PART IV: THE VILLAGE AND THE STATE
CHAPTER TEN

RITUAL, THE VILLAGE AND THE STATE

The political, economic and administrative changes that have swept through Sikkim in recent decades have not been without consequences in its ritual field. The first section of this chapter addresses the changes that have taken place within the village’s local administration and its relation with Gangtok. Despite a complete upheaval of the political and administrative system following Sikkim’s integration in democratic India, I argue that household ritual obligations and the traditional way of local administration are still fundamental factors involved in the management of Tingchim’s Lhopo community. The following sections illustrate how Buddhism was the dominant way in which the village related to the outside world in pre-1975 Sikkim, and how it has partly regained this role in the 1990s after temporarily losing its importance following the end of the Buddhist monarchy. We will see that household and other distinctively Sikkimese rituals, which have been so important in helping to define the Lhopo community throughout recent decades, are likely to continue to do so for a number of reasons despite the decline of bon and the renewed influence of conventional Buddhism in the 1990s.

1. LOCAL ADMINISTRATION AND THE VILLAGE’S UNITY

We have seen in chapter 2 that until the 1930s, Tingchim village’s head was called pipon and was nominated by the elders. The headship of the village eventually passed into the hands of Tsing Tsing, who had been appointed *mandal* by the Chogyal. Following the abolition of landlordism in 1951, Tsing Tsing started handing over the taxes directly to the Palace instead of to the Phodong monastery. With the help of

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1 Tsing Tsing’s father, Pipon Chongtong Lepgay, had been village head before him. They were of the Kalong lineage.