

Youth-Dormitories and Community Houses in India.

A Restatement and a Review.

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The institution of community houses among the Indian hill-tribes has aroused the interest of anthropologists ever since the publication of the earliest accounts of the Nagas' great bachelors' halls and the Oraons' youth dormitories. One of the first references to the *morung* of certain Naga tribes is probably a passage in JOHN BUTLER's 'A Sketch of Assam' (London 1847), which thirty-six years later was followed by the far more detailed and on the whole accurate description of Konyak men's houses and girls' dormitories by S. E. PEAL¹. E. T. DALTON, writing in 1872, referred not only to the bachelors' houses of such Assam hill-tribes as Kabuis and Garos, but commented at some length on the youth dormitories of the Oraons of the Chota Nagpur highlands². Since those early days of ethnographic observation, much information has been gathered on the *morung* and kindred institutions of Assam, but for many years little attention was paid to corresponding institutions in Middle India. When in 1930 I compiled data for a brief paper on bachelors' halls in Assam and Burma³ reliable information on youth dormitories and men's houses in Peninsular India was still so scanty that there seemed to be little scope for a critical comparison of these institutions with the better documented *morung* system of the Naga Hills. The ensuing years, however, saw an intensification of anthropological field-work in Peninsular India, and the recent publication of an imposing monograph on the youth-dormitories of the Murias of

¹ 'Notes on a trip up the Dihing Basin to Dapha Pani, January and February 1882'. Journal Asiatic Soc. Bengal. Vol. LII, 1883.

² Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal. Calcutta 1872, pp. 52, 214.

³ 'Das Junggesellenhaus in westlichen Hinterindien', Wiener Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte und Linguistik. Vol. I, 1930.