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

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2009 award - Pilot project
£9,346 for 7 months

Further Information
You can contact the EAP team at endangeredarchives@bl.uk
EAP 281 PILOT PROJECT
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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

[Remaining text continues from the next page]
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 MĀÑI’: māñi sá cho, ‘ASTROLOGY’: yúkcho nyókbú sá cho, ‘ASTROLOGY’: kyārngāk 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’: nga ń sá áhláp, sherbá ngák shang sá tsu, chotshät ngák shang sá tsu, rá cee ngák shang sá tsu and suknỳi ngák 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 Rapdensing Foning, p. 21 ms signed in Lepcha ár faying rumsang mú [R. Foning Rumsangmú], further notes in black ink on cover and throughout ms give name of Rapdensing Foning Rumsangmú from Kalimpong, i.e. on cover in Lepcha rāpdenšēng furumsangmū kālēnpang, ār. dri. esa. fonyung, in English R.D.S. Foning, in Lepcha ca ca cút, p. 1 notes in Lepcha sing foning, in English Kalimpong Darjeeling, in Lepcha rāpdyen shing fanyung, rāpden shing, p. 2 notes in Lepcha rāpdenšēng fanyung rumsangmū kālēn pang, in English R.D.S. Foning, in Lepcha ār. dri. esa. fonyung, p. 16 in Lepcha rāp rāpdenšēng; 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 ngák shang sá tsu, nākpú, chotshät ngák shang sá tsu, suknỳi ngák shang sá tsu, lŏmbā tān ngák shang sá tsu and nga hláp sá tsu
131×60 mm; 22 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, one quire, stitched; machinemade paper; text in black and blue ink; scribe Rapdensing Foning, p. 20 ms signed in Lepcha 5.5.30 rāpden sing fanyung rumsangmū kālēnpang [5 May 1930 Rāpdenšēng Foning Rumsangmū, Kalimpong], cover notes give title, name of scribe and date in Lepcha sherbā tsu ngák shing an nga hlāpshing sa chō gum yang shu ma o, rāpdenšēng fanyung rumsangmū kālēnpang, 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 glá nyóm tsha kati kakyöt tháp sa yák zá hlák bù chú tsḩät kajú sa chú tsḩät [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 ngákshang sá tsu, chotshât ngák shang sá tsu, za khya sá tsu, dakbú sá tsu kyân, párkhó sá tsu and lávo 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_phrû pû 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 Nûrshíng Lepcha, loose page signed in Lepcha nûrshing go nun pi tho ma, nám sá sám kati fali tháp nung ká pi mo o yang shu [written by me, Nûrshíng, 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 Nûrshíng Lepcha, pp. 20, 26, 30, 35 ms signed Nûrshíng 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 GURÜ CHO-ÖNG: *gurü cho öng* (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’: *yükcho nyókbú sá cho* (pp. 33-53)  
THE LEGEND OF THE ANTS: *tukfyl sá námthár* (pp. 55-80)  
PRAYERS TO THE CHÖRTEN: *chotyen mumlóm* (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
LÁZÓNG, 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. Núrshing 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 Núrshing Lepcha, p. 41 ms signed Núrshing 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.
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 yú 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].

'ASTROLOGY': khyenrúng díng 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 [Rapdenshíng Foning, Darjeeling], throughout ms pages stamped with ink stamp COPIED.

Title unknown, possibly THE LEARNED MASTER BÍRÚTSÁNÁ: lopán birútsáná 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.

'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.

'SHÉRBA NGĀKSHANG SÁ TSU, LÔM ZÂ NGĀK 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 Hindi 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.
THE LEGENDARY ORIGIN OF TOBACCO: 
*tangku námthár* (pp. 5-67)

THE STORY OF THE LEARNED MASTER *Bírútsáná*: 
*lopán bírútsáná 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 *rumtases thing sa zónnyíŋkup tshángdo tshurín sughun nám gonun pe shu lyel mu o* [I, Tshángdo Tshering, 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 *róŋkup tshángdo tsharíng go nun pe shu* [written by me, Tshángdo Tshering Lepcha], p. 122 signed in Lepcha *cho ãre múttuncí róngkup sahu nám tshángdo tsharín go lyembyí kup pur vang kyangpóng bám bá kalók nám lavo rányóm tsha kati phongo tháp sudyer sukiyí sudyer chotshát ká likka bú go do sa katánun cho ãre 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.

*WEDDING ASTROLOGY*: 
*brig 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.

THE LEGEND OF THE GODDESS QUEEN: 
*rumpu 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 *zónnyíŋkup nákphye go nun* [I, the human creature Nákphye], p. 160 ms dated 1894-1895 in Lepcha; condition reasonable, possible incomplete, water and ink stains and insect attacks, traces of mould; p. 49 notes in blue ink in Lepcha signed Rápdenshíng Foning, pp. 165-168 different handwriting.

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 *róŋkup mungtem go nun* [written by me, Mungtem Lepcha], p. 126 ms dated 1/4/1934 in Lepcha *sukniyi zányímá gum, lavo thón gum, nám kajú gum, tsha kati tarák 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 Khámíbú 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’: *ákáp vám* (pp.155-158)
WORSHIP OF EKÁDOSHI: *ekádosi 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 *ákomp*, 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 *bóngthing*. For purposes related to his work as a *bóngthing*, 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’: párkhó sá tsu, lavo munzun sá chotsu and lótnót ká lómbá ngu sòng sá plíngril 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 mamá 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 ò linun ó.tri. ingrem 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: ekádóshi 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 p. 1. in Lepcha and Nepali, cho áre ekdoshi sa cho gum, doshi munlóm sa cho gum, áre 'Sonam Lepcha NamRing Bosty', Sonam Lepcha ko kitap [This is the book of ekádoshi, the prayerbook doshi, this is Sonam Lepcha from Namring village, Sonam Lepcha’s book].

281_NamchuManuscript4

WORSHIP OF EKÁDOSHI: ekádóshi 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 thing 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: párkhó 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; machine made 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’: *yumbá 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’: nárp un sá rumgomsóng
210×80 mm; 8 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets; machine made paper; black ink; scribe Ông Tshering Namchu, p. 8 ms signed and dated O.T. Namechu 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 Ông Tshering Namchu, p. 18 ms signed and dated O. Namechumo Lepcha 2002; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript19
‘ASTROLOGY’: khyenrúng ding nga sá tsu
210×69 mm; 6 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, one quire, stitched; handmade paper; black ink; scribe Ông Tshering Namchu, p. 6 ms signed O. Namchumo; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript20
‘ASTROLOGY’: khyenrúng ding nga sá tsu
211×70 mm; 16 pages; ms handmade, oblong bookform, one quire, stitched; handmade paper; black ink; scribe Ông Tshering Namchu, pp. 4-5, 9 ms signed in Lepcha o. tri. námtsumú, 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 Ông Tshering Namchu, p. 1 ms signed in Lepcha o.tri. námtsumú róngkup [O.T. Námchú Lepcha], p. 17 ms dated 1998; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript23
THE LEGEND OF THE GODDESS NÁNGSE: rummit khánrú nangse sá námtthár
355×140 mm; 153 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate pink paper cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Ông Tshering Namchu, p. 153 ms signed and dated O.T. Namchu [signature] 19/2/1999, in Lepcha go óngdi tsharing numtsumú [I, Ôngdi Tshering Namchu]; condition good.

281_NamchuManuscript24
THE LEGEND OF THE GODDESS QUEEN: rum pundi sá námtthár
355×140 mm; 184 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate pink paper cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Ông 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: lingse chókyít
355×140 mm; 142 pages; ms handmade, loose sheets and separate pink paper cover; machinemade paper; black ink; scribe Ông Tshering Namchu, p. 142 ms signed and dated O.T. Namchu [signature] 1999, colophon in Lepcha; condition good.
THE LEGEND OF THÔNGSAL 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.

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.

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.

‘DEATH RITUALS’: *rumdár sónq sá mumlöm ryák cho 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.

‘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.

‘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.

‘DEATH RITUALS’: *rumlàtbú fátká théká thâp týektá 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.

‘DEATH RITUALS’: *rumlàtbú sá pûmlom 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 [rumlótbú 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. rónkup námtsumú [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.
THE LEGENDARY ORIGIN OF TOBACCO: tánku 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.

‘DEATH RITUALS’: nyú thing 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 nyúthing lóm frón, O.T. Namchumo; condition good.

2.3 The Adyenmu Collection
The Adyenmu Collection is owned by Dendrúp Adyenmu Lepcha, originally from Mane Gombú in Kalimpong, but now resident in Gangtok, Sikkim. Dendrúp Lepcha is a wellknown literary figure and journalist in Gangtok. Dendrúp 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. Dendrúp Lepcha would be willing to participate in a future preservation project.

Title unknown
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.

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.

‘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 chörten.
281_ChuksungManuscript7
‘ASTROLOGY’: chotshât ngâk shang sâ 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 illegibly because of fading, some pages torn, ms incomplete; p. 13 illustration of chörten and plants.

281_ChuksungManuscript8
Title unknown: ni tyu juk sâ cho, mu wúng nung sâ 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 rónkup THILOK thiluk lapche, p. 68 ms dated in Nepali 30-4-85 pudho lapche; condition reasonable, water stains; p. 2 notes in Nepali.

281_ChuksungManuscript9
‘ANCESTRAL WORSHIP’: thikúng 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 Támsângmú is a traditional religious specialist, a bôngthing, 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 Tamyong’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 sâ 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 ÚKDRÉ: 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-ŎNG: gúrú cho ông
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 Róngku p, who formerly was in the Indian Army, but now practices as a traditional religious specialist, a bónghing. 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 ÚKDRÉ: 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’: bông tông tshe tsu

281_ChongManuscript5
THE STORY OF LORD TASHE: tashe sung

281_ChongManuscript6
A NUN'S RETURN FROM HELL: nungyang mun delûk

281_ChongManuscript7
THE LEGEND OF GURÜ CHO-ÖNG: gûrû cho öng

281_ChongManuscript8
LAZONG, BOOK ON THE LEPCHA ALPHABET: lâzông

281_ChongManuscript9
LAZONG, BOOK ON THE LEPCHA ALPHABET: lâzông

281_ChongManuscript10
THE LEGEND OF TRIMIK KUNDEN: trimîk kundyen
THE GODDESS OF DESTINY: rummit kîngtsûm dármít

281_ChongManuscript11
THE STORY OF KÂRMÁ ÖNGJUN: kàrmá öngjun 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, lâmbo sa sung gum, yúkmun sa sung gum, lâmbo cho[gyík]sa sung gum, gye lenchi lâmbo sa su ng gum, chi lin sa sung gum, [lungtyen sa sung pang ábi rima nürtíng go zúk lung tho ma ákup ázón yâmbo 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 mirm gum shám kú gum ágyít re yúp do hângmu gum. [NIT scans 2: 38-77]

**281_NITManuscript3**  
**LAZÖNG, BOOK ON THE LEPCHA ALPHABET:** lâzóng (pp. 0-44 and 76-77)  
**THE GODDESS OF DESTINY:** rummít kingtsúm dármít (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 BIRÜTSÁNÁ:** lapân birütsáná  
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 nong 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 i. Taseything, Lepcha god. [NIT scans 5: 147-216]
**281_NITManuscript6**

**THE GODDESS OF DESTINY: rummit kíngtsúm dármít**

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 Darmit (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: tukfyil 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: rummit kíngtsúm dármít 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 likbá ngák 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 Chhoqey 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 chörten 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]
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]

LAZONG, 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]

LAZONG, 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 Grammar. Some 1st pages are missing (Incomplete) D.K. Lucksom 20/12/72; Label Mss No 7. [NIT scans 22: 471-498]

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]

THE LEGEND OF TRIMIK KUNDEN: trimik 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 No15. [NIT scans 23: 499-538]

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]

‘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
LÂZÓNG, 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
elsewhere 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 accommodation, 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

