

Symbolic Architecture and the Communication Methods of the Ao-Naga *Morung*

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Abstract

Morung (Arju) of the Ao Nagas was the bachelor's dormitory where every boy had to live from adolescence until marriage. In morung, the elders passed on their social, religious, and cultural history to the younger generation through a variety of traditional forms and methods of communication. In practice, communication and culture are inextricably linked, and no human society or culture can thrive without communication. Thus, it was a group communication, collective sharing, and entertainment institution based on community development and the dissemination of social and cultural norms. The high and magnificent architecture was symbolic because it represented the strength of the village as well as their skills in architecture and the visual representatives of carved images indicate their worldview of human-animal relationships and also speak of the history of the tribe. The goal of this study is not to glorify morung or to reintroduce a new version of it, but rather to critically examine morung's sociocultural relevance in older Ao society. As a result, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the socio-cultural significance of the Ao Nagas' morung's communication methods and symbolic architecture, as well as to analyze their potential relevance for the Ao Naga society's present and future.

Keywords: Morung, Communication, Architecture, Structure, Representations

Introduction:

Since time immemorial, the human race has used primitive, simple forms of communication that have been enhanced, extended, refined and are still in use today in all societies despite continuous technological inventions and the increasing sophistication and complexity of human interaction (Bride, 1980). This demonstrates that communication was not invented in today's modern period, but that communication has always been at the heart of all human interactions and social relationships, even in the most "primitive" human societies. Morung practices, also known as the bachelor's dormitory or young men's house by the Nagas, were where every male member had to remain from the time he reached puberty until the time of his marriage. Through verbal communication, the elders taught the children

about daily living, practices, and methods. It was the hub of communication and learning related to a man's duty. The forms and methods of communication in the morung were generally, what modern scholars called, "Traditional means of communication" (Thomas, 1995) referring to all communication possibilities existing and inherited in a given culture-they were part of the life and worldview of that culture (Eilers, 1969). The word communication comes from the Latin word *Communis*, meaning, "that which is common." It also denotes the idea of communality and community (Kumar 1989). The term implies sharing, togetherness and fellowship. Different scholars define communication in various ways, this is so because communication encompasses all elements of human existence. Carey (1989) describes communication as "a symbolic process

by which reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed.” Culture is a collection of beliefs, values and behaviours distinctive to a large group of people and expressed through various forms of communication. Culture is represented through dress, religion and art form in particular as well as through language. Culture is expressed through clothing, religion, and art forms, as well as language (Dimbleby, 1985).

The theoretical framework of this research paper centres around the concept of ‘communication as culture’, as proposed by James W. Carey (1989). The concept of culture can be approached and interpreted from different perspectives. The approach, on the other hand, is founded on the connection between culture and social communication. This ‘Society related approach to communication centres on the roles played by social institutions and social processes involved’, (Traben,1997).

Etymology and definition of Morung:

Morung’s etymology is unknown, and many believe it is not a Naga term. Tekatemjen (1997, p.2) refers to it as an “Ahom origin” and states that the word morung is probably of Assamese origin. The first American missionary to Naga Hills, Edward Winter Clark, defined the morung as “a big tree drum” from the Assamese word. In the Ao language, morung is the other name of arju. It was mandatory for the Ao Nagas to keep a gigantic drum carved out of trunks of big trees called Sungkong beside the arju or bachelor’s dormitory in ancient times, and the Assamese dubbed the institution morung. The widely accepted Assamese word morung, as used by EW Clark (1911) and Christoph Von Fürer-Haimendorf, fails to communicate the entire meaning and extent of the term arju, because it was a distinct traditional institution of learning and the cornerstone of Ao-Naga culture. Apart from the general usage of the term, each Naga Tribe has its name for morung. The Aos, for example, call it Arju, the Kyongs Champo, the Angamis Kichuki, and the Konyak Ban (Horam, 1977). The term ‘Arju’ means “to

fight with the enemy” or “to define literally.” Ar or Arer means enemy and Ju or Jubang means to capture, overpower, dominate. Thus, Arju can be defined as a means to overpower an enemy.

Morung of the Ao Nagas used to be the bachelor’s dormitory or young men’s house, where every male member had to live from adolescence till marriage. Morung was the most important educational, socialisation, and communication institution for learning about the tribe’s history and origins, ethical and moral ideals, and the spirit of community service. In morung, the elders passed on their social, religious, and cultural history to the younger generation through a variety of traditional forms and methods of communication. Thus, it was a group communication, collective sharing, and entertainment institution based on community development and disseminating social and cultural norms.

However, when the British arrived and introduced formal education, the missionaries wrote the tribal tongues on paper in Roman characters. This ushered in a modern worldview among the Nagas and also contributed to the development of tribal identity (Downs, 1992). The British rule prohibited head-hunting, which resulted in a stop of warfare between villages, and the morung ceased to be required as a guard room or as an armoury (Shimray, 1985). Eventually, the importance and significance of dormitories which are regarded as an essential institution lost their relevance and all the traditional rituals and customs, sacrifices were abolished entirely from the Ao Naga society.

Morung architecture and its symbolic representations:

The high and magnificent morung building itself was very symbolic because it represented the strength of their villages as well as their skills and architecture. When a new village was founded, a suitable location for the morung was initially selected. Every Ao village had one or more morung, depending on its size and population. It was normal practice to build a morung at the village’s entrance. The morung was typically 50 feet long and 20 feet

wide, with a front gable 30 feet above the ground. Except for tiny doors at the back and front, the morung was entirely closed and dark. (Mills, 1973: 73-74).

The morung has eaves (Kip) as well as a protective wall (tsümong). The eaves of the thatch roof roll down near the ground. The walls are made of solid bamboo pieces, fixed in the ground very close to one another called tsümong, lightened with cane ropes to escape the sudden spear thrust at night. When you enter the front door, there is a structure made of bamboo matting fixed with wooden beams extending from one side of the wall to the other, the height of this structure is about 5 metres to prevent adversaries from crossing rapidly. The front pillar, which was normally a large log around 2 metres from the front entrance, was intricately carved with images of tiger, hornbill, lizard, snakes, and human skulls, making the morung distinctive in the hamlet. A little beyond this, there are two fireplaces, one near the front door and the other at the rear. The former is meant for the seniors and the latter for junior members, Arju is generally repaired every six years by its members.

Inside the front entrance laid the sü-mangkong (resembling a mithun in repose) a barrier consisting of a huge log laid on the ground across the entrance covered with the most slippery bamboo matting structure. It is too high for most people to jump over. Any targeted attacker who tries to step over it will undoubtedly fail due to the slipperiness used to scramble the opponent. If an enemy enters the door, he has to jump over the log creating a noise which alerts the people inside the morung. In addition, three decorative bamboo posts are tied every six feet, making the wall impregnable. Palm leaves and split bamboo bottoms cover the upper half of the front wall. A one-and-a-half-foot area is left between the upper piece of the wall and the roof for ventilation, which is likewise covered with a finely knitted bamboo split. All these fixtures cannot be broken easily. At the very entrance, was an elaborately wooden

carved post with hornbill, tiger, snakes and human skulls representing the symbol of heroism. A typical Arju may feature many hearths and distinct divisions on the beaten dirt floor. The first chamber is called Tzuin (water storage), and it holds water, fuel, wooden bowls, sandstone balls, and other things on one side while serving as a urinal on the other. The second and third divisions are solely for seniors, while the fourth is for youngsters. Reeds for torches known as kumpok milen are stored in the higher portion of the ceiling, filling the full space of the ceiling from front to back and collected by its members during the winter months. In most of the Arjus, there are several thousand bundles of each kumpok milen stored for the whole year or more. (One bundle consists of 10-12 pieces about 8-10 feet long) (Venuh, 2004: 69). Both the second and third partitions have a fireplace. Rows of planks are retained on both sides of the divider as cots for each individual. Outsiders from other villages are permitted to sleep in the Arju under the careful supervision of the youths. An unknown stranger is not allowed to visit the Arju without the knowledge of Arju tir, the commander.

Symbolism and significance:

The architecture itself was highly symbolic. Morung's house was not only the largest in the community, but it was also the most ornately ornamented with carvings. Typical carvings were tiger, human skulls, hornbills, mithun heads, snakes, spears, and daos. The magnitude of the carvings and the number of human skulls were coded signals that represented a morung's might and right. The Ao Naga morungs had the weatherboards carved with figures of birds and fishes and painted in great detail with red, black and white stripes, circles and dots. The carvings depicted tattooed men and women, warriors wielding spears and daos (big knives), a human head, a Mithun head, a tiger, hornbills, reptiles, snakes, monkeys, and, on occasion, a tiger's skull or elephants.



The Ao-Naga Morung at Kisama Heritage Village, Kohima.

Ethnic arts are symbols that transmit meaning, whether highly conventionalized or naturalistic. They reveal information about the community and culture in which they are found. The Ao-Naga morungs' wood carvings are rich in cultural value. Not every design of the carvings had special meanings attached to them. Some like the lizards, fishes, and lines, had no definite meaning except for their frequent association with people, but most other representations were symbolic. Non-utilitarian woodcarvings were the major means of transmitting tribal emblems and value systems. In the morung, carving or painting a head was like exhibiting trophies for valour, victory, and blessing. The carving of Mithun's head on a morung was a prestige symbol that displayed riches and authority. The morung hornbill carvings represent valour, youth, attractiveness (particularly of men), grace, and the tribe's young men. The carving expressed hope that the hamlet would have many brave young men and capable leaders like the hornbills. The tiger is a symbol of the spirit realm as well as valour and courage. Elephants are a symbol of power because of their immense size and strength. And the python represents wealth. The sculptures' depictions were symbols that communicated the tribe's dominating value. The carvings on the morung's front central post represented the males of the community. The main post has to be cut from a robust, straight, tall tree and without blemish. Thus, the central post communicated the value of uprightness in men. The basic values of the tribe were there, displayed in the most prominent place of the morung.

Teaching and learning method:

Before the current official school system, Morung was the sole organised learning institution in Ao traditional society. The young lads were disciplined strictly. They were taught the history of the village and tribe, basic science, medicine, political science, economics, philosophy, religion etc. (Imchen,1993:100). The few common elements in the teaching-learning methods in oral culture were observing, listening, repeating, participating, helping and cooperating. All these elements were used in teaching young boys about carving, hunting and other lessons of the tribe. All these elements were used in teaching young boys about carving, hunting and other lessons of the tribe. In every Ao village, there were at least two morung, even in the small villages, and three or more in the bigger villages. Larger communities would have three hundred or more households. Each morung had only 20 to 25 regular members. Members were usually from the same clan and spoke the same language (mongsen or chungli). The members were divided into different age groups of seven to eight in number belonging to the same clan, and linguistic group. We can conclude that the core of morung communication was that of face-to-face conversation. Morung used a democratic method of communication in which participants were allowed to share their opinions.

Group communication:

Morung life was a collective existence. Morung members (arjusanger) were a community in and of itself. Every age group had their duties and functions so they always worked and acted together in a group. "We live in a society where not only being a group member is almost unthinkable... It is not a matter of choice at all, it is an inescapable fact of life". (Trenholm, 1986, p.174). A group, therefore, is more than a mere collection of individuals but each one is aware of and reacts to each other. Members of a group have a sense of belonging and identity. There is also shared behaviour based on rules, principles, and processes that are accepted by all members.

The method of group communication in the morung can also be examined in terms of proximity and general setting. The morung setup was arranged such that everyone could see and hear each other. Every night, a unique learning session was held in the morung. Before going to bed, everyone gathers in the 'atep' (the hearth in the centre of the morung). The learning session was held in the traditional naga seating arrangement, with the boys seated around the atep, facing the elders at the front. This traditional seating arrangement is still practised by the Nagas, especially during village community meetings. This arrangement had two meanings: first, it was a display of respect for the elders, and second, it was a sign of entire surrender to the elders' authority in the morung. This type of arrangement allowed the seniors to capture the attention of the younger members while also facilitating proper discourse among them. According to Mary Mead Clark, Nagas are excellent in public speaking since they were trained in the morung. The art of oratory which was a standard feature at all public gatherings was learned in the morung (Clark, 1907). As a result, members of the morung will be familiar with their culture, politics, diplomacy, and numerous ways of conducting themselves with others, and will be prepared to compete with anyone in any sector. The young people were taught and instructed to develop character and attitude formation as civic duties, community ethics, cooperative labour, responsibilities to oneself and society and training to become worthy citizens. Furthermore, because each age group (zünga) had less than ten members, they had plenty of opportunities to exchange and engage with one another. The majority of the group conversation occurred in an informal context. Another dynamic form of communicating acquired in the morung was the use of visual cues. The Aos uses the following signs as examples: A cross-mark on a tree's trunk indicates that it belongs to someone. A circle constructed of bamboo rope set on a heap of firewood or stones implies that if someone was discovered stealing it, a pig was imposed as a fine. A semi-circle sign made of

bamboo that is preserved on the wayside or in a specified location indicates that the area is taboo, i.e. out of limits. Serving rice beer with salt in it to a man by a young maiden in tsüki, was a sign that she loved him. Salt was very precious during those days, so serving it meant that the person was very special.

According to critical analyses of morung, an authoritarian mode of communication was commonly pushed on the morung's younger members. Specific prescribed duties were imposed on the junior members of the morung. They were assigned to carry firewood, collect and store water, clean the surrounding area, and do errands for the elderly. In this way, the seniors seem to have adopted an authoritarian manner of communication. The seniors controlled the entire morung authority, and they forced the juniors to serve them. Failure to carry out the seniors' directives was penalised. Excessive exercise of authority with severe punishment was prevalent, which may have weakened morung institutions as well as other external pressures that contributed to morung disappearance.

Teaching ethical values through stories, song and dance:

The elders in the morung exhorted the younger members about ethical values in life like, the use of power, honesty or other moral principles and stories instead of giving just a simple talk. The story of the lion and the goat is one such example:

Once upon a time, a huge lion came to drink water in a small stream. While the lion was drinking, a goat came and started drinking a short distance away down the stream. Suddenly, dirty water started to flow from the stream's source, for which the lion blamed the goat and killed it. The story underlines the misuse of power by strong or rich people over poor or weaker fellow beings.

Storytelling:

Storytelling was one of the most important forms of communication in the morung. Unlike

dance, which was reserved for special occasions, stories were recounted in informal settings practically every night by morung elders or by select senior men who were knowledgeable and talented storytellers. Ao traditional society, the stories were transmitted from generation verbally, as in other oral cultures. The stories were told not just for the sake of amusement, but also to keep social activities going. They created a bond of solidarity inside the community circles, and there was also an educational function for the young members of the community (Eilers, 1993). None of our traditional stories are meaningless even today. It reflects our customary rules, ceremonies, and taboos, as well as our social ideals, and moral and ethical existence. Every narrative contains a moral lesson for the audience. The only unfortunate part is that many of those stories are now extinct because there is no place to learn about stories and narrations like there was in the past.

The majority of Ao's stories were about village heroes, love stories, battle and conquest, and moral lessons. No particular training was given to any individual to memorize. There were no professional storytellers, only a few elderly men and women who were among the best narrators due to their unique ability and interest in storytelling. Those wise people developed more skills in the area of remembering the stories or the songs because of reciting the same stories over and over again. Because information was scarce and valuable, society held high regard for those wise elderly men and women who had preserved it and who knew and could narrate stories from the past.

During the day, Morung was almost uninhabited. Except for during day time, a handful who patrolled the village, all of the boys would go to their separate fields, leaving the morung deserted. After dinner at home, the boys would race to the morung to begin the noisy and crowded nightlife. They were busy cutting each other's hair, sharpening axes and daos, and making bamboo baskets. After such responsibilities were completed, they would gather around the fire and

make jokes or listen to stories recounted by the morung, or elderly men of the village. Often they would also visit *Tsuki*¹ and spend time with the girls singing and narrating stories of the past or about themselves and their daily life activities.

Stories related to community life:

The crab narrative has hidden metaphorical meaning for the value of community life and the responsibilities of each individual's unselfish tasks in it.

Once upon a time there were four freshwater creatures, namely a crab, frog, prawn and hellgrammite (*tsüsepsang*), who were good friends. They decided to work in their field by turns. On the first day, they went to the field of the crab. Being the host, he left his friends working to cook for them. He wanted to cook a special curry but there was nothing to cook for them so to make the special curry, he took off his legs one by one and cooked it. Not satisfied with the legs, he jumped into the pot and made the curry special for his friends. When it was time for the meal, the crab's friends went to the kitchen and discovered what the crab had done for them (Imolemba Jamir, 2022).

Because they cannot fathom any individual living apart from the community, the Aos regard even the aquatic creatures as living in a community. The crab's deed represents self-sacrifice for the sake of the community. Many stories have animal characters, and these stories are easier to recall due to their funny nature. As a result of the above examples, we can conclude that oral thinking is complex, contemplative, and symbolic.

Saying and proverbs:

Another effective means of communication in morung society was the use of sayings and proverbs in a private or public talk. The uniqueness of Ao's statement is that it is used in conjunction with a short story. The statement makes sense only if the listeners are familiar with the tale behind it. For example, a popular Ao proverb is, 'It's like a dog and a pig working together in the field,' and to

appreciate this, one must first grasp the tale behind it. According to legend, *Lijaba* (God the Creator) sent a dog and a pig to work on his land. The pig worked extremely hard all day, whilst the dog slept the entire time. That evening the pig returned home and reported to *Lijaba* that the dog did not work at all. However, the dog, after the pig had gone, walked and ran around a hundred times in the field and returned home reporting that the pig did not do anything. The next day, *Lijaba* went to the field to inspect, on reaching the spot there were only dog's paw prints. From then on *Lijaba* allowed the dog to sleep in the house and the pig outside.² Everyone in the community knew such stories, so referring to such sayings, made more sense to the members of the community.

Everyone in the community understood such stories, so referring to such sayings made more sense to them. Proverbs have always taken the main role in any Ao Nagas public discourse. Fuglesang (Eilers, 1993) views proverbial communication as providing a behaviour code, communicating folk humour, sensing behavioural regulation, and providing practical counsel. Proverbs from oral culture, he believes, must be viewed in this context. They have a magical influence on people's thoughts and serve as instructional and educational tools. They can be employed as socialisation and control tools, and they also contain a treasure of tribal wisdom. Imolemba Jamir (74 years) from Ungma Village, disclosed that most of the proverbs and sayings that he knew were learned in the Morung which are vital today for Ao society. Some of the most common Ao proverbs are given here as examples.

*Metongi alinung lepdoker ama*³

Taking the existing short length and cutting it off. The expression is used when a poor person's harvest is ruined or when someone's money is stolen while he still needs money. In other words, it is analogous to a poor man struggling to survive, but unlucky events continue to impede him, exacerbating the situation.

*Waro oer tempang takushi*⁴

Don't go knocking on the tree stump after the crow has left. That is, do not bring up the same topic again after it has been resolved. It also implies that expressing one's rage after the enemy has left is pointless.

Likewise, there are hundreds of such proverbs, which are treasured in the memory of the elders in the villages even today. While advising children at home or young people in the morung, the elders used such proverbs in their speech which made it more meaningful and convincing.

Song and dance:

Song and dance were another accessible form of communication in the morung. Harnedo (Eilers, 1993) classifies oral tradition into two general types: The non-sung and the sung tradition. With the non-sung, he grouped it as riddles, proverbs, legends, tales and humour, anecdotes, jokes and stories. With the sung tradition, he includes songs which were sung while working and also the lyrics, folksongs and other songs.

The majority of Ao songs describe events such as joy and celebration, sadness and tragedy, wars and war heroes, clan and tribal origins, and so on. The distinctiveness of Ao's traditional modes of communication is that any public speech or story was interwoven with songs. Imchen (1993) provides an excellent explanation for this by claiming that Aos usually begin a song with a speech and always ends a tale, speech, or verbal narration with a song that is relevant to the story presented. As a result, speeches and songs are an essential aspect of communication. In contrast to talks, which lacked poetic structure, Ao songs were always lyrical. The songs were generally short, simple tunes and always sung without the accompaniment of musical instruments. Moreover, the meanings of the songs were implied rather than expressed. They were also songs that could be understood only if the story behind the song was familiar to the community.

There were no music schools among the Ao Nagas, thus music was taught at morung. In their daily interactions, the young people of Morung and Tsuki learned the art of conversing in songs as well as the art of composing songs. Because songs were viewed as a form of communication, many of the compositions were spontaneous. Many songs were also forgotten, and only those with special meaning for the hamlet or tribe were kept and passed down from generation to generation.

The songs sung while working are classified into two categories: Aos and Nagas in general chant a melodious tune while working or hauling heavy loads. Such chants were sung by everyone involved in the work— men, women, and children alike. The Aos did not consider all of the chants to be songs, but the sweet-sounding chorus could be heard from a long distance away. Typically, the chant begins slowly and with a low tone, gradually increasing in tempo and pitch, and concludes with a roaring war cry. The songs were especially popular during the harvest season when the morung age group would take turns working. They worked and sang such tunes at the same time. Horam believes that the main tribal activity of agriculture has given rise to most of the songs and dances, which are preserved up to this day. (Horam 1988: 49). Communication through songs was displayed even in arguments, debates or in settling disputes in the village court.

Another form of song was the love song. These songs were very romantic and poetic. It was either sung responsively between lovers to express their feelings or to sing along during their boredom. The Jina-Etiben love story is counted as an Ao epic. This story contains the greatest number of love songs, which speak about beauty, commitment, family rejection and loneliness. The story is about Etiben, the most beautiful woman from among all Ao villages, who was wise and from a rich family and fell in love with a poor and ordinary man called Jina. Etiben's parents objected to their relationship and got her married to another man. But the marriage ended in a divorce because

Etiben could not forget Jina.

A song is given below:

Etiben sings:

*Sangpang aki teraksako,
Ponglong melongsangka,
Tsungi na Zaka limino.*

(Darling, though the house is a broken one, without a proper roof, even if the rain makes us wet, I want to live with you only.)

Jina responds:

*Aja mejasena,
Azü meyongsuna,
Yarla den denademla
Lir mejaka yongpangtsü ashije.*

(Though I don't eat rice or I don't drink beer, dear love, talking alone is like drinking fresh water from a fountain after chewing gooseberry.)

In tsüki, the love songs of passion and adoration were exchanged between lovers. "It was easier for the boys to enquire about a girl's interest and love through a song than to ask her face to face by word of mouth," I Temjen Jamir (May 9, 2022) remarked. Thus, song-based communication proved effective and meaningful for the Aos.

In Ao traditional civilization, dance was another way of communication. Ao dances were expressive and energetic in general. They were linked to myths, tales, and historical occurrences. Furthermore, they expressed their affection for animals through dance. The evidence can be found in several dances that are supposed to be based on animal movements. The python dance, hornbill dance, fish dance, and cock fights are just a few examples. Because dance was a community activity, there were no restrictions on who could join. Except for war dances and cock fights, which required a lot of physical power, women and even children were welcome to participate. According to Horam (1988), among the tribals, dancing was not limited to a few groups of people; every man

and woman engaged in this collective activity. The colourful Ao gowns were proudly shown on such occasions because dance was always associated with joy and celebration. Each person dressed according to his or her status in society.

Discussion and Conclusion:



**Ao-Naga morung at Ungma Village 1947
(image taken from the book: The Nagas by
Alban Von Stockhausen)**

Morung was the most important traditional learning institution and the cornerstone of Ao-Naga culture. Because of its mission, nature of instruction, and propagation of ideas, it is best described in terms of a modern university or military headquarters. It can be argued that the Ao-Naga society had no formal learning institution before the advent of modern schools and colleges. However, it holds a unique place in Ao-Naga society as a learning facility that was active at all stages of human existence and was very much in the interest of village community cohesiveness. Morung used the following types of learning: storytelling, proverbs and sayings, songs and dances, and symbolic representation. These forms were employed not merely for pleasure, but each narrative, proverb, or saying contained social and

cultural importance for the people. Thus, Ao-Naga oral traditions were passed down from generation to generation in the morung by teaching songs, dances, and folktales. Wood carvings of figures had great significance all of which were taught and learned in the morung. The Ao-Naga morung's symbolic representations and nonverbal behaviours are critical for keeping and passing cultural heritage and traditions from one generation to the next.



**Recreated modern day Ao-Naga morung at
Mongsenyimti Village.**

In the present-day context, the young Naga people are trying to rebuild morung in the villages. They want to resurrect the morung to make it a place of cultural interaction between elders and young people. In some villages, it is now used as a platform to conduct educational workshops for the younger generations to learn about the folksongs, cultural symbols and their meanings and the Ao language. Without ancestral identity, all political slogans of identity would be like a tall golden statue with feet of clay. Hence, the process of exchanging the treasures of culture should not be a mere age-old tradition of the oral form; but a sense of urgency and a feeling of sincerity like the morung culture, before time costs more diffusion and loss of the lore.

Endnotes:

¹Tsuki: Tsüki can be defined as girl's dormitory wherein the young unmarried girls were kept under the guardianship of an old women called Tsükibutsüla/matron. Usually, the home of the oldest women of the clan (Tsükibutsüla/matron) is chosen as a residence for the five to seven young girls in the village. There were several dormitories in every location (mepu/khel) because every clan have their own respective Tsüki as the Ao practice clan exogamy.

²Mefulila, personal communication, March 22, 2022).

³(Mefulila, personal communication, March 22, 2022):

⁴Mefulila, personal communication, March 22, 2022):

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