

Appendix-I

Place Names in Darjeeling

PLACE NAMES IN DARJEELING

THIS Appendix contains a list of the names of various places, rivers and mountains in Darjeeling, and of the peaks and passes visible from it with their meanings. It has been compiled mainly from an article written by Colonel Waddell and published in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (Vol. LX, part I, 1891). In that article Colonel Waddell very lucidly shows how remarkably descriptive are these native names. "The oldest names," he writes, "are found to be of Lepcha origin. The Lepchas from their wild forest life are 'born' naturalists, possessing a name for nearly every natural product, animal or vegetable, whether of economic value or not. Hence they readily gave discriminating names to the chief mountains, rivers and sites in their neighbourhood. A few of these old names still survive in places where the Lepchas no longer are present. The Bhotiyas, on settling in Sikkim, bestowed their own names on many of the already named sites, partly perhaps from the fact that the meaning of the Lepcha name was not evident, and partly to express their contempt for the Lepchas. Thus, many of the hills and rivers possess two names. And since the influx of Nepalis a third synonym in the Parbatiya dialect of Hindi has been added in several instances for rivers, mountains and already named sites.....The great majority of the names are given by illiterate persons, so that grammatical accuracy is not always to be expected. The names, as to their meaning, may be generally classed as descriptive; a few are mythological and religious, but these are chiefly confined to monastery names; and the personal designations perpetuating the names of the founders of villages are found almost exclusively amongst the Pahariya settlements. The descriptive names predominate, and these usually well express some very obvious physical feature of the site or river *e.g.*, of rivers, an especial tortuosity, steepness. impetuosity, shallowness or

otherwise of a course or channel ; of mountains, their shape, appearance, etc. ; of village sites, the stony, precipitous, meadow-like character, quality of soil, jungle-product, conspicuous tree, etc."

The river names are generally of Lepcha origin, the Bhotias merely substituting for the Lepcha suffix *ung*. i.e., water, the suffix *chhu* which has the same meaning ; while the Nepalis sub-stitute *khola* (literally a valley) or *nadi*, the ordinary Hindi name for a river ; in the case of hill streams, however, the Nepali name is *jhora*, a word derived from a Sanskrit root meaning "to lay waste." which is admirably descriptive of these mountain torrents. These Lepcha river names frequently have the prefix *rang* which conveys the sense of extension or length. The mountain names are mainly of Lepcha or Bhotia origin, the former calling a mountain *hlo* or *chu* and the latter *ri* (e.g., Chumulhari) ; while the Nepalis have no individual names for the various snowy peaks. The names of the mountain passes again are all of Tibetan origin, owing to the fact that while the Lepchas have kept to the lower hills and valleys, the Tibetans who settled in Darjeeling, Nepal and Sikkim frequent the cooler heights and have always kept up a commercial and religious intercourse with the table-land of Tibet ; the Tibetan term *la* or pass is also frequently applied to the mountain itself. The names of places commonly have some suffix merely meaning a place, village, etc., thus *bong*, called *pung* by the Limbus, is the Lepcha word for a resting place, *kyong* for a village, and *tam* for a level spot. The ending *bong* again is the Tibetan for a stump or foundation, and is used for a residential village ; *ling* merely means a place, *sing* a field, *gung* a ridge and *lung* a valley, while the suffix *tong* is frequently a corruption of *thang* or meadow.

To indicate the origin of the various names in the following list the symbol L. has been used for Lepcha, T. for Tibetan or Bhotia, N. for Nepali or Parbatiya Hindi, and B. for Bengali.

Ambiokh (T)—The place below the demon's shrine.

Ambutia (N)—The place of mango trees.

Badamtam (L)—The bank of the *padam* bamboo, the giant bamboo which furnishes the Lepchas with their milk jugs, water-vessels, etc. There was formerly a forest of these bamboos at the place known by this name.

Baghdogra (B)—The place of roaring tigers, a village in the Terai formerly much infested by tigers.

Balasan (B)—The river of golden sand, a Bengali name suggested by this river's wide bed of yellowish sand. Baluasan, the Nepali form of the name, has the same meaning.

Batasia (N)—The windy site.

Chiabhanjan (N)—The mushroom pass, a name suggested by the number of mushrooms growing by this *bhanjan* or pass between the hills.

Chola (T)—The lordly pass, said to be so called on account of its height and difficult approach. According to another derivation, it means the lake pass, a name derived from its chain of lakelets.

Chongtong (L)—The arrow-headed place, a name given to a site at the junction of two streams.

Chumulhari (T)—The mountain of our lady goddess.

Chunabati (N)—The lime-kiln.

Daling (T).—The place of the arrow, so called because the hill on which the old Bhutanese fort stands is sub-conical, resembling an arrow-head in shape. The name is also explained as meaning the stony site, as the fort is perched on the precipitous edge of some gneiss rocks.

Darjeeling (T)—The place of the *darje* or mystic thunder bolt. See the article on Darjeeling.

Dhajia (N)—The ridge of prayer flags.

Dichhu (T)—The old name for the Jaldhaka. It is merely a word meaning water, *di* being the Bodo word and *chhu* the Bhotia word for water.

1. Among the Himalayas.

Dongkya-la (T)—The frozen yak pass. A herd of wild yaks in attempting to spend the night in this pass (18,100 feet high) were frozen to death.

Gayabari (N)—The cow-shed. The word may also be a corruption of Gehunbari or the place of wheat; there are numerous wheat fields in the neighbourhood.

Ghum (N)—The name of the native covering made of leaves and bamboo strips, the shape of which resembles a Λ . The position of the village of Ghum, which occupies a narrow ridge on the summit of two steep slopes, has suggested this name. Another and more probable explanation is that the name means merely the bend of the hill, which is very distinct at this place.

Ghumti (N)—The turn of the road.

Gidhapahar (N)—The vulture's hill. Here great numbers of vultures infest the rocky cliffs overlooking the plain.

Ging (T)—The stretched-out slope.

Gok (L)—A name meaning narrow and difficult of access; an old military post on a narrow promontory between the Ramman and the Great and Little Rangit rivers.

Gorubathan (N)—The grazing station or the herd of cattle.

Jalapahar (N)—The burnt hill. This name is an allusion to the bareness of the hill and its slopes. The Lepchas have a far more picturesque name for it—Kung-gol-hlo or the fallen-tree hill. "The torturous spurs," writes Colonel Waddell, "running down from the steep foreshortened ridge of Jalapahar, represent the torn-up roots of the prostrate tree: the trunk is the ridge extending to Darjeeling; and the two main branches are the spurs of Birch Hill and Lebung, from which extend the innumerable ramifications of smaller spurs that form the branchlets."¹

Jaldhaka—The hidden water, so called because in one place the stream sinks down and disappears for some distance, flowing underneath the porous gravel and detritus.

1. Among the Himalayas

Jano (T)—The mountain of massed rainbows. The Tibetan name appears to be Ja-o Pung-ri bearing this meaning, and it seems likely that this name was abbreviated to Ja-o, and thence corrupted to Jano.

Jelep-la (T)—The lovely level pass, so called because it is the easiest and most level of all the passes between Tibet and Sikkim.

Jorbangala (N)—A pair of bungalows. Formerly there were only two bungalows above what is now a thriving bazar.

Jorpokhri (N)—A pair of pools.

Kabru (T)—In the Manual of the Sikkim-Bhutia Language by Graham Sandberg this mountain is referred to as Kyabru or the horn of protection. The name is more properly, however, Kabru, which is possibly a corruption of Kangbur or the swelling of snow; it might also mean the white swelling (*kar-bur*), but in Tibetan the adjective is not generally placed before the noun in this way. According to local native authorities, the name means simply camphor, but it is not clear why such a name should be given. It is also said that the name applies to a peak close to Kinchinjunga on the south-east, and not to the peak known to Europeans as Kabru, and that the name of the latter is really Pahung Ri—a designation now given, in the corrupted form of Powhunri, to a mountain near the Dongkya-la.

Kagjhora (N)—The crows' stream, a name given to a mountain rivulet in the station of Darjeeling. The name is said to be due to the fact that a large number of crows used to crowd round the municipal rubbish heap, which was formerly situated close to this stream.

Kalapokhri (N)—The black pool.

Kalijhora (N)—The black stream.

Kalimpong (T)—The stockade (*pong*) of the king's minister (*Kalon*). The place was formerly the head-quarters of a Bhutanese governor.

Kinchinjhau (T)—The great bearded peak of snow, a name referring to the monster icicles of this high mountain.

Kinchinjunga (T)—A corruption of Kangchhendzonga, meaning the five treasure houses of the great snows (*Kang* snow, *chhen* great, *dzo* treasury, *nga* (five), a name given to the mountain with reference to its five peaks. The highest peak, which is lit up by the glow of the rising and setting sun, is the treasury of gold ; the southern peak, which remains in cold grey shade till it is silvered by the rising sun, is the treasury of silver ; and the remaining peaks are the treasuries of gems, grain and holy books, which the Tibetans regard as the most valuable of possessions. The Lepchas, however, call the mountain Konglo Chu, *i.e.*, the highest curtain of the snows.

Kurseong (L)—It has been suggested that this name is a corruption of *Kurson-rip*, the small white orchid, which grows plentifully round Kurseong and that it means "the place of white orchids." Another suggestion is that it refers to a cane which used to grow there in rich profusion, and which the Lepchas in their "Rong-ring," as they term their own language, call *kur*, and that 'seong' is a corruption of *sheang*, a stick. There are still a few of these canes to be found in the forest behind Eagle's Crag.

Laba (T)—The wind-swept site.

Lebong (L)—The tongue-like spur, a corruption of *ali*, a tongue, and *abong*, a mouth.

Lepcha Jagat (N)—The Lepcha toll-bar. A place near the frontier where the Lepchas once levied toll on the Nepali imports into Sikkim.

Lopchu (L)—This place is referred to as Lopchok or the cool stone by Colonel Waddell in his book "Among the Himalayas". It may be possible that the word is a corruption of *lap-tso*, *i.e.*, stones set up as sign-posts to show the way ; the Lepchas and Bhotias place leaves on such stones in the belief that this will prevent them getting tired. The name is also sometimes pronounced Lukchok, and may perhaps mean the pasture land of sheep.

Mahaldi (L)—The bent-going river. This river, as seen from the hills, takes a sudden bend to the right on reaching

the plains, and has apparently been given this name in contrast to the Rangnyu or straight river, the Lepcha name for the other great effluent of Sikkim, the Tista.

Mahaldiram (L)—The fountain-head or source of the Mahaldi, a name given to the ridge near Kurseong because that river rises below it.

Mahanadi (B)—The great river, the Bengali corruption of Mahaldi.

Manibhanjan (N)—The dip (*bhanjan*) between the hills by the *mani* (a buddhist monument).

Matighara (N)—The mud house. The first mud house met with at the foot of the hills ; in the hills the houses are made of wood or stone.

Mechi (B)—The river of the Meches, a name suggested by this river being the western boundary of the aboriginal Meches.

Minchu (T)—The mineral springs.

Mirik (L)—The burnt hill, *mi-rek* being the Lepcha name for the burning of Jungel.

Nagri (L)—A corruption of *nak*, straight, and *gri*, a high stockaded fort.

Naksal (T)—The forest hunting grove.

Narsingh (T)—The uplifted nose (properly Narseng), a designation descriptive of the mountain as seen from Lower Sikkim.

Paglajhora (N)—The mad torrent, a name due to the violent outbursts of this mountain stream, which carries off the drainage of a vast ridge, and is therefore liable to sudden freshets.

Pandim (L)—The king's minister. The high peak next to Kinchinjunga is so called because it is considered to be the attendant of the god of the mountain. It has also been suggested that the name may mean the conical hill with a point like a needle.

Panighata (N)—The water-mill, the place where gain is ground by water-mills.

Pankasari (T)—The pasture land of *kasha* grass.

Pashok (L)—The Jungle. Here the dense subtropical jungle of forest of the Tista valley commences.

Pedong (T)—The halting place at the Po tree, *i.e.*, the *sal* or a kind of cypress from the gum of which incense is made.

Phalut (L)—The denuded peak, so called because the top of the mountain is bare of forest. The name has been corrupted by the Bhotias to Phalilung, meaning the shield of the winds and apparently referring to the fact that the mountain helps to shield Lower Sikkim from the south-west monsoon. The mountain is accordingly called Phalalum in the Statistical Account of Bengal.

Phubsering (T)—The name is said to be that of a Bhotia *sardar*, who first opened out the tea-garden now known by this designation. properly it is Phurpusring, *i.e.*, Sring who was born on a Thursday (*Phurpu*), it being a common practice to name Tibetan children after the day on which they are born.

Pobong (L)—The place of the *Po* bamboo.

Pulbazar (N)—The bridge market, the name of a village at the bridge over the Little Rangit and of other places similarly situated.

Ramman (L)—A corruption of *Ra*, a surging and tumultuous advance; and *Mong*, a demon, the name of the lake Mong-do, beyond Phalut, from which this river issues.

Rangarun (L)—The turning of the great river. For an explanation of this name, *see* the article above on Rangarun.

Rangfo (L)—The muddy brown extended water. A rivulet rising in the reddish laterite soil of the low outer hills, which joins the Tista near Sivok.

Rangit (N)—The Nepali corruption of Rangnyit, the river being known by the Bhotias as the Rangnyit chhu, and by the Lepchas as the Rangnyit ung. The latter is the original name and means the two extended waters, *i.e.*, the Great and Little Rangit, which are the principal rivers of Sikkim proper, as the Tista, which is larger, rises beyond Sikkim.

Rangjo (L)—The precipitous river, the name of a tributary of the Tista.

Rangli (L)—The Lepcha's house.

Rangliot (L)—The place of the receding waters. *See* the article on Rangarun.

Rangnu (L)—The straight-going river.

Rangpo (L)—The shifting or wandering river.

Rangtong (L)—The southern river.

Rayeng (L)—The spread-out or shallow river, a name given to a shallow and broadish stream near Sivok.

Rhenok (T)—The black hill. The soil of the hill is a very black humus. The name may however be a corruption of a word meaning the hill whose outline is like that of a nose.

Rikhyisum or **Risum** (B)—The three hills, so called because three ridges meet at this site.

Rilli (L)—The swirling river.

Rishi (T)—The hill top (*ri-tse*).

Rishihat (N)—The place of the saint.

Rishi-la (T)—The pass of the slipping mountain (*ri-shik*) so called because the pass has the appearance of a land slip.

Sabargum (L)—The cliff of the musk-deer, a name given to the peak between Sandakphu and Phalut because of the animals which used to haunt it.

Sandakphu (T)—The height of the poison-plant, *i.e.*, the aconite, which grows thickly for some distance below the peak known by this name.

Senchal (L)—The damp, misty hill, a name given to the ridge near Dajreeling, which overlooks the plains, receives the full force of the monsoon, and is cloud-capped for the greater part of the year.

Sepoydhura (N)—The sepoy's lines, the lines of the old Pioneer sepoy's now disbanded.

Siliguri—The stony site. A Koch name due to the fact that the bed of the Mahanadi by which Siliguri is situated is a mass of broken stone.

Simana-basti (N)—The boundary village, the name of a small village on the Nepal frontier.

Singalila (L)—The mountain of the alder tree (*single-la*).

Singtom (L)—An abbreviation of *shing*, a garden, and *tam*, a level spot.

Siniolchu (L)—The peak of the seven devils, Siniol being the name of a family of seven devils who fought there in bygone ages. It may be suggested, however, that the name is a corruption of *Sin* (mist), *sonon* (snow) and *chu* (mountain), *i.e.*, the mountain of mist and snow.

Sitong (L)—Tiger hill. A hill near Kurseong overlooking the Tarai, which was formerly frequented by tigers.

Sivok (L)—More properly suvok, from *su*, a breeze or rush of cool air, and *vok*, concentrated. The mouth of the gorge whence the Tista debouches on the plains, along which a strong breeze blows.

Sonada (L)—The bear's lair. Bears formerly frequented the neighbourhood and are still found there.

Sukiapokhri (N).—The dry pool.

Sukna (N)—The dry site. Sukna is in the Tarai, but on a plateau at the base of a spur, where the water level is comparatively low.

Takvar (L)—A corruption of *tak*, a hook-thread, and *vor*, a fish-hook, a name suggested by the curve of the land.

Tanglu (L)—The hill of fir trees.

Tendong (L)—The uplifted horn. For an explanation of the meaning of this name, see the article on Darjeeling.

Tindharia (N)—The three ridges.

Tirihana (N)—A form of Tarai, *i.e.*, a swamp or marshy tract.

Tista (N)—An abbreviation of Trisrota, *i.e.*, the three currents. Until 1787 A. D. when it suddenly forsook its old bed and opened for itself a new channel, the Tista, on emerging from the hills, divided into three portions—the

Atrai, Purnabhadra and Karatoya, which each followed independent courses to the Ganges and Brahmaputra. The Bhotia name for this river is Tsang-chhu or the pure water, while the Lepchas call it the Rangnyung or the great straight-going water, in allusion to the fact that it continues in a straight unaltered course in spite of receiving a great accession to its waters from the Great Rangit joining it at right angles. It has also been suggested, however, that the word is derived from *di* or *ti*, the Bodo word for water.

Tung (N)—The place of the *tun* tree (*Cedrela toona*).

