, among which LAZONG, BOOK ON THE LEPCHA ALPHABET: lâzóng

230×175 mm; 121 pages; loose pages of exercise book; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition poor, loose pages, edges of pages damaged; label *Mss No 18, note 6, 1887, cannot read*. [NIT scans 20: 318-451]

281_NITManuscript21

LÂZÓNG, BOOK ON THE LEPCHA ALPHABET: *lâzóng*

17 pages; ms handmade, bookform, stitched; handmade paper; black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition very poor, ms badly damaged and partly eaten away by rodents, part of ms still legible; label *Mss No 6*. [NIT scans 21: 453-470]

281_NITManuscript22

LÂZÓNG, BOOK ON THE LEPCHA ALPHABET: *lâzóng*

170×190 mm; 52 pages; machinemade, exercise book; machinemade paper; text in black and blue ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable, incomplete, cover and first page(s) missing, dirt and ink stains; label: *Lepcha Grammer. Some 1st pages are missing (Incomplete) D.K. Lucksom 20/12/72; Label Mss No 7*. [NIT scans 22: 471-498]

281_NITManuscript23

LÂZÓNG, BOOK ON THE LEPCHA ALPHABET: *lâzóng*

230×175 mm; 78 pages; exercise book, cover made with magazine or newspaper clipping; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable to poor, loose pages, incomplete, water and ink stains; label on front cover *Mss No15*. [NIT scans 23: 499-538]

281_NITManuscript24

various unidentified texts, among which: THE STORY OF LORD TASHE: tashe sung

200 x175 mm; 68 pages; exercise book; machine-made paper; black and red ink; scribe and date unknown; condition poor, ms appears to be incomplete, cover missing, water damage, dirt and ink stains; label p.1: *2. Teaching of Tashey Takbo Thing. Complete. Worth purchasing, inserted note p. 5 Tibetan written in Lepcha. incomplete*. [NIT scans 24: 539-608]

281_NITManuscript25

THE LEGEND OF TRIMÍK KUNDEN: *trimík kundyen*

230×175 mm; 84 pages; exercise book, cover made with magazine or newspaper clipping; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable to poor, possibly incomplete, water and ink stains; label on front cover *Mss No 14, note 3. A story book of Timik Kanden worth purchasing; cover notes in Lepcha Trimik kyendyen sa sung and bit dor pano, p. 1 colophon in Lepcha*. [NIT scans 25: 609-695]

281_NITManuscript26

'ASTROLOGY': *tsu*

appears to be part of 281_NITManuscript27

290×120 mm; 14 pages, many loose, no cover; handmade, several quires, stitched; machinemade paper; scribe and date unknown; condition poor, paper damaged, water, ink and dirt stains, incomplete; p. 1 note *Astrology*; p. 13 note *Lepcha Grammar Illegible*. *D.K. Lucksom 21/12/72, p. 17 marked 2-5-1972*. [NIT scans 26: 696-711]

281_NITManuscript27

LĀZÓNG, BOOK ON THE LEPCHA ALPHABET: *lâzóng*

'ASTROLOGY': *tsu*

290×120 mm; 34 pages, many loose and torn; ms handmade, hard cover, stitched; machinemade paper; scribe and date unknown; condition poor, paper damaged, pages torn, water, ink and dirt stains, incomplete; front cover label *Mss No 22*. [NIT scans 27: 712-731]

281_NITManuscript28

Title unknown, appears to be a Tibetan prayer book written in Lepcha script.

260×140 mm; 15 pages; ms handmade, bookform, several quires and cover, stitched; handmade paper; scribe and date unknown; condition poor, ms incomplete, reverse cover and last pages missing, paper damaged and torn, insect attacks, water, ink and dirt stains; front cover label *Mss No 11*; p. 5 note *Prayer to Avalokite Swara* and Tibetan text, inside front cover illustration in colour. [NIT scans 28: 732-741]

281_NITManuscript29

Title unknown

190×230 mm; 40 pages; ms handmade, one quire, stitched; machinemade paper; black and purple ink; scribe and date unknown; condition poor, ms incomplete, paper damaged and brittle, insect attacks, pages torn, traces of glue and mould, ink, dirt and water stains; p.1 label *Story of King Tembaniwat, Illegible, Torn and worn out D.K. Lucksom 20/12/72* and p. 1 label *Mss No 8*. [NIT scans 29b: 742-763]

281_NITManuscript30

THE STORY OF LORD TASHE: *tashe sung*

94 pages; several quires of exercise book; machinemade paper; black and blue ink; scribe and date unknown; condition reasonable, some pages loose and partly illegible, water, ink and dirt stains; two labels, label 1 *Worth purchasing. Story of Tashey Thing (Lepcha God) (complete) D.K. Lucksom. 19/12/72*, label 2 *Mss No 1. Mic Room A1 No 2 Cab No 2*. [NIT scans 30: 764-813]

3. Other collections in Kalimpong and Darjeeling

During the course of the pilot project it became clear that throughout Kalimpong, Darjeeling and Sikkim a number of people own collections Lepcha manuscripts in their homes. While some individuals welcome the study and digitization of these materials, the situation is generally much more complex. Most Lepchas are members of influential socio-cultural organisations such as the *Indigenous Lepcha Tribal Association (ILTA)*. The status of the ILTA is such that it is vital to seek their permission for any research project related to Lepcha studies in the Darjeeling district. Because large numbers of Lepcha manuscripts were collected by European researchers in the late 19th and early 20th century, the organisational committee of the ILTA remains very reluctant to grant permission for any research project related to Lepcha manuscripts. To illustrate this point, in a local publication that was recently acquired in Kalimpong, the president of the ILTA states: "*The Lepcha manuscripts, Naamtho-Naamthar, in hundreds, were taken away and are lying unused in Europe and else where in the world. The die-hard Lepcha traditionalists, today, guard their Naamtho-Naamthar with zealously and are very reluctant to part with the information on their Lepcha manuscripts. They really feel insecure and fear that their ancient Lepcha holy books, Naamtho-Naamthar, may be taken away from them and lost forever if shown to others.*" (Támsáng 2007: 48)

Although the investigator of this pilot project had previously undertaken extensive fieldwork on aspects of Lepcha language and culture in Kalimpong, Darjeeling and Sikkim, and has long gained the trust of many Lepchas in the area, the period of fieldwork during this pilot project proved to be too short to convince the complete board of the ILTA to gain access to the manuscript collections acquired by the ILTA and the collections held by the Lepcha Museum and prominent members of the ILTA.

The Lepcha Museum in Kalimpong holds the private collection of Lepcha artefacts and manuscripts of Sonam Tshering Támsáng, although this collection is said to be partly owned by the ILTA. The Museum is located above the Lepcha hostel in Bong Busty in Kalimpong and is open by appointment only. In October-December 2009, 75 Lepcha manuscripts were on display in the Lepcha Museum. Mr. S.T. Támsáng stated that the 75 manuscripts on display are part of a larger collection of at least 182 Lepcha manuscripts and that those manuscripts not displayed in the museum are kept partly in his home in Gangtok and partly in his family house in Kalimpong. Although access to the collection was initially granted by S.T. Támsáng during this pilot project, it was ultimately denied by the board of the ILTA. The collection of manuscripts on display in the Lepcha Museum is most impressive, it holds many rare titles and the manuscripts generally appear to be in a reasonable condition.

Each year around October 3rd, the ILTA organise a day during which members from all over the Darjeeling hills assemble in Ngase village in Kalimpong to read Lepcha manuscripts together and to train novices in the age-old chanting styles in which these traditional texts are read out. At this *Námthár Study Day* on October 3rd, 2009, approximately 45 Lepcha manuscripts were on display, which are mostly owned by Pasang Tshering Simikmú, a well-known religious specialist and literary figure from Ngase village in Kalimpong.

In 2007, 227 Lepcha manuscripts from the vicinity of Kalimpong were collected and catalogued by the ILTA following a request of the National Mission of Manuscripts, Ministry of Culture, Government of India (Támsáng 2007: 43). It is as yet unclear whether this number of 227 manuscripts reflects a separate collection (and thus does not consist of the joint collections of S.T. Támsáng and P.T. Simik mentioned above).

There are rumours of other collections in the Darjeeling hills which are mentioned here in case they can be followed up during a future preservation project: the private collection of Lyángsóng Támsáng in Bong Busty in Kalimpong (which is believed to hold at least the 35 or more manuscripts of his late father Khárpú Támsáng), the collection of the late Paras Mani Pradhan in Kalimpong, the collection of the late Lha Tshering Kunchudyangmo in Kalimpong, the collection of the late wife of the king of Cooch Bihar – known as Kakina Queen in Kurseong, a collection in the fenced off Lepcha village below Tukvar Tea estate in Darjeeling and the private collection of the local religious specialist or *mun* in Mirik.

4. Other Collections in Sikkim

In Sikkim it is often claimed that most Lepcha manuscripts are to be found in the Kalimpong and Darjeeling subdivisions and that not many Lepcha manuscripts have survived in Sikkim. However, it was found that much like in Kalimpong and Darjeeling, a number of people in Sikkim keep small collections of Lepcha manuscripts in their homes. In general though, based on the experiences during the fieldwork for this pilot project, Lepcha manuscripts appear to be less treasured in Sikkim than in Kalimpong and Darjeeling, and the majority of owners appears to be less aware of the significance of these materials and less interested in their preservation. This attitude may well threaten the survival of the remaining collections of Lepcha manuscripts in Sikkim.

During fieldwork in Sikkim in 1996, the investigator was shown 29 Lepcha manuscripts that were owned by a the Sikkim Lepcha Literary Association, a cultural organisation aimed at the collection, study and preservation of Lepcha manuscripts. These manuscripts were kept in the house of Mr. Karma Loday in Development Area in Gangtok,

During the fieldwork for this pilot project Mr. Karma Loday, who still resides in Sikkim stated that he was unaware of the current whereabouts of this collection. Other members of the Sikkim Lepcha Literary Organisation were unavailable and the general impression was that the organisation had not been able to maintain their previous interest in the study of Lepcha manuscripts.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The aim of the pilot project was to investigate the status of Lepcha manuscripts and areas inhabited by Lepcha people and to locate and identify Lepcha manuscripts in private collections in these areas. Upon the completion of this pilot project we have come to a better understanding of the nature, extent, condition and ownership of a representative portion of the Lepcha materials that still exist, and we can assess the viability of a future major preservation project aimed at Lepcha manuscripts. During this pilot project approximately 155 Lepcha manuscripts were consulted and a further 120 Lepcha manuscripts were located. At least another 363 manuscripts are rumoured to exist in the Darjeeling and Kalimpong hills and Sikkim together. Circumstances that were discussed with the Endangered Archives Panel impeded a fieldtrip to the Lepcha-inhabited areas in Bhutan and Nepal during this pilot project, but reports from Lepchas who recently visited these areas confirm that a small number of Lepcha manuscripts has also survived there. The existence of so many Lepcha manuscripts in private collections certainly makes a major project aimed at digitization and preservation possible, and the nature and general condition of the materials as well as the circumstances in which they are kept make such a project highly desirable.

Should a major preservation project be undertaken, the complex sociological circumstances that challenge an in-depth study of Lepcha manuscripts should be taken into account. Especially in Kalimpong and Darjeeling, a major preservation project should aim to get the unconditional support of the ILTA and other socio-cultural organisations in which the Lepchas have organized themselves, and it is to be expected that considerable time and effort will have to be spent in order to attain this support. The cost, effort and logistics necessary to locate further manuscripts, to set up appointments, to arrange travel and accomodation, to keep up equipment and a suitable work environment should not be underestimated.

Ideally, those in charge of a major preservation project would train a small group of people who are local to Sikkim, Darjeeling or Kalimpong in the study and digitization of Lepcha manuscripts, as the project would benefit both from local expertise and from being carried out over a period of several years. Apart from a training in digitization techniques, the team would also have to be trained in the reading of Lepcha manuscripts. As yet, there are few Lepchas who can still read the handwriting and comprehend the language used in old Lepcha texts. The team should also learn to assess the contents of Lepcha manuscripts, as it should be considered whether all manuscripts that will be located should be digitized or if priority should be given to the digitization of rare literary or religious works.

To anyone involved in Lepcha studies it is clear that a major preservation project aimed at Lepcha manuscripts is of the utmost importance. The contents of the Lepcha manuscripts represent important cultural traditions, and both those traditions and the materials in which they are recorded are under threat. Based on the experiences during this pilot project, a future major preservation project of Lepcha manuscripts is warranted and would be viable, provided the recommendations made in this survey are considered.

6. References

- Plaisier, Heleen 2003. *Catalogue of Lepcha manuscripts in the van Manen Collection*. Kern Institute Miscellanea 11. Leiden: Kern Institute.
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