# *Features of the Daily Life in the Scandinavian Alliance Mission Stations in Sikkim, 1895–1910*

**Pilvi Vainonen**

The Scandinavian Alliance Mission (hereinafter SAM) started the Himalayan Mission in 1892. Their actual target was Tibet but as the country was closed for foreigners, the mission stations were founded in India and in the small Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim, the main station being in Ghum near Darjeeling. The closest stations to Tibet were founded in the Sikkimese villages of Lachen and Lachung near the southern frontier of Tibet, and there were hopes that the activities could eventually be extended to Tibet as well. The SAM, like all the other missions in the area was acting in colonial circumstances under the British authority. In this article, I draw some characteristics of the everyday life missionaries were leading in these conditions in the small Sikkimese villages and in Ghum amid local peoples, customs and languages, first ill-prepared but gradually adjusting themselves to the circumstances and culture. Even if the missionaries formed a joint network, the daily life they were leading was relatively isolated and sometimes the everyday circumstances were challenging. The body behind the Mission was the Free Church denomination, and I have got a kind permission from the Evangelical Free Church of Finland to use their archival materials for my PhD study in progress. As this material has been used as the primary source for this article, the viewpoint lays mainly in the daily life of the Finnish missionaries.

## 1. Sikkim

### 1.1 The Scene

Sikkim is situated in the foot of the Kanchenjunga mountain range within the watershed of the Tista River. It lies south of Tibet and faces Nepal in the west, Bhutan in the southeast, and India in the south. Now the second-smallest Indian state, Sikkim was historically a Buddhist kingdom, the first Chogyal or Dharma Raja ("religious king") Phuntsog Namgyal being crowned in 1642.[1]

There had been many conflicts with the neighbouring countries during centuries, and eventually the British colonial regime made Sikkim as its protectorate. The Darjeeling area had been a part of Sikkim but was annexed to the British India by the Treaty of Tumlong in 1861, and on the occasion the British took the actual rule in the whole Sikkim (Mukherjee & Mercer 1962: 4–5; Sharma 1983: 25–26; White 1999: 17). Sikkim had also claimed the Chumbi Valley, the strategic route to Tibet, as her territory even if the control of Chumbi had been questionable for long (Bell 1998a: 7).

[1] Tibetan Buddhism is the traditional State religion in Sikkim. The first king was enthroned by three lāmas of the Nyingma sect (Waddell 1894: 1, 13). The prevailing animist practices were intermingled with Buddhism and are characteristic especially to the "old school" Nyingmapa, which is the principal order in Sikkim along with the semi-reformed Kargyupa (Waddell 1894: 14).

### 1.2 The People

There are three main ethnic groups in Sikkim, and several minorities. The Lepcha are the aboriginal inhabitants who are presumed to have come to the area from northeast India, but there is no agreement about this (Bedi & Sharma 1983: 32). In the end of the 19th century, the number of the Lepcha was 6 000. They had been practicing Buddhism since the 17th century, likewise the Bhutia, the other main group with Tibetan origin. As the Lepcha were mainly agriculturalists, the Bhutia were predominantly traders and herders. In the end of the 19th century, their population was also around 6 000. (Sharma 1983: 33; White 1999: 7–9).

The Nepalese is the third major group in Sikkim. The immigration from Nepal to the east had been voluminous after the arrival of the British, in fact it was encouraged by giving the newcomers land for cultivation (White 1999: 25–28). By the end of the 19th century the indigenous peoples were already heavily outnumbered by the Hindu Nepalese: there was almost 50 000 Nepalese immigrants in the country (White 1999: 7–9; Bell 1998b: 5). Simultaneously, the possibility for European citizens to settle in Sikkim was opened up (White 1999: 30).

In the Darjeeling region many nationalities and ethnic groups were met, such as Nepali, Tibetan, Bengali, Chinese, Mongolian, Singhalese, Sikkimese and Lepcha (SVL 1896: 46, 364). The British had been present for decades, and missionaries from diverse countries became a part of this multicultural milieu.

### 1.3 Climate

Geologically, the Himalayas is still on the move and earthquakes caused by the pressure of the tectonic plates are not unusual. In Sikkim the climate is subtropical and humid, yet in wintertime it is relatively cold. The monsoon rainfalls come down the Kanchenjunga mountainsides, and floods and landslides caused by heavy raining are frequent (SVL 1899: 47, 374; White 1999: 3). Even in the drier seasons the paths and routes on the slopes and in the jungles were usually difficult to pass, and during the rainy season even worse (SVL 1897: 34, 270; SVL 1899: 44, 348; White 1999: 42–43). Hailstorms occurred at times, and the hailstones could be very big, even “the size of golf-balls” (White 1999: 97). It is no surprise, then, that one of the regular issues the missionaries were handling in their letters to friends and families was how to manage in these climatic and geographical conditions, very different from the homeland (e.g., SVL 1896: 46, 364; SVL 1897: 34, 269–270; SVL 1899: 31, 244; SVL 1899: 32, 251; SVL 1905: 11, 85–86).

## 2. Political Circumstances and the Missionaries’ Relations with the Authority

### 2.1 Tibet, a Closed Land

The activity of the Scandinavian Alliance Mission in the Himalayas was started by North American based Scandinavians. J. F. Frederickson, his sister Anna and 10 Canadian missionaries travelled from Vancouver to Kolkata and Darjeeling in 1892 only to find out that they couldn’t enter Tibet as had been their intention. They applied a permission to start the work in India instead, and acquired the first mission house in the Ghum bazaar (SVL 1897: 38, 302–303; Hämelin & Peltomäki 1990: 106; Pylkkänen 1939: 15–16, 19–21). There were also hopes that the Mission could enter Tibet from

Bhutan, and another station was founded in Baxa Duar in the Bhutanese frontier for this reason (SVL 1896: 26, 204; Pylkkänen 1939: 66).

The closing of Tibet was a result of the complicated political situation in Central Asia. "The Great Game" was being played, as China, British India, Russia, Japan and other countries were watching their military and trading interests in Asia (SVL 1901: 49, 389; SVL 1905: 20, 165–166). This had not always been the situation, and also many missionaries had been travelling and staying in Tibet as early as in the 17th century.[2]

However, by the 19th century the borders were closed and carefully guarded by the Tibetan and Chinese authorities. Even the Tibetans living in the Lachen Valley were not allowed to enter further to Tibet than to Khamba-jong not far from the border (SVL 1897: 38, 302–303). J. Claude White, the Political Officer in charge of Sikkim recalls an event when he was exploring the southern frontier being some miles within the Sikkimese territory but was all the same turned back by a "very polite" Tibetan officer (White 1999: 72). Sarat Chandra Das, a Bengali scholar who later worked for the British intelligence, managed to cross the border from Nepal in Tibetan disguise in 1881 (Das 1998: 27, 35), and so did the French adventurer Alexandra David-Néel in 1923 on her way to Lhasa from China (David-Néel 1991: ix, 2).

Also, many missionaries had made fruitless attempts trying to penetrate into Tibet. Among them were several Herrnhut based evangelists, some of them approaching Tibet from Russia (SVL 1894: 26, 205). One exception was British Annie Taylor who had been staying in Sikkim in 1889–1891 to learn the Tibetan language and to adjust to the climate. Approaching from China, she eventually succeeded in entering Tibet and travelling all the way to Lhasa (SVL 1893: 37, 294; SVL 1894: 45, 356; SVL 1895: 42,

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[2] The first Christian missionary in Tibet was Portuguese Jesuit Antonio de Andrade, who reached Tsaparang, capital of the Western Tibetan kingdom of Gu ge in 1624 and stayed there until 1640. In 1630, he was followed by Portugese Fathers Cacella and Cabral who travelled through Bhutan to Shigatse but did not found a proper mission. (Snellgrove & Richardson 1986: 202–203.) In 1661, Jesuits Albert D'Orville from Belgium and Johann Grueber from Austria visited Lhasa for two months, and were followed by Italian Ippolito Desideri and Portuguese Manuel Freyre in 1716, Desideri staying in Tibet for several years. He was an exception among the missionaries, for he had a deep understanding not only of the Tibetan language, but as a scholar, also of culture. The first Capuchin Mission had operated in Lhasa in 1707–1711 and was followed by the second one from 1716 until 1745, when it was closed due to lack of funding and because the mission had offended the Buddhist conviction in serious ways. They had no converts either until in 1741 few Chinese and Newari were baptized; the amount of their Tibetan converts remained twenty-six. In 1846, French Lazarist missionaries Abbé Huc and Joseph Gabet entered Lhasa but were soon expelled by the Chinese; the closing of the country had begun. There were also laymen travelling in Tibet and Lhasa for various reasons, e.g. Dutch Samuel Van Der Putte had visited the holy city already in the 1720s, the first Englishman in Tibet was George Bogle who was sent there in 1775 to investigate the trading possibilities between India and Tibet, he was followed by Samuel Turner in 1782 for the same reason, and scholar Thomas Manning arrived in Lhasa in 1811 staying for 4 months. There was also Russian traders as well as an Armenian community in Lhasa. (Chandler 1981: 2–4; Snellgrove & Richardson 1986: 202, 220–228.) In those early days, Tibet was not closed except by the geographical barriers, but came gradually to be a "forbidden land" during the 19th century when the Manchu dynasty began to spread the idea of the dangers of foreign influence (Snellgrove & Richardson 1986: 227). However, when English missionary Annie Taylor reached Lhasa in 1895, she described that there were many travellers from England, France and Russia (SVL 1895: 42, 332).

332; also, Macdonald 2002: 19–20). There was no entry to Bhutan either, but among the SAM there were hopes that “the Lord would open up the way” also there (SVL 1896: 24, 187–188).

## 2.2 Missions and the British Authorities

Besides the relatively small Scandinavian Alliance Mission there were many major ones in the area endeavouring to Tibet, such as Roman Catholic, Moravian and the Church of Scotland (Mukherjee & Mercer 1962: 7–8). Concerning Sikkim, J. Claude White noticed:

> … perhaps half a dozen Roman Catholic, Anglican, Scotch, Scandinavian, Baptist, and other dissenting churches, all have delegates in one small area, to the bewilderment and confusion of the native mind… (White 1999: 42).

The field was crowded indeed, and there was even a competition-like situation between the different missions (HH4-2-14, 1242; Pylkkänen 1939: 99–100; Rautamäki 1985: 9).

The workers of these many missions were coming from different backgrounds and countries and not all of them seemed to be suitable to act in religiously and politically sensitive circumstances. White noted that the denominations should have paid more attention to the missionaries’ qualifications, not only to get better results in the evangelic work but also for diplomatic reasons, for “history has shown us how dangerous a volcano religious feeling is and how often terrible and far-spreading disaster is the result of an unconsidered action” (White 1999: 41–42).

Contacts between the SAM workers and the British officials were more or less regular. All permits for purchasing land, founding new stations or running schools were to be applied from the local – in other words, colonial – administration (SVL 1905: 20, 165–166; SVL 1905: 49, 397). For Sikkim, a visa with a promise not to enter Tibet was needed (SVL 1897: 38, 302–303).

Besides the lower officials conducting the practical affairs, there were three significant civil servants that have to be mentioned. Firstly, above-named J. Claude White was the Political Officer in administrative charge for Sikkim from 1889 to 1908 (White 1999: viii, 96). Secondly, Sir Charles Bell was based in Darjeeling in 1900–1904 and after the retirement of White, he stayed in Chumbi from 1908 until 1918 as the Political Officer in charge for the relations with Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet (Bell 1998a: 2–3). He also published classic works on Tibetan culture (see the references). Thirdly, Trade Agent David Macdonald was based in Yatung in 1905–1925, and before that he was working in the Darjeeling district and in Ghum for 12 years (Macdonald 2002: 12–13). The undertakings of these three officers was observed by the SAM missionaries, and from time to time their help was asked for in diverse matters (HH4-2-14, 1242; SVL 1897: 38, 302–303).

The contacts were close especially with the Macdonald family. David Macdonald had an Anglo-Lepcha background and he spoke fluent Tibetan (Macdonald 2002: 17–18). Originally Buddhist, he was converted into Christianity by the SAM leader Fredrik Franson when he visited the region in 1894 and was later involved in the Mission’s evangelical work (SVL 1899: 47, 374; SVL 1902: 3, 21; SVL 1905: 20, 165; Pylkkänen 1939: 21, 60, 69; Wikipedia, David Macdonald).

J. Claude White's agency in Sikkim was also of major importance for the Mission. Among his many innovations he initiated the apple growing and the cottage industry in Sikkim (White 1999: 95), both activities that the Mission was involved in for decades. Actually, the permits for Sikkim were issued for the weaving schools the Mission was running, not for the missionary work itself (Rautamäki 30.10.1996).

## 3. Arriving to the Field

### 3.1 The Finnish SAM Evangelists

The first Finnish missionary in Sikkim was Klara Hertz who had travelled to the field in 1896 supported by the Scandinavian Alliance Mission branch in the USA (SVL 1905: 13, 103–104). After staying some months in Ghum she travelled to Lachen to start the evangelical work. Swedes Amanda Larsson and Signe Rasmussen had been working in Sikkim since 1894, so Hertz was the subsequent Scandinavian lady in the small state (SVL 1896: 6, 43; SVL 1897: 38, 302–303). Another Finn, Anna Massinen joined her in 1899, and after Hertz returned to Finland in 1900 for some years, Massinen stayed as the only Finn in Sikkim for two years (SVL 1899: 40, 316; SVL 1905: 14, 110).

Sigrid Gahmberg had been the first Finn in the Himalayan field, arriving in Ghum in 1895. Hertz, who died in Lachen in 1920, was following her, and four more Finns arrived in 1899, Massinen among them. In 1902 came Edla Träskbäck and 1905 Elin Kronqvist, who also died in Lachen in 1939. Many others were still to come; in all there were around 35 Finnish workers in the Himalayan field until 1971, when the activities and property of the Mission were handed over to the Himalayan Free Church and have since then been maintained by local actors (Rautamäki 1985: 24, 27–28).

Gradually the network of mission stations was created, and at best there were 10 main stations and some minor ones. From 1906 on, the Sikkim stations were maintained merely by the Finnish Alliance Mission,[3] while the other Scandinavians continued the work in Baxa Duar (Rautamäki 1985: 9).

### 3.2 Learning the Languages and Cultures

Many missionaries came to field unprepared to the local circumstances, as White alluded (see above). Even if there were special courses for missionaries available in Europe and also some of the Finns attended them in Sweden or in England, the majority travelled to India straight from Finland without any particular training (SVL 1893: 4, 30; SVL 1898: 47, 372).

The learning began on the spot: Annie Taylor, for example, was staying in Darjeeling for six months in 1889 before moving for a longer period in Gangtok to learn about Tibetan language and culture (SVL 1894: 45, 356; Wikipedia, Annie Royle Taylor). Also, the SAM missionaries seemed to have studied Tibetan culture by reading: along with the ethnographic collections from the Himalayan field (see footnote 5) the National Museum of Finland received some books, namely J. Claude White's *Tibet and Lhasa* (1906) as well as *Among the Himalayas* (1899) and the classic *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism* (1895) by L. Austine Waddell.

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[3] In 1909, the Finnish Alliance Mission joined together with the Free Mission of Finland, which was a Free Church oriented movement, though the Evangelical Free Church of Finland was not founded until 1923 (Rautamäki 1985: 27–28; Hämelin & Peltoniemi 1990: 21–27).

The importance of knowing the local languages was understood from the beginning and, as a rule, the incoming missionaries started learning Tibetan, Bhutanese and other languages immediately after their arrival, favourably with a native teacher (SVL 1895: 42, 333–334; SVL 1895: 47, 372; SVL 1896: 6, 43; SVL 1896: 30, 237; SVL 1896: 46, 364; SVL 1899: 15, 115; 1900: 11, 84; 1901: 12, 93). The first Scandinavians had concentrated for two years in Tibetan studies (Pylkkänen 1939: 21). English had been introduced in the area along with the colonial regime, and for many of the Finns it was necessary to study English as well to be able to communicate with the administration and have religious meetings and classes in English (SVL 1899: 7, 49–51; SVL 1899: 27, 212; SVL 1899: 31, 245–246).

## 3.3 Travelling and Transportation

The railway from Kolkata to Siliguri in the foot of the Himalayas was opened in 1878, and the narrow gauge from Siliguri up to Darjeeling was finished in 1881 (Mukherjee & Mercer 1962: 6).[4] The SAM missionaries used the connection to get to the headquarters in Ghum, whose railway station is one of the highest in the world, 2 258 metres above the sea level. When pastor Kaarlo Waismaa was travelling up the mountain by the 'toy train' for the first time in 1899, he found the journey very amusing and described it vividly in the Free Church's weekly newspaper for the readers at home (SVL 1899: 7, 50–51).

Otherwise travelling in the mountainous area was difficult. In many places there were no roads, only tracks, and travelling was done by foot or by riding on pony or mule. It took two days to walk from Gangtok to Ringim through the narrow track in the forest, the only way available (SVL 1900: 6, 46–47). Professional carriers or coolies were hired for transporting, and extra stores were necessary should there be bad weather and no connections (e.g., White 1999: 35, 42–43). When White was appointed as the Political Officer, he started reorganizing the infrastructure in Sikkim by building roads and bridges, establishing the revenue system, public works, police force, judicial system, and so forth (White 1999: 25–28). The new road from the capital Gangtok to Lachung was in use in the beginning of the 20th century, and while earlier a week or more was required to cover the distance, it now took only two days (White 1999: 81).

While moving in the jungles one inconvenience was the leeches. The missionaries reported about this unpleasant fact in several letters (SVL 1902: 6, 46, e.g.), and White tells in his memoirs as follows:

> Another very great drawback to travelling in the rains at any elevation below 10,000 feet, are the leeches which swarm every path. Each leaf in the jungle is fringed with them and they look almost like the tentacula of sea anemones as they commence to wave about in the air at the approach of a by-passer in the endeavour to fix on him – indeed in some places they are so bad I believe if a traveller had the misfortune to meet with an accident and be disabled he would soon be bled to death (White 1999: 44).

[4] This route, the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, is now included in the UNESCO World Heritage Sites. In 2011, it was temporarily closed due to the massive earthquake (Wikipedia: Darjeeling Himalayan Railway), and even before that not all the branches were operating because of the damages caused by landslides. The connection leaves from the Sealdah Station in Kolkata and is called *Darjeeling Mail* even today.

# 4. Features of Everyday Life at the SAM Stations

## 4.1 Working Methods and Communication

At the SAM stations, there were various methods to get into contact with people. Public preaching and reading the gospel in the bazaars in market days and at other meeting points was the primary form of activity. The missionaries also visited homes and went to the fields to reach the people at work, and sometimes people came to their locations for conversation, classes or to Sunday school. (SVL 1896: 6, 43; SVL 1896: 30, 237; SVL 1896: 24, 187–188; SVL 1897: 15, 118; SVL 1897: 38, 302–303; SVL 1900: 11, 83; SVL 1901: 41, 326; SVL 1901: 43, 342; Pylkkänen 1939: 66.)

In the towns and villages people easily met but in the Lachen Valley many were practicing nomadic lifestyle (SVL 1900: 39, 307). The Lamteng village comprising of 75 houses was the traders' and herders' winter season retreat, while at other times they were moving along the mountain slopes with their livestock (White 1999: 74) This had to be taken into consideration by the missionaries, and sometimes they followed the herders to the mountains. Anna Massinen described one of these preaching tours as follows:

> I was staying in dak bungalow, a state guesthouse, from where I did five or six, even nine-mile trips to reach the people. (…) Yesterday I walked about five miles distance. In the first hut there was an old "amma", while the rest of the family had gone for their tasks. In the second hut I met a slave wife grinding maize. In two other huts there were Tibetans, who were rather willing to listen. (SVL 1905: 47, 380–381.)

In winter many people also moved to more southern villages. Kaarlo Waismaa, who had been staying in the Ringim station in Central Sikkim with his family since 1899, made tours to the villages to preach and have school classes for children and others (SVL 1901: 40, 317; SVL 1905: 6, 46; SVL 1905: 14, 109–110; SVL 1905: 20, 165–166). In 1902 he wrote, that during the winter he had visited "almost all villages in Sikkim" preaching the gospel to the Bhutia and Lepcha (SVL 1902: 10, 78).

As customary, releasing Christian publications and leaflets with verses from the Bible was considered essential. Among the publications were a Tibetan ABC-book and a songbook, the New Testament was translated into two Tibetan dialects, and a book titled *Tibetan Religion and the True Religion* with a Tibetan translation was released, it was written jointly by Fredrik Franson and David Macdonald (SVL 1895: 50, 400; SVL 1896: 44, 349–350; SVL 1899: 47, 374; SVL 1902: 3, 21; SVL 1902: 10, 79; SVL 1905: 20, 165; Pylkkänen 1939: 59–60, 69, 135; Rautamäki 1985: 8). However, not all publications were religious per se, in Ladakh a Tibetan-English Dictionary was released by the local mission, e.g. (SVL 1900: 1, 6).

The Mission provided working possibilities for local people, who usually were converts (SVL 1900: 7, 52; SVL 1902: 13, 102). Some of them were trained as evangelists and as they mastered the local languages and customs, it was hoped that they could enter the territories where the Europeans had no permission (SVL 1896: 6, 43–44; SVL 1896: 30, 237; SVL 1896: 44, 349–350; SVL 1897: 15, 118; SVL 1897: 38, 302–303; SVL 1899: 47, 374; SVL 1905: 20, 165–166). Here, the role of David Macdonald is interesting. As mentioned above, he had been converted by the SAM leader Franson and was acting as his interpreter during his visit to the field in 1894. Moreover, he contributed to the translation of the New Testament into the Central

Tibetan dialect (SVL 1899: 47, 374; Pylkkänen 1939: 21, 60, 69; Wikipedia, David Macdonald). In 1904 he had attended the Younghusband military mission to Lhasa and got acquainted with the Raja of Bhutan, and consequently hopes were rising among the SAM that he could act as a local evangelist in Bhutan and Chumbi, notwithstanding of his high standing as a British official (SVL 1905: 20, 165).

All over the world, it was customary that missionaries collected ethnographic artefacts. This was done also by some of the Finnish SAM workers, and the material collected by them is now hosted by the Evangelical Free Church of Finland and The National Museum of Finland.[5]

There was also much objection for the evangelical work. From time to time the local people who were working for the Mission and might have been converted were facing resistance or even threat from their families and the Buddhist monks (SVL 1897: 46, 363). J. F. Fredericksson gives an account from Lachen, where a high monk, or "priest", had prevented people from working for the Europeans. He was also threatening to punish a man called Chödrug who was going to be trained as an evangelist, and another man who had been attending the Mission school, by throwing them into the river what practically meant death penalty. When the SAM sisters heard about this, they immediately wrote to Political Officer White to Gangtok, who sent a letter to the village headman telling to arrest the monk, who nevertheless managed to flee to Tibet (SVL 1897: 38, 302–303).

Signe Rasmussen conveyed a similar message from Lachung: "Many people say that they would have come to Jesus a long time ago if the priests would not have hindered them" (SVL 1896: 44, 349–350). The Tibetan translation of the *Tibetan Religion and the True Religion* was being destroyed by the monks whenever it was possible; it had been spread to Tibetan speaking areas also in China and Mongolia (SVL 1897: 38, 302–303).

In the early 1900s, there was a threat that the missionary work in Sikkim would have been disbanded because of the crown prince's aspirations to revive Buddhism. Alexandra David-Néel was a Buddhist convert and she had been staying in Gangtok and in the Lachen monastery for years. She had created a close connection with the royal family and the missionaries were suspicious that she was influencing the prince against Christianity. The prince was crowned in the beginning of 1914, but as he died later in the same year the missionary work was continued unchanged (VS 1905: 6, 46–47; Pylkkänen 1939: 150–153, 155–158).

## 4.2 School Work

Western education in the Darjeeling district was started by the Christian missions (Mukherjee & Mercer 1962: 7–8). The Church of Scotland had several schools and even a teacher seminar in Kalimpong (SVL 1900: 6, 46). Also, the Scandinavian Alliance Mission founded primary schools wherever it was possible, at least in connection with the main mission stations. In Ghum there were separate classes for girls and boys and lessons were held to the villagers' children also in Saturdays, because not all could come to the school in working days (HH18-9-10, 1195; HH26-8-13, 1196; HH19-1-14,

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[5] The Free Church of Finland hosts a collection of several hundred Sikkimese, Tibetan, Bhutanese and Indian items. There is also a collection of 186 mainly Himalayan items at The National Museum of Finland, collected by one of the early SAM missionaries in India, Hilja Heiskanen.

1237; HH4-2-14, 1241). However, qualified, and converted, teachers were not easy to find (SVL 1901: 39, 308; SVL 1905: 20, 166; Rautamäki 1985: 8).

In the Ghum mission house there was also an orphanage Sparrow's Nest, where elementary education was provided (SVL 1905: 20, 166). When the children were growing up, many of them were sent to secondary and training schools elsewhere, often to Kalimpong and even to Kolkata (HH17-4-06, 1180–1181; HH4-2-14, 1244, 1245).

In the Bhutia families it was customary that the second son was trained as a Buddhist monk, while the eldest one married and continued the family name and took care of the family property as the principal breadwinner (Waddell 1894: 67). Girls were married early and usually they had no formal education. Once the girls and young women were often leading a relatively isolated domestic life, the role of women evangelists was considered important for approaching them (SVL 1900: 1, 6).

The running of the schools and reaching people even in distant locations was considered to serve the spreading of the gospel (Rautamäki 1985: 8). Indeed, many of the Mission's pupils were later baptized, in Lachung 6 women at the same time in August 1910 (SVL 1910: 39, 622). From time to time there was objection against the school work by the Buddhist monks; Fredericksson reported that in September 1896 the Mission schools were closed in Jorebungalow, Bataslie and Darjeeling for this reason, but in Lachen and Ghum the schools were still open "despite of the monks' efforts" (SVL 1896: 44, 349–350).

## 4.3 Weaving Schools

As part of the reforms in Sikkim, J. Claude White initiated cottage industry by opening weaving schools in Lachung and Lachen (White 1999: 295). The schools operated in the Mission's premises. In Lachung the school was at first run by the Swedes Mathilda Johansson and Signe (Rasmussen) Fredericksson, until the Finns Anna Massinen and later Edla Träskbäck arrived (SVL 1905: 20, 165–166; SVL 1905: 47, 380–381). The pupils were local girls and "most excellent tweeds" was produced. But as the girls were not used to school work they needed much supervision, and the marketing of the products was not an easy task either (White 1999: 296).[6]

At the Sikkimese homes cotton cloth was woven with narrow looms for the families' own use, only the yarn was mainly imported. For dying, vegetable ingredients found in the forests had been widely used, but they were rapidly being substituted by industrial aniline colours sold in the bazaars. Political Officer White felt so protective for the traditional way that he actually prohibited the sale of these modern dyes throughout Sikkim to "force them to return to natural vegetable dyes, which produce such beautiful soft tints and last so much better" (White 1999: 295). White was so enthusiastic for handicrafts that he started a carpet factory in Gangtok under the supervision of the Maharani herself (White 1999: 295–296).

As already mentioned, the cottage industry was crucial for the maintenance of the mission in Sikkim, because the permits were actually issued for the weaving schools, not for the missionary work (Rautamäki 30.10.1996). There are four old Sikkimese woollen blankets in the ethnographic collection of the Finnish Free Church, all made in the traditional style of combining two or more narrow stripes to make a larger blanket

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[6] The future president of Finland, C.G. Mannerheim ordered some blankets made in the Lachen weaving school as he was on a hunting trip in Sikkim in 1927 (Rautamäki 1985: 9).

(S12/4H1A, S13/4H2Aab, S14/4H1A). There is no information of their provenance, but they might be the products of the weaving schools, at least two of them have been collected in 1912.

## 4.4 Health Care

Giving healthcare services was one important activity at the mission stations. This also was considered to provide a way to get in contact with the people and, accordingly, an opportunity to spread the gospel (SVL 1896: 24, 187–188; SVL 1899: 36, 286; 1901: 6, 45; SVL 1901: 38, 302; Sihombing 2002: 83). The people came or were taken to the SAM stations for treatment (SVL 1905: 11, 85–86), and often the missionaries were called for homes. The Church of Scotland had even a hospital in Kalimpong (SVL 1896: 30, 237). In Lachen, Anna Massinen used cold wrappings and blueberry drinks for treatment; the blueberries she received as dried from Finland (SVL 1901: 38, 302).

Practicing Western medicine was of course nothing new in the missionary work in general, on the contrary. Even the first Capuchin Fathers in Lhasa had started their mission by providing health care services to Tibetans in the beginning of the 18th century (Snellgrove & Richardson 1986: 221). It is not exceptional either that many missionaries have been trained nurses or doctors, especially in later times, included some of the Finns who have been working in the Himalayas.[7] David Macdonald noted about Annie Taylor as follows: “On my return to Yatung later in the year I found her installed in the Trade Mart as a nurse, a capacity in which she undoubtedly did more good than she accomplished as a missionary” (Macdonald 2002: 20).

There was a continuous need for a doctor in the SAM stations. Eventually Ruth Longman, a young woman with Nepalese origin who had been adopted by a SAM missionary, was educated as a doctor in Kolkata. This was considered to be an investment, and she was working for the Mission for some years mainly in Ghum (Pylkkänen 1939: 160).

In Sikkim, the local curing methods were largely based on the Buddhist religion and the services of the monks (SVL 1900: 11, 83). Amulets and charms were widely used as preventive and curative means; Waddell notes that there was “special sorts for nearly every kind of disease, accident, or misfortune, and the eating of the paper on which a charm has been written is on ordinary form of combatting disease” (Waddell 1894: 115; also, Snellgrove & Richardson 1986: 262). The Lepcha had a reputation to be skilled botanists with the knowledge how to use locally growing plants for treatment. Their medicine men, *maondaok* were specialists who, besides plants, used minerals and animal-based products for curing (Tamsang 1981: 4–5). Also, the natural hot springs were used for ailments like rheumatism and skin disease, and the bathing could last for days (White 1999: 7, 66). As the cause of sickness was nearly always considered to be due to malign demonical influence (SVL 1900: 11, 83; Waddell 1894: 136), no wonder

[7] For example, Ossian Eklund who came to Ghum in 1901 was a pharmacist (SVL 1905: 14, 112), and Hellin Hukka-Dukpa from the Finnish Free Church Himalayan Mission (which continued the Scandinavian Alliance Mission’s work) was a trained nurse working mainly in Baxa Duar in the Bhutanese frontier from 1950 onwards for 37 years. She treated illnesses like malaria, tuberculosis, syphilis, and acted as midwife. Cheap medicines were acquired from South-India, where some missions had joint production. When the Tibetan refugees began to pour in India in 1959, she was busy treating them in the Baxa refugee camp for ten years, her fluent Tibetan language being of a great help in giving medical aid (Sihombing 2002: 83–84).

that the missionaries found the nursing to be appropriate opportunity to treat not just the body of their patients, but also the soul.

Sometimes they just had to stand back and watch the local practices. In 1896, Signe Rasmussen described how an infectious disease was spreading in Lachung and the patients were cast out from their homes and isolated from the community. A local healer, “witch”, had been called. He let the villagers to kill a bull, took some meat into his mouth and spilled it on the still healthy people to prevent them from falling ill. He also made all roasters in the village to be killed – the missionaries actually saw here an opportunity to buy some of them – because it was believed that their voice would spread the disease. The missionaries heard about a sick young man who had been carried into the woods and tried to find him in the dark but without success, finally believing that he might have been killed by a bear. (SVL 1896: 44, 349–350.)

## 4.5 Health Problems among the Missionaries

Health problems was a constant danger for the missionaries as well; actually, the first mission doctors had been sent to foreign fields for the missionaries themselves (Kena 2000: 260). As noted, the SAM workers were coming from very different kind of conditions and many of them died in the field on fever or other diseases (SVL 1895: 42, 333–334; SVL 1899: 35, 276; 1900: 39, 308; SVL 1902: 6, 45; SVL 1902: 13, 102; Rautamäki 1985: 1). There was no malaria above 4 000 feet altitude, but especially the damp climate in Ghum was considered unhealthy (SVL 1894: 43, 338; SVL 1899: 31, 245).

In winter, the snow and ice could cause snow-blindness. There is no reference to this in the data, but it was a real danger without proper protection, causing pain and blindness possibly for several days. Sunglasses made of either fabric or fabric and glass were used by the local peoples[8], and Lepcha and Tibetan carriers used peculiar spectacles made of very finely woven hair. These could be replaced simply by pulling one’s own long hair in front of the eyes (White 1999: 78).

Sometimes one’s working station was decided on the basis of the climate. When Kaarlo and Hanna Waismaa arrived in India in 1899, they were first located in Baxa Duar. However, Waismaa fell sick with tropical fever and eventually they were settled in Ringim, where the temperature is cooler (SVL 1900: 39, 307; SVL 1905: 14, 109). In December in 1904 the annual meeting was held in Ghum as usual, and the Waismaa family was facing a serious hardship again as Hanna had had a stroke after a childbirth and had not recovered properly. The meeting recommended that they should travel to Finland immediately (SVL 1905: 6, 46; SVL 1905: 14, 109–110). While preparing for the trip, Hanna died (SVL, 1905: 17, 140). She was the second Finn to die in Ghum, as Sigrid Gahmberg had died there after a prolonged fever in 1900 (SVL 1900: 25, 1).

## 4.6 Housing, Hardships and Holidays

Life was not easy in the remote mission stations. Contacts with other workers were rare, and thus the annual meetings were important gatherings (SVL 1897: 46, 363; SVL 1899: 27, 212; SVL 1901: 38, 302; SVL 1905: 6, 47). The weekly newspaper of the Free Church movement in Finland was sent to all workers in the field, and it provided

[8] There is a pair of Tibetan sunglasses in the ethnographical collection gathered by a SAM missionary Hilja Heiskanen, now hosted by the National Museum of Finland.

welcome information on issues not only in homeland but also on international affairs (SVL 1899: 4, 28; SVL 1899: 47, 374; SVL 1905: 51, 420). For Christmas packets from home were received, usually containing items needed in daily life, such as clothing, but also toys and books for the children of the orphanage (e.g., SVL 1899: 29, 230; SVL 1901: 9, 71; SVL 1902: 5, 36–37; SVL 1902: 6, 45; SVL 1905: 9, 69; SVL 1910: 44, 701).

Besides causing health problems, the hard climate caused difficulties in maintaining the buildings. In winter the water pipes of the Ghum mission house were sometimes frozen and broken, and there was no water available for the orphanage (SVL 1905: 11, 86). The old mission house in Lachen was so damp that mushrooms were growing in the floor cracks (SVL 1905: 49, 397), even if the Lachen Valley is among the higher and drier valleys of the Kanchenjunga (White 1999: 3). Once Anna Massinen was staying in Lachen in a room where lime was stored, it was wintertime and the room was so cold that water was frozen in a wash basin at nights (SVL 1901: 16, 124–125).

The shortage of funds was also a continuous problem. The activity was funded almost entirely by donations from homeland including all the wages, the building and renovating the houses, travelling expenses, and so forth. Many of the missionaries had more or less regular supporters in Finland. As a rule, the Mission's newspaper asked for endowments for specified objectives and reported about the donations (e.g., SVL 1896: 17, 131–132; SVL 1896: 26, 204; SVL 1900: 42, 335; SVL 1905: 17, 143–144; SVL 1905: 49, 397; SVL 1905: 49, 397). The First World War cut off the remittances from Finland, and even after the war the economical standing was very scarce (Pylkkänen 1939: 166–167, 191–193).

The natural disasters were not part of the daily life, but they caused a constant threat and fear (SVL 1901: 21, 165; SVL 1906: 4, 56). The mission houses in Ghoom and Baxa Duar were slightly damaged in an earthquake in 1897, and in Baxa many houses as well as the military quarters were destroyed (SVL 1897: 32, 255; SVL 1897: 34, 269). In Gangtok, the royal palace collapsed entirely, even if the walls of homes and monasteries were normally built very thick (White 1999: 37). A few years later, there was a massive landslide in the Ghoom area caused by the heavy rains. The roads turned unpassable, many houses were washed into the ridges and 200 people died, including 5 children of missionary Lee's family (SVL 1899: 44, 348). Also, the Finns faced a tragic loss in Sikkim in 1950, when the Lachung River was filled by avalanches and the following flood swept away 39 houses in the village. The mission house was destroyed and the people who were in were lost, one of them being pastor Arthur Pylkkänen (Hämelin & Peltoniemi 1990: 217–218).

From time to time the missionaries travelled for resting periods to other towns and stations where the conditions were more favourable than at their principal location (SVL 1896: 24, 187–188; SVL 1896: 30, 237; SVL 1901: 21, 165). Some came from the hot plains to Ghum and Darjeeling, and especially Kalimpong was a popular retreat because of its favourable climate.

## 4.7 Food

The staple food-crop in Sikkim was maize, and in lower parts also rice was grown. The most valued rice variety *takmaru* would grow in high altitudes and even if it didn't give equally large crops than the other varieties, it was more nutritious. It was also believed to be good for diarrhoea and malarial fever (Bell 1998b: 26).

In the mountainous areas with no trees, animal dung was used as fuel for cooking (SVL 1900: 39, 307; SVL 1905: 47, 380–381). One of J. Claude White's many undertakings in Sikkim was introducing fruit cultivation in the Lachung and Chumbi Valleys. Like the cottage industry, apple tree gardening was another officially run enterprise the Mission was actively involved in. Apple growing showed to be successful especially in Lachen: within a few years one tree could bear great many fruits. However, oranges were grown by the native inhabitants and the marketing of the apples turned out to be difficult (White 1999: 296).

## 5. Summary

In this article, I have briefly looked at the aspects of the daily life at the Scandinavian Alliance Mission during the first 15 years; the period of time when the work at the Himalayas had been begun and had been stabilized.

The SAM was a minor actor in the field but was altogether a part of the wider network of Christian activity. The scale of action varied between different missions, but the environment and the basic forms of activities were same for all. The SAM's impact was probably mainly in education; the weaving schools operated for decades, and the Bhutia of Lachen and Lachung are famous for their weaving even today (Sharma 1983: 35). The Christian missionary activity in Sikkim was part of the process of foreign influence as had been the introduction of Buddhism and Hinduism, and, most importantly, it took action within and was authorized by the British colonial power.

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