CHAPTER II

TRADITIONAL SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE OF THE MOYON TRIBE IN THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

FAMILY
MARRIAGE
RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES
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CHAPTER II

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MOYON TRIBE IN THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

2.1. FAMILY

Family is considered as the first and basic social institution. Family as a basic social institution plays important functions of procreation and socialization. Most essential component of any society is family. Burgess and Locke (Chopra, 2010:361) define a family, “as a group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood or adoption constituting a single household, inter-acting and inter-communicating, with each other in their respective social role of husband and wife, mother and father, son and daughter, brother and sister, cradling and maintaining a common culture.” Family, as it has been defined is a group of persons whose relations to one another are based on blood ties and who are therefore kin to one another. In this line, Sharma (2008:151) quotes A.M. Shah’s four interrelated social situations of family life in India, viz., the body of persons who live in one house or under one head including parents, children, servants, etc., the group consisting of parents and their children whether living together or not, in wide sense, all those who are nearly related by blood and affinity, and those descended or claiming descent from a common ancestor - a house, kindred, lineage.

According to Maclver and Page, the main social functions of family are “reproduction, maintenance, placement and the socialization of the young” (Chopra, 2010:366). The structure of the family varies from society to society. Moyon traditional family is the smallest unit which consists of a husband and wife and their immature offspring. If the husband is the youngest son, the parents are included in the family since it is the tradition that he takes the responsibility of looking after them. The traditional family of the Moyons as a social institution can be both nuclear and joint. They become nuclear families when married sons establish their independent households and live with their unmarried children. According to Desai (Sharma,
"a family becomes joint from its nuclear position when one or more sons get married and live with the parents or when parents continue to stay with their married sons." Moyons practice joint family only temporarily because they live with their parents and siblings until the construction of the new house and after that they establish their independent households. Only the youngest son who takes care of the aged parents inherits the parental house. Since ancient times, the family system of the Moyons is patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal. The present research explores some of these systems of the traditional family of the Moyon tribe.

2.1.1. Family System

The traditional family system of the Moyon society is patriarchal as the father is the head of the family. His authority is extended to his wife, to his children and to his entire household. The wife is subordinate to the husband but she exerts tremendous influence for good or worse over the husband and family. The final decision lies in the hands of the father who is recognised as the head of the family. The society is also patrilineal because the lineage of the father is given to the offspring. The Moyon family is patrilocal since the wife after the marriage has to leave her parental house and lives in the house of the husband with him. Moyon society is a male dominated society. The patriarchal system is prevalent in different aspects of their community life. For instance, in the traditional Moyon patriarchal family, women do not have the right of iruwrep ikaum (family inheritance). Properties like land, house and domestic animals of the parents are inherited by the sons. Movable properties like crops, cattle, ornaments, utensils, etc., are given to the daughters also. But immovable properties like field/land are not given to them. After the distribution of the possessions, bigger share is given to the youngest son who supports the aged parents. If there are no sons in the family, the daughters possess it till they are married off. In the event of death where no one is left in the family, then, paternal relatives claim the family property. The adopted son can inherit the family property if the family is childless.

The family system of the Moyons in the pre-independence period was based on their customary laws and practices. Their traditional family life was interwoven
with their social customs and practices. The researcher investigates some of these social practices of the Moyon traditional family life at pregnancy, childbirth, burial of placenta, woman’s diet, post partum sex taboo, natural therapy post delivery, bathing of child, ear boring, naming ceremony, etc.

2.1.2. Pregnancy

The researcher examines the beliefs and practices of the traditional Moyons at pregnancy. It was their conviction that when a woman was pregnant, she had to observe certain taboos in respect of food and work. The following interview depicts such practices at pregnancy.

**Interview 2.1**

Name of the Informant: Cr. Warthen  
Age: 78 years  
Sex: Female  
Place: Khurfhuwdaam  
Date: 2 April 2014

Cr. Warthen recounts that even though she and her husband became Christians in the 1950’s they had to observe the traditional customs and practices which were imprinted in them from generation to generations. She says, “When I was pregnant, I was forbidden from eating the meat of python or monkeys. I could not kill any animals especially snakes.” According to the social taboo, if the pregnant woman did so it would affect the child in her womb. The husband whose wife was pregnant also had to observe those social taboos. He had to refrain from eating the meat killed by poisoned arrow or the meat of the pythons. Besides that he could not intone or lead the folk songs or throw the plants for catching fish.

In his volume *A Collection of Moyon Folk Literature*, Kosha (2009:48) affirms, “In a village community fishing, a person in whose family there is pregnancy is not allowed to be the first to immerse the fish poison into the river. If he immerses, it is believed, fishes don’t die.”
The researcher notices that in the traditional family life of the Moyons, the husband could not set the fire to the *jhum* when his wife was pregnant. The villagers could not select seedling for the year nor pluck the first harvest from any family having pregnancy. The traditional family life of the people was guided by their social beliefs and customs and these traditional ways were made known to the people. The customary laws guided the social attitude, behaviour and actions of the people by declaring what is legalized and what is illegal. What is illegal is considered a social taboo. It is also discovered that the traditional belief of the people was that when the wife was pregnant, the husband had to fulfil all her desires for food or drink in order to ensure the safe delivery of the child.

**2.1.3. Childbirth**

It was believed that there was no social taboo on the husband if he remained outside the labour room at the childbirth of his wife. It must be noted that Moyons in the past constructed a house with just one room and there were no separate rooms as of today. That might be one of the reasons for the presence of the husband at childbirth to render all possible help. In order to ease the labour pain it was believed that all the utensils or anything that had a cover be kept uncovered so that the child would come out easily. Normally the husband did the uncovering of the utensils or uncovered anything that had a cover like the rice containers or the water containers in order to facilitate the child’s normal birth. The pregnant woman would lie down on the mat when her time drew near for her to give birth. She would hold her hands on to *buwkaang ruwnoh* (basket rope) tied to the roof of the house to get strength during her labour pain. The childbirth was conducted by the village mid-wives who were normally old women expert in assisting at the delivery. They used sharp bamboo blade to cut the naval cord of the baby. They would bathe the new born baby with warm water, wrap the child with a piece of cloth and put the child in *buwkaang* (basket). Then, the baby in the *buwkaang* would be placed near the fire to keep the child warm and alive. The present study reveals that the birth of the male was more welcome than the birth of the female in the traditional family of the Moyon tribe. But there are no records or oral traditions about the practice of infanticide or abortion.
based on gender. In an interview, Ng. Riimthan affirms, “so far, I have never heard about the killing of the child based on gender in the Moyon society.”

2.1.4. Burial of Placenta

The researcher finds that the burial of placenta in the traditional Moyon family was based on the social customs. It was a tradition that the husband buried the placenta after the childbirth. There was no fixed place for the burial of placenta but normally it was buried in the home garden. Again the washing of the clothes at childbirth would be done only by an old woman usually the mother-in-law or the woman’s mother. If there was no old woman, then, the husband had to wash himself, for it could not be done by anyone else as it was a taboo.

2.1.5. Woman’s Diet

The present study delves into the ancient practice of the woman’s diet after the childbirth. It consisted of boiled vegetables like sheersha (local vegetable), local eggs, local chicken soup, local rice, special salt, and smoked fish, fresh vegetables from their home garden, etc. The researcher explores that the traditional family had sufficient livestock for consumption. Chickens or eggs were not bought but the people ate from their own home products. Warthen claims, “whenever I was pregnant, I would keep ready the entire provision of my diet at least for three months like keeping the local rice, growing fresh vegetables in the garden, storing local eggs, salt, smoked fish, etc. In this way, whoever looked after me at the time of my delivery had no difficulties of providing me with the necessary diet, whether it was my husband or my mother-in-law or anyone else.”

2.1.6. Post Partum Sex Taboo

Another finding of the traditional Moyon family is the social practice of “post partum sex taboo”. This forbade the husband from sexual relationship with his wife after her delivery for three months. The researcher explores such a social practice among the people in the pre-independence period. The three months of the woman’s post childbirth was considered as her days of impurity. During the days of impurity of
the wife, the husband was not allowed to sleep with her. This information is collected from an interview with Ng. Linthen.

Interview 2.2
Name of the Informant: Ng. Linthen
Age: 73 years
Sex: Female
Village: Kapaam
Date: 11 June 2013

Ng. Linthen asserts, "It is the responsibility of the mother to instruct her son to refrain from sex after the child birth for a considerable period of time." The investigator finds that in the conventional Moyon family, it was a tradition that the mother convinced her son to refrain from sex after the childbirth of his wife for three months. The reason she gave to her son was to enable his wife to recoup her normal strength and health. It was also a social practice that the mother advised her son to provide special diet for his wife both for her nourishment and for the good health of the child she breastfed. It is also seen from this social practice that the mother-in-law played a significant role of influencing for good or for worse over her son in the traditional Moyon family. This justifies the criteria of looking at the goodness of the groom's mother before accepting the marriage proposal of their daughter because it was upon her depended their daughter's happiness to certain extent.

2.1.7. Post-Delivery Therapy

The researcher discovers the practice of post-delivery therapy of the Moyons in the traditional family. It is revealed that paarchiip (indigenous neem) which grows in abundance on a fence would be used for such a post delivery therapy. Paarchiip which is considered medicinal for healing any body aches would be boiled for the therapy. The warm water of paarchiip would be kept in a khuteeng (traditional basin) and the woman after the delivery would sit in it. It was also a social practice of the woman of post childbirth to bathe with such warm water of paarchiip to restore her health and strength. The present study discovers the practice of post delivery therapy
of the traditional Moyon family of woman covering her head and tying her waist with a piece of cloth. These were some of the natural and the traditional ways of maintaining the woman’s health after the delivery.

2.1.8. Naming Ceremony

The present study describes the “naming ceremony” of the Moyons in their traditional family. It was performed exactly on the seventh day of the birth of the child. It was a tradition that the names of the ancestors were proposed for the naming of the newborn children. The researcher discovers the unique social practice of the Moyons which has ascribed names for both sons and daughters according to the serial number of their birth and gender. The name of the lineage to which the child belongs is used as the surname. The study reveals that while proposing the name of the child, names of the ancestor as well as important social events of the time of birth are also taken into consideration. Animals would be slaughtered for the feast of the naming ceremony.

The researcher further discovers that during the “naming ceremony” of the Moyons in the pre-independence period, ithubim (village medicine man) performed the religious ritual. It is ithubim who uttered some chants to release the spirit of the child which was believed to have been buried along with the placenta. He would drop and pull up a thread which was tied at one end of a piece of bamboo through an opening of the planks at the spot where the placenta was buried. The bamboo represented the bamboo blade used for cutting the child’s navel cord at the time of birth. The planks constituted the floor of the house where the child was born. The present study examines that the rite of the “naming ceremony” was obligatory in the traditional family life of the Moyons. The belief was that if such an act was not performed, some misfortune would befall the child in the future.

2.1.9. Naena-ivuh (ear boring)

The researcher discovers the social practice of “naena-ivuh” which was an ear piercing ceremony of the Moyons in the pre-independence period. The belief of the people was that naena-ivuh would make the children more obedient to their
parents and Elders. The study further reveals the belief of the people that *naena-ivuhw* made the children more sharp and alert in their behaviour. It was carried out when a child reached the age of one year. Shangkham asserts, “The maternal uncle of the child would perform such ear boring act” (1995:450).

*Naena-ivuhw* would be accompanied by a dinner with meat and wine. An animal would be slaughtered for such an occasion and the meat also would be distributed according to the social practice. For instance, the father of the child would give the buttock portion of the animal to his *arupa* (intimate friend). Two pieces of fleshy thighs would be presented to his sisters while five pieces of fleshiest meat and a bamboo-mug of rice beer would be given to his father-in-law and all male relatives of his wife. As per the social custom, the ear and neck portions of the meat would be given to the maternal uncles and the Elders of his relatives. The invitees were served with food, meat and rice beer.

**2.1.10. Ascribed Names**

The “ascribed names” is based according to the serial number of their births and according to their genders, i.e., sons and daughters. The first five serial numbers of the “ascribed names” of the sons are *moti, koti, beti, angti* and *thompa*. And the first five serial numbers of the “ascribed names” of the daughters are *tinuw, tonuw, shangnuw, penu-w* and *thomnuw*. If more sons and daughters are born to the parents, then there are also “ascribed names” according to their serial birth from six to ten.

The study reveals that not all the lineages of the Moyon clans observe the serial number of the “ascribed names” for both the genders. For instance, the lineage of *Ngwruw* starts the “ascribed names” of their children from serial number second. They start the “ascribed names” of their sons from *koti* onwards and for their daughters from *tonuw* onwards. If more children are born, then, they leave out the sixth serial number of both the genders and continue from the seventh, viz., *konuh* for sons and *tonuh* for daughters. Likewise the lineage of *Ruwen* leaves out the third serial number *beti* for sons and *shangnuw* for daughters and also the eighth serial numbers, i.e., *benuh* for sons and *shangnuh* for daughters. The rest of the Moyon
lineages observe all the serial numbers from the first to the last born sons and daughters if children are born to them. The “ascribed names” of the traditional Moyon family are illustrated in Table 2.1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No</th>
<th>Ascribed Names of Sons</th>
<th>Serial No</th>
<th>Ascribed Names of daughters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>Moti (dropped by Nguwruw)</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Tinuw (dropped by Nguwruw)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Koti</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Tonuw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Beti (dropped by Ruwen)</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Shangnuw (dropped by Ruwen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>Angti</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>Penuw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>Thompa</td>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>Thomnuw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth</td>
<td>Monuh (dropped by Nguwruw)</td>
<td>Sixth</td>
<td>Tinuh (dropped by Nguwruw)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh</td>
<td>Konuh</td>
<td>Seventh</td>
<td>Tonuh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth</td>
<td>Benuh (dropped by Ruwen)</td>
<td>Eighth</td>
<td>Shangnuh (dropped by Ruwen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninth</td>
<td>Angnuh</td>
<td>Ninth</td>
<td>Penuh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenth</td>
<td>Thomnuh</td>
<td>Tenth</td>
<td>Thomnuh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Field work

### 2.1.11. Addressing People

The present study once more explores their social ways of “addressing people” in the traditional family life of the Moyons. They have their distinctive ways of addressing their elders, relatives and age groups. It is a taboo for the Moyons to call an elderly person by name. The elders are also expected to call their juniors by their favourite names and that too with love and affection. It is noted that while addressing one another in the society, their ascribed names according to their gender are always used in sequence. The Moyon couples have unique ways in addressing one another by using their first born child’s name. For instance, if the child’s name is Moveer, the wife will address her husband as “Moveer’s father” and likewise the husband will address his wife as “Moveer’s mother.” The following Table 2.2 demonstrates some of the distinctive ways of addressing people:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moyon</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Moyon</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afhuw apuw</td>
<td>Great-grandparents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afhuw</td>
<td>Grandpa</td>
<td>Apuw</td>
<td>Grandma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apa</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Anuw</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apafohuw</td>
<td>Father’s eldest brother</td>
<td>Anuwfuw</td>
<td>Mother’s eldest sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Apa” plus ascribed names</td>
<td>Father’s elder brothers</td>
<td>“Anuw” plus ascribed names</td>
<td>Mother’s elder sisters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Apa” plus ascribed names</td>
<td>Father’s younger brothers</td>
<td>“Anuw” plus ascribed names</td>
<td>Mother’s younger sisters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afhuw</td>
<td>Mother’s elder brothers</td>
<td>Aani</td>
<td>Father’s elder sisters (common to all)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Afhuw” plus ascribed name</td>
<td>Mother’s younger brothers</td>
<td>“Aani” plus ascribed name</td>
<td>Father’s younger sisters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afhuw</td>
<td>Father’s or mother’s uncles (common for all)</td>
<td>Apuw</td>
<td>Father’s or mother’s aunts (common for all)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“A” plus ascribed names, e.g., aamo</td>
<td>Elder brothers</td>
<td>“A” plus ascribed name, e.g., aati</td>
<td>Elder sisters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abrang</td>
<td>Husband of father’s sister (common for all)</td>
<td>Apuw</td>
<td>Wife of mother’s brother (common for all)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaarang or Kaafhuwasar</td>
<td>Husband (when referred to third person)</td>
<td>Karangnuw or Karumi</td>
<td>Wife (when referred to third person)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of the first child plus “ampa”</td>
<td>To husband</td>
<td>Name of the first child plus “annuw”</td>
<td>To wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambrang</td>
<td>To elder or younger sister’s husband (common for all)</td>
<td>Name of the first child plus “annuwfhunuw”</td>
<td>To wife’s eldest sisters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amapfuwhu</td>
<td>To husband’s elder brothers (common for all)</td>
<td>“Amnuw” plus inborn name</td>
<td>To wife’s younger sisters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Ampa” plus ascribed name</td>
<td>To husband’s younger brothers</td>
<td>Aani</td>
<td>To a distant cousin sister, father’s sisters and his cousins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amfuwhu</td>
<td>To wife’s elder brothers (common for all)</td>
<td>Kajuurfuwu</td>
<td>To the friend from same clan (common to both genders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Amfuwhu” plus ascribed name</td>
<td>younger brothers</td>
<td>“Amnuw” plus ascribed name</td>
<td>Younger sisters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karupa</td>
<td>To the best male friend from another clan</td>
<td>Karunuw</td>
<td>To the female friend from another clan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karangpa</td>
<td>To the close friend from another clan (among males only)</td>
<td>Karangnuw (among females only)</td>
<td>To the close friend from another clan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itar ae</td>
<td>To a group of elders (common both genders)</td>
<td>First syllable of ascribed name, e.g., ti, mo, etc.</td>
<td>To younger ones (for all)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of the first child plus “ampa”</td>
<td>To a friend who has children</td>
<td>Name of the first child plus “annuw”</td>
<td>To a friend who has children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Elaborated from Moyon, 2006:23
The people address great-grandparents as *afhuw apuw*. Grandpa is addressed as *afhuw* and grandma as *apuw*, father as *apa* and mother as *anuw*. It is observed that the help of the "ascribed names" is required to address the uncles and aunties. There are distinct names for the paternal and maternal uncles and aunties. In addressing one another, they follow the criteria according to the "ascribed names" of the persons based on their serial birth, age and gender. For example, in order to address the paternal uncle who is the elder brother of one's father, one has to begin with "*apa plus the first syllable of the ascribed name". If his "ascribed name" is *moti*, then the paternal uncle is addressed as "*apamo*".

The Moyons address paternal uncles as "*apa*" which means "father" along with the first syllable of their ascribed name. Therefore, "*apamo*" when literally translated means "first father". If his ascribed name is "*koti*", then he would be addressed as "*apako*" which literally means "second father". If the ascribed name of the paternal uncle is "*beti*", then he is addressed as "*apabe*". But to the eldest paternal uncle one has to begin with "*apa plus fhuw*. So he is addressed as "*apafhuw*" which literally means eldest father. The paternal aunties are addressed with "*aani plus the first syllable of the ascribed name." If the ascribed name of the paternal aunty is "*tonuw*", then she would be addressed as "*aanito*", so also if her ascribed name if "*penuw*", then she would be addressed as "*aanipe*". The eldest paternal aunty is also addressed as "*aani-upa*" which means eldest aunty.

The formula for addressing the maternal aunties is "*anuw plus first syllable of the ascribed names." For instance, if the ascribed name of the maternal aunty is "*tonuw*", then she is addressed as "*anuwto*" and if her ascribed name is "*penuw*", then she is called "*amupe*". Even a wife addresses her husband by the "ascribed name of the first child plus *ampa*". If the ascribed name of her child is "*moti*", then she addresses her husband as "*moti-ampa*" and if the ascribed name of the first child is "*tinuw*", then she addresses as "*tinuw-ampa*." Likewise, the husband addresses his wife with the "ascribed name of the first child plus *anuw*." Hence, Moyons have their distinctive ways of addressing one another based on their ascribed names, age and gender.
2.2. MARRIAGE

Sharma (2008, 144) describes marriage as more than simply a legalized sexual union between a man and woman; it is a socially acknowledged and approved relationship. Marriage certainly provides recognition or legitimacy to children; it confers acknowledged social status on the offspring, and this is important in terms of inheritance and succession. Marriage is not only between two individuals, but it is between two families in terms of bond that is created between them. Like other human societies, marriage for the Moyons is both for the procreation of children and for the continuation of society. It is fundamental not only for biological requisite but also for social and economic requisites. Agriculture is the main traditional occupation of the Moyons. For this more labourers are required. Gachui (2007:24) cites that marriage and procreation of children is one of the best ways to meet such requirements.

There are two broad types of marriage, namely, monogamy and polygamy. Monogamy refers to marriage of one man with one woman. Polygamy refers to both polygyny and polyandry. The former refers to marriage of more than one woman to one man, and the latter is marriage of one woman with more than one man. There is also sororal polygyny under which a man is married to two sisters. On the contrary, under adelphic polyandry a woman is married to two brothers. Besides these types, there are levirate and sororate marriages. Levirate marriage refers to a man who marries his deceased brother's wife even if he is already married or when he has become a widower. Sororate refers to marriage of a widowed man with his deceased wife's unmarried younger sister.

The present study finds that Moyons since pre-independence period recognize only monogamy. In his work, Moyon (2006:24) highlights from the Moyon folktale that polygamy was once practiced in ancient days. But the practice was shortly prohibited when a king who married two wives had killed one of his wives who was considered wicked in order to possess his other good wife. Therefore, polygamous marriages of polygyny or polyandry, or sororal polygyny or adelphic polyandry or
levirate or sororate marriages do not exist among the Moyon society. But divorce has been practiced and the divorcee is free to remarry.

Cr. Warthen emphasizes that according to the customary laws of the Moyons, only monogamous marriage is sanctioned. But there have been cases when a man has an illicit affair and when the woman becomes pregnant; the case is referred to the village court for settlement. Normally the first wife is recognised as his legal wife in the society. Consequently, he has to pay compensation to his illegal wife and he has to pay the fine also to the Village Elders as per the customary laws. But he will not be permitted to stay together with the second wife. The researcher came to know that the child born of such an illicit relationship would be killed with shareel (wood for pounding rice) in the traditional marriage system of the Moyons. It is for this that the parents instruct their daughters that they do not meet the fate of being looked down by the society for being the second wife except when it is a question of death of one partner or divorce on solid reasons. It is a great insult and humiliation for a woman if she ever marries a married man because she is called meerangpa ashiih (snatching away someone’s husband). The researcher examines the traditional marriage of the Moyons through their practices of clan system, age at marriage, six stages of marriage, marriage feast, illegal marriage, punishment for marrying a second wife, breaking engagement, adultery, divorce, pre-marital pregnancy, illegal child, forced entry of the pregnant girl to a paramour’s house, deserting pregnant wife and remarriage of widow or widower and divorcee.

2.2.1. Clan System

It is observed that the traditional Moyons have two clans, viz. Shimphuw and Ziingven. Each clan has six lineages. The lineages of Shimphuw clan are Nguwruw, Laanglon, Charii, Serbum, Bungeer and Suwnglip. The lineages of Ziingven clan are Chineer, Nungchim, Ruwen, Vaanglaar, Khaartu and Hungam. For the Moyons, clan system is a fundamental social fabric. Every aspect of their social customs and practices is normally based on it. Social relationship depends on the clan system.
Chapter II  

Traditional Socio-Cultural Life of the Moyon Tribe in the Pre-Independence Period

One of the main functions of the clan system is to regulate marriage. It is a taboo for a man to marry a girl from his paternal clan. But he can marry a girl from his maternal clan which is considered as a good match. The custom prescribes clan based exogamous marriage. Marriage within the lineages of Shimphuw clan viz., Nguwruw, Laanglom, Charii, Serbum, Suwnglip and Bungjeer are considered endogamous. So also marriage within the lineages of Ziingven clan viz., Ruwen, Khaartu, Vaanglaar, Hungam, Chineer and Nungchim are considered endogamous. But marriages between the lineages of Shimphuw and Ziingven clans are considered exogamous and prescribed by the Moyon customary laws. Table 2.3 below demonstrates the Moyon clans and its lineages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Shimphuw Clan</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Ziingven Clan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Nguwruw</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Chineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Laanglom</td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Nungchim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Charii</td>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Ruwen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Serbum</td>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Vaanglaar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Bungjeer</td>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Khaartu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field study

Again, the researcher confirms that Moyon lineages have initials. For instance the initial of "Nguwruw" is "Ng." while the initial of "Chineer" is "Ch." Likewise every shungkhur (lineage) of both the clans has its initials which are given in Table 2.4 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Shungkhur</th>
<th>Initials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Nguwruw (Ngoruhi)</td>
<td>Ng.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Laanglom</td>
<td>L.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Charii (Chara)</td>
<td>Cr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Serbum</td>
<td>Sb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Chineer (Chinir)</td>
<td>Ch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Nungchim</td>
<td>N.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Ruwen (Roel)</td>
<td>R.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Vaanglaar</td>
<td>V.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field study.
Chapter II    Traditional Socio-Cultural Life of the Moyon Tribe in the Pre-Independence Period

It is noticed that the three lineages, viz., Bungjeer, Suwnglip and Hungam have become extinct and so at present there are only nine lineages in the Moyon tribe. The present work investigates the double names of the lineages as illustrated in table 2.4. For instance, "Ngoruh" is bracketed in the lineage "Ngwruw", "Chara" is bracketed in "Charii" in bracket, "Chinir" is bracketed in "Chineer" and "Roel" bracketed in "Ruwen".

It is found out that the double names of the same lineage have occurred due to lack of Moyon script at the initial stages of education. Each individual was trying to spell one's lineage according to the sound and sometimes the lineage "Ngwruw" has been spelled differently and in many ways such as Ngoro, Ngoruh, Nguru, etc. Likewise the lineage Chineer has been spelled as Chinir and both are accepted as one. It is also realized that in order to correct these mistakes it would involve a lot of complications because many of them have officially documented their names along with their lineages in their various certificates.

For convenience sake and in order to avoid such spelling mistakes of lineages, only the initials are written while mentioning the names of the informant throughout these chapters. For instances "Riimtha Ngoruh" is written as "Ng. Riimtha" and the name "Warthen Chara" is written as "Cr. Warthen".

2.2.2. Age at Marriage

In the traditional marriage, there was no hard and fast rule about the exact marriageable age for the boys and girls. However, pre-birth or child marriages were alien to them. The traditional marriageable age of a boy was between eighteen to twenty five years and for a girl it was between sixteen to twenty years. Generally, marriage took place when both the boy and girl became sufficiently mature and were able to work independently. The present study considers the abilities of the boy and the girl to do all sorts of household works as one of the decisive factors to judge their maturity of their marriage age. They should prove their capabilities to manage their household by collecting sufficient food and by cultivating cash crops and jhum field.
2.2.3. Six Stages of Marriage

2.2.3.1. Chongthang (information)

The traditional marriage in the pre-independence period consisted of six stages, viz., chongthang, cha-ynsiuw, imah, juktuv, men and imaar. Chongthang, which is the first stage of traditional marriage literally means "information". In the context of marriage, it is information about the marriage proposal to the parents of both parties when a boy and a girl fall in love. An interview with Ng. Riimtha depicts how chongthang was observed in the traditional marriage of the Moyons.

Interview 2.3

Name of the Informant: Ng. Riimtha
Age: 94 years
Sex: Female
Village: Kapaam
Date: 1 June 2013

Ng. Riimtha says, "In the traditional marriage of the Moyons, when a boy and a girl established love, the boy informed his parents that he loved a particular girl. Likewise the girl also informed her parents that she loved the boy. This information of the love establishment between the boy and the girl is called chongthang." In an interview, the researcher explores that the initiative of informing the girl’s parents is the responsibility of the boy’s parents. They would go to the girl’s parents at night and made the request for the marriage proposal of their daughter with their son. It is discovered that the boy’s parents would take cooked chicken and earthen pot of rice beer during chongthang. If the girl’s parents agreed to the marriage proposal, they would reply, "Ken shiti ing nen shiitchu idik nave kemwng kho daamahung". The translation, "If our daughter is in love with your son, we have no objection to it." Then, the two families would dine together with cooked chicken and enjoyed the rice beer as a sign of agreement. But if the girl’s parents disagreed to the proposal, they would refuse to eat the chicken or drink the rice beer. To avoid such shame, chongthang was normally done at night and in secret so that nobody would know the refusal of the marriage proposal.
2.2.4.2. Cha-ynsuv (declaration of the marriage proposal)

*Cha-ynsuv* is a declaration to the public about the marriage proposal of the boy and the girl by the family members of both parties. There is an important criterion for the parents before they accept *cha-ynsuv* of their daughter. One of the main decisive factors for a marriage proposal of their daughter is the goodness of the groom’s mother. They consider it a fortune and a blessing if their daughter could get along with her mother-in-law and who would love her as much as she loves her son. It is learnt that this concern of the parent for the happiness of their daughter’s married life is rooted from a belief that if she is unhappy, her tears would disturb the family peace of her paternal clan lineage. Therefore, before accepting *cha-ynsuv* the parents of the girl deem it very important that the mother of the boy is good hearted to build a good relationship with their daughter so as to ensure her future happiness. Once the *cha-ynsuv* is performed, the boy and girl are legalized as husband and wife in the traditional Moyon marriage. Ng. Riimtha confirms, “From the next day of *cha-ynsuv*, the groom would be sent to the bride’s house for *imah*.”

2.2.5.3. Imah (groom in the bride’s family)

The researcher examines the practice of *imah* among the traditional Moyon marriage. It is a practice in which the groom has to stay in his bride’s family for three years. It is also the social practice that during *imah* the groom has to work and earn for the father-in-law and mother-in-law. He would also get all the practical training necessary from his father-in-law to begin a new family. All his earnings would be for the bride’s family. If he cannot afford to stay for three years, then he would calculate his earnings of three years and would give to the father-in-law and would take his newly wedded bride to his home. An interview with Cr. Warthen confirms this traditional practice of *imah* which exists among the Moyons since pre-independence period. She narrates that besides *chongthang*, *cha-ynsuv* and *juktuw*, her husband Ch. Runtha had to observe *imah* and he stayed three years in her paternal house at Matung. Although *imah* poses a lot of practical inconveniences, it has not been erased from the customary laws even now. On the other hand, it underlines its norms in Moyon customary law (BAP, 2008: 20) which is noted below:
In Moyon
1. *Juktuw* aamuwna irer ing lungah ammuw-ampa ningna kumthum imah tu vaata.
2. *Imah* turu inglungah chua-een ting ruwdeh kata tanave kumthum na taar naka pha vaachii rutha men amfhuw ningna teen vaata.
3. *Imah* atu shungna iriim itu kho aru sha.
4. *Imah* atu rae ataar rerchii aangkheng amfhuw-ampuw ae khaena vaata

**English Translation**
1. After the *juktuw* the groom has to stay in the house of bride’s father and mother for three years.
2. Without doing *imah*, if the groom wants to take with him his bride, then all his earnings would be calculated for three years and be given to the father-in-law.
3. During his stay in the bride’s house, he can perform any of the marriage functions/celebrations.
4. During his stay in the bride’s house all his earnings belong to the father-in-law.

### 2.2.6.4. *Juktuw* (marriage celebration)

It is observed that *juktuw* is a solemn celebration of the traditional marriage of the Moyons with meat and rice beer. In the past only *mithuns* were killed for *juktuw*. It included giving of the bride price by the groom. It could be held according to the convenience and ability of the groom. *Juktuw* consists of the following rites:

**a)** *Peen and Inih Ympi (presentation of traditional dresses)*: Moyon bride at the time of her marriage presents *peen* (traditional shawl) for the male members and *inih* (female dress) for the female members of her maternal and paternal clan members. It is a symbol of farewell and asking for their blessings. If the girl
cannot afford to give to all the members due to large numbers, she can give to the representatives usually the Elders.

b) **Reh Ynthong (parental gifts):** Life in the past was simple and *reh ynthong* which is the parental gifts for their daughter consisted of essential items such as tools for cultivation, cutleries, pots and pans for cooking, etc. In her writings, Shangkham (1995:447-448) mentions that in the traditional Moyon society, *reh ynthong* was given corresponding to the presentation of items of bride price made by the son-in-law. If a *daar* (gong) was presented to them, only the items used by the daughter were given as *reh ynthong* and if a *mithun* was also presented, all the items for both the son-in-law and their daughter were given. The following Table 2.5 illustrates the parental gifts for daughters:

**Table 2.5: Parental Gifts for Daughters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>In Moyon</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Korencho</td>
<td>Bracelet for women</td>
<td>One pair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Haar</td>
<td>Bracelet for women</td>
<td>One pair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Ruka</td>
<td>Bracelet</td>
<td>One pair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Luthii</td>
<td>Necklace</td>
<td>One pair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Shanak</td>
<td>Small beads</td>
<td>One kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Khuwngarnuw</td>
<td>Loin cloth for ladies</td>
<td>One kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Phaewwng</td>
<td>Waist band for ladies</td>
<td>One kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Langphae</td>
<td>Shawl</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Kepbuwr</td>
<td>A garland of half big shells</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Naathuur</td>
<td>Earring</td>
<td>One pair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Paentha</td>
<td>Bracelet for women</td>
<td>One pair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Isii</td>
<td>Spear</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Vuwrw - Seemphae</td>
<td>A small basket for men</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Laangthaang</td>
<td>Sword</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Kuursang</td>
<td>Bracelet for men</td>
<td>One pair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Kangchug</td>
<td>Smoking Pipe</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Langtom Peen</td>
<td>White shawl</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Diirkhuum</td>
<td>White head turban</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Buwkaang</td>
<td>Basket</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Tapu</td>
<td>Basket for keeping clothes</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td></td>
<td>All the clothes possessed by their daughter during the imah period.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Elaborated from Shangkham Gina, 1995: 447 – 448.
c) *Shakam* and *Juwrsha Ympi* (presentation of meat packages): Besides common meal which is served for all the marriage participants and well wishers, the groom prepares special meat packages called *shakam* and *juwrsha*. *Shakam* consists of meat packages given to the paternal clansmen of the bride and *juwrsha* consists of meat packages given to the paternal clanswomen of the bride. This giving of *shakam* and *juwrsha* is a symbol of asking blessings as the bride is going to start a new journey of life through her marriage. The paternal clansmen and clanswomen of the bride would eat the *juktaw* meat and extend their blessings in this way. “We bless you that you have a happy family with many children, good crops, fatty animals and good health.”

d) **Kikthuur (gifts):** *Kikthuur* refers gifts to the groom and the bride by the participants, relations, friends and well wishers during the *juktaw* celebration. In the past, *kikthuur* mainly consisted of traditional articles, tools and dresses which were necessary to start a new life. For instance, rice container, water container, rice pot, etc., are considered essential to begin a new family and they were presented as *kikthuur*.

e) **Shanuw ithak (sending off the bride to the groom’s house):** The bride is accompanied by her parents, family members, paternal and maternal clan members to the groom’s house. All the gifts given to her are also taken on that day. They would carry the gifts in the hands and walk in a procession towards the groom’s residence. The family accompanies her in slow procession on foot towards the groom’s house with *reh ynthong* and *kithuur*. During this ceremony the bride’s paternal aunty has to carry the rice container on her head and lead the procession. Carrying rice container has a symbolic meaning conveying the message that the newly bride would experience the abundance of food and prosperity in her new journey of life.

f) **Amee aarang (reception of the bride):** Here the groom, his parents and family members would receive the arrival of the bride being accompanied by her family members. Normally the mother of the groom receives the bride with an
embrace and would put inih around her. If the mother is not there, then the representative of the mother in the person of the groom’s sister or aunty would receive the newly wedded bride.

While waiting for the bride, the door of the groom’s house would be kept closed. The door would be open only when the bride arrives. At the arrival of the bride, the bride’s family members who accompany her would ask the permission of the groom and his family whether they are ready to welcome them. This is done in the form of a folk song and folk dance. Then the groom’s family would also reply them in folk song of their joyous welcome and they would symbolically open the door. Even today, the folk song is sung by the Moyon Elders during such amee aarang ceremony.

g) Ymmanthang (declaration by the groom’s family): While reh ynthong and kikthuur are put inside the groom’s house, the crowd awaits the newly wedded couple at the portico. The groom’s family would declare before the people of their joyous reception of their newly wedded bride into their family. This solemn declaration is normally done by the father of the groom. So also the bride’s parents would declare their full happiness in giving their daughter to the groom’s family. Ymmanthang is also a symbolic way of entrusting the bride to the love and affection of the groom and his family.

2.2.7.5. Men (bride price)

During imah, the groom has to perform the ceremony of giving bride price at the house of his father-in-law. He would kill cattle, arrange sticky rice, rice beer and make offerings to his parents-in-law and brothers-in-law. The definite time of the function is not fixed. It is left to the convenient time of the groom. Normally the groom would take an ox or a male pig, three pitchers of rice beer and a sack of sticky rice to his father-in-law’s house. He would present five big pieces of meat and a tongka (a bamboo bowl) of rice beer to each of his brother-in-law. He would also give
a good amount of cooked meat pieces and a pitcher of rice beer to his parents-in-law. The parents-in-law share these pieces of meat and rice beer with their near and dear ones. The villagers would partake in the meat, rice and wine offered by him. The customary law (BAP, 2008:21-22) mentions the three ways of fulfilling men during imah are mentioned below:

1. **Chara** refers to feeding the bride’s parents, bride’s brothers and the villagers with meat, sticky rice and rice beer.

2. **Menti** refers to giving bride price by the groom to the bride’s parents at a smaller manner like giving a cow. For menti, the bride’s parents would not give reh ynthong to their daughter while going to the groom’s house.

3. **Menfluw** refers to giving bride price at a bigger level. The groom would kill a mithun, a pig and arrange rice and rice beer for the occasion. He would arrange a mithun and a daar to his father-in-law. In turn the father-in-law would give reh ynthong consisting of all items for starting a new family. It is not an instant gift rather some portion of it can be given later on. The bride’s parents can give their daughter jhum field, immovable properties like a plot of land and any valuable articles like traditional baskets, spade, dao, rice container, rice pot, weaving materials, water pot, dresses, etc., to start a new family. Further, menfluw consists of seven rituals:

1. **Ymmuwnii**: It is the coming together of the two concerned families along with the village Elders to discuss about the proper distribution of meat.

2. **Zuwmmur tamni**: Choicest meat pieces reserved for the village Chief.

3. **Ampa tuwng**: Fleshiest meat for the father-in-law.

4. **Afhuw tuwng**: Fleshiest meat for the father of mother-in-law.

5. **Amnuw tuwng**: Fleshiest meat for the mother-in-law.


7. **Zuwrsha**: Fleshiest meat for sisters-in-law and clanswomen.
2.2.8.6. *Imaar* (feeding)

In her work, Shangkham (1995: 451) notes that the literal meaning of *imaar* means ‘feeding’. It is a festival of feeding the bride’s parents with meat and drink as a sign of love and gratitude. No religious ritual is involved in it. Domestic animals are slaughtered and their meat is distributed according to the social custom as mentioned in the ear-boring ceremony. *Imaar* can be performed under certain circumstances which are confirmed with an interview below:

**Interview 2.4**

Name of the Informant: Sb. Dina  
Age: 50 years  
Sex: Female  
Place: Kapaam  
Date: 2 July 2014

Sb. Dina explains with examples that the eloped couple who cannot perform any of the traditional marriage rituals as mentioned above can perform *imaar* by feeding the bride’s parents with meat and drink. Through this feast, the bride’s parents give the couple all the blessings necessary for their happy family life. *Imaar* can also be performed by unmarried daughters or sons who want to show their love and gratitude to their parents. Through this *imaar*, parents bestow their blessings upon unmarried daughters or sons who perform such a rite.

### 2.2.4. Marriage Feast

*Ichuwum* (cooks) slaughter the animals and prepare the delicious food items with all its indigenous ingredients for the marriage feast. They are a group selected by the groom’s family and as such they too are recognised for their contribution in the marriage celebration. It is also their work to prepare *shakam* and *juwrsha*.
It is one of the main concerns of the groom’s family for the provision of sufficient meat during the *juktuw*. Every care is taken to avoid any embarrassing situation. So precaution is taken in choosing reliable *ichuwm* for upon them the success of the *juktuw* depends to a great extent. Traditionally the food items of the *juktuw* consist of the following: *naenthuw buw* (steamed rice), *thingsuw* (chutney), *basiipaaren* (curry made from pounded rice with meat), *champhuk* (boiled vegetables) and *shating* (meat piece), *pan* (betel leaves), rice beer and so on. *Naenthuw buw* is a steamed rice preparation and its head cook is the maternal aunty of the groom.

*Naenthuw* is made of bamboo or cane in the form of a sound box. For steaming two pots are required. Initially the earthen pot called *naenteh* is filled with water and made hot while the *naenthuw* is kept on top of it. Inside the *naenthuw*, *naenshap* (strainer) is kept to prevent the falling of the rice. The *naenthuw* is covered by *kam*, a cover made of clay. Between the two pots *naenjeer* (a piece of cloth) is put properly. The steamed rice when it is cooked is kept in a container called *irang* (container) which is made of cane. People enjoy such type of steamed food and they look forward to such occasions. *Juktuw* celebration continues all through the night. The participants would come to the groom’s house and they would sing and dance the whole night.

### 2.2.5. *Izuwr* (illegal)

Marriage within the same clan is considered *izuwr* or illegal. According to the social norms, the child born illegally would be put to death with *shareel* (wood for pounding paddy). The smashed baby would be buried across the river so that the defamed act would not enter the village again. The couple would be fined with a pig and a jar of rice beer. Even this “taboo meat” would be eaten only by the elders across the
river. This was made known to the people to maintain the sanctity of marriage and to teach a lesson that such izuwr marriage was prohibited. This information is collected from an interview which is described below:

**Interview 2.5**

Name of the Informant: N. Nani

Age: 57 years

Sex: Female

Village: Khurshwdaam

Date: 24 March 2014

N. Nani affirms, “Moyon custom prohibited izuwr marriage and its punishment was very severe. The couples were detested from the society and were forced to leave the village without mercy. They were not permitted to use the common stream. They could not be appointed as village heads. Anyone conducting izuwr marriage would also be expelled from the village.”

The researcher further finds that so far there has been no record of any deaths with shareel which the social law pronounces for izuwr marriage. In an interview, Riimtha says, “When I was a girl, I heard the declaration of the elders to put to death by shareel of a particular child born of illegal marriage. A group of men was hired and they were given the responsibility to do so. But the weak conscience of the hired men could not carry out such an act and so they secretly gave the child for adoption. When they returned they reported to the elders that they killed the baby with shareel and buried it across the river as commanded by them. They concealed the truth for fear of being punished by the village elders.”

**2.2.6. Derpha (punishment for marrying a second wife)**

The social customs prohibit taking a second wife by a man who is already married. But divorce is sanctioned when it is based on reasonable ground and that also only if the case has been referred to the village court and approved by the elders. Therefore, if the married man takes another woman in spite of having his own wife, it
is considered that he has offended his wife. It is also considered that he has insulted the status of his wife’s parents and family members. In such a situation, the father, brothers and sisters of his wife impose a derpha. It consists of a pig and a pitcher full of rice beer. Moreover, if the second wife belongs to his clan, severe penalty would be imposed on him. It is observed that sexual intercourse before marriage is strictly prohibited. The study explores that if an illicit affair of a girl becomes public she would seldom get a bridegroom in her life. This information is obtained through an interview given below:

**Interview 2.6**

Name of the Informant: Ch. Michael  
Age: 57 years  
Sex: Male  
Place: Khurfluwdaam  
Date: 7 July 2014

Ch. Michael says that in the Moyon customary practices, it is not so much the material value of the punishment which may be a pig or a buffalo or a mithun as it changes from time to time. But what is more important is the non-material value which is the sanctity behind the punishment and anyone punished by the village court cannot take it for granted. Michael states, "It is a matter of prestige issue of the individual and his/her lineage. The defamation of one man is also a defamation of his own lineage as the Moyon social relationship is based on clan system."

**2.2.7. Sexual Abuse**

The study examines that in the traditional family, sexual abuse is considered an attempt to harm the virginity of the girl. In such a case, the guilty man is imposed a penalty with a matured male mithun and it is given to the maiden. He is also compelled to give a pig of five vae along with three pitchers of rice beer to the village elders. In case a person attempts to seduce the wife of another person, he is imposed with penalty. He is convicted of attempting to break the love and peace of the married
life of other person. In such a matter, the convicted person is compelled by law to give one male mithun to the family and a fine of a pig of five vae, to the elders.

2.2.8. Breaking Engagement

In the traditional marriage of the Moyons, it is noted that breaking engagement is punishable. Breaking engagement is when a man takes another girl after his final engagement. In such a case, the verdict of the social customs is that he has to pay a penalty to the girl with whom he is engaged. It is also investigated that he has to pay the fine to the elders. Further still, the study discovers that even if the girl breaks the engagement, she too has to pay the same penalty to the boy and to the village elders. It is also observed that the penalty consists of a pig of five vae because such a pig of five vae is considered a mature one. There is no fixed monetary amount for the punishment as it changes from time to time.

2.2.9. Adultery

The study examines that adultery is punishable in the traditional marriage of the Moyons. Adultery which is infidelity or deceitfulness or betrayal is liable to be punished by the social laws of the people. The customary law states that any person who kidnaps and takes possession of another man’s wife is punishable. He has to pay a penalty of a mithun as compensation for defamation to the former husband. Moreover, the kidnapper has to give a penalty of a pig of five vae to the village elders. Furthermore, the study reveals that according to the social laws of the people, if a man makes a woman pregnant prior to proper engagement, both the man and the pregnant woman are fined and they are compelled legally to give a pig of five vae to the village elders. Here also there is no fixed monetary amount for the penalty as it changes from time to time.

2.2.10. Divorce

Divorce can be sought either by the husband or the wife on solid reasons. If either of the party is unhappy and cannot adjust to the marital problems, divorce can be obtained through the village court. Some of the conditions for seeking divorce are:
barrenness, inability to bear male child, husband suspecting his wife of having extra-
marital relationship with another man, etc. It is also discovered that divorce has been 
sought when a wife is too much concerned about her parents or family members. This 
is proved with an interview mentioned below:

**Interview 2.7**

Name of the Informant: R. Marshing  
Age: 58 years  
Sex: Female  
Village: Kapaam  
Date: 11 June 2013

In an interview, R. Marshing asserts, “I have to obtain a divorce from my husband since I have to look after my aged father and my elder sister who is sickly. I was given a choice either my husband or to take care of my aged father and sick elder sister. Although this decision has pained me a lot, I chose to take care of my father and my sister. I realize they need me as I am the sole earning member of my family. So I divorced my husband in favour of my family and paid the penalty as per the social customs of the tribe.”

The study finds that any of the marriage partners who initiates the divorce, when approved by the village court, has to pay the penalty both to the partner and to the village court. It is also learnt that if the man divorces his wife, the latter would take back all her parental gifts she has brought on her wedding day. An interview with Ch. Aileen gives further information with regard to divorce.

**Interview 2.8**

Name of the Informant: Ch. Aileen  
Age: 50 years  
Sex: Female  
Village: Kapaam  
Date: 11 July 2013
In an interview, Ch. Aileen states, "when the man breaks the marriage settlement, he is fined and compensation is given to the girl to whom he is married and if the girl does, she is to do likewise. But if divorce is made of mutual agreement between the husband and wife, both of them would have to share the penalty and they would be pronounced as divorced before the village court and all their properties would be equally divided between them."

The interview further reveals that the husband would take the responsibility of taking care of the children when divorce is obtained. The social custom sanctions that if the child is with the mother, the father has to pay for the maintenance of the child till the age of three. The payment for the maintenance of the child for is ten buwkaang (local baskets) of paddy per year. One buwkaang of paddy is equivalent to forty kilograms. So the amount paid to the mother for taking care of the child (any gender) for one year would be (40x12=480) four hundred and eighty kilograms of rice. If it is the wife who seeks the divorce, she forfeits all her reh ynthong (parental gifts) and as per custom, she has to give a pig of five vae to the village council.

2.2.11. Pre-marital Pregnancy

In the traditional practice of the Moyons, if the girl becomes pregnant before marriage, she has to declare the father of the child in her womb within three months. If she fails, she is fined by the village elders because she is considered to have brought a disgrace to the society. She is looked down with contempt. But in case the woman declares the father of her child and he refuses to marry her, then, the boy has to pay compensation to her and also a penalty to the elders. This customary law has been in practice both in the past and in the present society of the Moyons. Although the amount of the penalty to the village elders changes from time to time, the law still forbids illegal pregnancy.

2.2.12. Illegal Child

The investigator examines the traditional practice of the tribe about an "illegal child". The tribe considers a child as an illegal child, if the child is born of a woman
who cannot identify the father. She is also considered a disgrace. She has to pay a penalty of a pig of five vae to the village elders for having brought such a disgrace to the village. The study further explores that even the child born of such a woman who cannot identify the father of the child has to take the mother’s lineage. No other lineage is proposed for such illegal child.

2.2.13. Ivatung (forced entry of the girl into paramour’s house)

In the traditional Moyon society, if a girl becomes pregnant and the boy’s family refuses the marriage, the girl can courageously enter the house of the boy. This forced entry of the pregnant girl into paramour’s house is known as ivatung. It is investigated that the practice of ivatung enables the girl to declare to the parents of the boy that the child in her womb belongs to their son. She lives in the family even if the son is not there at home. Initially the family may oppose her entry but eventually once the boy admits and accepts the child in her womb, then the marriage takes place. But if he adamantly refuses to marry, he has to pay compensation for the girl as per the customary law and the child is also taken to the care of the father.

2.2.14. Deserting a Pregnant Wife

Yet again, the study finds that if a husband deserts his pregnant wife; he is fined with a pig of five vae by the elders. He has to pay compensation to the girl as per the customary law. He is obliged to give ten buwkaang (local baskets) of paddy per annum to the wife till his baby reaches the age of three. Then, the child is given to the father.

2.2.15. Remarriage of Widow/Widower and Divorcee

The study reveals that Moyons prescribe the rules of marriage for widows, widowers and also for divorcees. The reason is that once marriage has been broken, it does not forbid the divorcee from getting married for a second time. Similarly, they believe that a widow or a widower on the death of his/her mate should not be forced to live alone and that if he or she so desired, there should not be any bar for a remarriage. It is further examined that in the traditional marriage of the Moyons, if the
widow does not remarry, she is well looked after by the family or close relatives of her deceased husband throughout her life. If she marries again, her new husband is obliged by customary law to pay an amount of money to the family of her former husband as compensation for having looked after her. In such an event, all her properties are also given to her former husband’s family. Further, if the widow has sons or daughters of the former husband, the children would inherit the properties. However, if sons/daughters are all dead or if there are only daughters and they are married, then all the properties of the widow would go to the family of her former husband. Another significant discovery of the traditional marriage of the Moyons is that even though its family system is patriarchal and patrilineal, women after marriage retain their own paternal lineage. This is still in practice even today.

2.3. RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

The institution of religion is universal as it is found in all the societies, past and present. It plays the most effective guide to the behaviours of members in most societies. The genesis of the religious quest in the human beings is unknown. Rao (2012:418-419) discusses the different views on the genesis of religion by different intellectuals. Ancient Roman philosopher and poet Lucretius contended that the belief in the gods was based on an illusion and that fear was at the root of religion. David Hume, a British philosopher of the eighteenth century, in his “Natural History of Religion” pointed out that the fear of natural forces led man to believe in gods who manipulated nature. Max Muller says that the basis of religion is to be found in man’s awe in the presence of extraordinary and terrifying natural phenomenon. Giddings asserts that the awe and fear of the “great dreadful” and of the mysterious forces have been responsible for the genesis of religion.

Religious dogmas have influenced and conditioned economic endeavours, political movements, property dealings and social institutions. The practices of laws, customs, conventions and fashions are means of social control in the society. Religion is a concrete experience which is associated with emotions especially with fear, awe and reverence.
Chapter II  Traditional Socio-Cultural Life of the Moyon Tribe in the Pre-Independence Period

It can be stated that the whole socio-cultural life of the Moyons in the pre-independence period was chiefly dominated by their religious beliefs. In order to trace the genesis of their religion, Sangkima (1992:51) has rightly highlighted "the importance of relying on traditions like folk songs and folk literatures". In his *Collection of Folk Literature*, Kosha (2009:61-64) has mentioned that the ancient Moyons did not have a clear idea of the existence of the living God, creator of the universe and of humankind. They assumed that they came out from under the world to this earth through a cave or a hole. Like any other tribals of India, Moyons had their own traditional faith and practices which is part of "their tribal life and is identified with their tribe names" (Ponraj, 1996:77). It is difficult to evolve a comprehensive definition of tribal religion which is known by various names, viz. animist, preliterate, primitive religion for many centuries. Wati Longchar asserts that 'primal religion' is a widely accepted term particularly in India (1991:6).

The religion of the Moyons cannot be termed as animism or primitive. Moyon (2006:35-36) terms it as 'Moyon primal religion' because it does not have scriptures or written creeds to be recited but it is resided in the hearts and minds of the people in the family, clan and villages as a living creed. In the words of Mills (1973:215), Moyon primal religion is a "system of ceremonies...he will not prosper if he omits the sacrifices due to the deities around him who, unappeased, are ready to blight his crops and bring illness upon him and his family."

For the Moyons, religion exists within the whole system of their being. It is basically a community religion in which an individual life is inseparable from the community life. The religious beliefs and practices of the Moyons can be understood in the words of Wati Longchar who rightly observes, "The religious ethos is contained in the people's hearts, minds, oral history and rituals...unlike other religions of the world, it does not have founder(s) or reformer(s)...creation is part of the scripture and their religion is centred on creation." (1995: 5-6). The present study delves into the belief system, concept of the creator, beliefs in supernatural powers, notions of spirits, concept of sin, life after death, rebirth, omen, dreams, rites and rituals of the Moyons in the pre-independence period.


2.3.1. Belief System

The current study discovers that Moyons had many traditional beliefs. Kosha (2009: 43) underlines that whenever there was death, the Moyons in the past would tie a piece of *siingkha* (a smaller variety of ginger, stronger in taste) at the tip of an arrow. The arrow was shot towards the tomb to clear the road for the funeral procession. It was a belief that at the tomb, the evil spirits could possibly give trouble to the journeying soul. So *siingkha* was supposed to have the power to drive away such evil spirits. It is supposed that gunshots also drive away evil spirits. Again, the researcher looks at the belief system of the people which forbids anyone going to the tomb of the dead before three days of burial. If anyone went to the tomb within those forbidden days, it was considered a taboo. Kosha reiterates that when a person died and the body was laid at the centre of the house, a man would stand near the door. Then he would jump in and bang the doorpost with his fist and then he would enter the house. He would mention the lineage of the dead person and pronounced words of comfort and embodiment to him. He would tell the deceased soul not to be afraid of his travel to *ithiikhuw*. This performance was called *phrah ynshum* in Moyon.

In an interview, Ch. Michael describes the traditional beliefs and practices of the Moyons. He underlines that life was centered mostly on agriculture and all their socio-cultural life were all interrelated and at times it is difficult to distinguish the different aspects of their life. They performed a variety of rituals, viz., ritual for cultivation, ritual for good produce, ritual for protection from rats or attack of insects, ritual for deliverance from sicknesses, rituals for the birth and rituals for the death and burial, ritual for protection from natural calamities such as thunder, lightening, storm, rain, earthquake, flood, rituals for hunting and fishing and so on.

The Interview elucidates that *khurfhuw* performed all the rituals. He acted as a mediator between the Supreme Being, the spirits and the villagers. He stood as the point of contact between the living and the supernatural world. He was the head of the whole village with regard to religious matters and performed ritual ceremonies in the villages. Next to *khurfhuw* was the village medicine man known as *ithiim*. He performed religious functions and sometimes performed sacrifices of chickens and
pigs usually to chase away the evil spirits. Gachui notes, "The ithiim made useful discoveries especially of the medical qualities of jungle herbs and roots used for sick persons" (2006: 38-39).

2.3.2. Concept of Afhuwthangnang (creator of the universe)

The researcher investigates the concept of Afhuwthangnang of the Moyons which reflects definitely of their belief in the existence of God. The word "afhuw" refers to "owner" or "author" or "creator" and "thangnang" refers to "heaven" or "earth" or "world" or "universe". The literal translation of Afhuwthangnang would be "creator of the universe" or "creator of heaven and earth". The word "thangnang" was used for proper name for God in the folktale of Tungnum and Jangnum (Kamkhenthang, 1982: 25). Moyons in the ancient times believed in one Supreme Being who created the universe. They believed that the Supreme Being existed above the blue sky or 'up there'.

The belief of the Moyons about the Supreme Being was similar to the neighbouring tribe of the Anals. They believed in the existence of the Supreme Being called Asapavan, the source of all creation. Asapavan stayed in the heaven and saw everything. What people could not decide or understand was considered to be in his hand. His name was only occasionally mentioned as for example if someone was treated unjustly he would say let heaven judge it.

Singh (1981:75) rightly states, "Asapavan was supposed to hear and judge everything. When someone was dishonest, God's omnipresence was acknowledged by saying to him, "heaven knows whatever you do on earth." It meant that God was omnipotent and omnipresent as well. He was a good God, never doing any harm to human beings. They conceived the idea that they needed to make any offerings or sacrifices to him. They did not directly worship him even though he was regarded as benevolent, good and harmless. The present study finds the relationship of the traditional Moyons with their Supreme Being. It investigates that only in the most helpless situations like the Mizos, the Moyons appealed to the Supreme Being. In his work, Sangkima (1992:51) describes the plight of the Mizos during their habitation in
Chapter II  Traditional Socio-Cultural Life of the Moyon Tribe in the Pre-Independence Period

Manipur river valley. They were in their helpless conditions with sorrows, sufferings and miseries. They began to seek ways and means and at last they reasoned out among themselves to whom their fore parents worshiped.

It was on the strength of that belief that the Mizos started with a simple beginning saying, “answer me, whom our mothers worshiped, answer me, whom our fathers worshiped.” With these simple incantations, the early Mizo religion came into existence. The Mizos never sought divine guidance except by invoking his name in time of helplessness, as he was supposed to be far away from them.

The Moyons appealed to the Supreme Being through the mediators of khurfhuw and ithiim in times of their difficulties. For instance, Moyons took oaths in the name of heaven for the settlement of issues in the village court. They invoked his name to confirm any statements that was based on truth. So they believed that false oath would bring partial or total destruction upon them. They were very cautious about making an oath based on any falsehood or dishonesty. It was a certainty that a man who made false claims would incur punishments or curses on him and his family lineage would not prosper in course of time. While the honest man, even nature like heaven and earth, water or tiger would favour the honest man and reveal the truth one day because the belief of the people was that there was a Supreme Being who could see everything and who took a record of all the good and the bad that was performed by human beings on earth.

Moyons believed in God as the father and author of the universe. They did not worship any idols of stone or trees or animals or any particular objects or things. But they believed that God was the supreme Lord of the whole universe like he was the God of water while they went for fishing. They believed God as the God of the good harvest while cultivating jhum field. They acknowledged him as the father of all goodness and blessings. Only they did not know who that God was until the coming of Christianity in 1922.
2.3.3. Belief in Supernatural Powers

According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, Seventh Edition, the word “supernatural” refers to “that which cannot be explained by the laws of science and that seems to involve gods or magic.” In his theory of the *Law of three stages*, Comte explains that the primitive persons everywhere tend to think in supernatural terms. They believe that the phenomena are “produced by the immediate action of supernatural beings.” They believe in all kinds of fetishes in which spirits or supernatural beings live (Rao, 2012: 670).

Moyons in the ancient days believed in the supernatural powers. Rao (2012: 413) describes the different definitions of religion by different thinkers. Durkheim in his book, *The Elementary forms of the religious life* defines religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices related to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden. Maclver and Page have defined religion as a relationship not merely between man and man but also between man and some higher power. For Ogburn, religion is an attitude towards superhuman powers. The basic components of religion are beliefs in supernatural forces, man’s adjustment with the supernatural forces, acts, defined as righteous and sinful or sacred and the profane and some methods of salvation. It can be said that one of the prominent characteristics which determined the religious belief was the fear of the supernatural powers. Religion is a matter of belief. It is nothing but man’s belief in supernatural or superhuman forces.

The Moyons believed in the Supreme Being endowed with supernatural powers or strengths and who controlled the earth, the heaven, and the souls. For instance at the time of swearing, it was a practice to pronounce, “I swear in the name of *Afhuwthangnang*”, which means I swear in the name of the Supreme Being who was believed to be the creator of heaven and earth. Although the people had many beliefs about the spirits yet they believed in the Supreme Being endowed with supernatural powers or strengths. They feared him because they believed he knew all their actions whether good or bad. If their actions were good and pleasing to the Supreme Being, then their belief was that everything would go well with them. On the other hand, if their actions were bad like telling lies or killing people or giving false
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testimonies, then they would incur curses upon themselves because the Supreme Being who was supposed to be endowed with supreme powers would not spare them as he had powers over them.

2.3.4. Notion of Spirits

Ancient Moyons believed in the existence of both benevolent and other malevolent spirits. The benevolent spirits were generally believed to be responsible for the welfare and prosperity of the humans. It was a belief that the benevolent spirits guarded and protected their villages from diseases, pestilence and natural devastations like failure of crops, storm and floods. The malevolent spirits on the other hand, were believed to be dangerous and destructive to human affairs. These spirits were thought to live outside the villages. They were believed to live on the roadsides, in the fields, rivers, ponds, trees, stones, hills and mountains. It was assumed that all forms of human sufferings such as damage of properties, diseases, accidents of various kinds, sicknesses and madness were accountable to these evil spirits. The present study finds that because of these beliefs, the people started to offer sacrifices to appease them. If the sacrifices were not done, the belief of the people was that the evil spirits would harm them or cause death. Table 2.6 depicts some of the spirits in whom people believed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>In Moyon</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Iziingbatee</td>
<td>Isolated spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Larepma</td>
<td>Harvest spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Paam Lae</td>
<td>Land spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Sheenlong</td>
<td>Dreaded evil spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Shintaangkru</td>
<td>Make-believe spirit to coax children to bathe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Thamengshee</td>
<td>Make-believe spirit to coax children to sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Tuktaneee</td>
<td>An evil spirit to scarce children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Kuurdong Lae</td>
<td>Underworld spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Vaangoba</td>
<td>Bad spirit of the wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Chii Lae</td>
<td>Water spirit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Study.
1) *Iziingbatee:* It was the belief of the people that when they travelled through isolated places and they journeyed far from any human habitation, a spirit called *iziingbatee* would call them loudly from a distance. According to the belief, anyone who answers such a call would get sick and die.

2) *Larepma:* Moyons in the pre-independence period believed in the existence of good spirits. *Larepma* was believed to be a well-intentioned and benevolent spirit for good harvesting. Moyons believed that during the harvesting time, *Larepma* would come and bring forth abundant crops. During harvesting time, the people would loudly invoke his name and plead for his coming to their fields by chanting this ritual, “*Larepma* from the east, from the west, from the north, and from the south, come, come, come.”

3) *Paam Lae:* According to the belief of the people, *paam lae* refers to the spirit of the land or the place. Moyons believed that some places have spirits of their own. According to this belief most of the spirits were bad. If a person got sick, he was considered that he had met the bad spirit of the land. Therefore, an appeasement was required through the sacrificial offering of either the blood of a chicken or a dog. This sacrifice of the blood was to be offered only by the priest. As per their belief, the stronger the spirit of the land that caused the sickness, the bigger the animal was required to appease the spirit. If the blood offering of a chicken did not cure the sick, then, they would offer the blood of a dog and still, if the sickness was not healed, then, they would offer a pig or a cow or a mithun to appease the spirit so as to liberate the person from such a sickness.

4) *Sheenlong:* The ancient Moyons believed *sheenlong* was one of the most dreaded evil spirits. This evil spirit was always understood in the plural forms. The belief of the people was that *sheenlong* would roam about in group and talk wherever they went. This belief created fear and threat to the people even when anyone talked about such an existence of the evil spirits.

5) *Shintaangkru:* *Shintaangkru* was a make-believe spirit created by Elders in the family to scare little children who refused to bathe or to have a wash. It was supposed to be a very black spirit smeared completely with the soot of the hearth. This spirit was called *shintaangkru* because it was believed that it
remained all the time at *shintaang* which is a gadget made close to the roof over the fire to dry and season earthen utensils, cane and bamboo made handiworks. The Elders would coax their children to bathe otherwise they would threaten them that *shintaangkru* would jump down to punish any disobedient children.

6) *Thamengshee:* *Thamengshee* was also another make-believe spirit of the Elders to scare the children when they refused to sleep or to stop crying. It was just a creation of the Elders especially by the parents to pacify their children.

7) *Tuktanee:* In reality, *tuktanee* was the crying sound of a bird. The bird generally makes this noise at night. Because the sound was frightful, the Elders in the family called it an evil spirit to scare children when they cried or when they refused to sleep.

8) *Kuurdong Lae:* The belief of the Moyons was that *kuurdonglae* was a spirit in charge of the world below. The word “*kuurdong*” refers to the “world below” and the word “*lae*” refers to “spirit”. The literal meaning is spirit of the underworld. The people believed *kuurdong lae* to be a good spirit.

9) *Vaangoba:* The belief was that *vaangoba* was a bad spirit of the wind. It travelled along with the wind and it would knock down trees and blew away houses. If anyone happened to travel when *vaangoba* passed by, it would knock that person to death.

10) *ChiiLae:* The people believed that rivers had spirits at different places, of which most of them were bad. *Vaangbarer* was the most prominent and the most dangerous water spirit. The belief of the people was that *vaangbarer* went along rivers in times of flood. The person who was on it when it travelled was sure to die. Another water spirit believed to be harmless was a female spirit called “water maiden”. It would at times appear on the shore in the form of a very beautiful and attractive girl. It would appear for some time and when the people approached, it would disappear suddenly.

**Influences of their Beliefs:** It can be noted from the description of the above that the beliefs and assumptions of the Moyons in the pre-independence period influenced all their socio-cultural activities. Their activities were related with the hopes of achieving sound health, long life, sufficient food and prosperity in life. But there was no
organized form of worship. However, their beliefs set the trend and tone of their daily outlook on life based on seasonal calendar. The norms laid down by their religious sanction demanded strict adherence to them. These norms set the manner of morality and good conduct. It helped the people to develop social cohesion as well as the development of an individual character.

Spirits of their Ancestors: Moyons believed in the spirits of their ancestors. According to their belief when a person died, he was physically dead but his spirit would travel and join the spirits of his ancestors. The spirit of the dead would be aware of all that was taking place in the house although he could not do anything. He would observe his friends who had come to pay homage to his mortal remains. He was aware of all those who wept for him and showed their solidarity with his family members. It was also the belief of the people that the dead would like to reciprocate his thanksgiving to all his friends who had come to pay their homage to him. Therefore, the family in bereavement would kill an animal, whether a pig or a cow and feed the crowd who came for the funeral. Normally this feeding was done after the burial. The people also believed that the deceased had to journey towards ithiikhuw and join in the spirits of his ancestors. So they would keep food for his journey twice a day near the hearth till the rite of baar inthii (the last rite) was over.

Animals have their Spirits: An added belief of the people was that even the animals have their spirits. The dogs could see the evil spirit and if he barked usually it was an indication that the evil spirit was coming to cause someone death in the house. Again from the unusual cries of the dogs, the people would predict that an earthquake or some calamities were awaiting them and they would keep themselves awake and alert or to call for the ithiim and do the appeasement of blood offerings. According to the belief of the people, the animals had very strong senses because their spirits could see both the spirits of good and evil.

Abode of the Spirits: Another belief of the people in the ancient times was that a damp place called idae was the abode of the spirits. Usually a small spring in the muddy soil which remained wet all through the dry season was considered idae. The
water from such a place was generally warm and blackish. The belief was that the demons that lived in idae could capture the souls of men and women which would result in their untimely deaths. So if a person was sick, they used to go to such a place and offer sacrifices of fowl, or goat or pig. Even when the people had to do jhuming and if it happened that there was a damp place nearby, they would first go to the place and offer sacrifice in order to appease the demons. Lorrain (1948: 419) cites about the practice of the people who would appease the demons through the ritual before they started cultivating the land.

**Evil Spirits of the Jungles:** Yet another belief of the pre-independence Moyons was \textit{laam ing athuur or shar ing akhum}. This refers to the evil spirits of the jungles who had the power to capture men and women and led them astray or caused them to become mad or even to die. The beliefs of the people were more evident if any person in the village got lost in the jungle or did not return home or missed the way. When anyone was found missing in the village, the whole village would search at night with bamboo torches shouting and asking the demons to release the captives. Such was the beliefs of the people on spirits, demons and ghosts which were known by different names referring to their habitats.

### 2.3.5. Concept of Sin

Before delving into their concept of sin, it is necessary to understand the roots of their religious beliefs and practices which are guided by their social customary laws. Their customary laws spell out norms acceptable to their religious beliefs and practices and in short to their socio-cultural life. The study reveals that any anti-social activity that broke the sanctity of the customary laws was considered a sin. In this regard, Kingsley Davis cites, “The unity and solidarity of the community is increased by the rituals that have the capacity of bringing people together and reaffirming the values and beliefs of the group. The rituals maintain taboos and prohibitions and those who violate them are punished (Rao, 2012: 419).

The researcher finds that the customary laws of the people maintain taboos and prohibitions and whoever violates them is punished by the village court. For
instance, the customary laws sanction that an endogamous marriage is considered illegal. Such a marriage in the past was thought to be a taboo as well as sin. Any social behaviour which was not accepted by the customary laws of the society was considered as sin and illegal. These illegal practices might be committed by an individual or by a clan. The consequences of sins were believed to be immediate and the souls of such persons who committed sins would suffer even after death.

Another typical example of the concept of sin or any action which was liable to be punished by the village court was judgment by swearing. If the village court could not settle a particular dispute between two individuals or groups, who claimed themselves guiltless, the last option was to resolve by ordeal. The two parties had to swear in the name of Ashuwthangnang and declare that nature would prove their innocence. The condition was that the guilty would be punished by the village court and in some cases the guilty would be killed by the very omens he pronounced. The following interview is a description of a true story of swearing by biting the teeth of a tiger.

**Interview 2.9**

Name of the Informant: Rd. Jeepness  
Age: 42 years  
Sex: Male  
Place: Vomku near Khungjuur village  
Date: 20 June 2014

Rd. Jeepness (*Rd.* is initial of Ruwndar in Anal) of Vomku village narrates, “I have heard a true story of “swearing by biting the teeth of the tiger” which was narrated to me by my grandfather. It happened during his days forty years ago. The two claimants bit the teeth of the tiger and swore, “If I am guilty let the tiger eat me before I enjoy the first harvest of my field.” This was between two individuals of Larong village and Larong Khunou village.” The informant continues, “A man from Larong village pierced at the bull with a spear belonging to an individual from Larong Khunou village. The animal with the pierced spear returned to the house bleeding.
When the owner of the bull saw the spear inside its body, he recognised the owner of the spear since in the village the people normally knew the things of each other. The owner of the pierced animal went to the house of the owner of the spear and told that his bull had been pierced to death. The owner of the spear denied the charge by biting the teeth of the tiger and swore. “If I ever did it, let me be killed by the tiger before I taste the first fruits of my paddy.”

Jeepness reiterates, “True enough, he was killed and eaten by the tiger in that very year before he tasted the first fruits of his field. While he and his wife returned home from their field, on the way, he told his wife to wait for him near the river. The wife became impatient because she waited very long for her husband. Since it was getting late, she started searching for her husband in the jungle where he had entered. To her surprise, she saw the footprints of the tiger with human blood and the clothes of her husband torn into pieces. The wife ran home and reported to the elders and they confirmed that her husband was killed and eaten by the tiger. Later on, the family also admitted the truth that his younger brother had pierced the bull with a spear and although he knew the fact, he bit the teeth of the tiger which he should not have done.”

Furthermore, there is yet another belief of the Elders which is that once the tiger eats any human being, it becomes blind and its teeth decay and fall. In the above true story of the man killed by the tiger, shortly after the incident the village people killed a tiger and according to their belief, it was the same tiger that had eaten the man from Larong village because its teeth were decayed and fallen unlike other tigers that are normally ferocious. The certainty of the people was that the guilty one would be eaten by the tiger and the innocent one would escape from being killed by the tiger. It was their conviction that when the Supreme Being disapproves of the wrong, it would also be revealed through the nature like the tiger. Even the tiger would participate in revealing the truth by killing the guilty and setting the innocent free. The belief was that nature like tiger or water would not tolerate sins based on false witnesses or false swearing. All these practices reveal that the Moyons in the past had a concept of sin.
2.3.6. Life after Death

Moyons believed in the continuance of life beyond the grave. They believed in the existence of *ithiikhuv*. According to them, *ithiikhuv* was the abode of the departed souls. It was thought to be an indistinguishable world where everything was on a much lower scale than in the present world. When a person died, his/her soul wandered in the vicinity of the village till *baar inthii* was performed. It was a belief that after the *baar inthii*, the soul of the dead would go and join with all the other departed souls who lived in *ithiikhuv*. Moyon (2006:42) extracts the following lines from the folk songs which depicts life after death.

_In Moyon_

*Hia e, ishahfuwe aebuw tinnii mahshe,*...*Hia e, aeruno thangnang na, tuwngsham abashiimo,*...*Hia e, akinna naming khuwnruw shuwnningbe; Hia e, khuwngruw tah e ichiina, laarmuwr tong o mahro e. ...Hia e, akinna naming khiwango othningbe; Hia e, khiwatah ichiina, shiir tining mahro e,*

_English Translation_

"In the land of dead, our food habit and style of life are all different. Why God made us to be a wife and husband? We cannot live together any longer. My service will come to you as rain when you reach home. Kindly seek not protection. I will visit you in the form of a bee; please don’t use stick to chase me away".

The above lines clearly depict the beliefs of the people about the existence of life after death. The folk song describes the differences of the life styles between life on earth and life after death. The food habits and the marital life were all different in the life after death. It also underlines that the souls of the dead could visit the loved ones on earth in the form of a bee. The study examines the faith of the people that the road to the land of the dead or the village of the dead or the abode of the dead was full
Chapter II  Traditional Socio-Cultural Life of the Moyon Tribe in the Pre-Independence Period

of thorns and creepers. It was very stiff, uneven, rough and rocky and filled with all sorts of obstructions. Life and food habits of *ithikhuw* were contradictory to that of the earth. In the land of the dead, garden spiders were regarded as wild bears and bamboo shoots were considered as fishes.

Again, the finding is that Moyons considered a soul which resembled that of a human being having a personality although it was invisible. According to their belief, the soul was immortal and at death, it departed from the body. The soul was also subjected to pain and suffering which was caused by external influences. Even after death the soul continued to work actively like cultivating, rearing domestic animals, or going for hunting or fishing. It was also a belief that the soul of a person could depart from the body while sleeping and wandered around in the heavenly world to converse with its ancestral spirits. The status of soul after death was determined by the actions of one’s life on earth. Those who disregarded the norms of the social, ethical and religious life on earth were punished after death. Moyon (2006:43) recounts the judgment of the souls of the dead who entered *ithikhuw* which was based on the Moyon folktale. According to the narration, *Jom*, the king of the dead was believed to be the judge of all the souls of the dead. He was believed to conduct his judicial court without any forgiveness or mercy. Every soul of the dead on reaching *ithikhuw* was judged by *Jom* according to his/her action on earth. The souls who refused to give fire to their neighbours while they were living on earth were punished by making them to embrace a red-hot iron. A person who refused to give water to others while on earth was made to carry a vessel full of water and yet experience thirst in the land of the dead.

Still a person who failed to remove dirty articles from the head of others while on earth was punished by the growth of thorny plants on their forehead. Similarly those who stole paddy were forced to eat the husk of paddy in *ithikhuw*. The soul of the murderer was cut into pieces with a saw. A borrower who could not repay his/her debt was made to become the slave of the lender. Those who committed adultery would embrace thorny plants. A person who robbed the cow of others on earth was made to be dragged by the cow in *ithikhuw*. A man who stole the materials of the
bridge was made to be used as a bridge in the judgment of Jom, the judge of the dead. Such was the beliefs of the Moyons in the pre-independence period.

2.3.7. Rebirth

Moyons in the pre-independence period believed also in the rebirth of life. For instance, the following lines which have been quoted from Moyon (2006:42) depict the beliefs of the people in rebirth. The folk song flows like this:

In Moyon

“Hia e, khuwngruw tah e ichiina, laarmuwr tong o mahro e. ...Hia e, akinna naming khiwango othningbe; Hia e, khiwatah ichiina, shiir tining mahro e.”

English Translation

“My service will come to you as rain when you reach home. Kindly seek not protection. I will visit you in a form of a bee; please don’t use stick to chase me away.”

From these lines, it can be understood that the Moyons in the past believed in the rebirth. Again the folktale of “Nungjur and Burung” confirms the beliefs in the rebirth of the people in ancient days. According to the folktale, Nungjur and Burung was a lovely couple who reincarnated in their same form as husband and wife. But their reincarnation was different from the previous life. Previous life was much better than the reincarnated one. According to their belief, some departed souls were also transformed into creatures. The folk song also throws light that the souls of the dead visited their beloved ones on earth from ithiikhuw in the form of a bee. Again it reveals that the blessings and services of the souls of the ancestors descended upon their progenies on earth in the form of showers of rains.

2.3.8. Omen

Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, Seventh Edition, defines “omen” as “a sign of what is going to happen in the future.” Moyons were very conscious of what
was going to happen in their personal life or in the near future or in the family or in the society. They looked forward for indications which were taken seriously in their social life. Omens can be both positive and negative. Kosha (2009:41) depicts the crow as a sign of bad omen. So while erecting a foundation pillar in the construction of a new house, the people would tie a bow and an arrow at the top end of the pillar in order to prevent the crow from perching on it. If a crow sat on the pillar, the house site had to be changed. If it was not changed, the omen was that a bad happening would occur in the family.

Kosha (2009:42-43) describes the beliefs of the people in omens and their methods of its management. In the pre-independence period, it was considered an omen when a person died of drowning, falling from a tree or killed by animals or men. So the body of such a person was not brought inside the village nor was it buried in the common graveyard. Again, at the death of someone in the village, a tree pole or a pestle of pounding rice was kept standing against the front of each house to prevent evil spirits from entering the houses. It is also observed as an omen when a domestic or a wild animal climbed the roof of the house or it entered or passed through a house, a misfortune would befall upon that family. If the people saw the sun surrounded by a ring, it was a sign that a famous person in the village would die. Again the people considered it an omen, if a certain bird chirped at night flying which was a sign of calamity or death or epidemic. When such symbols of omens appeared to the people, rituals were performed accordingly to ward off the danger ahead of them. They would have recourse to ithiim and according to his advice; rituals and blood offerings were performed to appease the spirits of such omens.

2.3.9. Rumang Ashaen (dreams)

In her work, Duckett (2009:9) portrays that imagination is the beginning of everything. A book cannot be written unless it is first dreamed or imagined. The house that one lives in was imagined before it was built. The great psychiatrist Carl Jung believed that nothing existed unless it was first dreamed. Again, Duckett (2009:48) quotes, “dreams are the facts from which one must proceed.” Hillman (1979:201) defines that dreaming is the psyche itself doing its soul-work. Cartwright and Lamberg (1993:3) state that indeed times of crisis highlight the important
function that dreams serve in our lives. Hillman (1983:7) excerpts “mind is in the imagination, rather than the imagination is in the mind.

Dreams offer nightly readouts on your physical, emotional and spiritual health.” Robert (1996:44) cites “by tracking and comparing these reports you can monitor the state of your health, your relationships and your progress towards or away from your larger goals.” Sechrist (1974:62) expresses, “broadly speaking, you usually meet yourself in your dreams in a myriad of artful disguises.” Psychologists like Duckett and Jung and other writers like Hillman or Cartwright and Lambeg or Robert or Sechrist through their works have explained the significance of dreams. Dreams as depicted by Duckett are tools to improve one’s health and wellbeing.

Moyons in the pre-independence period considered dreams to be the supernatural messages communicated to the living ones. It was a warning given to the dreamer to take precaution or to act upon it. According to their beliefs, dreams have both positive and negative messages. Some dreams communicate to the dreamers about their fortunes while others communicate about their misfortunes of sicknesses or accidents or deaths. Kosha (2009:57) illustrates with an example that when a Moyon man saw a python in his dream, it was an indication that a rich harvest of paddy was awaiting him and that he would become rich. The python was considered to possess mysterious power, so the people in the past feared to call it by its name and often it was called shavang (rich).

If a person dreamt of a big catch of fish, the interpretation was that he would prosper in wealth and in life. But a dream of crowd gathering indicates death in the family. The dream of flowers also indicated death according to the beliefs of the people. They were extremely conscious about the interpretation of their dreams that from it they could judge for themselves whether their plans would lead them to successes or failures. Some of these traditional interpretations of dreams and omens still exist today although people after embracing Christianity do not give much importance to these beliefs.
2.3.10. Rites and Rituals

2.3.10.1. Ynshi (sacrifices)

The term “rite” according to the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, Seventh Edition* “is a ceremony performed by a particular group of people, often for religious purposes: funeral rites or initiation rites when a new member joins a secret society.” Again, the term, “ritual” is defined by the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, Seventh Edition*, “a series of actions that are always performed in the same way, especially as part of a religious ceremony: religious rituals. It is something that is done regularly and always in the same way.” All religious organizations have their own rites and rituals depending upon their beliefs, knowledge and training to exercise influence upon their members. A religious belief is the cognitive aspect of religion. It tries to explain the nature and origin of sacred things. It assumes that the sacred things do exist. It gives information about the universe, creation, life and death, future of the world and such other deep but subtle matters. In his work, Rao (2012:414) underlines, “religious ritual is the practical side of religion. It refers to symbolic action concerning the sacred.”

Moyons had a rite for house location and they performed a ritual for that purpose. They had a rite for village location and performed a ritual for such an occasion. But they did not have any temples or shrines or mosques where they offered rituals and sacrifices. They did not have an organized form of worship. The places of their rituals and sacrifices or offerings or ceremonies depended upon the occasion or events or situations. If there was a ritual for the ear boring of the child, it was performed at home. Again, if the ritual was for the village location, then the ritual had to be performed in the very place where the village would be established. Furthermore, if the ritual was performed for the burial, it had to be done at the graveyard.

Moyons did not have specific place of worship for their rituals or sacrifices or offerings. But wherever the need for performing rituals in different places occurred, the rituals and offerings were performed in those places. Rituals and sacrifices were observed at almost every important event of their socio-cultural life. Offerings of
animals and fowls such as *mithuns*, pigs, cows, dogs, cocks, were performed and the cock was the most popular choice of offering. The purpose of the rituals and sacrifices was to appease the spirits depending on the type of the event which was observed. The following data are obtained from a couple of how an appeasement was made to the gods of the field for a good harvest.

**Interview 2.10**

Name of the Informant: Cr. Jamson  
Age: 59 years  
Sex: Male  
Place: Khuringkhuw  
Date: 29 June 2014

**Interview 2.11**

Name of the Informant: Ch. Deenkham  
Age: 60 years  
Sex: Female  
Place: Khuringkhuw  
Date: 29 June 2014

Cr. Jamson and Ch. Deenkham is a couple of Khuringkhuw who have been blessed with seven children and most of them are settled. They were farmers cultivating both wet fields and *jhun* fields all through their lives especially when they were settled for nearly twenty years at New Khongjon village (Tungsher). Later on they migrated to the present village Khuringkhuw, Chandel. Deenkham relates, “My father-in-law had gifted us “shaanglung” which literally means “paddy stone”. It is a pair of stones which is believed to be a couple gods for a good harvest and each stone is almost the size of an index finger.”

Jamson supplements, “As per the instruction of my father, I had to appease *shaanglung* twice in a year for a good harvest, i.e., before the cultivation and before
the harvest. I would place it at the very site of the field on a banana leaf, and country liquor would be poured on it. Local food such as rice, chutney made of banana stem, meat and dried fish were sacrificed which were kept near it. Then, my wife and I would implore from shaanglung fortunes of abundant crops on our cultivation.”

Deenkham adds, “Whether because of the shaanglung or because of our hard work and skill, we always enjoyed a good harvest.” Deenkham continues, “After the appeasement, I would wash shaanglung nicely and I would keep it preciously on a piece of cloth like how relics are treasured. It was only in the recent past I came to know that such practice was against the Christian faith and therefore I surrendered it to a Catholic priest.” The above case studies reveal that Moyons performed rituals and sacrifices to appease the different spirits. It is further observed that appeasement was also made to shaarung which believed to be a god for bringing fortunes at hunting.

2.3.10.2. Diseases and Sickness

Moyons in the pre-independence period performed rituals to cure any diseases and sickness. For instance, when somebody in the family was sick, it was suspected that the evil spirits had attacked the individual. They would enquire the root cause of his sickness and once they identified the place or the object, then, they would call for ithiim to appease the spirit of the sickness to depart from the sick person. He would call for the village priest to make the ritual appeasement with the blood of chicken or the blood of dog in the very place where the sick person got the sickness. An interview below confirms such a ritual to appease the spirit of the sickness:

**Interview 2.12**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Name of the Informant:</th>
<th>Ch. Warneh</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td>82 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex:</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
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<td>Place:</td>
<td>Kuurkam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>20 July 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ch. Warneh affirms, “When I was a girl at my native village at Khungjuur, I remember I got sick once in the jhum field. In those days, Christianity had not yet entered our village and our own traditional beliefs and practices were still intact. I was so sick that I thought I would die at that time itself. My mother who was with me in the field called for ithiim and he offered the blood of a dog to appease the spirit of my sickness in the field itself. I do not know whether it was the appeasement or the gift of healing from God, I got completely cured after the sacrifice was made.” The subsequent interview confirms the religious practices of the people with regard to sickness.

Interview 2.13
Name of the Informant: Cr. Korashing
Age: 71 years
Sex: Male
Place: Kapaam
Date: 1 June 2014

Cr. Korashing affirms that the people conceived of God as someone who was the author of life and of the universe. They believed in the God who was very great and supernatural. Though they did not see God in person with their physical eyes, they believed in the God who was very close to them and close to the nature. They were also very close to the nature. They believed in a God who controls the nature like the mountains, hills, valleys, jhum fields, rivers, streams, roads, water, sun and moon, wind, etc. They wanted to appease the gods who controls the nature and therefore they performed some rituals and animal sacrifices for any social or religious or cultural acts.

2.3.10.3. Women in Religious Life

Moyons in the pre-independence period recognised women who proved to be great priests as ithiim. Women ithiim performed rituals for the sick but they were however, not allowed to perform the village customary functions or festivals. All the other rites and rituals were performed only by the male ithiim. The female ithiim
could perform only those of the sickness. Further, *araae isiim* which was one of the funeral rites of the dead was not performed for the deceased women folk. It was thought unnecessary because they did not belong to a permanent clan. Although the society allows women to retain their lineage even after their marriage the idea that they belong to the husband through marriage has made the society think that they do not have a permanent clan.

### 2.3.10.4. Death and Burial

Another exploration of the present study is the traditional ritual for “death and burial” of the people. When there was death in the family, meat and rice beer-pitchers were offered to the soul of the deceased. But family members of the deceased would not eat the meat. After the burial, no one was allowed to go to the grave or move out of the village for three days. Those three days were considered sacred and a social taboo which was made known to the whole village. This social taboo was observed because any one violating such a taboo might meet with ill fate. One of the last rites of the dead called *baar intihi* would be performed after a year. The ritual would be performed by *itiim*. On such an occasion, the village would eat meat and drink wine and get drunk. This ritual marked the closing ritual of the dead. The next is an interview with R. Koren who narrates the death and burial rituals of the people in the pre-independence period.

**Interview 2.14**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name of the Informant:</th>
<th>R. Koren</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td>79 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex:</td>
<td>Male</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>5 June 2014</td>
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R. Koren explains, “In the past when death occurred in a Moyon family, the relatives of the deceased, normally the members of his clan, would slam the door or strike the planks as they entered the house. They would spell out words of lamentation and grief at the loss of their beloved. The mortal remains of the dead would be kept
covered with white cloth, the head toward the backdoor and legs toward the main door. For the rich people, the family would kill a cow for the mourners and the skull was kept at the graveyard. Usually the deceased was kept for a day while the bereaved family offered wine and meat to all the mourners. But the family members would not eat the meat.” Koren restates, “Bamboo carriage was used at the funeral procession. Several coins were scattered on the way with a belief of buying the burial place. They buried the dead along with a strong wine and a gong. The food items were set aside daily for the deceased beside the hearth in the house for almost one year till the closing ritual called baar ithii was performed. This was a belief that the departed soul came to eat the food with the family which was set aside for him every day.”

Further research reveals that the people in the pre-independence period considered unnatural deaths as caused by the evil spirits and therefore the dead person would not be buried in the common graveyard. For instance, suicide was considered shaar (evil spirit that cause death). If such a death occurred outside the village boundary, the dead body was not brought home. Unnatural deaths were those of accidental deaths caused by weapons or by falling down or by getting drowned or by getting burnt or death by animal bites. The nearest brother-in-law was regarded the main person responsible for the burial and no women and children would participate in such unnatural death rituals. Ithiiim would perform bor-ithaang ritual instead of baar-inthii ritual. The next day after the funeral was considered a social taboo and none was allowed to go outside the village. The death of a pregnant woman during child birth was also considered unnatural. If such a death occurred due to the negligence of the husband, then, the husband was penalized with a pig and a wine pitcher.

Again, if a woman died leaving behind any weaving unfinished on the loom, it was considered a taboo. Therefore, only women who had ceased to bear children could complete such an unfinished weaving and wore it. The dead body of such a woman who died at childbirth was taken out of the house and the house also would be set on fire. If any death occurred soon after the burial of a person who met an unnatural death, it was considered as a kind of mysterious evil death. So, the family of
the deceased would purify it by presenting a cock and a wine-pitcher to that family where the unnatural death had occurred. However, such purification was not done with the near relatives.

2.3.10.5. Village Establishment

Another investigation of the present research is the practice of a ritual for a village establishment. Moyons performed this rite by boiling an egg at the chosen site to test the suitability for the human settlement. The site was considered good if the egg got boiled properly. Secondly they would take with them a rooster and stayed for a night at the site for the village. In the following morning if the rooster crowed and flapped its wings and faced eastward, it was assumed that the place was ready for human habitation and dwelling. Thirdly, on an auspicious day, they would perform a ritual called khuwder ishah. They would carry a pig and go for a night’s stay. They would spear the pig at its armpit to death by a sharp bamboo blade, for hammering to death was forbidden as it was considered a taboo. The faeces of the pig would be buried in a pit. They would partake in the meat. Such a rite was known as khuwder ishah. It is also observed that the people would share the different roles among the clan representatives in the establishment of a village. The pillars of the first house in a new village were to be erected by the Chineer-Nungchim lineages of Ziingven clan. Common water pond was to be dug by Nguwruw lineage of Shimphuw clan. The village was considered to be complete and beautiful if both the clans of Shimphuw and Ziingven lived together.

2.3.10.6. House Location

In his work, Moyon (2006:46) describes the ritual for the house location called busae isiih which was performed with the help of the ithiim. The busae isiih was a ritual to examine whether the spot for the construction of the house was good. In an interview, Ch. Warneh describes with her childhood experience of how a ritual for the house location was performed at her ancestral village. Before erecting the pillars for the house, the people would prepare the ground for its construction. At the spot of the construction, they would make a little ditch and then, three grains of paddy joined together would be placed on it. This was followed by pronouncing these words, “my
grains, let not your position be altered if this spot is good. But indicate a sign if it is not good." Then, they would cover the pit with a leaf and wait for some time and open it again. If the position of the grains remained unchanged and the pit free from insects, the location of the house was considered good and a house would be constructed on that very spot. The foundation pillar would be laid by a man from Ziingven clan who was judged by the village to be a person of a well-being family.

2.3.10.7. House Dedication

An in depth study reveals that Moyons performed rituals for almost every activity of their socio-cultural life. All their activities were interwoven and interrelated. After performing the ritual for house construction, they would perform a ritual for the house dedication. For this ritual, ithim would bury a piece of intestine of an animal at the corner pillar. It was a belief that it would prevent the influence of the evil spirits upon the family who would settle there. Cr. Warthen who grew up as a non-Christian explains, "The ritual of the house dedication was performed in order to free the people from any attacks of the evil spirits. It was a belief that the ritual would foster the well being of the family. She reiterates, "Besides, eating and drinking on such an occasion, a trek-traang dance would be performed to signify the strength of the construction and to prevent any problematic incidents upon the dwellers."

2.3.10.8. Khuw Ithi (village ritual day)

Moyons performed khuw irthi in order to prevent any outbreak of epidemics or diseases in the village. It was a ritual to drive out the demons or the evil spirits that caused epidemics or diseases in the village. During the khuw irthi, the people would close the village gate with branches. The Village Elders would eat the meat and drink the wines that were contributed. Khuw irthi was performed at the village gate with the belief that people should recover from their diseases caused by the evil spirits. The ithim sacrificed the head portion of an animal, normally a cock, by hanging with two tongka (bamboo container) of cooked chicken on each side of the gate. On such a ritual day, no one was allowed to enter in or go out of the village. The violators were made to give one cock, a wine pitcher and also bear all the expenditures of the ritual function.
2.3.10.9. *Paam Rachii Isuwng* (locating site for cultivation)

*Paam rachii isuwng* was a ritual to locate a good site for *jhum* cultivation. It was the first festival of the year. *Khurfhuw* would go to the village gate and perform this ritual with the help of an egg. If it burst out, then, the region towards which the egg burst out was considered fertile and productive for cultivation. If the egg did not get boiled in a particular site, the indication was that there would be no good harvest. This omen would really take place as per the beliefs of the people. It was only after ascertaining the site with the help of the egg that the people would deforest the area for cultivation. *Khurfhuw* was usually chosen from the *Ziingyen* clan. During such a ritual, one man from *Shimphuw* clan of any lineages was made to eat the boiled egg. The following year he was expected to present one wine pitcher to the villagers for the *Paam rachii isuwng* festival.

*Khurfhuw* was regarded with much respect as he was one of the most important persons in this ritual for locating site for the cultivation. Along with the respect and honour he received from the people, there were many obligations which were imposed on him. It is found that *khurfhuw* was restricted from eating certain types of food such as that he could not eat any fermented fish or fermented beans or any animals killed by a poisonous arrow. The success of the cultivation depended upon his strict observances of his diet and his good conduct of life. Under such religious obligations and regulations, *khurfhuw* generally resigned after a year.

2.3.10.10. *Ruw ynthuw/Paam Mi Ynthuw* (burning of field)

*Ruw ynthuw* or *paam mi ynthuw* was yet another ritual for burning of *jhum* field. In the pre-independence period, the season for burning it was in April. In the months of February the *jhum* area would be cut down and be kept for a month to get dried. When the felled trees were dried enough, there would be a ritual. N. Nani says that even in *ruw ynthuw*, *khurfhuw* would produce a sacred fire at the village gate from a ‘mituk’ (country-made matches). It was with the sacred fire that the deforested area was set on fire. The villagers used this fire to conflate their respective fields. It was the practice that the most virtuous person according to the judgment of the villagers would be given the privilege to initiate the burning of the *jhum* field. When
the villagers returned home, each family would bring rice beer to *khurfhuw*’s house and drink together. *Khurfhuw* would wash his hands with egg fluid as a symbol to cleanse the sins of the burnt insects and animals. It was only after this ritual that the villagers start clearing the field.

2.3.10.11. *Saangthen Itu* (cleansing of the sins of animals)

The present study found yet another ritual called *saangthen itu* which was practiced by the Moyons of pre-independence period. It was normally performed by *ithiim* at every field terrain to cleanse the sins of all the dead animals like birds and insects during the burning of *jhum* fields. This ritual involved animal sacrifice such as dogs. The head portion of the dog would be buried in the field. The *ithiim* would gather certain leaves where the sacrifice was performed and some chanting would be made by him. It is also found that there was yet another ritual in continuation of *saangthen itu* which was called *lami-fhuy-chiisfhuw*. It was a ritual to chase away any evil spirits on the road from the field leading to the stream or any water source. This ritual was done for the prevention of any future sickness or outbreak of diseases during the period of cultivation. When this ritual was over, the owner of the field would offer the *ithiim* a thigh portion of a dog with a jar of rice beer as a token of his gratitude.

2.3.10.12. *Shaangrii Ithi* (crop protection)

The present study finds that there is also the practice of *shaangrii ithi* which was a ritual to prevent any attack of pests or diseases of the crops so as to produce a rich harvest. It reveals that the people took great care in *jhum* cultivation as their livelihood depended on it. This ritual would be performed when the growing plants reached the height of one or two inches. *Khurfhuw* would make fire at the *suwngkung* (village gate) from which the villagers would take the fire with the help of *pimu* (burning clothes). With *pimu*, they would walk around their respective field and then place it on the stump of a tree in the fields. In the evening, *khurfhuw* washed his hands with an egg and wine.
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R. Koren says that *shaangrii ithi* was observed for three days during which no one was permitted to venture into the field for it was considered a *genna*. In the words of Hodson (1996:164), the term "*genna*" means "simply forbidden or prohibited. *Khurphuw* was forbidden in the work of clearing a road of the *jhum* field. The belief of the people was that if he joined in such a road clearing, the paddy would be damaged that year by the rats. In order to prevent any damage to the crops, he would symbolically cut off one paddy plant and chant some words for the protection of the crops.

2.4. FESTIVALS

The present study deals with the "festivals" which are a part of the socio-cultural life of the Moyons. It finds that the people celebrated annual festivals - all connected with the agricultural activities. These festivals were compulsorily performed every year although not all of them involved the whole population of the village. The main persons involved in the festivals were *khurphuw*, *ithiim* and Village Elders.

*Khurphuw*, the village priest, was chosen from among any men of the *Ziingven* clan. His main role was to perform rituals and sacrifices. He had to observe strict diet because upon his diet and conduct of life depend the success of the cultivation of the people. *Ithiim*, a village medicine man was normally selected from the *Shimphuw* clan. He was supposed to see the spirits, talk to them and know their desires. Accordingly, offerings of animals and fowls would be made to the spirits. BAP (2008:49 -74) describes some of the "traditional festivals of the Moyons.

2.4.1. Sachii Ichi (seed sowing)

*Khurphuw* performed *sachii ichi* which was the first act of sowing the seeds in the *jhum* earth. When the felled trees were burnt and the spot was cleared, a day was fixed for *khurphuw* to perform this act of *sachii ichi*. *Ithiim* would bless the seeds by sprinkling wine over the *sachii* (seeds).

Table 2.7 illustrates some of the "traditional festivals of the Moyons."
Table 2.7: Festivals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>In Moyon</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Shachii ichi</td>
<td>Seed sowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Shaangken</td>
<td>Harvesting festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Buwrenpeh</td>
<td>New rice festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Vaangcheh</td>
<td>Closing festival of harvest season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Ruta kuur</td>
<td>New crops festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Midim</td>
<td>New year celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Berkaap</td>
<td>Archery festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Zaaka-theeng</td>
<td>Feast of charity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Ikam-kuurva</td>
<td>Feast of merit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Paa m mee ichuwng/Ruwynthu</td>
<td>Festival for burning of the jhum fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Shaangthen itu/Lamdae</td>
<td>Appeasement made to the spirits of jhum fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Ruwfhuw yngkhap</td>
<td>Festival for sufficient crops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Suwng iihing/Khuw thi</td>
<td>Protection from epidemics and sicknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Humfhuw itheh</td>
<td>Festival of honoring someone who kills a tiger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Ru yntu</td>
<td>Festival of fraternity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Een iruwh</td>
<td>Festival of house inauguration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Ithii/Mee athikrae</td>
<td>Ceremony of paying homage to the dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Sharii</td>
<td>Festival of giving information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Shakchi</td>
<td>Special meat packages for the clansmen and clanswomen of a man who kills any big animals either domestic or jungle ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Nae na vuwh</td>
<td>Ear boring festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Baar ynthi/Rutha iphin</td>
<td>Celebrating the first death anniversary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Lupadae/Itaang bacha</td>
<td>Festival of mutual consent for exchange of human labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Nuwraram Param</td>
<td>Moyon vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Thangnang</td>
<td>Festival of acknowledging the creator of heaven and earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Imah-nong</td>
<td>Festival of observing the duties of the son-in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Manu ithiir</td>
<td>Festival of deliverance from curses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field study.

2.4.2. Shaangken (harvesting festival)

‘Shaangken’ or harvesting festival was celebrated by the villagers in the month of Iram or Mantang (August or September) before the flowering of the paddy. Shaangken is derived from the word shaang which means “paddy” or “rice” and aken
means “to care for”. It was celebrated to take care of the growing paddy in anticipation of a rich harvest.

The people would make three mounds of earth or soil representing paddy and erected three sharings in the style of ikam at the village entrance. Sharing is a wooden post in the ‘Y’ shape used in ikam festival... Three small amounts of equal size of paddy are constructed surrounded by khungtum, a kind of broad wild plant creepers which are arranged in a row. Small plants like naeshuwm andphaeraam are planted inside. At night they gather at the Chief’s house singing shaangken songs and dance, enjoying meat and wine. Khurfhuow also would contribute one wine pitcher and one cock. Thereafter, he is not restricted in the food habits. During this shaangken festival, the people choose the persons who would first pluck the paddy ears relating to buwrenpeh festival.

2.4.3. Buwrenpeh (new rice festival)

Buwrenpeh is a festival of tasting the new rice of the year. In every harvest, a woman of standing, i.e., health, character and experienced mother from Ziingven clan would launch the plucking of the best ear of paddy for the village. Ithiim would perform a ritual for a good harvest. The villagers would cook and have a grand feast by singing harvesting songs and by enjoying meat and wine.

On the last day of harvesting, the Elders would lead the villagers with daos and spears to the jhum field with ithiim. On their way home, they carry a person on their shoulders irrespective of his rank. They would carry him in the midst of singers and drummers. The chariot carriers would be given wine and meat. The owners of the fields provided wine and meat for all. Thus they would make merriment throughout the night.
2.4.4. **Vaangcheh (closing festival of harvest season)**  
Traditionally the closing ceremony of the year’s harvesting season was performed by the person who harvested the last crop i.e. *niim* (Job’s tear). This person would take wine and meat with him for refreshment and his married sisters would also lend him a helping hand. On arriving home, the youths in the village would welcome the reapers by singing and beating *daars*, i.e., gongs. One among the reapers would be chosen and charioted up to his home. The chosen one would present the people a cow and a pig to be killed at night for the celebration.

2.4.5. **Rutha Kuur (new crops festival)**  
It was a celebration of the arrival of the new crops into the respective homes of the people. After the hard labour of a year in the field, the head of the family performed *rutha kuur*. He welcomed home all the *rutha* (souls) who were believed to have been left out in the field. The ritual was done by dining with wine and by eating *ithaebuw* i.e., sticky rice, meat, fish, crab, etc., for the occasion.

2.4.6. **Midim (new year festival)**  
Moyons in the pre-independence period celebrated New Year festival which was known as ‘*midim*’. Normally it was celebrated after the harvest. On that day, every family cleaned the surroundings and household hearth; all ashes and charcoals would be thrown away. *Chaanglu*, one of the village assistants would collect one charcoal from each house and pound it well in wooden mortar and pestle with water. They would put into it a banana stem and everyone would be asked to dip their fingers and make a mark on their forehead. Each family made fire out of the friction of stones and iron, and would light the household fire. In the evening, *ithiim* would use a traditional shield for protection and proceeded to the village gate. He would throw away the remaining pounded-charcoals towards western direction. This was a sign to chase away all demonic spirits from the village. After this the village gate was closed.
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The following day would be declared a taboo, and no one would be allowed to leave or enter the village. Until this occasion was celebrated no one was permitted to give or sell his harvested crops of the year. If the people violated such a taboo, it was a belief that the year’s harvested crops would be diminished.

2.4.7. Berkaap (archery festival)

Berkaap was a festival of archery competition and it was occasionally performed with the celebration of midim also. It was a competition in which every competitor was allowed to shoot his arrow until he hit the target. The village competitors would get ready with their bows and arrows and the entire village would witness the competition. A target was made of menchuwrr thing, a localized name of the wood and was hung up on a tree, and the target was inscribed a mark on which the competitors tried to hit. The person who hit on the target was regarded an expert in archery and he was honoured with one cock or one rice beer-pitcher for his success. In the evening, from one end of the village to other, the people would bang underneath the beds of every household, shouting, Taenruw! Taenruw! It meant Flee! Flee! It was a sign of chasing the evil spirits out of the village.

2.4.8. Zaaka-theeng (feast of charity)

Zaaka-theeng was yet another festival of the Moyons in the pre-independence period which was a feast of charity. It was normally performed by the wealthy men in the village. In those days, the wealth of the man was judged by the number of paddy and crops he gathered in the year, the amount of domestic animals and fowls he possessed, the amount of fire wood he gathered in his house and so on. Everything was known to the villagers. For instance, how many baskets of paddy, a man gathered was all known to the villagers because everyone was involved in the agricultural works. According to the understanding of those days, the wealthy man would arrange the Zaaka-theeng.
The requirements of Iham-fнуw are provided by the relatives and kinship of the deceased. The firewood for the feast is collected with the help of the villagers, especially the youth, in pounding paddy and fetching water.

When most people are free by March or April before the beginning of the cultivation season, Iham-fнуw is normally celebrated at a convenient time and place. This ceremony is marked by feast, dance, and festivities. The day is set aside for the feast, and the village community serves meat dishes such as roasted fish, beef, and mutton. The entire village Benefits from this abundance of wealth shared by the person who hosts the feast. In the recent past, some modifications have been made to the feast.

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killed. The animals for the feast are usually speared to death one by one in a very ceremonious manner. The man dressed in female clothes from the relative or kinsmen of the Ikam afhwu comes out of his house and leads a group of female dancers. It is the man who dresses in female attires who spears the animal to death after dancing around it three times. The meat of the mithun is cut on the very spot where it is killed and its dung is buried there. At night a fire is burnt at the spot where the mithun is killed to chase away the evil spirits. This is followed by a feast of eating, drinking and dancing for three days and three nights continuously.

The first day of ikam is called eenlum which means searching for bamboo. The killing of animal on the sharing and a part of the veranda is called Kungkung. The day on which the son-in-laws are led to dance is called Juwrsik. The ceremony of the last day is called Kuwrchiim. The ikam feast begins from the supper of eenlum and continues up to the supper of Kuwrchiim. Normally, the people gather at Ikam afhwu's house on the first day and the sister of Ikam afhwu offers them food with wine and meat. The Ikam afhwu acknowledges his sister's kindness by gifting the thigh of the mithun to her.

Moyons practiced a tradition of distributing meat to different people. For example, the Ikam afhwu gives the right thigh portion to his asarkung upa (eldest married sister), the left hind thigh to his asharkung naepang (younger married sister). If he has no younger sister he gives it to his nearest married sister. The back portion of the animal is presented to his arupa (best friend), the neck portion to his eldest brother or otherwise to his nearest eldest brother, the sathar or the mid-skeletal portion to his father-in-law, the shakna or the two ears to the eldest brother of his own mother (maternal uncle). The long skeletal portions of both the right and left sides are given to the eldest married sister of his clan, the shorter two portions to the youngest married sister of the clan.

The portion of aariir iduung (the soft intestines) is cut up in regular pieces and is distributed to all the villagers. A delicious traditional curry is prepared with the remaining portion of the meat along with other meats of other cows. It is served to all
the people gathered there for *ikam*. When the food is ready for meal, *shabarung* (heart), *shashung* (liver) and *sapi* (stomach) are sliced into two equal halves. One half each of these portion is kept near the *ishabur* (middle pillar of the house) for the next day. The other halves would be served to the elders. Usually the *Ikam afohw* dines together with the elders.

The following day the ceremony of *khurong ithak*, which means cleansing the house of the *Ikam afohw*, is observed. The village elders perform this ceremony to cleanse any ill-effects which might have befallen during the continuous celebration of the festival in the last three days. When this ceremony is over, the Village Elders take a *naenthu* (a kind of bamboo pot for cooking steamed rice), a *tong* (for drinking wine) and a *chukoh* (a pot for boiling water on which *naenthu* is put) to the open field on the western gate of the village and these three items are kept hanging between two posts.

There are eight stages of *Ikam* festival and anyone who performs all the stages of *Ikam* is given prestigious honour and glory here on earth and even after his death. It is recorded that only Ng. Wangting of Khungjuur village had so far performed the *Ikam* from the first stage to the eight stages called *aesii-teen*. Some of the persons who celebrated the feast of merit up to the fifth i.e., *Madeen* as recorded are Ng. Kamchung and Cr. Bething. They were known persons who received the prestigious award called *pharchuumpa*, a token of reward for good deed rendered to the royalty.

One who could attain up to sixth *Ikam (pham ituk)* was honoured by carving a 25ft long log of wood in the shape of traditional bench. The people danced around this art on the occasion and kept at his house for the rest of his life, down to the days of his son. There are certain differences in *Ikam* ceremonies. In the first stage called *eenjuw*, there is no erection of *sharing* while from the second stage onwards there is the special ceremony of *sharing* erection. The manner of celebration of the second and the third stages of *Ikam* are similar especially with the ceremony of erection of *sharing*. 
Table 2.8: Stages of Ikam Festival

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moyon</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Moyon</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abashennii</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Eenzuw</td>
<td>No Sharing erected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanniniii</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Marzuw</td>
<td>Sharing erected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanthumnni</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Habae</td>
<td>Same as above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanriini</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>Niing</td>
<td>Dancing and singing and distribution of buwtaang by son-in-laws to the crowd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arungaani</td>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>Madeen</td>
<td>Dancing and singing round any sharing erected in the village.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akurknii</td>
<td>Sixth</td>
<td>Phamtuk</td>
<td>Feast of seat of honour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashariini</td>
<td>Seventh</td>
<td>Rushong</td>
<td>After ikam the couple remained in the house for three days with shut doors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airithnni</td>
<td>Eighth</td>
<td>Aesii-teen</td>
<td>Counting the stars</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field study.

During the fourth stage i.e., niing lincham ikam, there is the special dance of the in-laws of the Ikam aghuw. The imah (the brother-in-laws of the host of ikam) carry a basketful of buwtaang (the mixture of rice and meat), and they lead the village dance in procession. In the midst of the dance, the imahs throw up lumps of buwtaang to the crowd and it is customary that the crowd catches the buwtaang with the help of their clothes. One who performs Ikam up to the fourth stage is honoured during his lifetime. He is also honoured at his death by hoisting flag during his funeral procession. On the occasion of his baar ynthi, a big stone called rutha is erected in his memory.

During the fifth stage called madeen, the villagers go round the village dancing and singing. They dance and sing round any sharing found erected in anybody’s yard. On such an occasion the young maidens put a bunch of flowers or garlands in their hair. Shamcher (headgear) is also worn by them. It is also a practice on such a madeen ikam in which a kind of big umbrella called pharchuumpa is carried in front of a procession. The people would go round the village singing and dancing which symbolizes a token of reward to the royalty of the ikam aghuw for rendering a good deed. During the sixth stage, i.e., phamtuk, a big log of thomdang (a particular name of a local tree) is kept hanging between phaenthang and wall of the house as a symbol of prestigious seat of honour as enacted in the phamtuk ikam. The surviving
sons of the man are allowed to use his *pham* after his death. However, his grandsons are not allowed to enjoy it. The seventh stage of *Iksam* is called *rushongshangka*.

After the *ikam* is over, the *ikam afhuw* and his wife remain in the house for three days with the doors shut. The couple lives for these three days like *fiwraang* (birds) doing *fiwraangkhum* (birds in hatching position). During these days no birds are allowed to fly over the house. So it is a tradition to have the in-laws to take care of the house so that no bird flies over the house. *Aesii-teen* is the eight stage of *Iksam*. The word "*aesii-teen*" refers to counting the stars. When *aesii-teen* is performed, people pile up pebble stones from the river as high as a mound to commemorate such an event.

### 2.5. TRADITIONAL LIFE

#### 2.5.1. Food and Drink

Food and drink plays an important part in the social life of the Moyons. They are the means whereby sharing is practiced and friendships are maintained among the communities. Rice is the principal food of the people. *Naenthu buw* (steamed rice) and *ithae buw* (sticky rice) are some famous dishes. Vegetables like pumpkin, cucumber, gourds, beans, chillies, Job’s tears, sweet potato, varieties of tubers, sesame, etc., are cultivated and consumed. Edible wild leaves and fruits also form most of their food-stuff.

People consume rice beer, which is obtained from fermented rice. Roasted meat of domestic or wild animals and dried fish are common. Bamboo-shoot, wild tea leaves form part of the diet. Certain habits like chewing or smoking of tobacco in pipes were also practiced in the past. The different seasons of the year viz., winter, spring, autumn and summer determine the food habits of the people, for they greatly depend on the natural grown plants for their food. The people drink indigenous
soup with different types of vegetables such as pumpkin leaves, passion leaves, raw papayas, cabbage, mustard leaves, beans, banana leaves, etc.

Moyons enjoy champhuk (boiled vegetables) and eat various natural grown plants and thingshw (chutney) leaves. Some of the local names of such varieties are as follows: shaven, shaapa, kiriim, sheershah, waktumber, pakep, patin, parchhip, batiim, bashuwmawrow, rikniing, etc. Some of the local delicacies are juungchah (perkia roxburghii), burosthw (king chilli), ngathuw (fermented fish), bayaang ngathuw (fermented beans), aethuw (a kind of onion leaves), shopum (fermented bamboo shoots), entuw (fresh bamboo shoots), nachang (banana stems), etc.

2.5.2. Attires

The attires are of different colours and designs and they are related to Moyon history and culture. They are all designed and woven by women from time immemorial. In ancient days, they prepared the yarn from certain plants and cotton they grew themselves. It took them time but they managed to prepare and weave for their needs. The traditional shawls worn by both men and women are called peen. The men folk usually wore headgear and wrapped up with white cloth. The following Table 2.9 illustrates the attires for men:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Kuurkam peen</th>
<th>6.</th>
<th>Lashen peen</th>
<th>11.</th>
<th>Lapoh peen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Langtom peen</td>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Lukhaang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Laangam peen</td>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Langphae peen</td>
<td>13.</td>
<td>White head turban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Vangjam peen</td>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Ithor peen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Laarchang peen</td>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Duupziih peen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Lathing peen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.9: Attires for Men**

Source: Field study.

1) **Kuurkam Peen**: Kuurkam peen depicts the memory of the famous and extraordinary "iruwng" or king of the Moyons named "Kuurkam". The shawl is of four colours, viz., black, red, green and white each symbolizing their history,
their hopes and aspirations and also the extraordinary gifts and qualities of their king. It is a multi-coloured shawl signifying the stages of Moyon civilization.

2) **Laangam Peen:** Laangam was a legendary hero of the Moyons who was believed to have gone round the world. It was also a belief that he made an attempt to reach heaven by a ladder using his magical powers. But before he could reach his target, the ladder broke at its foot as it was eaten by white ants which, it is said, he forgot to appease earlier. It took him years to come home as he is said to have fallen on the other end of the world. By the time Laangam reached home, his first daughter who was born in his absence grew up to a marriageable age. This whole episode is called “Laangam thang tah” and to commemorate this, the shawl is woven. It is black and blue stripes with ‘shabaku reh’ (bags of paddy). After harvest people take home their crops in shabaku (a basket made of cane and bamboo; cloth bag using white shawl). The clothes are usually woven and are called Langphae peen or shawl. The shabaku represents the cultural life as well as the wealth of the people who performed feast of merit called “ikam” because one could do so only when one had more than sufficient. The shawl is used by both males and females.

3) **Vangjam peen:** Vangjam peen is a combination of black and red colours. Vangjam was the bosom friend of king Kuurkam. The colours signify the sorrow and the danger due to the treacherous death of their king whom they esteemed so much in the person of Nguwruw Kuurkam. Red and black striped shawl with sabaku reh or designs is named after the bosom friend arupa of king Kuurkam mentioned above. After the killing of king Kuurkam by his enemy, Vangjam too faced danger. The shawl is meant for both men and women.

4) **Laarchang peen:** This is a special shawl for courageous noble hearted and generous wealthy people as the term indicates. It is manifested in the performance of feast of merit “ikam” having eight stages. Laarchang peen (shawl) is being woven with designs which are of different shapes. The prominent ones are ‘sharings’ and the animal, heads and others. It is originally meant for those special people mentioned above.
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There are shawls commonly used and most of them are white except two which are woven from a plant called “lathing” and another one brownish in color. These are lathing, lashen, langtom, langphae, ithor, duupziih, lapoh, etc. Langphae peen which consists of off-white and reddish colours made from the barks of particular trees and used by men for the night. Men in the past wore white head turban.

Table 2.10 illustrates the attires of women. Women in the past wore changkak tied around their waist and wore also lummuh peen suwm around their shoulder. Even today during the festivals they wear the full set of traditional attires. For instance during the ikam festival the women wear sarong which is also called inih made of different colours like red, green, black, yellow, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Attire</th>
<th></th>
<th>Attire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Changkak</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Kungkung inih</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lummuwpeensuwm</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Kuurki inih</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lungven</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Lamtaang inih</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lukhaang</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Kungbeng inih</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lukhum</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Duupziih inih</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Khungarnuw</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Riikii inih</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Inih</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Shungnung inih</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tudeen inih</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Thiina vifuw inih</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Shamjeer inih</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Pikhuwng inih</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Khungarnuw inih</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Poih ynghir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Aarshuumpa inih</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Laengki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Tongtingpa inih</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field study.

The following is a brief explanation of sarong or inih (women’s wear) which consists of different colours, designs and significance. **Tudeen inih** is a sarong named after a capable and a beautiful lady named “Tudeen”. The background of the sarong is usually red with tingpi design at the two ends. It is used on special occasions by aged women. Any background of green, black, blue is also used. **Khungarnuw inih** is a special sarong having varieties of designs depicting
natural gifts and productions. It is worn during feast of merit called "ikam" by dancers.

Aarshuumpa inih (praying mantis): There is a Moyon folk tale about a woman named Lungnuw who married a lazy squirrel. She worked very hard but her husband harassed her often. Many animals promised to avenge her but none could do it. It was finally Aarshuumpa that came to her rescue. In gratitude, Lungnuw gave it two shawls which were peendum and peenlang. Once a designer saw the insect, she observed it carefully, wove it and called it "aarshuumpa inih".

Tongtingpa inih: The Moyons believe that spiders keep the house firm with their cobwebs. They further believe that the spider has strong and good teeth. So whenever a milk took falls, he/she addresses the tongtingpa (spider), “Spider, let’s exchange your good and healthy tooth with my bad one”. So saying the tooth is thrown up to the roof of the house. The importance and significance of this insect in the life of the Moyons is depicted in this cobweb like designed sarong called tongtingpa inih.

Besides these, there are sarongs mainly for young women. They are kungkung inih, kuurki inih, lamtaang inih, kungbeng inih (representing an indoor game), duupziih inih, riikii inih, shungnung inih, thiina vifuw inih, ruwchang inih, etc. There are also another type which are shorter and smaller in length and size which the people call inih tak literally meaning real sarong. They are worn at the waist covering the lower portion of the body up to the calf while the upper portion is covered by "peensuwm inih" starting at the chest up to the knee. They are changkak, laengki, ynghir, etc.

Lukhum: It is a small and short cloth for covering the women’s heads. It is worn by all elderly women but with a difference in wearing it between the married and unmarried ladies. There are two colours viz., white and orange. There are stripes of two in green colour at both edges (length) and other stripes in green at the other two ends (breadth).

2.5.3. Ornaments

During festivals, Moyons adorned themselves with different types of ornaments. While performing the dance they would embellish themselves with
beautiful ornaments and colourful dresses. Women decorated themselves with ornaments made of shells and animal bones. Men dressed up with headgear of tail feathers of hornbill which signified the promise made between their forefathers and the birds when they came out from the cave. Some of the ornaments of the Moyons are listed in Table 2.11:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Table 2.11: Ornaments</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><em>Naathuur</em> (earrings): Both men and women have their respective earrings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><em>Sanak</em> (necklaces): <em>Ruwhi, laangam ruwhi, kebuwr, lushen, ruka, hor, laarchang sanak</em> such as <em>kuurkam, laangam, vangjam, tudeen and riinglah</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td><em>Baen leh tuk</em> (armlets): <em>haar and korenccho</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td><em>Kikchii</em> (bangles): <em>paentha and kuursang</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td><em>Khi leh tuk</em> (anklets): <em>khi kae</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field study.

*Lukhumpaar /Shamcher* (headgear): Both men and women use headgears ‘*lukhumpaar*’ while performing traditional dances and songs. They are made of bamboo sticks, feathers of hornbill, peacocks, fowls, sea shells, thread, etc. In the past, hornbill feathers were used. However, in due course, due to the environmental changes, the hornbills migrated to other places. So in its place, feathers mainly of the hens and the cocks are used.

*Naathuur* (earrings): *Nae-naa-ivuwh* (ear boring) ritual was performed for every child in the family. *Naathuur* was the usual ornament for both men and women. It was made of lead and was always worn by men and women in the past.

*Sanak* (necklaces): There are two types of *sanak*, viz., *ruwhi* with a usual round and the other oblong shaped beads which is called *Laangam ruwhi*. *Ruwhi* is a necklace of round cornelian stone of light brown colour. It has unequal sizes. The neck portion is smaller followed by bigger beads and the centre is the biggest bead called *abarae* (navel). It serves as a pendant of the necklace. A woman is considered as the centre of the family which is substantiated by a folk-tale on “*Shajaangmuw*”. This lady was given in marriage to someone unknown to her without her knowledge and consented.
by her brother. The folktale says that her future mother-in-law on seeing her plight, asked her in singing of her status of life to which she replied in singing that while her mother was alive she was considered buungsii barae i.e., ruthii barae (navel). The folk song goes like this: "Juwwuw aring raen be e, buungsii barae tah nge." It means when her mother was alive, she was the centre of attraction and affection.

Laangam ruwthii is also a cornelian necklace but the beads are longish in shape. Like the ruwthii mentioned above, it has different sizes of beads, small, bigger and biggest. It has the pendant which is the biggest at the centre. It is also known as abarae. It is also worn by women throughout their life. There is yet another folk tale “Laangam Thangtah” how this necklace is so named Laangam ruwthii. According to the legend, when Laangam the great warrior failed to reach heaven due to the breaking of his magical ladder, he was wandering around the world and was sustained by the beads given by an old wise lady as food. On reaching home while answering to nature’s call, he washed the beads out of the waste. He found them to have become oblong in shape. They were made into a necklace which came to be known as Laangam ruwthii. These necklaces are worn mainly by women.

Kebuwr is a big sea shell and is worn only at the time of dancing specially during festivals by men and women. A full set of buungsii keplae or ornaments is worn by a man who has to spear the animal tied to a ‘Y’ shaped wooden post called ‘sharing’ while performing ikam festival. It is worn across the body from the neck.

Lushen is a red bead necklace worn along with other necklaces. Ruka is a long necklace worn across the body from the neck and was made of elephant tusks in the past and is used by both men and women dancers. It is a show of power and strength. Hor is made out of sea shells. It is used as a string for male dancers’ basket.

Laarchang shanak are necklaces resembling Kuurkam, Laangam and Vangjam shawls. They remind the greatness, power and bravery of the Moyon legendary personalities. The famous King Nguwruw Kuurkam Moyon reigned in Khungjuur Village. Laangam was an adventurous Moyon who walked across the world.
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Nungchim Vangjam Moyon was the bosom friend ‘arupa’ of King Ng. Kuurkam Moyon. Tudeen shanak is a necklace in memory of the most beautiful Moyon lady called Tudeen. It is mainly used by women on special festivals. It is made of different beads. Riinglah sanak are short necklaces worn along with the long ones.

**Baen Leh Tuk (armlets):** Haar and korencho are the main armlets used by both men and women dancers. Haar is worn at the arm. It is made of lead by the people themselves with the help of a small bamboo by heating it. While it is being prepared or heated, women particularly who are in their periodical menstruation and pregnancy are prohibited as their presence would disrupt the process. Korencho is made out of brass. The two ends are called ‘aha’ which means ‘teeth’ and is worn at the arm next to haar.

**Kikchii (bangles):** Paenthala which is made of brass is worn at the wrist as a bangle. It is worn by the women daily as well as during the festivals. Kuursang is a bangle for men worn only during the dance. It is made of brass. It is thicker and heavier than paenthala.

**Khi Leh Tuk (anklets):** Khi leh tuk are decorative pieces for feet while dancing. There are pieces of decorative items used by both men and women dancers tied at the arms, wrists and ankles. They are usually made of colourful threads.

### 2.5.4. Dormitory System

The present study finds that the traditional practice of irer ae riinhii was a dormitory system only for the boys. The girls remained in their own houses. Once the boys reached the age of puberty, they would be sleeping in groups at a residence.

Ng. Riimtha says, “By evening after the dinner, the boys would go to their irer ae riinhii. There, they learnt to interact and adjust themselves to grow in community life. They would share their experiences and through fraternal relationship, they learnt to cultivate community feeling and belongingness. Coming together enabled them to
develop skills in singing, dancing, music, sports and games. The dormitory system was in a way a training place where they were formed with practical life skills."

Shangkham (1995:449) confirms, "In the past, the Moyons had a dormitory system, but not separate house was constructed for such purposes. Though freedom was given to the youngsters, hardly any immoral activity occurred before proper marriage."

2.5.5. Folk Tales

One of the ways by which the customs and social values of the people are transmitted from one generation to the next is through folk tales. They are not simply tales but they convey important messages. Moyon folktales give much information about the history of their ancestors. They contain information about their social setting, social practices and beliefs of their ancient times. The tribe has treasures of folktales which tell us of their extraordinary qualities of strength, courage and wisdom which is expressed in the Moyon code of conduct.

2.5.6. Folk Literature

In his collection of *Moyon Folk Literature*, Kosha (2009:1) gives picture of social, as well as religious norms and beliefs of the ancient Moyons. It is a collection of songs and rhymes, some of which are lullabies, riddles, proverbs and dictums and beliefs of manyElders and knowledgeable persons. For instance, at night when a mother refines cotton with a bow, she sings this song so that the child does not cry.

**In Moyon**

_Peshae peshae phikphik, Iriir hangsuwh ninge. Peshae peshae phikphik, Chingkuwng hanghang kate. Peshae peshae phikphik._

**English Translation**

_O refining bow, twang twang. I go to see the poultry shed. O refining bow, twang twang, I go to take the drum. O refining bow, twang twang._
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The Moyon folk literature reveals some of the traditional beliefs of the people such as taasham. It is assumed that when someone dies, the stretcher used to carry the dead body should be destroyed soon after the burial. If this is not done, it is thought, that the dead with the stretcher would roam about at night and can enter every house in search of men. Consequently, somebody might again die in the village. In this way the Moyon folk literature depicts the beliefs of the people and the expectations of their social behaviour and social life and action.

2.5.7. Folk Songs

Folk songs are a rich resource for understanding Moyon culture. They reflect their social life and their social organization. They also depict their deep attachment to the land and their dependence on the natural resources for their sustenance of life. All the events of their day to day life are depicted in the form of folksongs.

No celebration in the ancient days was held without music and folksongs. Emotional expressions are communicated through poetic songs. For instances, deaths were mourned through funeral songs, love songs were composed for lovers and songs attributed to the beauty of nature were also popular in olden days. Grandparents through their songs blessed their grandchildren. Social gatherings at nights were marked with folksongs.

In his preface, Kosha (2010) has mentioned twenty seven groups of Bujuur kastam la (Moyon folk songs) which are sung on different occasions and festivals. This information is given in Table 2.12 below:
Table 2.12: Folk Songs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Folk Songs</th>
<th>Different Occasions and Festivals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Een La</td>
<td>Sung during the inauguration of a new house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Een Vernii La</td>
<td>Sung at Jaaka itheeng festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Eentu Kuurchiim La</td>
<td>Sung at an agricultural function, Shaangkeng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Imah La</td>
<td>Sung at Ikam festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Jukam Kuurchiim La</td>
<td>Sung in the night of the last day of Ikam festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Kaethok La</td>
<td>Lovers Love songs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Khomae La</td>
<td>Sung when the forest was cleared for jhum cultivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Khuwngchar Deengnii La</td>
<td>Sung at the release of a new drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Khuwng La</td>
<td>It had a theme and could be sung on any occasions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Khuwntik La</td>
<td>Seed-sowing song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Kungkung Kuurchiim La</td>
<td>Song of Ikam festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Laamru La</td>
<td>Song when Kungkung dancers danced around Y-shaped erections called sharing erections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Laangam La</td>
<td>Song which depicted the story of a legendary Moyon hero called Laangam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Lacheeler</td>
<td>Sung for a rest when a song ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Latee</td>
<td>Song of the Ikam festivals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Men La</td>
<td>Song of the bride price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Naepang Bathaenii La</td>
<td>Lullaby song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Phaetha La</td>
<td>Song of bravery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Pham tuknii La</td>
<td>Sung after the 5th stages of Ikam festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Phamshah La</td>
<td>Sung during the installation of a village authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Sha La</td>
<td>Sung when a big jungle animal is killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Shaang Bashumnnii La</td>
<td>Ikam song sung for a good harvest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Shashee shanii La</td>
<td>Ikam festival song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Thifhuwjaang La</td>
<td>Song of the Ikam/Jukam festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Torae Yndomnnii La</td>
<td>Song of the harvest festival of niim, Job’s tears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Tuwr Reengnii La</td>
<td>Lovers’ love songs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Vaangcheh La</td>
<td>Song of the harvesting festival</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field study.

2.5.8. Folk Dances

The varieties of folk dances found in the tribe pertain to various events and festivals. It is noticed that the people perform folk dances with traditional attires by
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forming separate rows of males and females accompanied by *Kongkaepa* (singers and drummers).

The most popular dance is that which depicts their origin from the cave. In his work, Philip Roel Moyon (2006: 29) mentions different types of dances which are performed during *ikam* feast and other occasions. On every festival, people hold their hands with each other and stand in two circular lines and perform the folk dance to the rhythmic beat of drums. Every one present for the festival comes out to dance spontaneously irrespective of gender and age.

![Image of Folk Dance](image)

**Table 2.13: Folk Dances**

|------------------|------------------|
| 2. *Sika engiir chak-chak laam* | 7. *Imah or Ithur laam (Jaaka laam style)*
| 4. *Laamlu laam* | 9. *Jaaka laam- performed during the Jaaka Lthiing* |
| 5. *Khavaetang laam* | 10. *Trektraang dance-ritual dance during the house dedication* |

*Source: Field study.*

In the past the dancing group would move around the village and danced wherever the *sharings* were erected by those who had performed *Ikam* festival in the previous years. All the villagers, particularly the youth used to stay all night in the house of the *Ikam afhaw* used to dance backward and forward. Moyons in the pre-independence period also performed sword dance and war dance by holding shields and spears. It would be stimulated with war songs.
2.5.9. Music and Instruments

R. Angnong in his writing on the Origin, migration and settlement of the Moyons (1986:30-31) mentions the different notes of Moyon music and musical instruments which are used in different dances and these are given below:

1. Musical rhythmic note of jhum cultivation i.e. preparation of crop field.
2. Crop seedling note of music.
3. Note of traverse along the hill ranges.
4. Musical note of dawning of the day.
5. Warning song at the approach of enemy attack.
6. Victorious song at return of a successful campaign.
7. Luxurious and decorative songs.

Musical instruments which used by Moyons in different dances are drum (mridhangha), khung (twirl), lusheem (bamboo-gourd flute), shananta, pena, pashim, puba, jurping, etc. Other traditional instruments which are made from natural objects are taamfluv (small bamboo flute), khuwng (drum), daar (gong), pengkun (trumpet) and sharakii (mithun horns).

2.5.10. Games and Sports

Wrestling was one of the common games played in the Moyon villages. The champion of the wrestling was considered brave and he was regarded with high status. Other indigenous games of the Moyons are archery, sareer-yngkhu (javelin throw), tarek-taraang ikhunng (high jump), tosaerung (stone throw), etc. Archery competition was the main event of the ber-ikap festival. Traditionally it was performed during the festival of Midim. Sareer-yngkhu is similar to that of javelin throw. The only difference is that in sareer-yngkhu, pestles are used while spears are used in javelin throw. The indigenous game of tarek-taraang ikhunng was performed on the occasion of any house inauguration. This game is similar to that of bamboo dance. The purpose of playing such a tarek-taraang ikhunng was to ward off the evil
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spirits from the newly built house. There is yet another traditional indoor game called tosaêrung. It is played with five small stones and normally children enjoy such a game. They also enjoy the game of racing and football. In the past, boys used the urinary bladder of a pig or a cow as a ball for football matches.

Yet another interesting indigenous game is that of hunting the mithun head. The head of the mithun is tied at the top of a post which is normally a bamboo. The bamboo post would be greased with the oil of the pig and the men folk especially the youth exhibit their best strength and skill to climb and get the mithun head. The one who succeeds to climb the top of the bamboo post, in spite of the grease which is very slippery, wins the prize.

2.5.11. Social Taboos

An important feature of the Moyons in the pre-independence period is their practice of social taboos. A taboo could be defined as “a prohibition”, which, if violated, would lead to an automatic supernatural penalty. Through taboos the society restricted any act that violated the community norm which ultimately brought the wrath of the supernatural. A taboo should not be seen, heard, smelled or tasted. It was a certainty that when any person violated a prohibition he breached a taboo and he brought upon himself the wrath of the gods or the spirits.

In his work, Kosha (2009:39, 42) underlines that it was a taboo for the Moyons to shed blood at night because an evil spirit would see it and it would suck it causing death of the person. Again, in a funeral procession, the family of the dead person threw coins on the way between the house and the graveyard. It was a taboo for anyone from the family of the dead person to collect the money. If collected by the family, some evil might happen to them. Others could collect it. The thought behind throwing coins was that the departed soul would require money on the journey to the
land of the departed souls. The practice of social taboos guided the social life of the Moyons in the past.

### 2.6. Economic Life

The economic life of the Moyons in the past was centred on agriculture and domestication of livestock. Agriculture was the main occupation of the Moyons and their entire way of living was oriented on economic activities of production for consumption of household needs. Cultivation of paddy in jhum field was their main occupation. Crops like rice, maize, potato, beans, yam, pumpkin, gourd, Job’s tears, millet and vegetables were grown by them. Cotton fields were cultivated in the olden days for its textile.

![2.32: Job's tears](image)

Besides, the people were engaged in rearing livestock and domestic animals. Forest products also contributed to the people’s livelihood like making baskets and mats from cane and bamboo. Since agriculture was the main source of livelihood for the Moyons, land for the Moyons was considered equivalent was capital (Singh, 1998: 176). For them, land is their stomach because they believe that it was the land that provided their basic human sustenance of their growth and development.

### 2.6.1. Concept of Land

#### 2.6.1.1. Land Relationships

Information from the Moyon folklore conveys that when their fore parents Tuva and Khiva established a village, there was peace and harmony and there was no bad relationship with others. The concept of land (BAP, 2008:5) since time immemorial is that the land on which Moyons settled is the land which the almighty has given them. Their inhabited lands belong to them and they take care of it and hand on from generation to generation. As per their customary laws, whenever there is any land dispute, the judgment of the people reigns supreme. The families own land in various parts of the terrain within the boundaries of the Moyon land.
2.6.1.2. Collective Ownership

The land ownership system of the Moyons can be classified into three categories.

Collective Land: The village land is collectively owned by the community. It includes those areas which are for cultivation - forest land, cattle grazing land, play ground, public entertainment place, etc. The village authorities take care of these lands and some are used for the welfare of the village. This common land is neither inheritable nor transferable. It cannot be sold to other villages or tribes. The oldest form of rural property is that of collective ownership.

Clan Land: The clan land belongs to a particular clan and is passed on from one generation to the next. Each clan has different lineages and the land belongs to the different lineages within the clan itself. The jhum fields which belong to different clans or lineages are called ruwniing or ruwkang. The clan land is the land of their ancestors and it belongs to their descendants. It has significance among the Moyons because the clan always extends a helping hand to the needy clan members. They have the culture of sharing and providing a portion of it to any of their members when they are in desperate need of land to survive.

Individual Land: Moyons can sell or purchase the land to or from fellow villagers but not outsiders. Though ruwniing or ruwkang belongs to an individual, he cannot sell it without consulting his family lineage or his clansmen. The individual ownership might have derived from joint ownership or common holdings by a gradual process of separation (Olivinho, 1996:272). The individual land is called eenmin ruwniing (homestead) which every Moyon owns in his village. One may settle at a site of one’s choice in a village provided that is also agreed to by the village authority. One has to demarcate the plot with one’s adjacent neighbour(s). One also enjoys the liberty to shift one’s house to another site in the village. However, one cannot sell the plot which one has left. He cannot reserve a homestead at a place of his choice without prior approval by the village elders.
Collective Ownership: Collective ownership of the land is vested in the hands of the village authority. The lands in plain areas which are registered by the government follow the norms of the government established land laws. Every man who inherits the jhum field or properties of his ancestors enjoys it without interference from anyone. They enjoy the liberty to migrate from one village to another village. They can purchase land from other neighbouring tribes and establish a new village. Any outsider may settle in a village subject to the approval of the village authority through the customary laws of offering meat and rice beer. The following interview demonstrates such a practice of an outsider becoming part of the community through the customary laws.

Interview 2.15

Name of the Informant: Ch. Tombi
Age: 75 years
Sex: Male
Village: Nungthar
Date: 20 June 2013

Ch. Tombi says, I was originally a Meitei from Nambol Oinam, Bishnupur district. My name was Mutum Tombi Meitei. While I was serving in the Indian Army in 1969 at Pallel I married Ng. Totha of Nungthar. Since then, I decided to become a Moyon by adopting a Moyon lineage through a public declaration. The then Chief of Nungthar was late Ch. Moshuwm who embraced me as his brother by giving me his lineage, Chinir. From then on, I changed my name from Mutum Tombi Meitei to Ch. Tombi Moyon. I declared my naturalization into Moyon tribe by slaughtering a mithun and fed the elders and the villagers. The village authorities gave me the homestead and I am now blessed with three sons and a daughter.” He reiterates, “Moyons have honoured me by making me the Church Chowkidar (care taker), then a deacon, a treasurer and then I became a Chaanglu (village assistant), and gradually became Senapati (assistant Chief) and Iruung (Chief).” Yet another interview of naturalization reveals that an outsider can settle in a Moyon village through the approval of the village authority.
Interview 2.16

Name of the Informant: Ch. Lohrii
Age: 80 years
Sex: Male
Village: Nungthar
Date: 25 June 2013

Ch. Lohrii who is presently the Assistant Chief of the Nungthar village hails from the Mao tribe of Kalinamei village. In 1959, he was working at Liwachangning School and after a year, married a Moyon woman in the person of Ng. Nipha of Nungthar village. The then Chief of the village was Ch. Moshuwm who gave him his lineage Chinir.

So, P. Lohrii became Ch. Lohrii. He states, “I declared my Moyon identity as Ch. Lohrii by killing a mithun and by feeding the village authorities and the village people. Since then, I have been given a place of importance in the village council. I was given the post of Mantri (village cabinet councillor), then luklah (village cabinet councillor) and today I am Senapati (assistant Chief).”

2.6.1.3. Land Boundary

Land boundary from time immemorial is made through indigenous ways of measurement in the form of ranges, hills, streams, bamboos, roads, etc. The people understand and accept such traditional ways of boundary measurements and pass on orally from the father to the sons or from the elders to the younger ones or in the form of folk tales and folk songs from generation to generation. Demarcation is also done through the erection of stone.

2.6.1.4. Khuwder (reserved area)

For the Moyon community, the area which is covered by about one kilometre radius (measurement of land from one end to another end especially in terms of a circle) from the village comes under “village reserved area”. A village reserved area is owned commonly by the village. No portion of it belongs to an individual or clan.
Natural resources found in this area are used as agreed upon by the villagers for the village development. No individual or group is allowed to use these resources for their own purposes except for the common good.

2.6.1.5. Khuwkheh Na'ng Khuwkheh Ting Itaen (migration)

It is noticed that a man may migrate from one village to another village but he is not permitted to sell his immovable properties to the outsiders. Before he migrates to another village, his properties are to be left in the hands of his relatives or clansmen in the village. In case of no kin in the village, it has to be given to the village authority. A migrant may come back and resettle in his former village. He may also reclaim the immovable properties which he has left with the village authority. Before a person migrates to another village, he observes inuw khamnii (clearing one’s debts and dues) during which he clears his debts and dues in the village. If he neglects to observe inuw khamnii even if he migrates to another village, his former village has the right to sell off or take away his immovable properties. When a man migrates to a new village, it is a customary law for him to offer a subscription by killing his livestock and perform a dinner party called chongthang. A Moyon even in the past was not allowed to say “refugee” to another Moyon. Even an oral expression of such a word was punishable by customary law.

2.6.2. Means of Livelihood

2.6.2.1. Village Economy

The term “village economy” concerns the arrangement for the satisfaction of the various needs of its people. It includes the securing and service of food and drink, shelter, clothing, leisure, recreation and miscellaneous wants. Thus, the “village economy” is interpreted as a broad category of “production-consumption”. Among the Moyons, the village council of elders, from time immemorial, manages its economy based on agriculture.

The ownership of the village lands of the tribe is collectively vested in the community through the village authorities who are also known as Village elders. It is
the responsibility of the village elders to decide the jhum fields for the cultivation. They also take care of the ecology of the land by observing its rotation. In the past, the people obtained food from their land and reared domestic animals and fowls. The forest produced sufficient food and other basic requirements of the villages. From it, the people obtained water, fruits, wood, bamboos, canes for basketries and handicrafts, woods to construct houses, thatches for their house roofs, forest animals for their consumption, vegetables and jungle herbs, herbal medicines, etc.

2.6.2.2. Jhum (shifting) Cultivation

It is recognised that jhum (shifting) cultivation is an age-old method of agriculture practiced by the Moyons in pre-independence period. The agricultural activities of the jhum system are carried out through the year round. The spot is identified and agreed by the villagers through the village authorities. The location of a good spot for field would be done through the omen of an egg by khurfhuw. He would predict whether the location was good or not and whether the felled trees would be burnt. The deforestation and jhum burning of the terrain begin from mid-March till mid-April and seed-sowing follows in April. Left over of the trees which are not burnt properly will be burnt again and some trees will be kept as a support for the people to work since the field is very steep.

The people make steps along the steep land called ruchang ikhang so that they can work conveniently. It also serves as a protection for planted crops not to be washed away by the monsoon rain. They make temporary footpaths of about two feet by using the felled trees arranged in lines on both sides. It is a traditional way of making the road in a uniform way so that people can walk properly without falling due to the steepness of the jhum fields. There is also a traditional style of making a way for fetching water. People put rii ikhang, trees kept as a demarcation if there is no natural stream between one fields to another. They also arrange in line the wood as a boundary for the cultivation which is called nuumrii ikhang. If there is a dispute between any two persons on demarcation, then it is settled at the village court.
Moyons construct a small hut called *thaam* in the field. It serves as a shelter for them to rest or to stay during the time of seed sowing, weeding, harvest, etc. Seeds like rice, millet, and Job’s tears are sown in the burnt land and while the crop is growing it is weeded once or twice. The millet is harvested in July, the paddy in November and the Job’s tears in the following months. Chillies, pumpkins and cotton are also grown in the fields. The harvested crops are then kept in a barn at the field. It is cyclic and the site is shifted every year.

### 2.6.2.3. Method of Harvesting

Moyons in the pre-independence period agreed together as to which field they would harvest first and fix the harvest days for various people. If the *jhum* land was small, two or three fields would be joined together for the harvest, otherwise they would wait for their own turn.

The following interview gives a clearer explanation of the traditional method of harvest.

**Interview 2.17**

Name of the Informant: N. Moniren

Age: 58 years

Sex: Male

Place: Khurfluwdaam

Date: 7 July 2014

N. Moniren declares, “I have the experience of *jhum* cultivation and its method of harvesting as I was a *jhum* field cultivator for many years at Matung village before I settled here at Khurfluwdaam. It was a practice from ancient days that the same woman who led the seed sowing would inaugurate the harvest. The married woman from the *Shimpaw* clan mostly from the *Ngawruew* lineage was given the privilege of leading the seed sowing and again, she was chosen to be the first to pluck the ripe crop. She would inaugurate the harvest by cutting the first bundle of corns. This privileged woman also had the obligation to offer wine and smoked fish to
the village elders. The smoked fish was normally from the Hill Rivers and it would be put in the form of a garland. There would be at least seven to ten fish in every garland and although the number of garlands was not fixed, there would be sufficient fish for it was a symbol of starting the feast of harvest. Only after that the harvest would begin."

The place of threshing was called ruwvwu. The people would level the steep land 15 x 10 feet. When the harvested paddy could not be brought home on the same day due to far distance, they constructed a small hut on the way to keep the paddy temporarily which was called shangthaam. From shangthaam, they would bring the paddy to their homes and store in a traditional granary called itom. Tasting the first new rice is called buwrenpeh. The whole village would feast over the celebration of the new crops with rice, meat, fish and rice beer for a day. If the family did not have sufficient paddy to eat, then they would borrow, and return it when they got a good harvest in the future. The informant says, "There was no system of selling or buying in the past among the community. Charity and concern for one another reigned supreme."

2.6.2.4. Fishing

Fishing was one of the food gathering activities of the Moyons. A fishing trip was organized for the whole village once or twice annually. The people made fishing nets by blending bamboo and cane. A toxic plant called jearii was used for catching the river fish. In the hill villages the river and its tributaries were divided along its length into sections called chii. Each chii and its catchment area were owned by a particular person.

The understanding of the people was that a rivulet which gushed down into rivers belonged to the owner of chii through which it flowed. Setting up of a fish trap near the confluence of chii and rivulet was known as ngsuwvm inaam. A fish trap built across a river was called chapen. It was forbidden to set up ngsuwvm or chapen at someone's chii without the knowledge of its owner.
2.6.2.5. Hunting

An important activity was the practice of hunting and chaang rawpher (trap setting) among the Moyons. Bows, arrows and spears were commonly used in hunting. The use of poisoned arrows was practised in the olden days. Hunters ventured into the jungle with dogs in two groups. One group would ambush with dogs while the other would drive the hunted animal towards the intended direction. If a wild animal was killed, they would shout atairii (victory cry) as they returned home. They would bring home the sharungbep and the shyong for the Village Elders. The killer would present the buttock portion to his dearest friend. The two hind legs would be presented to his sisters, neck portion to the eldest member of his family group and the ear portion with some flesh to his maternal uncle.

If a wild bear or deer was killed, a lump of flesh was set aside for elders of his family group. This meat was known as shakhi-sha. All the elders would have a grand meat-feast. Another practice is that while hunting, if a larger animal like tiger, bear, wild boar, etc., was killed, the hunters, at the village gate, should shout a victory cry as ti-hi-hi aha kui and for small animal like deer the victory cry was as ti-hi-hi. One could know whether larger or smaller wild animal was hunted from the victory cries. A shout of victory cry without killing wild animal was considered as sharam athing (wishing ill-luck for future hunting). The culprit would be punished according to custom.

In a hunting trip, an animal injured by one hunter was shot down by another hunter was known as shakning iri. The hunted wild animal belonged to the former and the latter would receive his due share of meat known as shakning. After fixing due shares according to custom, the remaining meat would be equally distributed among the hunters. The tongue portion of meat belonged to the one who killed the animal. If a person, even though was not one of the hunters, came across hunters in a forest distributing meat of a hunted animal, he shall also be given some meat called
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Anangsha. Womenfolk would prepare a dish from head portion with rice and chillies called *sharuwthuwh buw*. They would partake in the dish with their kids. The jaw portions were meant for *ichuwn* while the tongue portions were eaten by the elders.

**2.6.2.6. Domesticating Animals and Fowls**

Rearing of cattle like cows, buffalos and *mithun* is part of the Moyon life in the past and even at present. Each family has these domestic livestock which is also one of the means of their livelihood. Their traditional ways of domesticating their livestock and fowls are the following. Most of the season, livestock are set free into the forests. Chickens are kept in baskets and pigs are set free around their homes. Live stocks reared at home are called *deenkaar*.

The custom of purchasing a calf before its birth i.e., inside its mother’s womb is known as *shabarae ikham*. The owner of the cow hands over the calf (purchased through *shabrae ikham*) to its legal owner when the calf is one year old. The new owner of the calf will kill chicken, invite elders, friends and owners of cows during which he presents a *diirchampa* (gift) to the owner of the calf’s mother. If a calf purchased through *sabrae ikham* dies before handing over to its legal owner, then they will wait for the next birth. If the cow dies before it gives birth or if the cow/calf is killed or sold before fulfilling the agreement, the owner of the cow will return the value of *shabrae*. If the owner of the cow refuses to hand over the calf after maturity of time, he will return twice the value of *shabrae*. The custom of *shabrae ikham* is done only with domestic animals like cows, buffaloes and *mithuns*. There is no practice of such with other livestock.

**2.6.2.7. Labour System**

The labour system of the people in the pre-independence period was through an exchange of human labour. It was a practice by which the person who employed another would in turn return his day’s labour later on. It is also called *khulang* (exchange of human labour). In *khulang* system, there is an understanding between the two persons, the one who hires and the one who is being hired. This *khulang* system was without payment in cash. It was practiced in the past as the only
occupation in those days was cultivation. In those days there was only the practice of *jhum* cultivation. If a person who had no *jhum* field wanted to cultivate, then he offered wine and requested another fellow villager to allow him to cultivate his field. Sometimes they made an agreement through half share crop or even with a pot of rice beer they could even be permitted to cultivate the *jhum* field freely without any payment. If the person could not return the *khulang* in person, then he had to give certain amount of paddy like four *khulangs* which was equivalent to one traditional basket of paddy.

If a family suffered misfortune like sickness and was unable to cultivate the field, then, by offering of meat and wine to the villagers, the villagers would come in a group to do the work freely and happily. The meat could be either pig or dog. It had to be slaughtered and not bought in kilograms which the Moyons called *rupa idae*. If the man finished his *jhum* work at any one of the different stages, then he would go and help the one who did not finish on time and that too he would do freely without any payment. Such was the generous practice of the traditional people.

**2.6.2.8. Barter and Mortgage System**

Barter and mortgage system was practiced in the Moyon society in the past. Jeyaseelan states, "Barter system was the only means of exchanging goods" (1996: 47). There was no market as such, so nothing was cultivated for business except for consumption. All the exchanges of goods were measured approximately. Most of the goods which were used for exchange were rice, sticky rice, Job’s tear, vegetables, domestic animals like pigs, cows, dogs, traditional ornaments, traditional dresses, traditional tools, etc. Borrowing and lending was practised in times of famine and hardship. During the cultivation, people helped each other in all their works. It was a common practice to repay in the same manner of work. In moments of sicknesses or any emergency, people even mortgaged their *ruwniing* and they could get back when they returned the borrowed money or things.
2.6.2.9. Forest Products

Forest products were important in the life of the people because they depended solely on the resources from the land they owned. Timbers are grown for years for future use. The forest provides another source of income to the people and it is from it that they derive timber, firewood, bamboos, thatch and many edibles.

2.6.2.10. Women’s Role in Economy

The role of women in the traditional economy of the people was significant. They contributed a lot to its economic life as their contribution was not only confined to household works. Economically, life is practically impossible without women because they share in all the aspects of socio-economic life except that they have no political voice. They faithfully cook food, wash clothes, clean the house, collect firewood, nurture babies and do endless domestic chores. They accept their position and play their role dutifully. In fact, their resources give the family and society economic stability.

The idiom has rightly noted, “Rupunuw inem, shaang inem” which means ‘more daughters more harvest’. Women are engaged in agricultural activities right from the first stage of felling trees for jhum cultivation up to harvest. Weeding is generally done by them. Weaving is also the exclusive activity of the women.

2.6.3. Arts and Crafts

2.6.3.1. Handicrafts and Basketries

Moyon men of pre-independence period were skilled in different types of handicrafts and basketries. They would create various designs of cane and bamboo like baskets, mats and other useful household items. The ecological setting of the villages facilitated luxuriant growth of certain fibrous and pliable plants and creepers of which cane, bamboo and reed
were noted for their varied uses. The people depended on the natural resources specially the forest products. One will find the extensive use of natural resources provided by the ecology of the area. Out of the natural forest products, the people built their dwelling houses, straddled rivers and streams, made objects used in transport and conveyance and making of household articles including basketry and matting.

Gachui, 2007:44-45) avers, “The matured cane collected from the jungle was first cleansed and then wound in several coils. The whole bundle would be kept on the drying rack over the fireplace which seasoned the cane and made it durable and insect proof. The bamboo was also seasoned by the same process or by keeping out in the sun. In both cases a fully matured bamboo was selected for the purpose.” It is learnt that there is a season for cutting trees, timbers, canes, bamboos, etc. Gradually, these natural raw materials of the forests are utilized for different purposes like making of household articles, basketries, buwkaang mats, baskets for winnowing rice, carrying basket, strong basket, etc.

Almost all the household utensils were made of bamboo or carved out from bamboo and wood. Traditional rice mill called shum carved out from a big log was common for grinding rice. Sharing, a Y shaped wooden pole was carved for the Ikam festivals. Wooden tubs, wooden seats; wooden beds, cane dining tables, tamlo (wine mug) and cane balls were commonly used.

2.6.3.2. House

The traditional house would be raised two feet above from the ground. Varieties of wood and bamboos would be used as pillars. The roof of the house in those days was of thatch in the shape of ‘A’. There would be a door both in front and behind, and a separate side veranda was also constructed. Above the hearth, there would be a kind of traditional rack called erap where all varieties of things were stored, viz., baskets, animal
skins, dried meat and dried fish. Above the irap is shintaang (upper traditional rack) and below irap is lapnae (lower traditional rack). In every house, a rice beer pitcher would be placed beside the hearth. Sometimes some kept them above the hearth for quicker fermentation. It is also seen that different types of knives called chemshuw (big knife) and tangshii (small knife) and all the essentials of the kitchen purpose would be hung on the traditional rack. Firewood for the immediate use of cooking would be kept just below the irap and also firewood to keep warm in winter while chatting around the fire would be stacked. Traditional houses would be decorated with skulls of animals. A man was considered brave if he outnumbered others in decorating his house with them.

2.6.3.3. Granary

A granary, which in local term called itom is essential. In it, people stored paddy and varieties of crops. Itom would be built on a raised ground about two feet. For its construction, varieties of woods and bamboos were used as pillars. The roof of the itom in those days was also thatch in the shape of ‘\^’. There would be only one door. The paddy would be stored in a big basket made out of bamboo called pang. Shangphae buwruk was used for measuring the paddy. Usually the people determine the quantity of paddy stored in the itom by means of how many shangphaes like how many bags of paddy. Beside paddy, local products and crops like niim, sticky rice, baar, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, white pumpkins, tapioca, etc. which could be preserved long were also stored in itom.

2.6.3.4. Tools and Weapons

The traditional method of cultivation was depended solely on human labour of both men and women. They stayed in a hut at their field for a long period and laboured with just small hoes, dao, etc. They did not use any fertilizers in the past. They carried home the products of the jhum field in shabaku (bamboo baskets) on their back. Naga dao (knife), bow and catapult are the main weapons of the tribe. Bow and poisonous arrows were commonly used. These weapons were always
carried as protective measures against any type of attacks. A man carried a _dao_ in his _ruwpeer_ (cane bag) whenever he ventured into the jungle. Each family had necessary tools like hoes and axes.

### 2.6.3.5. Cutleries and Utensils

The traditional Moyons used cutleries and utensils which were made of cane, bamboo, wood etc. Examples of such cutleries and utensils are _kamsheng_ (chutney bowl), _thingshum_ (chutney grinder), _khuco_ (wooden spoon), _bukam_ (rice pot), _buwshaebuur_ (rice container), _pukaan_ (plate), _chiibeer_ (water container), _tongka_ (container for fermented soya bean), _ngathow buur_ (container of fermented fish), etc. The traditional dining table of the people is called _micam_ (made of cane). Again their traditional seats are called _mura_ (made of bamboo and animal skin) and _khamtong_ (wooden piece for sitting).

### 2.7. SOCIO-POLITICAL LIFE

In the traditional socio-political life of the Moyons, the village is the basic political unit. The village administration is managed by the village chief and his council of elders. The chief and his council of elders are elected for their ability from different lineages of the two clans, _Shimphuw_ and _Ztingven_. This administrative body of the village elders is known as "_khuw ipuh mee_" (BAP, 2008:11). The elders in the village council who have observed _pham ika_ (installation ceremony) are called _phannae_. _Phannae_ consist of nineteen ranks and the first five rankers are known as _phamlen_ (cabinet rankers). It is found that Moyons did not have any trace of hereditary system in the election of their chiefs and their village elders from time immemorial. No women are also appointed in the village council.

The traditional socio-political life of the people is guided by their social customary laws which have been passed on orally from generations to generations. Some of these have been reflected in their folklores, folk songs, folk dances and folk
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tales. In the words of Moyon (2006:12), “Moyons had a very high sense of democracy even in the olden days as per the folklores and songs.” The chief and the assistant chief are never elected from the same clan. Proportionate representations of two clans are taken into consideration in the village political management. The two groups consult with each other and manage the village.

This study attempts to survey the socio-political life of Moyons in the pre-independence period, viz., establishment of village, the village chief and his council of elders, installation of the village chief and his council of elders, vacancy of the village chief, customary contributions, functions and responsibilities of the chief and village council, removal of the village chief and his council of elders, village court, role of women in village political affairs, shaarkhii (swearing) and settlement of various disputes.

2.7.1. Village Administration
2.7.1.1. Establishment of Village

It is found that the traditional customary laws sanction the approval of the village authority of one’s last village before one establishes a new village. He has to follow the tradition of chongthang and aarthaang to the village authorities of his last village. Then, the village authorities approve and declare the establishment of the new village to the public. This applies also to a new comer to a village who has to perform chongthang and aarthaang to the village elders. It is to be noted that Moyons accommodate people of different ethnic groups into their community. The following interview proves that people of different ethnic groups have been naturalized into the community.

Interview 2.18
Name of the Informant: Ng. Khupchingpao
Age: 70 years
Sex: Male
Place: Khurfhuwdaam
Date: 24 June 2014

2.42: Ng. Khupchingpao
Ng. Khupchingpao affirms, "I belong to Chin tribe and my name was Khupchingpao Zou. I performed the Moyon customary laws of chongthang and aarthang to the village authorities of Khuwringkhuw. The then Chief of Khuwringkhuw late Ng. Beren embraced me as his fraternal kin and gave me his lineage, "Nguwruw". Since then, I declared myself as Ng. Khupchingpao. My wife Mannou, 69 years has adopted the “Chinir” lineage, and created a fraternal clan relationship with Ch. Michael. Along with me, three other Zou families declared themselves Moyons. The men adopted the “Nguwruw” lineage, and their wives adopted the “Chinir” lineage by keeping in mind the custom of exogamous clan marriage system."

The interview reveals that the names of those who joined the Moyon community are: Ng. Genkhanthang, and his wife Ch. Niang, Ng. Isaac, son of Ng. Genkhanthang, Ng. Paopu and his wife, late Ch. Mangnu. Cr. Teresa, daughter of late Ng. Paopu is married to Ch. Gilbert and adopted the lineage of her mother-in-law, “Charii”. The informant reasserts, "It was in the year 1999, that Ch. Rungtha, the then Chief Founder of this village welcomed all of us and that’s how we have become part of the Khurfhuwdaam community."

It is clear from the above interview that Moyons are guided by their customary laws for the establishment of their village and for the acceptance of new comers into their established villages.

### 2.7.1.2. Village Chief and his Council of Elders

*Iruwng* is the indigenous name of the village chief. The traditional village is managed by *iruwng* and his council. They are addressed as village elders or village authorities and they are the policy makers and decision takers in the village. There are certain requirements to be eligible to the post of the village chief or to the post of the village authority. The village chief or the village authority must be a married man who heads his family and who registers his household in the list of the village householders. He must possess sound physical and mental health. He must not have more than one wife. He must not have questionable antecedents in the village or tribe
level. He must not be addicted to substance abuse. The following Table 2.14 lists the titles of the village chief and his council of elders. Manipuri terms are also written in bracket.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Titles of the Village Council member</th>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Iruwng (ningthou)</td>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Duungkuum (lanchingpa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ruwngchang (senapati)</td>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Zuwrkumm (keirungpa)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Lukrah (luprak)</td>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Shirrung</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Lukaum (mantri)</td>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Shakrung</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Veenthang (chingsangrakpa)</td>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Meechaar</td>
</tr>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Luza (meitrambu)</td>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Ruwrah</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Chiinglam (wangkhra)</td>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Phamzii</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Zupaar (upanba)</td>
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Source: Field study

As shown in Table 2.14, serial number one, iruwng is the village chief who is also known as ningthou in Manipuri. The next serial numbers from two to six viz., ruwngchang, khurah, lukrah, lukaum and paarcheer are known as the cabinet authorities while the rest are known as members of the village authority. The cabinet authorities are elected by the people of the village. The council members are elected by the village authorities through consultation and consensus. There is no fixed term of office and one remains in office as long as one is able to carry out one’s duties and has the confidence of the people. It is noted that since time immemorial, the principle of proportionate representation of all the clans is taken into consideration in the socio-political administration of the traditional village of the tribe. These representatives who are known as the council of elders consult with each other and manage the affairs of the village.

2.7.1.3. Installation of Village Chief and his Council of Elders

Pham ika is an installation ceremony for the post of the Chief and his pham apuuh (council of elders). The installation ceremony of the chief is usually done separately while the installation ceremony of the others could be performed separately
or in groups. A phamzii is exempted from performing his installation service. He is to take an active part in all the installation services and other celebrations related to customs. The installation ceremonies of the chief and his councillors were done in a closed-door session exclusively by the elders of the village. Moyon customary laws authorizes that the chief and his council perform pham ika (oath taking). If installation is not done, the person even if elected by the village as the chief or as the cabinet authority, is not recognised by the tribe and as such he has no voice or authority in front of the public.

2.7.1.4. Iruwng Pham Ihaang (vacancy of the Chief’s post)

In case the post of the village chief lies vacant, any member from phamlen (cabinet) fills up the post of the chief. However, the former chief remains in office till the new chief is officially installed. In case of death or removal, ruwngchang (assistant chief) acts as the chief till a new chief is appointed and installed. However, if the people express their desire to appoint another person other than the Assistant chief, the voice of the people is taken into consideration. The appointment of the chief is done in every village as per the customary laws. The appointment of the chief in Moyon is called pham ithin. The village elders offer meat to the person of their choice for a customary post. One has to return the offer of meat if one refuses the post entrusted to him. If one accepts the post, takshaennii (day for commitment) is arranged. On that day, the date for installation service is also fixed. One remains in service of the village administration as long as one has the confidence and goodwill of the people.

2.7.1.5. Customary Contributions

The Moyon custom (BAP, 2009: 15-17) ordains a contribution of wine and chicken called ‘aarthang’ which is collected from each and every household annually. The purposes are to bear the expenses of village meetings and to provide hospitality and entertainment to important guests who visit the village in connection with the village affairs. One’s “ruwning (jhum field) or iva (river) may be forfeited if one fails to pay these subscriptions.
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Certain amount of paddy is also collected in the community granary by the village chaanglu. Miru ynruwp was the celebration at khurfhuw's house to enjoy the wine subscription. As a custom, the newly appointed Chief and councillors would give feasts to the village befitting their ranks in their respective village administration. Exclusive share of meat known as elders' meat is given to the top five cabinet councillors. Pham aapuh (councillors) are also honoured at any function with their respective seats in order. As per the Moyer customary laws there is distribution of meat called sharam-baram. The following are types of meat distributed at any installation ceremonies:

1. Zuwmuur tamni: Choicest pieces of meat kept in a bowl and offered to the chief.
2. Khurjaar: The share of all the invitees.
3. Shakam: The distribution of phamnae shakam is as follows: Two and half pieces of meat are given from iruwn to his lower rankers up to lukuum. Two pieces of meat pieces each are given from paarcheer to his lower rankers up to chiinglam. Two pieces of meat each given to zupaar and his lower rankers. It is also given to the retired phamnae.
4. Shabarae or shariing: Household share of meat.
5. Sharungbeb: Included in household share of meat.

2.7.1.6. Functions and Duties of Village Chief and his Council

The chief and his council of elders are the policy makers and they are responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the entire village. Besides the judiciary, the chief and cabinet administrative heads are responsible for the general development of the village. They implement all the welfare and developmental programmes of the village. They set the place and time for jhum cultivation and the process of agriculture. They collect taxes; look after the widows, the orphaned and the sick persons who are unable to attend the plantation and harvesting works in time. In short, the village council has a collective responsibility in the village affairs and administration. The functions and duties of the village authorities are described by Ng. Bengamsha.
Interview 2.19

Name of the Informant: Ng. Bengamsha
Age: 60 years
Sex: Male
Place: Matung
Date: 21 June 2013

Ng. Bengamsha is presently the Chief of Matung village. Matung is the offshoot village of Khungjuur. The Chief says that most of the educated ones of the village have migrated to the plain areas in search of better opportunities of education and livelihood. The village affairs are managed by the chief and his council. In Matung there are six cabinet councillors for any policy and decision making and there are other twelve councillors to assist the chief in his administration and duties of the village.

The chief is elected by the village male elders. He serves the people as long as the people are contented with the manner the duties and responsibilities entrusted to him are carried out. For the Moyons, a social status of a man depends on his capacity of leadership in the village and his leadership for the welfare of the tribe. The chief and the elders are recognised by the society at every function either in the form of meat package or shawls or a seat of importance. However, it is not the matter of getting meat or shawl or chair, but what matters is the social recognition of the status of men who holds the leadership positions in the village.

The village councillors are appointed for their ability irrespective of their material possessions but they need to represent the different clans. The many duties and responsibilities which the village authority performs are to safeguard village boundary, to maintain law and order and ensure peaceful existence in a village, to check theft, robbery or any anti social activities in the village and to administer development and welfare works.
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Safeguarding Village Boundary: One of the main duties of the village authorities is safeguarding the village boundary. Due to the ecological changes and the natural influences of rain, erosion and landslides, the traditional ways of maintaining the village boundary at time face difficulties within the tribe and its neighbouring tribes as well.

Interview 2.20
Name of the Informant:  N. Shongshir
Age:  42 years
Sex:  Male
Place:  Tungphae
Date:  24 June 2014

The president of Bujuur Aanchung Puh (Moyon Naga Council), N. Shongshir asserts that the people follow the traditional methods of maintaining the village boundary which is marked by physical geographical features like hill ranges, valleys, streams, rivers, etc. He identifies the existence of these traditional ways of boundary maintenance among neighbouring tribes like the Anals, Lamkangs, Choolies, Monsangs, etc.

However, the physical and geographical set up also changes over the course of time. As a consequence, boundary conflicts do occur either within or without the tribe. Efforts are made to survey the land in scale so as to demarcate the village boundary and avoid eventual conflicts. Interviews with various elders reveal that so far no bloodshed or violence has been recorded on boundary issues among the Moyons. On the other hand, the authorities have managed in maintaining peaceful relations within and without the tribe based on their customary laws.

2.7.1.7. Removal of the Village Chief and his Council of Elders

There are certain conditions which are laid down by the customary laws with regard to the removal of the village chief and his council of elders. If one accepts a customary post and makes a commitment but is unable to perform an installation
service within a year, then, his candidature is declared cancelled. However, one may kill a cock and throw a party and plead for more time. In such an event the duration may be extended by three or four months. He will be removed if he fails to hold his installation service within the given time.

In the case of promotion, another person is officially installed to the vacant post created by the promotion, however, if the promoted councillor cannot perform his installation ceremony, he shall be removed and the latter will take over the former’s post. A village council member can be removed from office for the subsequent reasons, viz., misuse of public funds, misuse or selling of village properties for one’s selfish end, having more than one wife, for having been convicted of crime by the village court and a person may cease to be a member of village authority by retirement.

As per the Moyon customary laws, the Chief takes an oath with these words, “I may be removed from my customary post if I’m found guilty of a crime.” A guilty person may be forgiven if he asks for pardon after making good the loss and thereafter gives a penalty of one pig or cow. Like the chief, if any of the administrative heads are found corrupt, the customary laws sanction that they be impeached or sacked from their positions by the villagers. However, if the person confesses and seeks pardon before the public or authority, then he is forgiven by paying a fine of an ox and a pig.

2.7.1.8. Role of Women in Village Political Affairs

In the traditional democratic Moyon administration, women were never taken into account. They were excluded from the village council and its meeting. They were not allowed to enter the village court except when they were required to give their witnesses or give their testimonies for the settlement of certain issues.

The voices of women were not taken into any consideration. They had no voice in the appointment or elections to the village council. They were considered equal to children. However, women were involved behind the scene like cooking and preparing food and serving the men folk. They could not even share their views with
their husbands. It was considered that the village administration was solely the responsibilities of the men folks and the duties of the women were to obey the men without any questions.

2.7.2. *Vaajeerkung* (village court)

The village council worked as the chief judicial court of the traditional socio-political life of the people in the pre-independence period. The chief is the supreme judge in deciding all civil and criminal cases of the village. He heads the village council of elders. The village court hears cases and disputes and passes verdicts. If the nature of the case is small, only few members settle it. Imposition of fines, punishment and settlement of any case are done on the basis of its customary laws. All kinds of disputes and differences between families of the same clan are as far as possible decided by the clan elders. When they cannot solve the problems, the cases are brought to the village court.

It is also found that both criminal and civil cases are tried by the council which passes final judgments. These decisions are given by well experienced elderly representatives of all clans. If the cases are vague and cannot be solved peacefully, then the village council resorts to taking of oath and ordeal. In boundary disputes, theft, etc., witnesses are to be produced. Filing a complaint petition is to be made to the chief. A case of suit begins if an individual or group verbally brings a complaint petition in the form of one jar of rice beer to the village court with a request to investigate into the matter and settle the case.

The village head in consultation with other responsible members fixes a convenient date for the hearing. Both the petitioner/plaintiff and the accused/defendant are intimated and summoned to appear before the court on the scheduled date for hearing through a messenger. In case a party/individual fails to appear before the court without prior information to the village court, a fine is imposed in terms of a jar of rice beer with a pig of five *vae* on the defaulters. If the accused is found guilty, he is liable to pay a fine as well as the compensation to the plaintiff.
2.7.3. **Saarkhii-itu (swearing)**

When the village court is unable to arrive at a final decision, the last option is to settle the dispute by oath taking. It is practiced by the people for settling any disputes and cases. The elders assume that a person is guilty unless he or she proves his/her innocence by swearing. It was the only method of determining justice in the society in order to decide the right or wrong or guilty of an accused person.

In cases where facts were difficult to find and impossible to solve, the last resort was to leave the parties to be tried with the help of supernatural power. The person concerned had to take an oath before the village chief and his council of elders and then he was supposed to submit the facts. It is thought that whatever the person said was based on truth. If he would tell a lie, the anger of God would destroy and punish the liar. There have been a few cases where disputes have been settled by saarkhii-itu (swearing). The settlements by saarkhii-itu are done only under extreme cases. Some examples of such settlements are mentioned below:

1. **Mee shaarkhii** (eye witnesses): The first procedure is to judge the case based on eye witnesses or witnesses or testimonies. A false witness may incur upon himself/herself a heavy punishment.

2. **Chii shaarkhii** (water submersion): In water submersion, both the plaintiff and the defendant are compelled to remain submerged in the river for an indefinite period of time. The person who comes out of the water first is considered guilty.

3. **Eating the earth**: In this method both the plaintiff and the defendant are made to eat the earth. The person who is able to eat more earth is considered innocent and he would be the winner of the land.

4. **Swearing by biting tiger’s teeth**: The plaintiff or the defendant swears by biting the tiger’s teeth with these words, “May I be killed by tiger if I am guilty”.

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5. **Swearing by Bashih (thunder bolt):** The plaintiff or the defendant swears by holding thunder bolt with these words, "May I be struck by lightning if I am guilty".

The following cases exemplify swearing by "water submersion" which was a practice not only in the Moyon tribe but also in their neighbouring tribes like the Analns, the Lamkangs and the Chothes. Rd. Jeepness cites a real incident which occurred among the Anal tribe of Chakpikarong, Chandel district. It was the practice of the pre-independence period.

Even in the post-independence period such a practice has taken place although under very rare circumstances. It was in the year 2009, two individuals were fighting for a land which belonged to neither of them. They claimed that the land belonged to their ancestors. Each one swore that he was right and he was ready to risk his life for truth. They were submerged into the Chakpi River, unfortunately both of them died in the water and the judgment was that both were guilty. It is the belief from their ancestral days that even nature like water does not tolerate the guilty while the innocent will come out victorious. According to the belief, the guilty person when submerged into the river experiences something like a hot spring which prevents him to submerge even if he may be an expert in swimming. The elders in the present time do not encourage such practices as they think it is against the Christian principles. Yet when the two claimants are so very obstinate and it seems that it is impossible to come to any amicable solutions such practices take place.

**Interview 2.21**

Name of the Informant: R. Angningden
Age: 63 years
Sex: Male
Place: Khungjuur
Date: 21 June 2013
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In an interview, R. Angningden, Chief of Khungjuur stated, “Swearing by ‘water submersion’ was the practice of the pre-independence period. Yet such a practice has occurred among the Moyons of post-independence period. It was in the year 1995. There were two individuals fighting for a jhum field. One was from Khungjuur village while the other was from Thangkin village.

The two claimants swore that the land belonged to them and no village authorities could settle their dispute. They swore that at their own risk they would submerge themselves into the river and declared that nature would settle the dispute by making the guilty come out of the water first. The two claimants, Cr. Komol of Thangkin village and Ng. Danichung of Khungjuur village submerged themselves into the river which was witnessed by the village authorities. The one who came out first from the water was Komol of Thangkin village and he was judged guilty. As per the judgment of water, the innocent was Danichung of Khungjuur village and the land went into his favour. The guilty was fined with a pig by the Village elders.”

Although swearing by “water submersion” was the traditional practice, it has taken place even in the post-independence period among the neighbouring tribes too. In the month of April 2014, two neighbouring villages of Kapaam village, namely, Lamkang Khungkha and Purumchumbang had a land dispute. Each village claimed the land belonged to its own ancestors. Negotiations were made to come to an amicable settlement but each village claimed that the land belonged to their village. No discussions or advices from the Church authorities or village elders worked out to settle the dispute. But at the same time the two villages did not want to make the dispute into a communal dispute since they belonged to two different communities.

The elders of the two villages feared that involving the two tribes would further lead to communal bloodshed. So they handed over the matter to the Naga Council. The Naga Council, under the leadership of Thomnoh Anal, decided that the last option was to settle the dispute through the “water submersion”.

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The condition was that the person who came out of the water first would be considered guilty. The two claimants’ representatives were the village Chiefs of Purumchumbang and Lamkang Khungkha. Before they submerged themselves into the river, they swore in word and in writing with their signature stating that they had taken their own risk for any consequence. Also the guilty would lose the land as well as he would be fined with money as per the customary laws of the village court.

After all the agreements, the two claimant representatives were submerged into the Chakpi River, near United College, Chandel which was witnessed by many neighbouring village elders and prominent people. In that scene, the one who came out first from the water was the representative of the Lamkang Khungkha and as per the water judgment, he was judged guilty. There is yet another case where the swearing by eating the earth had taken place.

**Interview 2.22**

Name of the Informant: N. Angensing
Age: 35 years
Sex: Male
Place: Laarphuw
Date: 23 May 2013

N. Angensing relates an incident which happened about forty years ago in his village between two claimants over a *jhum* field. The two individuals were cousins as they belonged to the same clan. Since both were unyielding in claiming the field, they decided to swear by eating the earth and prove their innocence. As per the belief, the one who is able to eat more earth is innocent and the one who is unable to eat is guilty. The village authority warned the two claimants about the risk and its consequences. The earth was brought before the village court to witness the swearing. Just before the swearing, the guilty one surrendered and refused to eat. So he was fined with a pig of five *vae* by the village elders and the land went in favour of the innocent one. According to the certainty of the elders, even nature like earth does not
tolerate the wrong and it reveals the truth in favour of the innocent, and the guilty is put to shame in public.

2.7.4. Settlements of various Disputes

2.7.4.1. Land

As mentioned earlier, settlements of any disputes by swearing are done only in extreme cases. Land disputes have been settled through the wisdom of the elders. Land disputes occur often among hill villages due to lack of proper demarcation of the land boundary in the hill areas. First of all the land in the hills is too vast and as the Elders who know the demarcation of the land by natural methods die, doubts arise over the ownership of the village land or *jhun* field. When such land disputes arise, the village authorities make an enquiry from the elders of neighbouring villages or from the elders of different villages who have the proper knowledge of the land.

**Interview 2.23**

Name of the Informant: Ng. Beridar  
Age: 62 years  
Sex: Male  
Place: Thangkin village  
Date: 20 May 2014

Ng. Beridar, Chief of Thangkin village opines that one of the main reasons of land dispute in the hill villages is that some individuals manipulate the natural resources for business. There are a few individuals who deal in business by selling trees and natural resources of certain portion of the hills for a year or two without the knowledge of the village authorities.

It is also observed that they claim certain portion of other’s land as theirs and sell it secretly without the knowledge of the concerned owners. Such practices destroy the natural demarcation by streams or by hillocks or by bamboo groves. When land disputes take place, the village authorities consult the elders who have the knowledge
of the land and its boundaries. In this way land dispute is settled amicably by the elders of the villages. The following is an example of such an amicable settlement of land dispute by the elders.

**Interview 2.24**

Name of the Informant: Ch. Savio  
Age: 38 years  
Sex: Male  
Place: Khurfluwdaam  
Date: 2 May 2013

Ch. Savio describes, "There was an issue over the jhum field called Rungha Samsii in Khungjuur village about 10 km. from the Chandel headquarters. The two claimants were Ch. Kobert of Thangkin village and Ch. Ngamling of Khungjuur village. Both Kobert and Ngamling made a claim over the field of my grandfather, Ch. Bekung. The dispute was brought to the elders and they called for me. I justified, let me throw a subscription of meat and wine to the village authorities and henceforth reclaim the ownership of the jhum field. My intervention was accepted by Ngamling and Kobert and the village authorities because they knew that the disputed land belonged to my grandfather and I as his grandson had every right to reclaim it."

### 2.7.4.2. *Naeduung Ven Shungna Itheh* (abortion)

The customary laws forbid any pregnant woman, either secretly or openly to abort a child. Abortion is prohibited by the Moyon custom. An act of abortion is regarded as an act of murder. A couple or a person guilty of this crime is punishable by the village authorities with a fine of five *vae* pig. But the illegal child born of *izuwre* couples of the pre-independence period would be killed with *shareel* because the customary laws forbid an endogamous marriage.
2.7.4.3. *Mee Irangnuw Ymbaruwh* (possession of another man’s wife)

The Moyon customary laws forbid *mee irangnuw ymbaruwh*. It condemns any man from the possession of another man’s wife either by force or in the absence of her husband. The customary laws also condemn such an act even when taking possession of another man’s wife with her own consent.

2.7.4.4. *Mee Phungkha Yngkhii* (interference to couple’s life)

If a person spreads rumours and whereby brings about disturbance in the otherwise peaceful marital life, such an act is treated as an attempt to break marital life and such a rumour monger is punished by the village elders with a pig of five *vae*.

2.7.4.5. *Isher Amanruwh* (taboo)

*Isher amanruwh* refers to anyone who breaks into the house of a neighbour with a weapon like *dao* or an axe. When such a person threatens the household or creates havoc inside the compound or damages any property, he is accountable before the village court. The village court is responsible to arrest him/her and penalize him/her with a pig of five *vae*. Such acts committed even without a weapon are also punished for he/she is judged to have brought taboo into the latter’s household. He/she is accountable to replace it or make compensation for the damages done. Moyons in the pre-independence period settled all their disputes in the village court. *Isher amanruwh* applies also when drowning takes place in someone’s river or the dead body is found in the neighbouring village. The following case illustrates such an incident of *isher amanruwh*.

**Interview 2.25**

Name of the Informant: Ch. Kobert
Age: 40 years
Sex: Male
Place: Thangkin village
Date: 4 July 2014
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Ch. Kobert recalls, "My son, Ch. Godfry, hardly 3 years old, was drowned in the year 2007. On that day my wife had gone out for marketing, there was no one to look after my two sons. So I took them and made them play on the river bank while I was fishing. Just then Ch. Angampa and his four friends from Monsang Pantha came for fishing and persuaded me to help them to fish with dynamite. I gave all the possible reasons for my inability to comply with their request as I did not want to leave my two children by themselves. On being persuaded, I went further along with the group for fishing with the dynamite. While they were collecting fishes from dynamite, I returned to the river bank where my two children had been waiting for me. To my shock, my younger son was found missing. My elder son who was hardly five years could not understand or explain where his young brother had disappeared. So I started searching for my son. I followed the river bank downward suspecting him to have been carried away by the river. More than a kilometre away, I found the dead body of my son in the shallow water soon after the deep water."

Kobert had to perform a subscription of meat and tea party to the village authorities of Monsang Pantha village because the dead body of his son had been recovered from a river that belonged to their territory. Drowning is still considered isker amanruwh not only among the Moyons but also among the neighbouring tribe like the Monsangs. It is learnt that unlike the past, instead of a ritual, a prayer service was held to prevent such a tragic death in the near future.

2.7.4.6. Ymbaruwh (theft)

If a person steals in the absence of its owner, any property like ornaments or crops or domestic animals, he must return it. The stolen item must be returned intact or else the robber must replace it or pay the price of the goods to the owner. The customary laws forbid any one to rob the properties of others whether they are found inside or outside the house or anywhere else. If anyone is found guilty, he is penalised according to customary laws. If a thief is neither in a position to return the stolen goods nor pay the fine for his crime, the village court flogs him with a stick ten times or twenty times or thirty times or fifty times which corresponds to the degree of his
crime. Further, he is made to march through the street hanging around his neck all the names of the stolen items.

2.7.4.7. Ynruw/Taakuw (robber)

Moyon customary laws describe that taking possession of the property of another man by force or threat is an act of robbery. Such a crime is punishable with a fine of one pig. Besides, the criminal or the culprit must return twice the amount of goods which have been seized by him. Taking possession of the property of another man after causing physical injury to its owner is an act of robbery. The guilty is to be judged according to customary laws.

2.7.4.8. Lupunuw Suwrka Namka Abuwh (forced marriage)

If a man attempts to possess an unwilling girl by force, it is considered as an attempt to harm the maiden’s prestige. In such a case, the guilty man is to pay a fine of one pig to the village elders. Besides this, he has to pay a heavy fine of five cows and a gong to the girl for defaming her maidenhood. If a forced physical relationship is committed with the assistance of his friends, his accomplices are fined with one mithun. If a woman becomes pregnant out of such a relationship the child in her womb cannot be aborted. A person guilty of child abortion is not permitted to remain in the village. The man responsible for the pregnancy of the girl is accountable to take care of the child.

2.7.4.9. Miktheh (murder)

A person who takes away the life of another man is a murderer. There are three categories of murders, viz., impulsive murder, cold blooded murder and accidental murder. The impulsive murder refers to a murder without pre-planning or prior thought which can take place while fighting. Cold blooded murder is a premeditated murder and an accidental murder is caused by accidents during hunting or by road accidents, etc.
Moyon Customary Laws (BAP, 2009: 28-29) imposes the penalties for every category of murder. In case of impulsive killing, the murderer shall pay a sum of rupees two lakhs to the family of the murdered. Besides, he shall pay a fine of a cow and a pig to the village and deceased family for sanctification respectively. In case of premeditated killing, the murderer shall pay a sum of rupees three lakhs to the family of the murdered. Besides, he shall pay a fine of a cow and a pig to the village and deceased family for sanctification respectively.

In case of accidental killing, the murderer shall pay a sum of rupees one lakh to the deceased family. Besides, he/she shall pay a fine of one cow and one pig to village and deceased family for sanctification respectively. It is found that there has been no record so far of a murder case among the Moyon tribe. It is found that no Moyon has ever killed another Moyon or killed another person either by impulsive or by cold blooded. But there have been a few cases of accidental killing during hunting trips. The following case depicts such accidental killing.

**Interview 2.26**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Informant:</th>
<th>R. Wisdom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td>59 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex:</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place:</td>
<td>Bjuuur Khuwfhuw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>23 June 2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R. Wisdom states that although quarrels and impulsive fights have taken place among the Moyons due to the consumption of alcohol yet they become friends the next morning. They continue their friendship and good relationship. He recalls an accidental killing that took place in Matung village about sixty years ago. Two bosom friends, late Ng. Thompa and late Nungchim went for hunting.

Suddenly, Thompa who held the gun saw a deer in front of his friend and shot him. According to the faith of the pre-independence period, Moyons called this as *shaar ing akhum* which means the evil force has blinded the hunter. After shooting
the deer, Thompa realised that the deer was none other than his own bosom friend. With sorrow and fear, he put his friend Nungchim who was not yet dead near the river and ran home.

When the village people saw Thompa with blood on his shirt, they understood that he was under the spell of *shaar ing akhum*. The village people came in search of the body and true to their perception, found Nungchim fighting for life near the river. They carried the dying man for treatment on their backs in turn. Unfortunately, on the way, the man breathed his last.

While dying, Nungchim pronounced his forgiveness and begged the people not to take any revenge on his friend because it was not intentional because it was due to *shaar ing akhum*. Respecting his last words, even the family did not take any action and no case or compensation took place. Yet another accidental killing took place at hunting which is described below.

**Interview 2.27**

Name of the Informant: Ng. Adam  
Age: 50 years  
Sex: Male  
Place: Laarfhwu village  
Date: 24 April 2013

Ng. Adam recalls his life experience, “Over ten years ago I had gone for hunting along with two of my friends, viz., W. Daniel and Ng. Clement. At that time we were staying in Matung village. Daniel was under the spell of *shaar ing akhum* and instead of shooting the deer; he shot his friend, Clement. Luckily it pierced only his thigh and it did not hurt his bone so he is still alive although the bullet is still inside his body. I was frightened that I too might be shot under the evil spell. So I ran to the village to inform about the incident. The people rushed to rescue the injured man. To our surprise, Daniel was trying every means to save his friend whom he had shot. Then the people carried the injured friend, Clement on their back from the thick
forest and rushed to the hospital for the treatment. Luckily, Clement escaped death and he is still alive today."

Since such an incident took place accidentally, the medical expenses of the injured man in the person of Clement was met by Daniel and his family. It is also found that Daniel’s family killed a pig and observed a day of cleansing of such a tragic incident from the village. There was no court case and it was amicably settled among them.

**Interview 2.28**

Name of the Informant: Ng. Angningngam  
Age: 54 years  
Sex: Male  
Place: Laarfhuw village  
Date: 24 June 2013

There was yet another accidental shooting which took place due to *shaar ing akhum* about seventeen years ago. According to Ng. Angningngam, during the New Year celebration the village men went for hunting as a group. Suddenly, L. Honeychung under the spell of *shaar ing akhum* shot at Cr. Kopel thinking to be the hunted animal. Luckily Kopel did not die as he was shot under his arms. The men carried the injured friend and brought him to the village on their backs in turn. Then from the village they rushed him to the hospital and he survived death. Even in this case, there was no revenge or appeal to the village judicature as it was considered accidental. Honeychung and his family bore all the medical expenses of Kopel and as per the Moyon customary laws, the family offered meat and wine for the cleansing of such a tragedy from the village. Thus, the village authorities managed to handle the situation in an amicable manner.

**2.7.4.10. Pikaari Asham (absence from village duty)**

The act of *pikaari asham* (absence from village duty) in the traditional socio-political life of the people is punishable by the village court. It is observed that one’s
ruvniing or chii could be confiscated by the village if one absented himself from attending one’s pikaari. The customary laws required that every villager attended to his duty especially when it was fixed and declared obligatory by the village. Under such traditions, one could not take it for granted. But if the villager could not fulfil his obligation, he could inform the village authorities and they would exercise their discretion accordingly.

2.7.4.11. Livestock or Properties or Crops

There different ways of settlement of damaged livestock or properties or crops of the people. If a man without warning the owner injures a livestock that caused damages to his crops or properties or garden or field or household, he is expected to treat the injured animal until recovery. After the livestock is brought to whole he will take with him a chicken and compromise with the owner. If a livestock succumbs to its injury, then he will pay the price of the livestock. Besides, penalty is imposed upon him by the village court. If someone lets loose his cattle despite the warnings given by the village authority the owner is solely responsible for the death or injury of his cattle. If a livestock is caught in a snare, then the one who puts the trap will have the dead livestock by paying the price of the livestock to its owner. Thereafter, he will kill a cock and compromise with the owner of the dead livestock. If a livestock is caught in the vicinity of a village or on the track/territory of domestic animals, then the one who sets the trap will be penalised according to the customary law.

This second chapter on “The Traditional Socio-Cultural Life of the Moyon Tribe in the Pre-Independence Period” has explored the significance of the unwritten customary laws which guided the people in all their social-cultural life and practices. The legend affirms that these customary laws and practices which regulated the socio-cultural life of the people started as early as the days of their escape from the cave. It is observed that the law giver was Thompuung under whose skilful leadership, the man hunter at the entrance of the cave was killed for the people to have free exit.
Chapter II  Traditional Socio-Cultural Life of the Moyon Tribe in the Pre-Independence Period

The chapter has explored the socio-cultural life of the ancient Moyons in different aspect of life: marriage, religious beliefs and practices, festivals, traditional life, economy and their socio-political life. In its investigation, description and narrations, it is observed that the customary laws and practices considered some acts as acceptable and legalized them in their social interactions and organizations. For instance, the society has established the clan system which regulates the basic social institution of marriage. It is also found that the customary laws prohibit endogamous marriage and considers it illegal and such marriages are punishable before the village court. On the other hand, the customary laws encourage exogamous marriage.

This chapter has shown that the traditional village political administration is based on equal representatives of both the clans of the tribe. It has also explained the democratic nature of the people. The villagers love and respect their village chief and his council of elders, who are accountable to their villagers for their well being and development. The villagers too have their voice if power and authority are abused by their village authorities, to the extent that they can ask them to surrender their posts on moral ground.

It is observed that the socio-cultural life of the Moyons in the pre-independence period was regulated by its customary laws and practices. It can be said that the different aspects of their family life, be it patriarchal system, or pregnancy or child birth, or burial of placenta or naming ceremony or ascribing names or ways of addressing people are all directed by their traditional customs and practices. Their belief system, concept of life and death, rites and rituals, festivals, concept of land, means of livelihood, village administration and settlement of various disputes are also accomplished and governed by their customary laws and regulations. It finds that the traditional Moyons value their customary laws and their traditional socio-cultural life is influenced by it. The customary laws of the people sanction taboos and prohibitions and whoever violates them is punishable before the village court.
Chapter II  Traditional Socio-Cultural Life of the Moyon Tribe in the Pre-Independence Period

2.101: Camp fire
2.102: Jhum field cucumber plant
2.103: Taamsaw
2.104: Kuurkam waistcoat
2.105: Vangjam and Laangam waistcoats
2.106: Vangjam peen
2.107: Laraam
2.108: Laynthornii
2.109: Weaving loom
2.110: Lukhumpaar
2.111: Zaka-theeng dance
2.112: Kuurkam peen
Chapter II  Traditional Socio-Cultural Life of the Moyon Tribe in the Pre-Independence Period

2.113: Shaangken festival

2.114: Thaan

2.115: Traditional poultry

2.116: Trek-traang dance

2.117: Display of basketries

2.118: Vaangcheh festival

2.119: Cultural dance

2.120: Cultural dance troop

2.121: Duli (traditional water suppliers)

2.122: Folk dance

2.123: Researcher at folk dance

2.124: Folk song by the modern youth

2.125: Ikam festival

2.126: Ikam dance troop

2.127: Zaka-theeng festival