



caretaker then opens a large wooden box and hands each dancer a mask carved from wood and a silken scarf or *dorjé gong* (རྡོ་རྗེ་གོང་) to wear throughout the next two days.

On day one, the *tercham* dancers emerge from the temple hall, wearing masks and the *dorjé gong*. The dancers are joined by other dancers representing the *yab-yum* (ཡབ་ཡུམ་) or male-female principles of Vajrayana Buddhism. *Tercham* in Sakteng is performed towards dusk while those in Jampé Lhakhang and Nabji-Korphu take place closer to midnight. After several hours, performed in the temple's courtyard, the entire troupe of *tercham* dancers, including the *yab-yum* performers, proceed to the villages where they are eagerly welcomed to confer blessings on the residents' homes. Entire families, male and female, young and old, greet the dancers and escort them inside the house, offering them food and served three types of local brew; *bangchang* (བླང་ཆང་), a kind of home ale drink made from millet, *singchang* (སིང་ཆང་), a kind of draught beer and *changkö* (ཆང་བཀོ་), a thick soup of fermented rice prepared with butter, eggs and amaranth seeds. Such offerings to the naked dancers are believed to quell misfortunes, sickness and untimely death in the coming three years. The dancers repeat the proceeding in every house in the community, travelled in a barefoot to all surrounding villages and displaying laudable commitment continued wellbeing and to dispel evil and misfortunes in their community. At night, the dancers return to the secret house, where they enjoy a few hours' respite before the next day's performance.

The origins of the Sakteng *tercham* are unknown, and the scriptures containing its origins were lost to fire. Unlike in Nabji-Korphu and Jampay Lhakhang, *tercham* in Sakteng is more elaborate in terms of wearing masks that revered as the key relics of Borangtse Lhakhang. In 2001, the government official, Dasho Drungpa of Sakteng, issued an order to change the dress code of naked dancer, instructed the dancers to wear short pants for the sake of modesty. Three years later, when the Borangtse temple caretaker and the dancers reopened the box, they found the *dorjé gong* were riddled with holes, destroyed by insects. They reenacted the festival in its entire unadorned splendor, minus the intrusion of the official dress code.

The end of the festival brings the naked dancers back to Borangtse Lhakhang, where the participants reunite in the temple sanctum to relinquish their respective masks and *dorjé gong* to the temple caretaker. The temple caretaker recites special prayers invoking local deities to bless everyone bringing the proceedings to a close. The temple caretaker painstakingly replaces each wooden mask and *dorjé gong* in their traditional resting place for the next three years until the re-emergence of the naked dancers. Finally, people offer tea and wine to the dancers and Lama, expressing their gratitude for warding off misfortunes in the community for next three years.

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