

# MOSHUP ABANG

**B. S. GUHA**

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**T**HE Dormitory system among the aboriginal tribes of India is an intriguing subject and one which needs to be studied more widely. Too little has been written of the system as it prevails among the tribes of Assam or NEFA. Dr B. S. Guha's survey of the Dormitory institution among the Adis of Siang Frontier Division seeks to remedy this shortfall. For his material Dr Guha paid a number of annual study visits to various sections of this tribe during the last years of his life and this book embodies the results of his labour.

The first section contains the author's observations on the institution and brings out points of similarity or difference between the Adi system and that prevailing among a few other communities of tribal India. This section serves as an introduction to the second part which presents in story form the local account of the origin of the institution.

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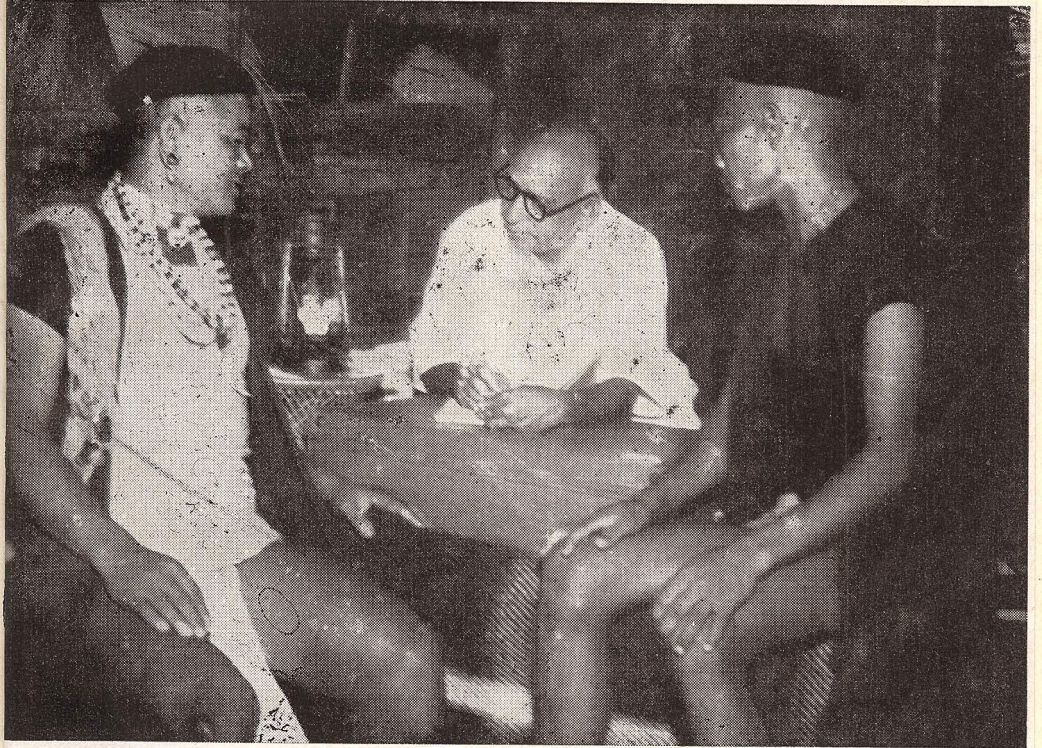
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*Akom (left) with Tatam Poda (right) narrating the Moshup Abang at Ledum Moshup to the author (centre)*

MOSHUP LEGAPÉ DOYING  
AGOM LUNEN

*or*

THE MYTHOLOGICAL ORIGIN OF THE  
ABOR DORMITORY SYSTEM

*By*

B. S. GUHA, M.A., A.M., PH.D., F.N.I.



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## PREFACE

Material for this descriptive account of the Moshup or Dormitory System of the Adis was collected over a number of years by Dr B. S. Guha. Unfortunately his death took place before steps could be taken to get it published. He had been in consultation with the NEFA Administration on this particular work for some time before his death, and had expressed the wish that he would like the book to be published by the Administration.

The burden of collating the material was taken up, not without trepidation, by the Research Branch of the NEFA Secretariat, first by the Cultural Section and subsequently by the Philological Section. It must be stated, however, that the matter remains much as Dr Guha prepared it and whatever change has been introduced by the collators is limited to the spelling of proper names and other minor details.

Dr Guha, throughout, has used the word Abor in reference to the tribes of the Siang Division. This has been retained although Adi is the term used now, and moreover, it is a term that is popular with the people themselves. The spelling of the name for the dormitories used among certain Nagas has been adopted in this book as 'Morang' although other authors variously spell it as 'Morung', 'Moorang' etc. and the actual pronunciation approximates more closely to 'Morong'.

The book is in two main sections. The first is a study of the concept behind the establishment of

the dormitory system and contains observations on similar institutions among some other tribes in Central India, Assam and Nagaland, which the author compares and contrasts with the Adi Moshup. The second contains the abang or the myth in three parts. This explains why and how their dormitory system first came to be instituted.

It is hoped that this account will stimulate further and more concentrated studies of an interesting institution.

Acknowledgement is due to Shri G. S. Guha the author's brother, and the author's widow, Smti Uma Guha whose cooperation and generosity have made it possible for the NEFA Administration to proceed with the publication of this book.

SHILLONG,  
*The 23rd October, 1964.*

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NEFA, Shillong.*

## INTRODUCTION

MOSHUP IS THE name by which the dormitory system prevalent among the tribes of the Siang Frontier Division is known. Through this organization the adolescent and the young receive training in hunting, warfare, traditions and the values cherished by the tribe as well as the regulation of premarital sexual life so that they can grow up as full members, well trained in the correct canons of behaviour and in different activities pertaining to the welfare and prosperity of the tribe. Among primitive people in many parts of the world, while the boys and the girls live with the family during the day, at night they sleep in separate dormitories. These houses vary from simple leaf huts and requisitioned private dwellings to the largest and most ornate structures in the village forming the focal point of community organization. As a rule the unmarried boys and girls sleep in separate houses under the supervision of some elderly person or widow but instances are not wanting where the same house is shared by both. In these dormitories the inmates are governed by certain rules and regulations and they have specific duties to perform.

In India the dormitory system occurs among the hill tribes of South-Western and Central India, Orissa, Chotanagpur, Assam and the North-Eastern Frontier. While among the majority such as the Kanikkars, Malapantarams, Malapulayans of the Travancore and Cochin hills, the Juangs of Orissa, the Hos and Oraons of the Chotanagpur Plateau and the Hill Kacharis, the Mikirs and Garos of Assam, the system occurs as sleeping quarters only for the unmarried of both the sexes, in some tribes of Orissa and Central and North-Eastern India it is found as an elaborate structure with a highly developed organization as the centre of tribal culture running through almost every sphere of tribal life. Although the dormitory system contains some common features such as the partial or complete exclusion of women from the boys' dormitory, the discipline and spirit of

corporate life of the inmates, the period of novitiate that they have to pass through, the regulation of behaviour between the youth of the two sexes and the participation of the members in the socio-religious life of the tribe, it takes different forms according to the habitat, culture-pattern and the tribal personality.

Four distinct types of bachelors' dormitories are found in India, namely the 'Dhumkuria' associated with the Oraons of Chotanagpur, the 'Ghotul' of the Murias of Bastar, the 'Morung' of the Naga tribes and the 'Moshup' of the Abors. It would be instructive to consider the distinctive features of each before discussing the Abang or the sacred mythology concerning the origin of the Moshup of the Siang Frontier Division. It may be said that these institutions flourished in their full glory only in the past and in most cases are now in decaying conditions or have completely disappeared as a result of the impact of modern civilization and the influence of reformers, particularly Christian missionaries, who look upon them as centres of immorality or heathen institutions which should be condemned and shunned. The accounts published, however, by early writers such as Dalton, Hore, Needham, Roy, Hutton, Mills and others enable us to form a good idea of the institution and the influence it exerted on the tribal life before the decay commenced. Fortunately in a few it still occurs in a vigorous living condition giving ample materials for comparison and understanding.

To begin with the most widely known, namely the Dhumkuria, sleeping houses or Gitioras occur among many tribes of the Chotanagpur Plateau from the lowly Birhors, the nomadic hunters and trappers who keep two of their leaf huts as sleeping places for their boys and girls, to the Hos and Mundas who also have Gitioras or separate sleeping houses for the unmarried of both sexes. In the Damini area among the Paharia tribes and the Asurs of the Palamau and the Neterhat Plateau, separate sleeping places for the young are present. These Gitioras, however, are nothing more than dormitories for sleeping, the other characters of the institution being either not developed or in a very rudimentary stage. Among the Oraons of the

Ranchi District it occurred in a highly developed form and the term Dhumkuria was really applied to the Oraon institution. The expression, though better known outside, is not an Oraon name but probably one that has been given by the people of the plains who have settled in the plateau. The Oraons call their men's dormitory "Jonkh-erpa" and the women's dormitory "Pel-erpa". The Dhumkuria or the boys dormitory is a substantially built house situated in a prominent part of the village. It is of rectangular shape, varying in size from 40 ft×14 ft to 80 ft×20 ft and over, according to the size of the village. It has a single hall. The pillars and the beams are decorated with carved figures of animals, erotic and other motifs, symbolizing the high degree of decorative art developed by the tribe. Drums, mats and bull-roarers were stored in the Dhumkuria.

The members of the Dhumkuria were divided into distinctive age-groups with a leader or Mahto in charge. On admission to the Dhumkurias, the boys had to go through a period of novitiate and do fagging work such as bringing firewood and water or massaging the legs of the older boys or visitors when they were entertained. Discipline was strictly maintained and any neglect or disobedience was punished. The boys of the Dhumkuria were pledged to secrecy regarding its affairs. They supplied the labour for any village work and took a prominent part in social festivities. The Dhumkuria was thus not only the school of training for the adolescent but it was the centre of the village life where guests were entertained and the meeting place of the elders for discussion of the affairs of the tribes. Its association with hunting is evident from the presence of animal effigies and more particularly from certain magico-religious rites performed at the time of the Sarhul and the Phagu festivals for the increase of the "procreative powers of the inmates so as to enable them to definitely increase the huntsmen of the tribe".

The girls' dormitory or Pel-erpa was not, however, an ornate house like the former. It was a house of simple structure and its location was not generally disclosed to outsiders. Like the boys' dormitory, it was under the charge of an older girl called Barka Dhangrin, who maintained discipline therein. It was not the

custom for the girls to visit the boys' dormitory, but it was an accepted social practice for the unmarried of both the sexes to mix freely and even sleep in the girls' dormitory. Like the boys, the girls had to pass through a period of novitiate when they were not permitted to form any liaison with boys. One of the duties of the girls was to sweep and clean the boys' dormitory and present strips of woven mats to their boy friends which were spread on the floor of the Dhumkuria. Although there was a great deal of freedom, complete decorum and adherence to tribal usage, such as the exogamic rules, was maintained. Dancing and music were regular features of the Dhumkuria life. In the dancing ground in front of the Dhumkuria, the girls, gaily dressed with flowers in their hair, assembled at night after meals and danced till late hours when they usually paired off. Although there was considerable premarital freedom, wedded life was steady and faithful.

The second pattern of the dormitory system is known as the Ghotul which is found in its most developed form among the Murias of Bastar although it is also present among the Hill Marias of Abujhmar Hills and the Bison-Horn Marias. The Muria Ghotul has certain special features not found in any other dormitory system. According to the tribal legend the Ghotul was the greatest gift of Lengopen to mankind. Lengopen was a hunter during the day but spent his nights with his Motiari in the Ghotul. The unique feature of the Ghotul is that its life is shared by unmarried boys or Chelliks and girls called Motiaris in a single institution. Dr Verrier Elwin who spent several years among the Muria has studied its place in the Muria life and the account that he has published is intimately drawn with an unsurpassed wealth of details. According to him, in the older forms of the Ghotul, the relationship between a Chellik and a Motiari was one of great attachment and fidelity lasting throughout the premarital life and often strengthened by the ties of a "Ghotul Marriage". In the later type of Ghotul which is more widespread nowadays, fidelity to a single partner is not approved. On the contrary, the partners are expected to be periodically changed so that deep attachment between one single pair cannot

develop, because it is feared that such attachment might interfere with the subsequent married life and cause unhappiness. The Ghotul, like other dormitories, enforced discipline and gave training to the youth of both sexes in their social duties and was responsible for the development of art, music and dancing among the Murias. It also played an important part in religious festivities and occasions like marriage where the Chellik and the Motiari had distinctive parts to play. Supply of labour and performance of various duties for the village, entertainment of guests and undertaking of dancing expeditions to neighbouring villages for relaxation, were part of the Ghotul life. As a matter of fact, although the free mixing and the sexual side of Ghotul life has attracted more attention, in actual importance its place is subsidiary to the social and religious side. Nevertheless it provides "a kingdom for the unmarried" in a manner not found in any other dormitory system and accounts for the gay and emotionally balanced life of the Murias.

The significance of the Lengopen as a hunter and his worship every three years at Simurgaon with pigs, goats and bulls suggest the close association of the Ghotul with hunting. The ceremonial association of the Chellik with axe cultivation and his going out on hunting, fishing and trapping and that of the Motiari in the gathering of edible roots is a symbolic expression of the quest of food forming the basis of the Ghotul and suggests that when the Ghotul was first conceived the Murias were a hunting and food-gathering tribe with the beginning of shifting cultivation. With the gradual development of the institution it embraced every aspect of the life of the tribe. Without the Ghotul the life and culture of the Muria would lose their meaning.

As in the rest of tribal India, the dormitory system was once widely prevalent in Assam and the NEFA. It existed among the Hill Kacharis, Garos, Mikirs, Kukis and Lushais, who had separate dormitories for the unmarried boys and girls. Among the Naga tribes and the Abors of the NEFA, however, it reached its highest development with certain specific characteristics which distinguish them from the Dhumkuria and Ghotul of

Peninsular India. The dormitory is always a reflection of the culture and personality of the tribe. The tribes of the NEFA being warlike and engaged in constant inter-tribal feuds, the dormitory among them has been geared to that aspect of their life.

The Naga dormitory is known by the Assamese word "Morang" or "Morang-ghar". Among the Nagas, however, it is known by the local tribal names e.g. the Ao Naga calls it "Arijo", the Lotha "Champo", the Rengma "Rensi" and so on. Unfortunately, the dormitory survives at the present time in the majority of the Naga tribes with only a vestige of its past glory and activity. The big ornate dormitory houses of the Aos, among whom the organization was most advanced, are now abandoned and the logdrum which used to send a thrill through the hearts of the young fighters is no longer beaten.

Among the Konyaks and the Noctes of the Tirap Frontier Division, however, it still exists as an active and virile institution though perhaps not in all its former glory. In the year 1954 a party of the Department of Anthropology, Government of India, under my direction carried out an anthropological survey in the four villages of Khonsa, Borkuma, Lapnan and Borduria among the Noctes. They occupy an area of about 2,876 sq miles with a population of over 5,000 in the Tirap Frontier Division. Lying somewhat out of the zones of contact they have preserved some of their old customs and institutions. The organization of the Morang which they call "Poh" was studied by Wati Aonak, a member of our party, himself an Ao Naga with an intimate knowledge of the institution as it existed among his own people. As the materials collected by him are new and show how the Morang as a living institution actually functions in a cultural horizon similar to that of the Siang Frontier Division, I am giving here a detailed outline of the Poh. The corresponding women's dormitory is called a "Yampo". In those places where a house has not been specially built for the girls they sleep in private houses requisitioned for the purpose and known as "Yanjo Yimthen". The Morang of the Noctes is of two kinds, namely the chief's Morang and the ordinary Morang. In the village of Lapnan there is a third one, that

of the younger chief. The number of Yampos or girls' dormitories in Khonsa is three, in Lapnan it is seven and in Borduria there are only the Yanjo Yimthens. The Morangs are large houses with openings at the front and the back and situated usually at the gate of the village in a most prominent position but not with stone foundation or stone platforms as Hutton found among some of the Konyaks. The size is often over 40 ft × 12 ft the gable rising up to 30 ft. The front is decorated with carved wooden posts and there is a platform for sitting. The pattern is similar to that of the dwelling houses with split bamboo flooring of a check design. In the case of the chief's Morang the floor design is of an X shape. Inside the house on one side there are raised bamboo changs or platforms for sleeping and on the other there is the large dugout logdrum or xylophone called "thum" by the Noctes. Above the logdrum there is a platform for the human skulls brought from head-hunting raids. These, however, are not kept in the ordinary Morang but in the chief's Morang and can only be touched by special priests and not even by the chief himself. At the time of our investigation there were 42 skulls at the Poh of Lapnan and 114 at Borduria. The Morang is built by the joint efforts of the entire village but in the case of the chief's Morang expenses are borne by the chief. Like the Muria Ghotul, the Morang possesses lands whose produce, rice and millet, are used in the feast given at the time of its reconstruction. The Morang is reconstructed periodically by the collective efforts of the men of the village with feast, songs and dances. In the case of the chief's Morang, rice, meat and kham (rice-beer) are prepared by women at the chief's house and then served to the men at the Morang. It is on this occasion only that the women can enter the Morang. The following song sung on this occasion invoking its aid for increased head and animal trophies suggests the underlying objects of the Poh :—

Kosung jano boloma	— Oh thou great chief's Morang,
Soayan momai vannayangko	— Let more heads come here,
Kosung jano boloma	— Oh thou great chief's Morang,
Lapan bakhas oven navangae	— Let more wild boar tusks be brought here,

Kosung jano boloma — Oh thou great chief's Morang,  
 Jano momai vannavangko — Let more tigers' heads be  
 brought here.

Following the reconstruction there is a ceremonial hunt and the head of the animal killed is given to the chief.

In many respects the logdrum is the most distinctive object in the Morang and special care is taken for its preservation from fire or other calamities. Each Morang must have one logdrum which is hollowed out of the trunk of a big tree and is on an average 20 ft × 4 ft. When beaten with wooden clubs about six inches long, it emits a tremendous sound heard from a great distance. In the ordinary Morang it is played only at night but in the chief's Morang it might also be played during the day when there was an inter-village fight, or a head-hunting raid in a nearby village, when villagers lost heads at the enemies' hand and when hunted heads were brought to the village. With the disappearance of head-hunting the drum is played during the day nowadays only when a road is to be built between one village and another or to the jhum field or when a bridge is to be constructed. It is also played every time a son is born to the chief.

There is an elaborate ceremony for the making of a logdrum; barks are collected from the jungle and brought to the priest to decide which particular tree will be suitable for the drum. A group of men is then sent to the forest for cutting down the tree and making the logdrum. In the case of the chief's Morang, a special officer known as "Kangsen"—a position of high honour—is sent for the purpose. The hollowing out of the trunk and the carvings are all done in the jungle before the drum is brought to the village. The installation of a logdrum is an event of great importance. As it is a huge thing it takes sometimes several days to drag it from the jungle. The men carrying the drum camp on the wayside and are entertained by the women of the village with rice and kham. When it is brought to the village gate the drum is kept in an open place near the Morang when a big ceremony takes place

with the sacrifice of mithun and pigs and the entire male population of the village is feasted. The blood of the animals killed is thrown on the drum after which it is taken inside the Morang with gun-fire, shouting, dancing and singing. The following song is sung on the occasion :—

Oh mohkum. kangkhum	— Oh logdrum, we have brought you here,
Oh aolan pampan	— Oh stay with us for ever; etc. etc.

Every bachelor has a right to be a member of the Morang soon after he is given the dao-holder by his father i.e. as soon as he is able to look after himself. Only the wealthy section can be members of the chief's Morang, as membership presupposes the giving of two feasts, one to the Morang members and the other to all the men of the village. For the younger chief's Morang it is enough to feast the Morang members. The membership of the ordinary Morang is free. Women cannot become members of the boys' dormitory nor can they enter its precincts except on the occasion of its installation and reconstruction. As in the case of other dormitory systems, the inmates have to pass through a period of training and do a lot of fagging duties, such as the bringing of firewood, water etc. There is, however, no inferiority complex and care is taken that everybody considers himself an equal, subject to the carrying out of his duties and observance of the general discipline of the Morang. Its most significant religious side is the storing and preservation of the hunted skulls which testify to the glory and valour of the people and serve to maintain the necessary quantum of the soul-matter to ensure the health and prosperity of the village. The Morang is considered sacred. It is also a sanctuary where crime cannot be committed and offenders and even enemies can take shelter.

Mention has been made of the fact that women are not allowed to enter the Morang except on the day when it is installed or rebuilt. The boys of the Morang on the other hand are free to go to the girls' dormitories (Yampo) which, like girls' houses among other tribes, are not generally disclosed to the outsiders and

they can sleep there with their chosen partners. There is a great deal of free mixing between the unmarried boys and girls and premarital sexual freedom is socially sanctioned. In the Poh not only are the traditions and heroic deeds of the tribe recited but songs of love are taught and learnt. While the younger boys sleep quietly in one corner, the older boys go to the Yampo in a group with flowers on their ears and with daos and sit by their girl friends and offer them sali or pan which is responded to by the girls with flowers which they gather for their lovers. They may sit, chat, flirt till the late hours of the night and even sleep with their girl friends there. If a child happens to be born, then the boy must marry the girl if outside his clan or pay a heavy fine. The Nocte custom, like that of the Abors, is for the girl to stay with her parents after marriage and not to go to her husband's house immediately. During this period of betrothal the young couple often sleep together in the Yampo or Yamjo Yimthen instead of the parental house of the girl as among the Abors. There are various types of love songs sung by the boys and the girls at the Yampo of which the following are examples:—

*The girl sings :*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Lenang korang jongpo                     | — I have been waiting for you,                |
| Jongpo takosong lakme<br>bomseka         | — With flowers in my hand,                    |
| Ehora ngame jongpo baro<br>somlaeke      | — Expecting your arrival I have<br>done this, |
| Jongpo acheale asena rekole<br>ejonganle | — Tell me how you like the<br>flower.         |

*The boy answers :*

- |                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Thaja nga anang jop-nangmen | — I'll spend the night with you,             |
| Bangnang lavangmen          | — I'll not go back to the Morang,            |
| Medemnangjepnang men        | — There are many boys at the<br>Morang,      |
| Bangnang leangmen aho       | — There is no place for me at<br>the Morang, |

- Ajealen lajepta — My bed at the Morang,  
 Bangnang eleangko me lajepta — Is occupied by some of my  
 friends,  
 Ejeptan aho — No place for me at the Morang.
- The girl says :*  
 Jep bangnang jepthen ahoko — Do sleep here if there is no  
 joane place for you at the Morang.
- The boy rejoins :*  
 Longdoun chongnajea humko — We must sleep together  
 jutkae hobe nagho jutkoe under the same cover.  
 khube,
- Responds the girl :*  
 Adango seadeo hamkhoe — I agree, we will sleep  
 jutkoe hupto negho jutkoe together under the same  
 khupto, cover.
- Finally the boy concludes :*  
 Bangme mongsem kigin — Girl of my choice,  
 Kiani keadang khau — I will sleep with you.  
 Demsea jukoi hopro — In the same bed,  
 Nipen jukoi kokkha — Under the same cover,  
 Dangne yougla bulo — Even though you may fly  
 to sky,  
 Hanchoa chunla kongduo — I'll follow with the iron  
 bed.  
 Kane lepla bulo — Even though you escape  
 underground,  
 Ukon popla longduo — I'll search for you by digging  
 the ground.

The Moshup or the dormitory system of the Abor, while similarly imbued as the Nocte Morang in the traditions of hunting and warfare, is without its central cult of head-hunting and the logdrum. The Abors like the Nagas believe in the aith or soul-matter and its return to its earthly container (the cranium) but they have not developed the pragmatic side, namely its supposed salutary effect on the health and prosperity of the community. Instead, a niche or sanctum is provided for the animal skulls in

the Moshup as essential for successful hunting. There are other features of the Moshup which give it a wide coverage and pivotal position in the Abor life to an extent not found among other tribes possessing analogous institutions with the possible exception of the Murias of Bastar. I propose, therefore, to discuss at some length the different aspects of the organization and the concept around which it is built, in order to show not only how the Moshup works in actual life but also its bearing on the origin and philosophy of the dormitory system as a whole. As one who has had first-hand knowledge of all the four systems, namely the Dhumkuria of the Oraon and Munda of the Ranchi District, the Ghotul of the Murias at Dongrigura in the Kondagaon Tehsil (under the chaperonage of Dr Elwin himself), the Nocte Morang of the Tirap Frontier Division, and the Moshup of the Abor of the Siang Frontier Division, I consider myself in a special position to do so. Of the Abor Moshup my acquaintance has been most intimate. During the period of nearly a decade starting from the year 1948 I led research parties of the Department of Anthropology, Government of India, in the Siang Frontier Division every year, except in 1951 following the earthquake, beginning from the month of November to the onset of the monsoon. The members of my parties visited the greater part of the Siang Frontier Division, two reaching as far as Gelling in the far north. As our party also included women anthropologists, it was possible to obtain a truer picture of the feminine side than would have been possible otherwise. Following the Abor custom and the advice of Mr Peter James, the then Political Officer, a man of wide and intimate knowledge of Abor language and life, we made it a point to stay in the Moshup itself during our trips. By doing so not only did we see the day-to-day life of the inmates but as participant observers of the major festivities connected with the ceremonial life of the institution we were able to probe its esoteric side. I myself lived in the Moshup of four of the major tribes namely those of the Pasis at Balek, of the Minyongs at Ledung, of the Padams at Ayeng, Mebo, Dapui, Lukku, (a village abandoned after the earthquake), Memosepo, Kalek, and Bodak and of the Panggis of the Yamne valley at Jero

and Sibbum. Our stay in a single village extended from a week to a month; sometimes, we stayed as in the Kalek Moshup in 1954-55, for over four months. The Abang or the mythological origin of the Moshup was narrated to me by Akom Megu (since deceased) the Abor Miri and official interpreter of Bodak and revised and checked by Mutsang Perme, the Miri of Shilluk during my visits in 1953 and 1954. Both of them are among the foremost of the Padam Miris with wide reputation.

The Moshup is the most distinguishing feature in the life of the group of tribes of the Siang Frontier Division who come under the orbit of Abor culture, namely Shimong, Milang, Karko, Konkar, Panggi, Minyong, Padam and Pasi, extending from the proximity of the northern snow-ranges along the MacMahon line to the foothills below Pasighat and from the Sissiri in the Lohit Frontier Division in the east to the valleys of the Siyom and Simen on the west. Although our information on the tribes living in the northern and north-western territories like the Bori, Bokar, Pailibos, and Ashings is not complete yet what we do know about them shows that the Moshup, known among them as Bange, exists. Its northernmost extension can be traced up to Pemakoichan where it is called Rambang. This may be due to the influence of the Abors who inhabited this tract and still comprise a considerable portion of the population, for the dormitory system is absent among the Membas as well as among the Hill Miri, Apatani and Dafla tribes west of the Subansiri river. Similarly in the east the Mishmis of the Lohit valley do not possess the dormitory. Even among the Gallongs who live in the valleys of the Siyom and Simen although the Dere (as they call the Moshup), is present, its scope and function are limited to the holding of the tribal council and entertainment of guests. The Dere does not provide sleeping accommodation for the young men nor is there any corresponding arrangement for the girls. The zone of the Moshup institution is, therefore, limited to the tribes belonging to the Abor group proper. Among them, however, there is a close similarity in the structure and organization with only minor variations reflecting the topographical

and institutional differences that have subsequently arisen, but indicating the basic uniformity of the Moshup as enjoined by the Abang. It is my intention, therefore, to discuss them as a whole and then to indicate in what particular respects the inter-group and regional differences have developed. .

The earliest account of the Abor Moshup was given by Lt R. Wilcox in his "Memoir of a Survey of Assam and the Neighbouring Countries" published in *Asiatic Researches* in 1832, although reference to the Abor tribe occurs in an Account of Assam, compiled in 1807-14 by Francis Buchanan who later came to be known as Francis Hamilton. In pages 76-77 of his account the Abors are mentioned as a wild tribe living immediately beyond the Dikrong River just north of the Chingpos. There is some confusion, however, about the exact position of the Abors and even their relation with the Khamphtis. As an officer of the Revenue Survey, Wilcox was appointed Assistant to Capt Bedford to survey the sources of the Dihang or Brahmaputra. Bedford preceded Wilcox and arrived in the Abor Hills in November 1825, but was not allowed to go beyond Pasial (Pasighat). In the account of his journey published in the Government Gazette dated Feb. 2, 1826 he mentioned his meeting Pasial and Minyong Abors of the villages of Pedu, Sibu and Membu but did not write anything about the Moshup or Abor dormitory system. Lt Wilcox came by boat from Singarughat to Sikughat accompanied by Lt Burlton and visited Membu (Mebo) which was then situated on a range of hills across the river Siku somewhat east of the present site of the Mebo village. Mebo was then the largest settlement of the Padam Abors in the lower region, consisting of about 100 houses in the centre of which was the dormitory. Wilcox called it by the Naga name of "Morang", and described it as a large building which served as a hall of audience and debate, a place of reception of strangers and a house for the bachelors of the village. Accommodation was provided for him in it but he preferred to camp outside. In the Kebang or meeting of the village elders that was held in the Morang, people from the surrounding villages including Shilluk attended. Wilcox saw young bachelors gathered in the Morang

at night and warming themselves by the wood-fire, and found that the decisions of the council made in the Morang were described as those of the Raj with the full authority of the village behind. The farthest point reached by him was the left bank of the Dihang opposite the village of Padu beyond which he was not permitted to go. Capt Neufville, the Political Agent visited Membu in 1827, to discuss with the Abors about the settlement of the Miris and according to the Abors considered the Morang to be a fine building. The next visitor was Dr John M'Cosh, Lecturer in the Medical College of Calcutta who came to the Abor and Mishmi hills in 1837 and referred to the Moshup as the hall of the entertainer where animal skulls were hung. He was followed by Major V. Vetch, Political Agent of Upper Assam, who came to the Abor villages in 1847 and 1848 regarding the amount of 'Posa' to be paid to the Abor tribe but his attempt to penetrate into the parent villages of the Bor-Abor (Padam) did not succeed. He spoke of the Bor-Abors as blunt, independent and warlike but furnished no particulars about the dormitory. Incidentally the Assamese word "Abor" means non-tributary or independent people and was applied in a general sense to the wild independent tribes of the North-Eastern Frontier irrespective of whether they were Abor, Mishmi, Dafla, Naga, (such as Abor Mishmi, Abor Dafla, Abor Naga etc.). It has no derogatory meaning and implies truculence rather than savagery. Father Nicholas Michael Krick, a French priest who crossed into the Tibetan village of Samey twice between 1852 and 1854 to spread the Gospel and was murdered treacherously by the Mishmi Chief Kaissa, visited the Abor village of Membu in 1853 and published an account of his visit to the Abor territory in pages 169—201 of his book entitled "Relation d'un Voyage au Tibet en Tibet et d'un Voyage chez les Abors en 1853". The portion containing his account of the Abors was published in English by the Rev A. Gille S. J. in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* in 1913. Father Krick's first encounter with the Abors occurred in November 19, 1851 when he visited them with Captain Smith on the back of an elephant with an escort of 200 soldiers. In 1853, however, he went as far as Membu which apparently was at the



same place as Wilcox found it, "on the curved flanks of a mountain" 600 ft above the plain. He was provided shelter at the Moshup which he called "the common building" and "guard-house where huntsmen gathered for hunting meet". He also called the Moshup a council house in which all political questions and topics of the day were discussed. According to him the Moshup served the purposes of extraordinary gatherings and young unmarried men slept there. Among other things, Father Krick found it to be the meeting place of old men who could no longer work but were treated with respect and consideration. We owe for a more detailed account of the Moshup to E.T. Dalton who visited the Abor Hills accompanied by Lt E. G. Eden of the Assam Light Infantry in 1855, in his capacity as Principal Assistant to the Governor General's Agent in Assam. Before he became the Commissioner of Chotanagpur he spent a considerable time in visiting the country between the Lohit and the Dihang and came to Membu in 1855 and like his predecessors was given shelter in the Morang as he called the Moshup but he preferred to camp outside. The Morang was situated in the most commanding part of the village and Membu was found by him to have doubled in size from the time of Lt Wilcox. In the lower and most compact part of the village he counted 150 houses. He found the Morang built in the same style as private houses but much bigger, about 200 ft long, consisting of 16 or 17 hearths. He mentioned a central fireplace (Radang) where he was seated along with the Gams. In the Kebang held during his visit at the Morang there were not less than 300 persons present. Dalton found that it was occupied at night by the unmarried young men of the village, both freemen and slaves. A certain portion of the married men, also according to his information kept guard at night to forestall any surprise enemy attack. The Morang functioned as the council house where the Gams and all adult men assembled and issued orders to the village, such as the declaration of genna or holiday on the occasion of his visit. According to him the Morang was the common treasury of the village and had certain property of its own such as pigs, poultry etc., which were kept for public use. Like Fr Krick he found the superannuated men

the curved flanks of a mound provided shelter at the "common building" and "guard-hut for hunting meet". He also mentioned in which all political questions were discussed. According to him the Moshup was for extraordinary gatherings and meetings. Among other things, Father Dalton noted the respect of old men who could not be treated with disrespect and consideration. We found the Moshup to be used by E.T. Dalton and was named by Lt E. G. Eden of the Moshup as Principal Assistant in Assam. Before he became Principal he spent a considerable time in the Moshup and the Dihang and came to the Moshup. Successors were given shelter in the Moshup but he preferred to camp in the open ground in the most commanding position. Dalton found by him to have doubled in the lower and most compact uses. He found the Morang Moshup much bigger, about 7 hearths. He mentioned a Moshup was seated along with the Moshup. On his visit at the Morang there was no Moshup present. Dalton found that it was used by the young men of the village, a portion of the married men, and the Moshup kept guard at night to forestall the Moshup. The Morang functioned as the Moshup for all adult men assembled and the Moshup. On the declaration of genna or Moshup. According to him the Moshup of the village and had certain Moshup. Poultry etc., which were kept in the Moshup around the superannuated men

of the village living in the Morang at public expense. Following Dalton, J. F. Needham, Political Agent of Sadiya visited Membu in 1884 but he was not allowed to proceed beyond the Balek group of villages. He, however, was the first man to use the Abor expression Moshup for the dormitory instead of Morang as had been done by previous visitors. He found the Abors to be exceedingly proud of their Moshup in which all important topics were discussed and disposed of. At the time of his visit, the Moshup at Membu was at the entrance of the village and not at the centre as Wilcox and Dalton had found. By pacing he measured the length of the building to be 80×10 yards or 240 ft×30 ft with front and back exits. There were altogether 24 fire places in the building. It was the residence of all the unmarried warriors and the walls were stocked with animal heads, bows and arrows etc. In his opinion the building was large enough to accommodate 500 people. He found the atmosphere of the Moshup to be fetid but when he wanted to hold the Darbar in the open ground he was rebuked by the Abors who told him that all such meetings must take place within the Moshup which was their court or kutchery.

The accounts of the Abor Moshup from Wilcox down to Needham were confined to the villages of the lower regions. They show certain variations in the size of the village and the Moshup building that had taken place during the intervals, indicating the growth of villages like Membu due to the influx of people from other parts as well as the fact that the Moshup building had no fixed dimensions but varied in length and number of hearths to meet the needs of the changing situations at the time of its periodical reconstructions.

During the period following Dalton's visit from 1859 to 1909 several visits were made including that of Williamson in 1909 and not less than 10 military expeditions were sent to the Abor Hills for reprisals of murders and raids perpetrated by the tribe on friendly people of the neighbouring villages. The last and biggest of these was the Abor Expedition of 1911-12 sent for punishment of the murderers of Dr Gregorson and Mr Williamson, Political Agent, on 30th and 31st March, 1911 respectively at Renging

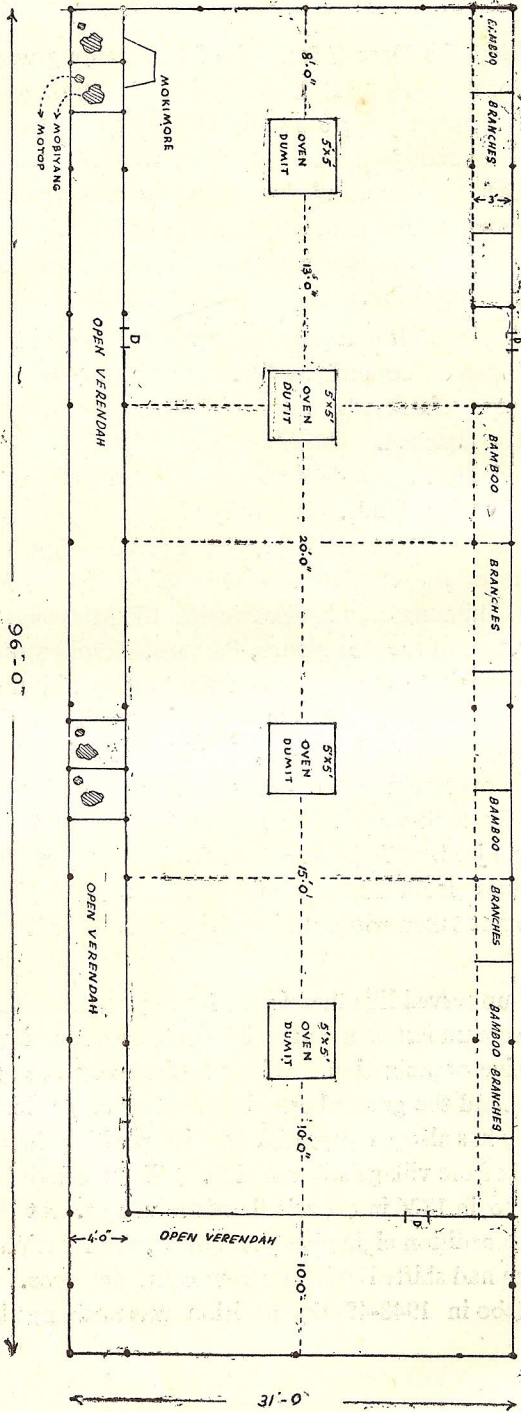
and Komsing and for establishing administrative control over the territory. The expedition was under the command of Major-General Bower with Capt W. B. Hore as Field Intelligence Officer and Sir George Dunbar as Commandant of the Lakhimpur Battalion of police as one of the officers. The expedition, starting from Kobo on October, 1911 traversed the Gallong and Abor territories on both banks of the Dihang (Siang) reaching as far north as Singing on latitude  $28.45^{\circ}$  north. We are indebted to Capt Hore for the most authentic account of the Abor village structures and Moshup organizations of the upper regions. Capt Hore travelled with the expedition all through the Abor territory and disclosed many hitherto unknown facts about their customs and rites with particular reference to the dormitories. He found that the Moshup varied according to the size and condition of the village. In the Minyong country for instance on the right bank of the Dihang, the Moshup at Komsing was as long as 250 ft with nine fireplaces. On the other hand in the northern villages such as those of Riga, Damroh etc. each clan lived separately under its own Gam and had its own Moshup. There was no common village Moshup as in the lower regions. Hore corroborated the earlier findings of Wilcox and Dalton that the Moshup served not only as the sleeping place of the unmarried men but also as the council house where all matters pertaining to the village were discussed and decided. He was also the first to call attention to the existence of the Rasheng or dormitory for unmarried women which he found prevalent in the upper regions particularly on the eastern section of the Dihang valley. In the Memoir published by Dunbar, the word Moshup is spelt as "Moshap" and described as a barrack for unmarried men. The Moshup according to him was situated in the central part of the village and was a big building with numerous exits, built on the same pattern as the private houses. It was the place where guests were entertained and councils held. Dunbar noticed that women were prohibited from entering the Moshup. With regard to the Rasheng, however, he found that men had free entrance. He described the Moshup in the Minyong village of Kombong as a fine building outside the village itself. He was mistaken, however,

in thinking that the Dere (Moshup) of the Gallong was also a bachelors' dormitory. But he was right in stating that the Gallongs had no house corresponding to the Rasheng and girls slept in their parents' houses. After Dunbar no trustworthy account of the Abor life and dormitory customs appeared nor was any systematic survey undertaken till our investigation from 1948 when a serious attempt was made to assess the true significance of the institution.

The Moshup is built in a prominent part of the village suitable as the centre of community life. In the olden days it acted also as an outpost from where the different approaches to the village could be watched. The Abors were a fighting people like the Nagas and until a few decades ago were engaged in constant tribal and inter-tribal feuds. Not only did the village units fight against one another but there were often confederations of tribes such as those of the Padams and Milangs against the Mishmis in 1894, of the Shimongs and Karkos against the Minyongs of Riga and Komkar, and of the Minyongs, Padams, Komkar and Pasis against the Panggis to prevent them from trading with the plains in the south and through the Shimongs with the Tibetans in the north. As a measure of protection, the villages were built on the spurs of hills overlooking the valley and were well stockaded and flanked by rock-chutes. The paths leading to the village were often panjeed. Well-known stockades such as those of Igar two miles from Rotung and Kekkar Monnying near Kebang were not taken without difficulty by the Abor Expedition of 1911-12.

The Moshup served like the Naga Morang as the centre from which raids were undertaken and which could also function as the village defensive organization. With the disappearance of inter-tribal fighting and the gradual establishment of peace this aspect of Moshup life has also disappeared but its position in a commanding part of the village still remains. Wilcox found the Moshup of Mebo in 1826 in the middle of the village. At the time of the Abor Expedition eightyfive years after, the location of the Mebo Moshup had shifted to its north-western entrance. When we visited Mebo in 1948-49 the position was unchanged. The

FRONT ELEVATION



SIDE VIEW

Moshups at Bodak and Lekko (at the old sites before the earthquake) and villages like Ayeng, Balek and Jero were also at the entrance, but the Kalek, Ledung and Sibbum Moshups were in the centre. The Memosepo Moshup was at the extreme eastern outskirts of the village giving a commanding view of the valley. There is, therefore, no precise canon for the location of the Moshup but it depends on the topography as well as the suitability as an observation post and as a centre of community life with some open ground in front, convenient for a Ponung Ingkong i.e. an open dancing ground for the ponungs.

Capt Wilcox, Dalton, Needham and Hore have earlier observed that the Moshup is built on the same pattern as dwelling houses, on piles or raised platforms varying from 3 ft to 15 ft in height according to the lay of the land. It has a front and a back entrance as well as central notched trunk ladders. In small Moshups like those of Bodak, Ledung, and Balek, their number is not more than one or two but in larger Moshups such as that of Sibbum, there may be as many as eight or ten. The size of the Moshup depends on the size of the village. It varies from 50 ft  $\times$  20 ft as in those of Bodak and Lukku, to over 200 ft in larger villages. Hore found the Komsing Moshup to be 250 ft  $\times$  20 ft and Needham measured the Mebo Moshup in 1884 as 240 ft  $\times$  30 ft. At the time of our visit the Mebo Moshup was of a considerably reduced size but still over 100 ft long and the Ayeng Moshup 75 ft  $\times$  30 ft. The Kalek, Memosepo, Dapui and Jero Moshups were about 60 ft  $\times$  30 ft each. The Sibbum Moshup, the largest we visited, was over 250 ft.

Unlike the dwelling houses, the Moshup is a single rectangular hall divided into a number of meroms or hearths made in the shape of a wooden square 4 ft  $\times$  4 ft or more sunk in the floor of the house to a depth of one foot or so and rammed with gravel and earth with a stone fireplace in the centre called letik. Unlike the Nocte chief's Morang the floor of the Abor Moshup has no special design. It is made of split bamboo in chequered pattern as in the dwelling houses. Over the merom there is a square wooden frame called kumbang or bare where the

heads of the animals killed by the members of the merom are hung. Below this there is a platform called perek, made of split bamboo on which articles belonging to the members of the merom may be kept. In the villages of the lower foothills, however, such as those of Ayeng, Mebo, Kalak and Ledung, the perek is often dispensed with only the kumbang or the bare remaining. Around the kumbang there is a square frame of a thorny creeper called tatkiye forming a sort of overhead boundary to act as a protective shield. The Abors believe that just as the thorns of tatkiye entangle a man, so would setting up of a tatkiye frame immobilize animals during hunting. The tatkiye frame is considered symbolic of the obstacles put in the path of animals and is considered to be of good import.

The Moshup was originally conceived on a clan basis each clan having one. For instance, there are ten clans at Damroh and there are ten Moshups, one for each of the opuins (clans) such as Irang Moshup, Borang Moshup, Lego Moshup, Pertin Moshup, Tayeng Moshup etc. The same is true of the Moshups of the upper regions, in Shimong, Milang, Karko, Riga, Gekko etc. In these parts there are no common village Moshups as each of the opuins lives separately with its Gams and Kebangs (councils) as observed by Hore in Damroh in 1911-12. It appears, therefore, that in ancient times, as illustrated in the pattern of village organization in the parent villages of the upper regions, for defensive purposes and for the common interests of the village only, the opuins combined and acted together, but for their own socio-economic life, such as hunting and festivities connected with it they functioned independently through their own Moshups. These clan or opuin Moshups are called Retek or Suptek as distinct from the central organization belonging to the whole village which is called Moshup.

When, with the pressure of population and shortage of tillable land, people began to move to the southern virgin lands, they at first followed the pattern of their parent villages and each clan led its socio-economic life separately with its own Retek and Gam. Continued immigration of new groups of people causing sudden

increase in certain clans which could not be accommodated in the existing Reteks led gradually to the growth of a central Moshups where the surplus huntsmen could be housed. Sibbum offers an example of this transitional state. When the Panggis first settled here from their parent village of Gekko, the nine clans that moved, namely Taying, Pange, Tage, Gate, Tateng, Tengu, Taku, Padang and Age set up their independent Reteks, and, although members of a common village organization for political and defensive purposes, pursued their independent socio-economic clan life. Soon, however, the rise in number in some clans such as the Pange and Padang, who could not be taken in the clan Reteks and who belonged to none of the already settled clans, made it necessary to have an organization which could accommodate them irrespective of their clan affiliations. In this way a central village Moshup grew up. The different existing Reteks were retained in the beginning but the concept of clanwise membership of Reteks was transferred to the meroms of the central Moshup which finally replaced them. Not all the meroms, however, were filled up on the clan basis; professional and other heterogeneous groups were taken on topographical and other considerations and the Moshup came to represent a true cross section of the community. Thus out of the nine meroms in the central Sibbum Moshup, two, namely Pange and Padang are clan meroms, two others like Keku and Kebuk signify the chronological orders of their establishment. Sange has reference to the elevated nature of its hunting ground etc. and Bari is constituted of the singers of Bari sung at the construction of houses, namely "Ge-ey-ey Abonane Kape Mone-ey etc.". During this transitional stage the clan Reteks were retained along with the central Moshup whose meroms were formed partly on clan basis and partly on other considerations.

A further development occurred with increased colonization as shown in the Moshup organization of Jero where the Panggis moved from Sibbum in their drive southwards towards the Yamne valley. As the number of colonists was small there was no scope for separate Reteks. Accordingly only one village

Moshup was set up with four meroms namely Sange, Paran, Riang and Romkeya of which Paran and Romkeya were clan meroms and Sange took the name of Sange merom of Sibbum whose members had moved into Jero. In the third phase of development seen mostly in the villages of the foothills whether Padam, Pasi or Minyong, the clan Moshups or Reteks have completely disappeared, replaced by a central village Moshup. Where the villages are large as at Komsing, Ayeng and Mebo, the meroms are many but formed chiefly on topographical position of the houses of the members or other factors. The clan membership of the meroms as transferred from the Reteks found little scope in the Moshup. It became representative of the total village rather than a federation of different clans e.g. in the Ayeng Moshup there are altogether nine meroms divided into the Ango-Sango sections. The names of the meroms have reference to their position in the Moshup such as Gidum meaning one end, Gingkong the other end and Radung the centre of the Moshup.

A still further stage of development is illustrated in the village of Bordak. This village was founded about 1915-16 by some of the Padam families moving from Padu and Silli belonging chiefly to the Taying, Megu, and Perme clans totalling altogether about 40 houses, not sufficient for forming meroms either on the basis of clan or topography. The three meroms called Romdang, Romtak and Romsam were formed on age basis i.e. Romsam for old men, Romdang for young men and Romtak for adolescents.

The merom division of the Moshup is basic in Abor society, each merom being considered a social unit such as it occurs in the ordinary family dwellings. This idea of a single unit of the merom was, therefore, a transference from the family to the Moshup. The number of meroms in a Moshup, although it varies in different villages, is made primarily with the idea of their forming viable hunting units i.e. neither too small nor too large for the purposes of successful hunting. In the Reteks of the upper villages there are often more than one owing to the large number of members; as for example, in the Irang Retek at

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Damroh, where our party stayed in 1949 there were two meroms. The same is true of some of the other Reteks which have large membership. In the Sibbum Moshup we found nine meroms; similarly Hore found nine in the Komsing Moshup. Wilcox found as many as 17 or 18 in the Mebo Moshup which increased to 24 at the time of Dalton's visit, but at the time of our visit the number of meroms did not exceed nine. It is possible that the large number of meroms mentioned by Wilcox and Dalton is due to the inclusion of Romsams made for the use of mijjims (old men). At Sibbum, for instance, there were nine Romsams for nine meroms during our visit in 1950. These Romsams are without kumbang and perek and are really extensions of meroms functioning only during the day and not true meroms. At the present time in the lower Abor villages separate Romsams do not exist but old men or mijjims sit and work together in any part of the Moshup during the day.

The membership of the merom does not depend on the individual but is hereditary. Children of the families belonging to particular meroms whether constituted on clan or other basis become automatically members of these meroms and cannot change to any other merom according to their wishes. When new people move into particular villages it is the Kebang which decides in which particular merom or meroms they should be placed. They are usually assigned to those meroms whose membership has declined due to depletion caused by death or migration, with an eye to the position of their houses. In the case of people belonging to particular clans where clan meroms still exist the newcomers automatically become members of their clan meroms. In some cases, as for example at Jero, if Minyongs and Padams instead of Panggis come and settle in the village, those of the former tribe who belong to Jammu and the Iring clans will automatically become members of the Riang and Ronkeya clans and the Taying, Porting and Parmeya of the Padams will also become members of the Ronkeya clan. These clans are accepted as affiliated to the Riang and Ronkeya clans of the Panggis and can, therefore, partake of their privileges and obligations.

The basis of the Moshup organization is the Ango-Sango division, a feature which distinguishes it from the dormitory systems of other tribes. The social structure of the Abor tribes is founded on dual organization which not only regulates marriage but runs through the entire tribal life. Among the Minyongs, for instance, the marriage division is called Kuri Kuming and among the Padam it is known as Nguda, and Nguping among the Panggis. All the clans of the tribes belong to either of these two divisions and marriage within them is not permitted but must take place between the clans of the two divisions. Any infringement of this rule entails heavy fine and even expulsion. Although this system is no longer rigidly followed, for all practical purposes it still holds good. For purposes of war and control of trade, there was a similar division between the northern and the southern villages. The Minyongs of the villages above Kebang to Riga came under a confederation known as Ngorang and from Kebang down to the foothills it was known as Ngango. The equivalent Padam divisions were Ginkong Magbo and Gidewe Magbo. The use of the word Magbo (bridegroom) signifies their subsequent development into exogamous divisions. With the disappearance of war and enforcement of freer communication between the north and the south, the divisions have ceased to exist. There can, however, be no doubt that the territorial divisions between the north and the south were of later growth but the Kuri Kuming, Nguda and Nguping divisions for the regulation of marriage are certainly of an early epoch. These dual divisions, however, cannot be integrated with the Ango-Sango division which must be considered as a separate organization regulating a different sphere of Abor life. At the present time its importance is much greater than that of the former. The sphere of Ango-Sango division embraces the set-up of the whole village, the political organization, Moshup, hunting, as well as the ponung. Accordingly, all villages in the Abor territory are divided into an Ango and Sango section with a pathway running between the two. The eastern portion is known as the Sango and the western Ango. For instance in the village of Ayeng the Sango section lies east of the central village

pathway towards the Sibbum korong and the Ango section towards the Siku korong. At the start the sections were of equal or of very nearly equal size but the equilibrium is often disturbed with the migration of some families to other villages or their movement from one part to the other. As for example, the chief Gam of the village, Talo Borang, moved from Sango to Ango section and Lego Gam similarly came over from Ango to Sango section in the village of Kalek. While change of habitation from one to the other section is permitted, the affiliation of the person to his original division remains true. During kiruk or ceremonial hunting and Moshup feast he must go with his original group even though at that time he may live on the other side.

Among the Abors, before the extension of the administration, each tribe had its own land recognized by convention; the whole of the area from Damroh to Dambuk belonged to the Padam tribe. Within this territory the Padam villages had their territorial boundaries well recognized and no poaching on the hunting ground of one village by another was tolerated. If such a thing happened then there would be trouble. This as a matter of fact was one of the reasons of inter-village warfare. Within the village itself the hunting ground of the Ango and the Sango sections are sharply demarcated by the Kebang. The meroms of each section similarly had their respective allotted shares within these grounds. No poaching either by the Ango on the Sango section or *vice versa* or by one merom on the hunting ground of another was permitted. This is probably due to the original independent life led by each clan with its separate Moshup and Kebang, as is still found in the upper villages like Damroh, Karko, Shimong, Milang and Gekko. The meroms developing subsequently on clan basis when a central village Moshup first took shape retained their separate hunting grounds even when at a still later stage the meroms ceased to be formed altogether of a single clan membership. Should, however, the violation by one of the Ango-Sango sections of the well-defined hunting ground of the other take place there is likely to be serious trouble not unoften ending in fighting. In the case of poaching by one

merom on the hunting ground of another, a fine is imposed depending on the nature of the game killed; usually a perok (an earthen jar) of apong has to be given to the aggrieved merom. When, however, large game, such as a wild boar is killed, a pig is the penalty. In case of small game a fine of four annas is the usual compensation. The proceeds of these fines would not, however, go to the fund of the whole Moshup but to the aggrieved merom.

The division of work between the Ango-Sango divisions though primarily concerned with hunting is also extended to other spheres excepting agriculture: ariks are distributed not on Ango-Sango basis but indiscriminately. In all cases of ritual hunting or kiruks such as Ampi-Dorung which takes place between December and January when the granary is exhausted and in Gine-Dorung between October and November at the time of harvesting, the Sango section will do the kiruk on the eastern side of the territory and the Ango section on the western side; but the game when brought to the Moshup is not separately distributed but is made on a joint basis as the game bagged may not be equal in the two sections. In all other important activities like Etar i.e. construction of the fence for the mithun, Aran and other Dorungs, the two sections are assigned separate tasks; but the interest of the village as a whole is never forgotten although the explanation now offered—that the assignment of separate tasks brings in competition and each group tries to do better than the other with the result that the work is most efficiently accomplished—is certainly a rationalization. The basis of separation must have been due to the existence of the dual division from a remote past. Before building the Moshup or before its annual reconstruction the two sections collect the materials and store them separately in their own sections, but at the time of the actual building they work together.

The dances performed during Aran by men is on a village basis led by a Miri; for instance at Kalek, Mutsang who is the undisputed Miri of the village leads it for the entire village. In very small villages like the Padam village of Bordak

where there are only 40 houses, the Moshup although divided on the Ango-Sango basis has no separate hunting grounds allotted to the two sections but in kiruks and in ordinary hunting the three meroms go together and the game is distributed to the entire Moshup. This deviation has taken place due to the exigencies of circumstances and is a foreboding of what is going to take place in small settlements in the future. In all the old villages of both the upper and the lower regions, however, the original pattern of Ango-Sango division still holds good and is the most important factor in the Moshup and the village organization of the tribe.

The inmates of the Moshup are called Moshup-ka. There is no definite age for entry to the Moshup. The usual practice is that when a boy is able to sleep away from his parents he must come to the Moshup and sleep there. In the case of the Padams and Pasis the entry to the Moshup begins from the time the boy starts wearing the ugon or the piece of cloth hung in front to cover the genitals, but among the Minyongs and Panggis the boy is sent to the Moshup when he is able to take care of himself. He must come and sleep in the merom to which members of his family belong. Membership of the merom cannot be changed. Even if for some reason a family moves from one section, say Sango, to the other section (Ango), his membership to the original merom would still remain binding. In the merom there is no scramble for places for which there is no special rule or procedure but once a boy sleeps in a particular spot his place is not taken by any other even if he may come late. The Moshup-ka are further divided into distinct age groups namely Anyengs or novices, Radang the next age group and the senior group known as the Abuing. Each merom has a proportion though not necessarily equal of these three age groups. The Anyengs or the novices usually come to sleep in the Moshup after their evening meals and are expected to bring firewood and light the fire. If there is any neglect they are taken to task by the Abuing. From the Abuing one member is selected not on seniority alone but on ability also, to act as the leader of the merom and is known as Abuiyana. In addition to the Abuiyana, in some Moshups,

there is a Moshup Rotung who is in charge of the entire Moshup-ka. Abom Tayeng was a Moshup-ka of the Anyeng Moshup at the time of our visit in 1954.

Besides the fagging duties, the primary function of the Moshup being training in hunting, the Anyengs are slowly initiated in that art by the two senior groups. When a merom goes out on a hunt they advance in a converging line shouting "Ho Ho" with the Anyengs between the older boys so that they are not exposed to sudden danger or attacks from animals. The boy who first spots the game has the right to shoot it first. If he misses he does not get a second chance. If and when the animal is killed, he is, however, given the front part as he has first sighted the animal. The members of the merom, both Anyengs and Abuings, must carry out the instructions of the Abuiyana or the leader of the merom. If any one absents himself from the Moshup excepting when ill or disobeys, he is first reprimanded; if he persistently does so or fails to carry out the orders he is beaten with a stick. Among the Panggis he is only scolded but not beaten. In the case of a serious offence, however, e.g. the failure to carry out the orders of the Kebang, he is to pay an ajeng or fine. As an extreme case among the Padams and Panggis, but not the Minyongs among whom only physical punishment is given, rice may be forcibly taken from his kumsum and fruits of his jackfruit tree destroyed. The parents do not and cannot interfere as they consider it a just punishment. The proceeds of the ajeng are given to the injured merom and not to the Moshup as a whole or the Bango.

As hunting takes place on the Ango-Sango and merom basis the hunters belonging to each of these sections gather at their respective dumbangs and do not start from one and the same. Each village has well marked dumbangs separately for the Ango and Sango sections e.g. the Sango dumbang of the village Ledung is known as Dekan dumbang and that of the Ango is called the Sille dumbang from the name of the Sille korong or stream. The position of a dumbang in hunting among the Abor tribes as enjoined in the Abang is very important. It is here that the hunters gather, as well as the mijjims or the old

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men who can no longer actually hunt. In small hunts this is not usually done but in all major operations like the Ampidoring or Gine-Doring and other important kiruks this practice is followed. The animals killed by members of each of these two sections are brought to their respective dumbangs and there they are cut into pieces by the mijjims. Smaller animals, like rats, or small birds are consumed at the dumbang but portions of large animals are brought to the Moshup and there distributed among the mijjims. The hunters do not take any share except sometimes a little of the portions given to the mijjims of their families. The meat must be cooked in the Moshup. Formerly the Ango-Sango sections used to eat their shares separately but nowadays they all sit together and eat. At the end of each of these kiruks, the patar mijjim, the oldest man of the village gives a feast. Rice and apong are prepared in his house and brought to the Moshup but the meat has to be cooked in the Moshup itself. Women, however, cannot take part in the mijjim's feast either in the Moshup or in the houses of the mijjims. These feasts to celebrate successful hunts or Dorungs is a purely men's affair. When the hunt is undertaken not on the merom basis but on the initiative of one or two members, the game need not be given to the mijjims but the hunters take it all. Even in the case of kiruks while the front part of the animal is given to the hunters the rest goes to the mijjims.

The skulls of the animals killed are hung on the kumbang of the respective meroms of the hunters. A ceremony known as Bango-Bomdum has to be performed before the skulls are hung. This ceremony differs from animal to animal. For a small deer a fixed quantity of ginger and apong is thrown on the skulls but in the case of a large deer such as sambar or a wild boar, a fowl has to be killed and intestines removed. It is then pierced with a stick and is hung on the road leading to the village. In many Moshups, particularly smaller ones as in Jero, Ledung, Bordak etc. the skulls are not hung in the kumbang but in a line along the northern walls of the Moshups called reu or konyang. This is the usual practice nowadays except in

the large Moshups of the upper regions where the older and more orthodox custom of hanging the skulls on the kumbang is still observed. The philosophy behind the preservation of the skulls in the Moshup lies in the Abor belief that the animal souls (monit mono) like human souls (aith) go out at night and being attracted by the smell of apong and ginger come to the Moshup. And when the souls are wandering about, the animals are spiritually blinded by Tori Mono and move about without being able to see and take care of themselves with the result that they become easy preys to hunters. Gaumen Soyen the presiding spirit of the Moshup would then lead the hunters to the animals for a sure and easy bag.

One of the striking features of the Moshup is the place it provides for the old men or mijjims who can no longer take active part in hunting but still have a part to play in the community life with advice and suggestions they can offer from their experience. It is also to make them feel that they are no longer superfluous to the community but still are useful in their advisory capacity. They may feel also that affection and consideration are still there which are their due from younger members whom they brought up but who are now in control of the activities of the tribe. This aspect of the Moshup life was noticed by early visitors from Wilcox to Dalton. Father Krick was so struck by it that he described it as surpassing even that recorded of old Lacedaemon of ancient Greece. With each merom there is a supplementary hearth called Romsam where the old and infirm male members of the families belonging to the meroms sit together and chat during the day and may even sleep at night if there is not enough room in the ekum. The system still prevails in the Moshup at Sibbum and those of the upper villages but has disappeared in the lower ones as shown from the fact that Father Krick found the Romsam in the Moshup of Mebo in 1853 but during our visit in 1949 there was no Romsam at the Mebo Moshup. In all the ceremonial hunts or kiruks as well as those undertaken by the joint efforts of the meroms the animals killed are not taken by the hunters. Only in the case of wild boar or gumbong the actual hunter takes the front

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part, and the trunk is given to the mijjims of the respective Romsams who divide it among themselves. When, however, the game is a large one, a deer or a wild boar, it is given to the village as a whole from which the hunters may get a little share. On their own part, the mijjims have to provide feasts on these occasions by giving rice and apong cooked in their houses and brought to the Moshup. The meat, however, has to be cooked in the Moshup itself. All male members of the village participate in these feasts but the patar mijjim does not take part except in providing the stuff. His satisfaction is that the feast given by him has been enjoyed by the members. Women are not allowed to take part in the mijjim feasts. The provision of these feasts by the mijjims at the end of the annual Dorungs is intended to preserve their self-respect that they are not parasites as well as to give them satisfaction that by means of this feast they are still able to add to the enjoyment and gaiety of the life of the village. In this manner, a sort of two-way traffic is maintained viz. not only is the filial bond kept strong but the feeling is sustained that the mijjims even in their old age when they are unable to hunt still play a useful life. One will observe groups of them on a sunny day sitting in the open courtyard in front of the Moshup engaged in these activities. The mijjims in their turn do not remain idle but spend their time in basketry, wood-work and other handicrafts needed for their families.

In addition to hunting and warfare, the Moshup functions as the centre of the village political life. As observed by Wilcox, Krick, Dalton, Needham and Capt Hore, the Moshup is the meeting place of the Kebang or the village council where all important matters pertaining to the community are discussed. In former times, measures for protecting the village against enemy raids or for attack on other tribes used to be discussed. At the present time, however, with the cessation of inter-tribal warfare the Kebang's activities are confined to village affairs, declaration of genna, accommodation and supply of porters for visitors, the fixing of the date of the kiruks etc. The Kebang assembled in the Moshup is also the chief judiciary

of the village where complaints by the villagers can be brought and punishment to offenders meted out. The orders of the Kebang are carried out through the Moshup-ka whose duties are to inform the villagers of the decisions of the Kebang and to act as messengers on urgent work for the Kebang. The orders of the Kebang are conveyed by the chief Gam to the Moshup-ka through the Abuiyana or the leader of the merom. In the absence of the chief Gam the next Gam in seniority is competent to issue the orders. Any reluctance to obey the orders of the Kebang is considered as a serious offence and the punishment is beating or fine. As the Abor saying goes "Lomnan ager gipayada" (for urgent work go). The importance of the Moshup, therefore, is not confined to the training and efficient performance of hunting and festivities associated with it but also in its functioning as the instrument through which the Kebang operates. Without the Moshup the entire village government by the Kebang would collapse.

### Rsheng

The women's counterpart of the Moshup is called the Rasheng, literally, a meeting place or rest-house. The Abang gives the reason for its construction as the need for gaiety, amusement and the art and regulation of love-making. The boys are trained in the Moshup in the various spheres of men's activities such as hunting, warfare, administration and rituals connected with these. In the case of women, however, the duties chiefly concern household affairs, such as jhum cultivation, weaving, cooking and taking care of children. But amusement such as dancing, music and the art of love-making cannot be taught by the parents, so Idum Bote or the Doying felt, on the completion of the Moshup, that a similar institution was necessary for women. As, however, love-making cannot be carried on under the observation of Uyus (spirits) their presence was not invoked. Thus, the Rasheng is of a purely secular character and has no sanctity or spiritual significance behind it like the Moshup which is sacred as an abode of the good gods to ensure successful hunting. Unlike the Moshup

it has no central institution but is made purely on the basis of clan organization. Like the clan Moshups there are several Rashengs in a village. Here also the Ango-Sango division operates. As usually there is only one, the number of girls being fewer, the merom is not made on an Ango-Sango basis, but those Rashengs on the Sango side of the village are called Sango Rashengs and those on the Ango side Ango Rashengs. The Rasheng, being confined to a clan, is a small simple structure about 40 ft×20 ft without any porch. The walls are well protected with wooden planks and so is the entrance which is secure and strong to prevent forcible entry and undue liberty being taken by young men. Just as the boys are entitled to be members of the Moshup when they begin to wear an ugon, girls who have reached puberty and whose breasts have developed, can sleep in the Rasheng. There is no Pobang in the Rasheng as no Ipaks are performed in the Rasheng and no Uyus reside there. The Rasheng is generally situated in a secluded corner of the village and its whereabouts are not publicized but are known to the villagers. The chief functions of the Rasheng as enjoined in the Abang are the art of love-making and the organization of ponung or music and dance. Just as Karduk taught Doni the Lutor Delonge so also Karpung showed the girls how to dance the Monam which is done by men and women together in the Rasheng in demonstration of love. Other dances for gaiety and amusement are also performed in the Rasheng, but those which have a bearing on agriculture such as the Solung dance, are not done in the Rasheng itself but in the Ponung Ingkong or the dancing ground in front of the Moshup as this concerns the propitiation of various gods and goddesses connected with agriculture.

Although the Rasheng is not so well organized as the Moshup, it has its own system which is strictly followed. The girls constituting the members of a Rasheng are called Ponung i.e. bevy of girls organized for music and dancing. Discipline is enforced by the leader of the Ponung called "Ponung Rotum" and any disobedience or neglect of duties is punished with reprimand or fine. Younger girls pass through a period of novitiate

when they bring firewood, light fire and do other work assigned to them. They come to the Rasheng after their meals and it is their duty to see that the fire is lighted so that when the older girls come they find everything in order. The younger girls or the novitiates sleep on one side of the hearth and the older on the other where they receive their lovers.

There are two kinds of Rasheng girls, namely those who have recognized lovers with whom they consort regularly and must often sleep in the Rasheng and those who do not have recognized boy friends but consort with any of the Moshup boys they please. The older Rasheng girls who are visited by their lovers come late and sometimes, when there is a Miri or dance, after the dances are over. Each pair sleeps side by side under a badu (rug). Though the inmates know what is going on, so long as the sexual act is not seen but done under the cover of the badu, decency and decorum are not considered to be violated. Only unmarried girls can have such relationship with their boy friends. Among the Abor as well as many other tribes, particularly the Naga, such as the Konyaks, Noctes, Aos etc. among whom the girls' dormitory is similarly developed, a considerable amount of premarital freedom and latitude is allowed to young people of both the sexes. Among the Noctes, after the betrothal, the couple are expected to sleep in the Yampo or dormitory and not in the house until one or two children are born. This is the recognized social practice. Among the Abors who have a similar custom, on the other hand, girls may sleep with their boy friends only in the Rasheng so long as the betrothal has not taken place and the adum or the purchase money has not been paid. But after the nametaddo (betrothal) they are not permitted to do so. They must sleep in their own houses for three or four years before they go to their husbands' houses. While laxity and freedom exist during the premarital period, after marriage conjugal fidelity is strictly observed. On the occasion of the betrothal the bride's father enjoins upon his daughter that henceforth she must not sleep with any other boy but only with her magbo (groom). Any violation leads to heavy fine or divorce and there is no condoning of extra-marital sexual transgression.

In the free life of the Rasheng it is not possible to prevent sexual union between the members of the same clan although this is against the exogamous rules of the tribe. Among the Noctes who are also exogamous, sexual union between the members of the same clan is not entirely unknown. This has led many observers to think that while marriage is not allowed between the members of the same clan there is no bar to sexual union as such between the members of the same clan among these tribes. As Capt Hore has remarked "cohabitation before marriage is universally recognized and curiously enough may take place between persons of the same clan without any breach of the tribal law". In reality, however, such action, though it is ignored, is not socially approved and if any child is born out of such union it is considered a serious offence which is liable to heavy ajeng or fine and the couple may even be excommunicated. Should, however, the girl bear a second child to a member of her own clan she is turned out of her parent's house and may be sold as a slave. In this manner the exogamic rules of the tribe are enforced but it cannot prevent altogether in actual practice sexual intercourse within the prohibited groups. In general, conception in premarital life is not liked and steps are taken to ensure against it and Aborigines often resort to certain abortifacient practices such as the oral use of the juice of the bark of the sith tree or the roots of the rinko and oko plants. This is done in secret without the knowledge of the elders for this is a crime according to the Abang amounting to the destruction of foetal life. In the event of conception taking place no social stigma falls on the girl but the lover is expected to marry her if outside the clan or pay a heavy fine. When a marriage does not take place although permissible, if the child happens to be a boy he takes the surname of the father and if a girl that of the mother and resides with the mother.

The Rasheng is built on clan basis as the Moshup. In all the upper villages there are as many Rashengs as there are clans; for instance, in Damroh there are ten Rashengs for the ten clans. At the time of our visit to Sibbum in 1950 there were nine

Rashengs corresponding to the nine clans Taying, Pange, Tagi, Geteh, Tatung, Tangu, Taku, Padung and Aje. Similarly at Jero there were three Rashengs, namely Paran Rasheng, Monku Rasheng and Mone Rasheng. The same situation prevails at Riga, Shimong, Milang, Karko, Gekko and other villages of the upper regions. Below Padu, however, in the lower Abor villages, whether Padam, Minyong or Pasi, the Rasheng does not exist. This is attributed to the influence of people from the plains who consider it as a centre of immorality. With increased contact, this notion has gradually been spreading upwards, and at Jero in 1950, following the example of Balek, the Ponungs refused to allow the Moshup boys to sleep with them with the result that the enraged young men, considering it as contrary to the Abor custom, destroyed the Rasheng houses. Subsequently, however, the Rashengs have been re-established at Jero. From the absence of Rashengs in the lower regions, Hore regarded that the Rasheng was a decaying institution; but from the re-establishment of the Rasheng at Jero in 1950 it may still be considered to be active in the upper regions, fulfilling its allotted place in Abor society. Many old-timers consider the absence of the Rasheng in the lower parts as not altogether beneficial to Abor society for one of the reasons for the institution of the Rasheng was the regulation of sexual behaviour within the tribe. In ancient times before the Rasheng was established there was often indiscriminate sexual intercourse and even incestuous relations took place sometimes as illustrated in the well-known story of Karduk and Karpung. The Rasheng was introduced as a means of stopping indiscriminate sexual intercourse and regulating sexual behaviour so that it could only take place within approved tribal laws and codes of conduct. During our visits to the Minyong and Padam villages of Ledum and Shilluk, elderly men like Tatem Pada of Ledum and prominent Miris like Akom Megu, Mustang and others complained that the abolition of the Rasheng had led to the decay of sexual morality and young people were found to indulge in such practices at all places such as back portions of dwellings, vacant houses, kumsums or granaries, and in the open fields at all times without any check or hindrance, forgetting

not only decency but tribal laws of prohibited relationships. It cannot be denied, therefore, that while the Rasheng as an institution of sleeping place for unmarried persons is abhorrent to the notion of the sanctity and decorum of sexual life, it certainly acted as a deterrent to promiscuous union and, in the regulation and control of sexual behaviour among free primitive hunters like the Abors, it played a significant role.

Besides the art of love-making and free mixing between the unmarried of both sexes, the other functions of the Rasheng are (1) the organization of dances of the Ponung, and (2) supply of workers for doing various work in the village or in the houses of others during harvesting and entertainment of distinguished visitors or migams.

Among the Abors dancing is very well organized and has developed into a fine art with great variety of rhythm and dignity. It will be no exaggeration to say that, not excluding the much publicized dances of Manipur, no other primitive tribe has so many picturesque dances as the Abor tribes. The dances are all of the folk-dance type and not danced in solo but in a group with the Miri leading and keeping tune with his yoksa or sword. There are some dances where at the end there is a pairing of couples but most often dances are done in a circle or moving in two converging lines meeting each other. The dance can be led either by a male or female Miri and not unoften female Miris are seen leading the dances. For each Rasheng there is a Ponung or a group of dancers. It is one of the functions of the Rasheng to train girls in the dances with only vocal music sung and without any instrumental accompaniment. The Miri leading the dance will sing the whole song and the Ponung only sing the chorus. The Ponung select from amongst themselves the seniormost and the ablest girl as their leader who is called "Ponung Rotum". Seniority, however, is not the only criterion but the important factor is intelligence and personality to inspire confidence in the Ponung. As for instance Arane, (born during the Aran festival), the Ponung Rotum of Jero whom we met in 1950 was not the oldest. She was younger than her companion Pepe, but in

point of intelligence and attractive personality she was outstanding and could have made her mark in any society. Like the Moshup-leader she supervises the work of the other girls, organizes dances and enforces discipline. If her instructions are disregarded or disobeyed the offender is scolded or fined, and the parents do not interfere. It is the duty of the Rotum to organize the Ponung for dance and there is considerable rivalry between the different Ponungs regarding their dancing performances. It is those Ponungs who are pretty and dance well that have a great demand for them on all festive occasions. The Ponung of each Rasheng dances separately and does not combine with other groups. Being formed on the clan basis each is an independent unit with separate organization and its own Miri. The selection of the Miri to lead the dances depends on the Ponung Rotum who does so in consultation with the other members as to which of the known persons versed in tribal lore would be the most suitable to act as their Miri. Although a woman is permitted to lead the dances on special occasions as a Miri, only a man can be selected as the recognized Miri of a Ponung, as he is expected to know the Abangs and rituals of dances. There is an elaborate procedure for the selection of the Miri and his installation. The Ponungs have an intermediary called Irging selected from among the well-to-do young men of the clan or village who acts as the go-between. It is the duty of the Irging to do all the work for the Ponung and act on their behalf with the Miri. He entertains the Ponung in his house and at the time of festive dances the Ponung are guests at his house along with the Miri. In return the Ponung work in his field for one day and in the field of the Miri for another day. The Miri cannot demand any remuneration from the Ponung but at the time of his installation or the Solung dance they give him a tadok, a red gale and a Miri kiring, a semi-circular garland of beads hung on his neck as the insignia of the Miri. The Ponung also give him a large quantity of meat as a token of appreciation and love. The relation between the Miri and his Ponung is not merely that of teacher and pupils but of attachment and love. Sexual intercourse between the Miri, the Irging and the Ponung is

socially condoned and not objected to by their wives. In the well-known song "Boileko boimang babine baimang boileko boimang" the Miri deplors that "as he is no longer young, he has become like their elder brother, and the Ponung will refuse to take him as their Miri" and although consoled by the latter "Boileko boeka babine boeku boileko boeka", that "though old and like an elder brother they will still take him as their Miri", he knows that the most intimate part of his association with the Ponung is over. The majority of the dances are connected with various rituals and the invocation of gods and goddesses presiding over various phases of agriculture, the welcoming of guests etc. Just as hunting is the special sphere of man's activity, agriculture is woman's. Of the 74 dance-songs of the Ponung collected by Dr Uma Choudhury, there is only one namely "Daingne iyangna lange miti beb" which may be described as truly a love-song. It means "now we are dancing together but even when you will go away from this place I will remain the same and will not forget you". Two other songs "Ge mijing rai saba panmeke panme" and "Odiye odigabe talege talege", by extolling the charm and beauty of the girls participating in the dances, are expected to arouse love and passion. The former says that "we (the Ponung) are like flowers. As flowers blossom and fade away so are we like blooming flowers. We should make our life happy for tomorrow we may die". The latter speaks of the "charming girls who are moving their sash (gale). They are very attractive to look at". The special dance called monam, which according to the Abang was taught by Karpung to women, is a mixed dance of young men and women in demonstration of love and is danced in the Rasheng. Other dances are usually danced in the Ponung Ingkong or village dancing ground in front of the Moshup, as the space in the Rasheng is limited. During rains and inclement weather dances are also performed in the Moshup which is more spacious.

The festival which concerns the Ponung specially is the Solung Lune, also known as the Mime Solung or women's festival. It takes place in the months of Yil and Tanno (July and

August), during weeding time and before the ripening of amo (summer rice). The Solung ceremonies are connected with agriculture and are in propitiation of Kine Nane the presiding deity of ariks (fields) and other Uyus. Just as Ampi and Gine Dorungs are connected with kiruks (hunting) similarly Solung is an agricultural festival *par excellence* and therefore, it concerns women who are in charge of agriculture. It is the most important festival among the Abors and lasts for seven days and nights during which the Miri, specially commissioned by the Ponung and called the Solung Miri, sings the entire Benyat Abang or the origin of agriculture. Spirits headed by Kine Nane look after the ariks and are responsible for the success of the crops. Men are not excluded as women are in the Aran, Ampi and Gine Dorungs. They kill mithun and pigs and collect their blood in the kakong (trough) and prepare the meat for the feast. They, however, do not participate in the dances which go on for most of the day and night but sit and listen to the narration of the Benyat Abang. The third and the fourth days are genna and after the end of the festival two and a half days are also declared genna with complete cessation of work. During this festival people visit their friends and relatives and are feasted with meat and apong. On the fifth and most important day of the festival known as Benyat Edung, the Ponung visit their individual ariks in gala dress in the morning and perform the ceremonial planting of trees and offer the blood of the animals sacrificed to Kine Nane and after ringing a pair of emol they invoke her blessings for the success of the crops. On the way back from the field the Ponung perform the same ceremony in the kumsums or granaries. The end of the Solung is celebrated in the Moshup with a feast for men given by the mijjims and known as Melo Pingskang to which women are not invited. Similarly the Ponung celebrate with a feast called Ponung Pingskang in which no men except the Solung Miri can participate.

In addition to dances the Rasheng arranges women porters for carrying loads of visitors from one village to another. If, for instance, there are 20 girls in a Rasheng, the Ponung Rotum will ask them to provide one egg each and the collection is

given by her to the visitors as presents. The money and presents received for the dances organized are kept in the fund of the Rasheng by the Ponung Rotum and spent at the time of Solung Lune and other festivals.

The organization of the Ponung, the selection of the Rotum, and the installation of the Miri remain as before. In place of the Rasheng they are organized on a village basis for small villages like Bordak, Ledum, Memosepo, Kalek etc. In larger villages like Anyeng and Mebo two Ponungs exist on the Ango-Sango basis as separate units. On festive occasions, however, such as the Solung, they will combine and act as one unit. Although in these villages there are no separate sleeping places for the Ponung as in the Rashengs of the upper regions, there is often an arrangement by the Rotum or any senior girl for a lover to sleep in her house. This was the practice also at Jero during the time the Rashengs were in abeyance. The main characteristics of the girls' dormitories, therefore, persist although in an informal and somewhat changed pattern.

To sum up, the Ponung may be considered as an integral part of the Rasheng or the girls' dormitory. It exists throughout the Abor territory from the northern-most part, from Ashing, Bokar, Bori, Pailibo, Shimong, Milang and Karko to the Padam, Pasi and Minyong villages of the foothills. Among the tribes where the dormitory system in the true sense is not present there is no Ponung, as for example, among Gallongs who, though in recent years they have improvised dance parties under the influence of their eastern neighbours in view of its great attraction to the plains people and encouragement given by the Administration, yet have no organized Ponung with its Rotum and Miri as found among the Minyongs, Padams and Pasis.

The account of the Abor dormitory system given in the foregoing pages shows how it embraces all the major facets of tribal life, economical, social, political and religious. In none of the dormitories elsewhere in India is there

such an elaborate organization for hunting as the division of the Moshup into separate meroms with their own hunting grounds on the dual basis of Ango-Sango with two distinctive dumbangs. The Abor Moshup does not operate merely as a centre for hunting and socio-religious purposes but is also the instrument through which the administration is carried out by the Kebang. The place it provides for the mijjims or the old men who are also the distributors of the game killed in the kiruks and the Mijjim Pingkangs or feasts given by them to the young hunters are unique. Similarly, the Ponung dances of the Rasheng are much more organized with their own Miris who form the central figures, although in the Ghotul the Motiari, and in the Oraon Pel-erpa the Dhangrin perform dances as important activities of these institutions. Unlike the former the Rasheng, however, is not a mixed institution nor has it anything corresponding to the "Ghotul marriage"; its associations are less formal and restrictive. There is no functionary of the type of a Barka Dhangrin of the Oraons who chaperons the younger girls. The Ponung Rotum, while enforcing discipline and guiding the Ponung in their dance festivals, is one of them and more of a comrade than a supervisor. In one respect, however, namely, in the development of decorative art the Abor Moshup draws a complete blank and suffers not only in comparison with the Ghotul and Dhumkuria but also with the Naga Morang where considerable stress is laid on wood-carving and other forms of ornamental art. Only in weaving and the beautiful designs in the gale and galuk do the Abors show any artistic bent.

The nearest approach to the Moshup and Rasheng are the Nocte Poh and Yampo but unlike the former these are feudal in character. There is no chief's Morang or younger chief's Morang with their privileged hierarchical positions nor is the membership based on wealth. The Moshup is completely democratic in character and every person is considered to be of equal status and possesses the same rights. Nor is it associated with the head-hunting cult with the storage of human heads as most sacred possessions. The animal skulls in the Moshup

though sanctified, are preserved more as a lure for the monit mono or the disengaged animal spirits at night for successful hunting and have no curative significance. The celebration of the great hunting festivals of Aran, Ampí and Gine Dorungs and the agricultural Solung Lune have no equivalents in the dormitory systems elsewhere in India. Lastly, the life of gaiety and amusement of the Ghotul which makes it a "paradise for the unmarried" is not equalled in the Moshup with its more comprehensive politico-religious character and the leading part taken by the mijjims in its affairs.

### **The Origin and Future of the Moshup**

A great deal has been written about the origin of the dormitory systems and many theories have been advanced. On the lines of Freudian thought Dr Verrier Elwin has suggested avoidance of the "Primal Scene" as the most probable explanation. There are, however, certain over-riding considerations which make it impossible to accept this view. Among simple primitive folks the sexual act is looked upon as a natural and normal event without any inhibition from religious and ethical ideologies which give it a secretive character and forbid its discussion. Be it said to the primitive man's credit that his general healthy outlook has prevented the occurrence of abnormal practices like onanism, homo-sexuality and erotic exhibitionism so common in civilized societies. The aboriginal inhabitants of the Andaman Islands live in a single collective hut each pair occupying a separate cot. It is not an uncommon sight to find, for instance among the Onges of the Little Andaman, several pairs indulging in the act after the midday meal without any feeling of shame or delicacy. They did not, however, develop the dormitory and there is no parental segregation whatever. The dormitory system has developed among hunting tribes either in the food-gathering stage or in the beginning of shifting cultivation. It is not, however, a uniform or general occurrence. While some have developed it, others of the same region under identical living conditions have not. Among the primitive tribes of the Travancore hills, while the Kanikkars, Malapantarams and Malapulayans possess the dormitory, the

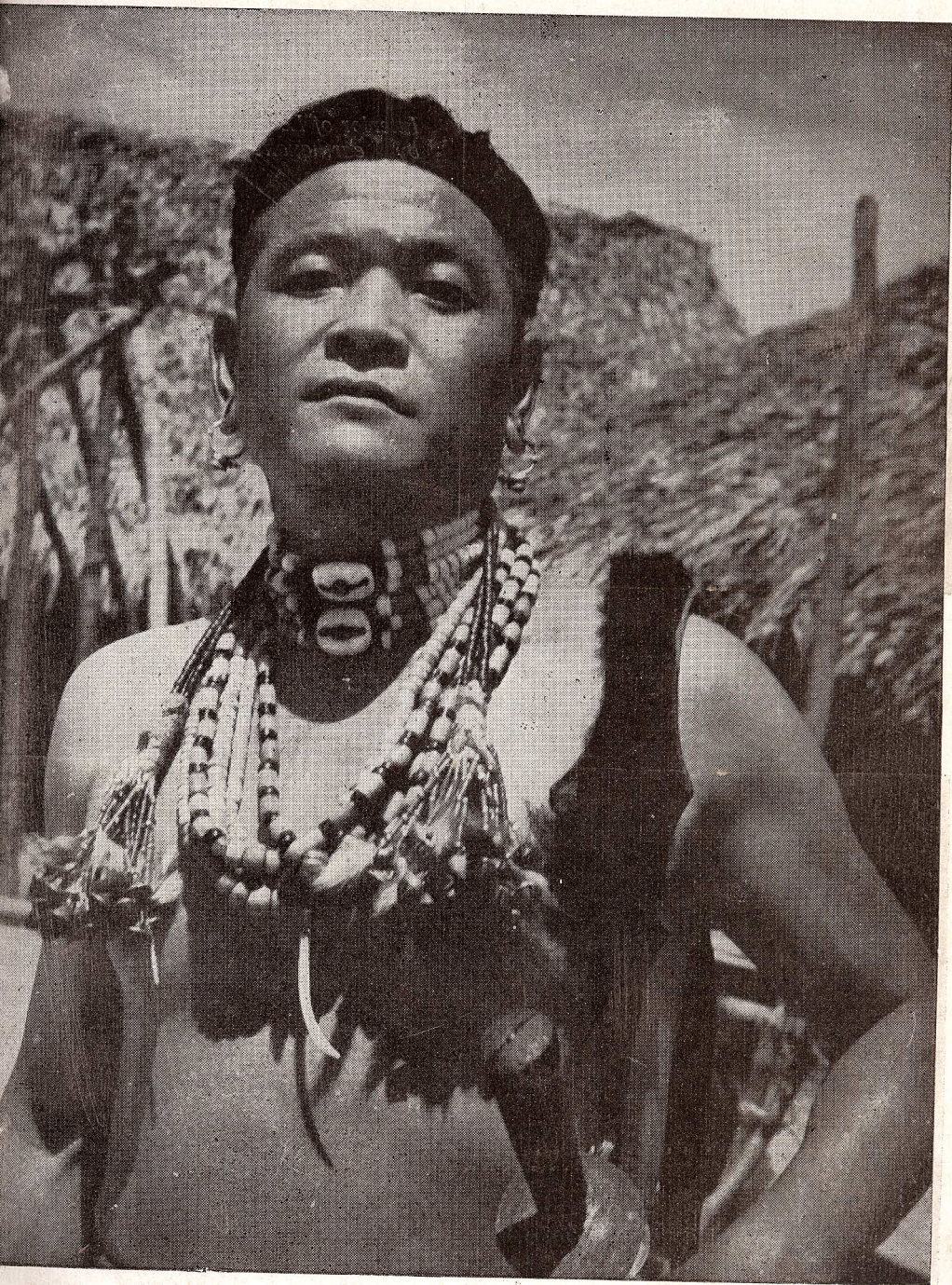
Irulas do not have it. Similarly in Chotanagpur the Santals are without the Dhumkuria, while it is in a rudimentary form among the Mundas and Hos. It is among the Oraons and Paharia tribes that it occurs as a fully-grown active institution. In Assam while the dormitory formed an important part of the culture of the Kacharis, Garos, Mikirs and Lushais, the Khasi-Pnars show no sign of it. Similarly the Morang is absent or present only in a rudimentary form among the Angamis but constitutes an integral part of the life of the Sema, Lhota, Ao and Konyak Nagas. Incidentally, the dormitory is not linked with the culture of the Austric-speaking people as some have supposed. Its absence among the Khasis, Nicobarese and the Santals clearly indicate its non-relationship with the Austric cultural milieu. We do not have adequate evidence of the original linguistic affinities of the tribes of South-West India but in Central India it certainly flourished among Dravidian speaking tribes like the Oraons and Paharia and not among the Austro-Asiatic tribes. In North-East India it occurs among tribes speaking Tibeto-Burmese languages like the Garo, Lushai, Naga and Abor groups. If the avoidance of the primal scene was really the determining cause it is inconceivable why it is totally absent among the Santals but present among their Paharia and Oraon neighbours with very similar living conditions. Similarly it is difficult to account for its non-existence among the Angamis although their cultural pattern with the pursuit of head-hunting as the central cult is the same as that of other Naga tribes. Finally, while the Moshup forms the most distinguishing feature of the Abor culture of the Siang Frontier Division, it is entirely absent among the Mishmis of the Lohit Valley and the Daflas, Hill Miris, Apatanis and kindred tribes of the neighbouring regions. Among the Gallongs, children sleep in the house with their parents without any segregation. If avoidance of the primal scene were really the objective, how is it that in the Abor ekums, married daughters with their magbos sleep on one side of the family hearth with the girls' parents occupying another side but within close observation? It has been shown before that the dormitory came into existence for the

purpose of successful hunting, for provision of training in the science of the chase and for propitiation of the hunting gods. This is true equally of the Ghotul, the Dhumkuria and the Morang. The close association of these institutions with hunting and rites connected with it, or the periodical ceremonial undertaking of chase during the year leaves no room for doubt about the true cause of its origin. As far as the Moshup is concerned, the Abang puts it beyond the sphere of conjecture—the organization of the Moshup into hunting units, the storage of animal skulls and the performance of festivities like Ampi and Gine unmistakably demonstrate the underlying philosophy.

The dormitory system then owes its origin to the hunting stage of the society and cannot last in its old form with the changes that are rapidly taking place in the modern society with the introduction of intensive cultivation and development of industries. The abolition of head-hunting and gradual abandonment of hunting for procurement of food are undermining the basis of its existence. Yet in the training that it gives the young and adolescents it amply provides for discipline and corporate existence which are the real ingredients of character building. The comradeship between the adolescents and youths of both sexes and its gaiety and fun give the inmates the joy of living and help in the fulfilment of the much needed emotional demands. This polarization of life between hard work and gaiety fulfils the deep-rooted needs of human beings and must be recognized as true objectives of education. That this is the feeling of the tribals themselves is shown by the revival of the Morang among the Ao and Lhota Nagas after the separation of American Christian Missions in recent years. In a similar move, Julius Tiga has striven to revive the Oraon Dhumkuria. From the same deeply felt needs the Sema Naga colony of five villages near Ledo off Stilwell Road in the Tirap Frontier Division has resuscitated the Morang in the changed conditions of their new surroundings. It is true that it has to be given a new reorientation to conform to the changed conditions of tribal life but any attempt to stop it

either directly or indirectly through moral pressure will be a mistake and is likely to create a vacuum in tribal life.

That the dormitory provides an excellent method of training and meets certain basic human needs is proved from the revival of the institution among many modern societies. In the Kibbuz of Kiryat Yedidim, a Jewish community of eastern Europe who settled in Israel, the children are brought up in a series of dormitories from the age of six months to adolescence in mixed groups of males and females under trained nurses and teachers, thus giving not only education and training but companionship with the equivalent peer groups. Strange as it may seem this prolonged separation has increased rather than diminished parent-child attachment. The bond of the chaverim with the Kibbuz is so strong that not a single case has occurred in its history where the child has elected to live outside the Kibbuz. The mixed association of youths has, it is true, developed certain informal sexual associations as in the Muria Ghotul and Abor Rasheng, but it has steadied rather than loosened the marriage tie. Somewhat different is the growth of association of the fraternity and sorority types in American Universities which cater not only for the various athletic and academic pursuits but, by providing avenues of companionship between the young members of both sexes have helped in their emotional adjustment in meeting some of their basic needs. The tribal dormitory, therefore, has an important part to play in the training of the children and with reorientation it may still be an essential institution. It is, however, obnoxious and contrary to ethical concepts to tolerate the prevalent freedom in sexual relations. But its other factors are unexceptionable and capable of introduction into any modern society.



*AĀKOM Mego the Adi Miri*



*Interior of Lokku (destroyed  
by earthquake) Moshup*

*Interior of Mebo Moshup  
with Mijjims during day*





*Moshup boys at a Merom at Sibbum Moshup*



*Nokte Poh of  
Khonsa village*

*A general view of the Sibbum  
[Moshup with surrounding houses]*





*Irang Rasheng at Damroh*

*Yanpo of the Noktes of  
Kheti village (T.F.D.)*





*Kutkang Miri leading the dance at Ayeng*

*Ponung of Ledum*



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