

The Manger: As Kirata Through the Historical Perspective in Sikkim

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ABSTRACT

The history of Magar or Mangar is shrouded in mystery and obscurity in India. It is generally perceived that like some of the other caste of the Nepali community, the Mangars are regarded as mere an immigrant community without a concrete background in India. However, the History of Sikkim unfurled the existence of Mangar in India with a definite historical background, which also reflects the community not only as the oldest but having a kirata connectivity in Indian history.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The Yajurveda has the first mention of Kirata or Cirata (Sukla Yajurveda, Vajasaneyi Samhita, XXX, 16; also, Krsna Yajurveda, Taittiriya Brahmana, III, 4.12.1). According to Macdonell and Keith's Vedic Index on Kirata, "Kirata is a name applied to a people living in the caves of the mountains, as appears clearly from the dedication of the Kirata to caves (guha) in the Vajasaneyi Samhita (also Taittiriya Brahmana) and from the reference in the Atharvaveda to Kirata girl (kairatika), who digs a remedy on the ridges of the mountains." The Kiratas were later found in Eastern Nepal, although the term appears to have been used to refer to any hill people, most likely aborigines, even if the Manava Dharma-Sastra saw them as inferior Ksatriyas (ref.X,44)¹. The Kiratas, who make up a significant portion of the tribal communities residing in the Himalayan and sub-Himalayan regions, forest tracts, mountainous areas, and the Gangetic plains, valleys, and delta of India, have been the subject of least importance among the tribes described in ancient Indian and Classical (Greek and Latin) literature.²

2. DIFFERENT VIEWS REGARDING THE ORIGIN OF KIRATAS

According to G.P. Singh, the epics—the Ramayana and the Mahabharata—were the most valuable sources in the post-Vedic era. The Balkanda and the Kiskindhaa Kanda of Valmiki Ramayana discussed their origins, movement, physical characteristics, habitation in the marshy area close to the sea coast, etc. In the Uttarkanda of his Ramacharitamanasa, Tulsidasa also mentioned the Kirata and Khasa together. In a similar vein, the semi-historical Mahabharata offers a highly lucid and trustworthy account of the Kiratas. Ten of the Mahabharata's eighteen Parvas are useful for studying Kiratas. Historical data regarding ancient Indian tribes and races can be found in the puranic records, which include the Mahapuranas and the Up-Puranas. It is true that mythological details, exaggerations, religious bias, and other abnormalities have tainted the classic stories found in the Puranas. Nevertheless, the Puranic

narratives cannot be considered completely unreliable despite numerous glaring flaws. Numerous Puranic accounts of the Kiratas provide extremely positive details regarding various facets of their way of life and culture. They have been referred to as the inhabitants, nations, and Janapadas of India's eastern, northern, or Uttarapatha, southern, western, and mountainous regions.³

3. MAGAR AS THE LATER ARRIVAL 'PRONOMINALISED' DIALECTS SPEAKER

One of the surviving members of the original non-Aryan race, the Kiratas, create a broad framework for historical research on their civilization and culture. They are extensively dispersed and divided, which is reflected in the current situation. The Kirata culture originated in the "North Eastern, North Western, Central, and Deccan regions" in the past.⁴ According to Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, the first Mongoloid settlers were quite primitive, primarily hunters and gatherers who lived in caves. A late Buddhist narrative that has very little historical significance claims that the Tibetans arrived in their nation around the middle of the first millennium B.C., during the time of the Buddha. The "Himalayan" Mongoloids of Nepal, who speak languages like Newari, Lepcha, Magar, and Gurung as well as "pronominalized" languages like Dhimal, Khambu, Kanawari, and others, may have come before them. The Newars, Lepchas, Magars, Gurungs, and other late immigrants are likely represented by speakers of the "pronominalized" dialects.⁵ He further opined that the Mongoloid tribes speaking dialects of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan speech family might have found a center of dispersion in a region east of Tibet and northeast of Assam, from which they started to spread into Tibet and India. The movement may have begun, as previously suggested, at least before 1000 B.C.⁶

4. THE MANGAR AS THE ABORIGINES OF SIKKIM

The Magars or Mangars,⁷ one of the Kirata people of the Eastern Himalayas is an aboriginal person from Sikkim and Nepal. They are among Sikkim's oldest tribes. Rajesh Verma has plausibly asserted that the Kiratis include Rai, Limbu, Gurung, Mangar and Tamang tribe of Sikkim. The first people to settle in ancient Sikkim were the Mangars, Limbus, and Lepcha.⁸ Iman Singh Chemjong has stated that a place called Shin in the northern part of the Himalayas was the original home of the Mangars.⁹ The Magars are described by Hamilton (1819) as a Himalayan Tribe "Wallowing in all the ancient abominations of the mountaineers", and found anywhere in the Himalayan region.¹⁰ Iman Singh Chemjong has further stated that in the East Nepal and Sikkim the Mangars are so called because they were the children of Mang, Mong or Mongol people. The Chinese and Burmese people call Mang or Mong for Mongolians and ar or arui means children. So, Mangar means the Children of Mongols....their complexion proves that they are no other than scattered Mongolians.¹¹ According to Rahul Sanskrityayan's *Madhya Asia ko Itihas* (History of Central Asia), the learned author has identified the Ancient Mangar as the Kirat tribe of Sikkim and Nepal with Kirait, one of the Central Asian nomadic tribes. He claims that one branch of the Kirait and Mongku tribes of Central Asia expanded to Suchuwang, Yunan, Burma, Eastern India, and Nepal long before the region adopted the term Mongol or Mongolians (around the 12th or 13th century A.D.) They do not claim to be of Mongol descent, nor did they hear the name. He claims that the Mangar tribe of Nepal must be descended from the Kirait and Mongku composite group that arrived in Sikkim and changed their name to Mangar.¹² After settling in Sikkim sometime before the fifth century,

the Mangars, also known as the Magars, reigned independently in each of its regions, just as the Lepchas and Limbus.¹³

5. VIEWS IN SUPPORT OF CONNECTION WITH SIKKIM AND INDIA

Iman Singh Chemjong said that the Mangars originally lived in Shin, a location in the northern Himalayas, based on his dependence on the Kirata Mundhum. From there, a group of individuals led by Shing and Chitu Mangar traveled to the South. They were referred to by the Southerners as Tansang Thapa, which translates to "people who came from the far away north." These Mangar tribes eventually proliferated, split into twelve divisions, and were dubbed "Barah Mangars" (twelve Mangars). Shinjali Thapa, Honjali Thapa, Hungchun Thapa, Chhoday Thapa, Pudkey Thapa, Munday Thapa, Udhro Thapa, Bairang Thapa, Ishar Thapa, Barahi Thapa, Hangyung Thapa, and Hangshe Thapa were the Twelve Mangars. They made Sikkim their permanent home after arriving there..¹⁴ There is undoubtedly some validity to the Mangar tribe's genesis and migratory history recorded in the Kirata Mundhum. Although Shin is typically associated with Chin, in this instance it seems to relate to Tibet. Additionally, Mangars are a Kirat sect that is said to have introduced sweet potatoes to Sikkim and Nepal, according to Nepalese tradition. In particular, the Lepcha tribe referred to the potatoes brought by the Mangar tribe as Mangorbook.¹⁵

6. SETTLEMENT OF MANGAR IN SIKKIM

Mangars, a tribe now confined to Nepal west of Arun, are the aborigines of Sikkim, whence they were driven by the Lepchas westward into the country of the Limboos and by this latter further west (Nepal) still," according to John Dalton Hooker, who carried out a scientific expedition in Sikkim in 1848–1849. They have now converted to Hinduism and are thought to have been barbarians rather than Tibetans."¹⁶ While discussing the "History of Sikkim and its Rules," H.H. Risley also brought up the Magar chiefs' or kings' authority over Sikkim. The chief Sintu Pati Sen founded a Magarjong in Mangsari, West Sikkim, around 1600 A.D., and ruled the surrounding areas for many years. The Ruins of Mangarjong at Mangsari, West Sikkim provides proof of it. Similarly, remains of several Mangarjong Mansong Mangarjong of Suldung, Kamrung, Famtham, Sudunglakha, Berthang-Berfok Mangarjong and Rateypani Kateng Mangarjong, are the historical and archeological significance.¹⁷

According to Iman Singh Chemjong, the Magar tribe of India, were in Sikkim and reigned there before the Bhutia of Sikkim. Sintu Pati Sen established a sizable kingdom in Western Sikkim in the sixteenth century. With the passage of time the numerous socio-economic and religious elements contributed to their slide from a powerful and beautiful past to a little-known backward cast of Nepali community and so as of Indian society.¹⁸

7. THE CLOSE AFFINITY OF MANGAR AND LEPCHA IN SIKKIM

The composite group of Kirait and Mongku, who migrated to Sikkim and became Mangar, must be the ancestors of the Mangar tribe in Nepal. Certain Lapcha tribes were referred to as Mongormu, he

continued. He believed that some Mangar tribes may have mixed with Sikkim's Lepcha tribe to become the Lapcha Kirat people.¹⁹

I.S. Chemjong further argued that “There is another proof of affinity of the Mangar and Lepcha tribe in counting numbers. The Mangar tribe counts one, two, three, four, five, Six, seven askat, **net or nis, som buli, banga, lam, sing** and the Lapcha tribe calls **kat, net, sam fuli, fungo, lom, syang.**”²⁰ The Limbu tribe calls six, seven, eight, nine, as, **Lam, sing, sha, lung, singbung** whereas the Mangar as **Lam, Sing, shya, lhung, sing.**²¹

There are proof that the Mangar Kirat people live in Sikkim. Furthermore, the Mangar chiefs were so powerful in Sikkim that they continued to clash with the Sikkimese chiefs until the 18th century A.D. According to Sikkimese history, the chiefs made every effort to subjugate the Mangar Chief by maintaining a matrimonial relationship with him. Chhangzat Karwang, the Chief Minister of Sikkim married the daughter of one of the Mangar chiefs of Sikkim and tried to keep amicable contact with them, but the Mangar Chief of Sikkim knew that nothing could be anticipated from the Buddhist monarch of Sikkim and they utterly abandoned the Sikkimese relation and their existence in the history of Sikkim had been send to oblivion. However, the existence of Mangar jongs or the Fort of Mangar tribe in various place of Sikkim, itself shows testimony of their existence in Sikkim.

8. LOCATION OF MANGAR AND THEIR RELATIVITY IN SIKKIM

J.R. Subba, opined that prior to the formation of "The Greater Sikkim" through the "Lho-Mon-Tsong Sum" Tripartite Treaty, Mangars lived and governed at least a portion of Sikkim. The leaders of the three communities signed the agreement at Denzong Phuntso Khangsar in 1642, a Water Horse Year, the year that Phuntso Namgyal took the throne as First Chogyal at Yoksom Norbugang in what is now Western Sikkim. This marked the integration of the land resources of the Lhorees (Bhutias), Monrees (Lepcha), and Tsongrees (Limboos), extending the area of "The Greater Sikkim" from Chumbi Valley in the north (now Tibet-China), Har Chu Valley and Am Mochu Valley in the east (now Bhutan), to the east of the Arun River in the west (now Nepal).²²

He further wrote that in the Tripartite Treaty, translated in English by Prof. Ringu Tulku, there is a mention that:

“During the last Mongpa War some people’s action were noted and let them be beware of now from this year of Water Horse Year onwards we will abide by the commands of the King, his Guru and his Sons and will never let arise a bad thought against Sikkim.”

From this paragraph of the treaty, It reveals that the Mangar Chiefs opposed the Bhutia monarchs' supremacy and the formation of "The Greater Sikkim," which was violently overthrown, and the chief was either slain or vanished from the Greater Sikkim region. However, he is also unclear that the Mangpa war he referenced was the conflict between Mangar leaders and the Bhutias in the Mangarjong area of Mangsari, West Sikkim of the Greater Sikkim, or the "Kangpachen valley and Tambar valley" of Limbuwan..²³

The Limbus and Magars were identified as ethnic groups in Sikkim in 1642. B.C. Das observed that the ethnic scene of Sikkim started to a rapid change with the advent of the British. Darjeeling was a part of

Sikkim till 1780. During 1780-1816 it remained under Nepal. In 1816, while implementing the Indo-Nepal Treaty or Segauli treaty, it was given over to the British.²⁴ From the Maharaja's History of Sikkim, it is revealed that the Mangars were in Sikkim prior to 1642 as evident from the account of a travel of the first Chogyal Phuntsho Namgyal of Sikkim, who was consecrated in 1642, across the Kingdom.²⁵

Historian Kumar Pradhan mentioned that during the 17th century when the Tibetans invaded Sikkim, they might have won some of the territories occupied by the Limbu and Magar.²⁶ It is mentioned in the history of Sikkim that from Rumtek to Ragdong to Yangong 'there were Lapche and Magars and they were subjugated. Even after the Tibetans occupied Sikkim by the Tibetans, there were rebellions by the Rong (Lapche) and Chong (Limbu), and the old charters of the Sikkimese kings gave the authority to the Pahadiya (Limbu and Magar) chiefs, to bring silk robes from the state and beat the drum in the locality, as a demonstration of their status and honor when they went out. There are also mentions of the children of Subba here and there in this book.²⁷

Santosh Allay has published the book, 'Magar Jati ko Itihas and Sanskriti Sikkim ko Sandharbh ma' (The History of Mangar and its Culture in Sikkim Context) after a detail survey of various fort of Mangar chief in Sikkim viz; Mangsari Magarjong, Barthak -Barfok Mangarjong, Ratepani Kateng Mangarjong, Kamrang Magarjng, Famtam Magarjong, Sudunglakha Magarjong, Suldung jong, Kitam jong, Magardalam.²⁸

9. EVALUATION

According to Shiva Kumar Rai, "certain areas of Sikkim were under Nepal once, and likewise some parts of Nepal were under Sikkim....As a result, it is natural for the different communities in Sikkim and Nepal to freely relocate and establish themselves in different regions of both countries..²⁹ Hence, the settlement of Magar in Sikkim is not a mere perception rather historically proven with various archaeological sites located in Sikkim. The community might not mere be termed as migrant subject in India, as the history of Sikkim reflects it precisely. It is very essential to preserve these historical sites and documents, which can unveil numerous facts and provide resources about the enriched history of the Mangar in Sikkim and elsewhere of India.

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