Tingvong: a Lepcha village in Sikkim

60 minutes

The film illustrates the changes the Lepcha of the Dzongu reserve, North Sikkim, have been through in the last 60 years. From the 1940s, the Lepcha of Tingvong village gradually abandoned hunting, gathering and the slash and burn cultivation of dry rice, and became settled agriculturalists. Entire mountains sides were converted to cardamom and terraced for the cultivation of irrigated paddy. The irrigated rice and the cardamom cash crop not only brought the Lepcha within Sikkim's market economy but helped create a surplus which could among other things be invested in religion. In the 1940s, the Lepcha of Tingvong embraced Buddhism and all its complex rituals without however abandoning their strong shamanic traditions. Today, both forms of rituals amiably co-exist in the village.

This film is part of a long-term visual anthropology training project for the tribal communities of Sikkim. The first phase aims to document the social life and rituals of the Lepcha of Dzongu. We have accumulated over 100 hours of material which is archived at the institute for research use. This is the first film edited from the material. Short thematic films will be edited for museum use in Sikkim.

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