THE GURUNG PRIEST AS BARD

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I The Origins of Priestly Knowledge

Accounts of religious specialists in the Himalayan area have often pointed to the non-literate nature of many of the traditions concerned. Macdonald, for instance, has written that, "l'activité du jhākri s'appuie entièrement sur la tradition orale, orale dans le double sens qu'elle est transmise oralement et qu'elle n'est pas couchée par écrit" (1962, p. 109). But such accounts have tended to concentrate on the importance of involuntary vocational crises or initiatory trances in the lives of such specialists, rather than on examining the implications of these and other factors for the character of the learning which is sustained through these techniques.

With this in mind, it is reasonable to discriminate three cases. Firstly, there are those in which knowledge claimed by the specialist is said to derive from spiritual experiences and dreams. Thus Gorér quotes a Lepcha padem saying, "There is no need of a teacher for the work of Padem; the spirit will instruct before each ceremony as to what is needed in the way of sacrifices by means of dreams in which the spirit will be represented by Europeans or Kings of Sikkim and other States" (1938/1967, pp. 218-19). The Sunuwar puimbo and ngiami are stated by Fournier to become possessed by an evil forest spirit (banjhākri) which teaches them "formules propitiatoires, mantrā et les techniques pour façonner (leur) tambour chamanique (dhyānro)" (1974, p. 72). With these two cases belong the instances recorded by Hitchcock for the Magars (1966, pp. 28-9). It is also appropriate to include those Tibetan bards of whom Stein notes, "ceux qui chantent le Gesar sans avoir eu de maître sont seuls à bien chanter; il faut entendre qu'ils l'ont appris en état de rêve ou de ravissement" (1959, p. 332).

Secondly, there are those cases in which the spiritual experience or crisis is treated as a sign of aptitude to be followed or accompanied by arduous learning from a human master. Into this category fall the Tamang bombo and lambu described by Höfer (1974 b, p. 169, 1971, p. 147, 1981, pp. 26, 32, 36), the Lepcha mun studied by Gorér (op. cit. p. 220) and Siiger (1967 I, p. 165), and the pan-Nepalese jhākri as exemplified in Macdonald's essay (1962, pp. 116-18, 128).

Finally, and bearing in mind Allen's cautionary note on those Thulung priests who "can acquire the capacity (for possession) simply as a further technique in
their repertoire” (1976, p. 126), there is the category of those in which there is neither initiatory possession nor trance state, whether before or after starting to learn. Into this category fall the Gurung officiants termed poju and kheprī.¹ These priests learn arduously from their teachers the spells (ngo) and recited narratives (pē) which comprise the substance of their ritual activities.

The reason for stressing these distinctions is that they point to problems of assessing the extent to which individual creativity on the part of the specialist is essential or contingent to his tradition. Höfer, for example, has stated on the one hand that the Tamang bombo “has a répertoire of certain ritual texts which he

¹ The transcription adopted is based on Burton-Page (1955, p. 112 note 2), although grave and acute accents are used to differentiate intermediate vowels not distinguished by him there. Pignède writes pucu and klihbrī (1966, p. 35), Messerschmidt poju and khepre (1976 a, glossary pp. 143, 140 s.v.), Glover and others poju’ or poju and khlyyebrī or lxebrī (1977, pp. 90b, 46b). The orthography adopted is a simplified system used here purely for the mechanical exercise of comparing distinct performances by priests from the same village; and though conscious of the need to present such texts in a form suitable for more detailed linguistic study, the author has not yet been able to transcribe from the tape-recording with the aid of a knowledgeable priest willing to pause over each word in order to get the closest reasonable phonemic representation. The reading conventions are therefore at best crude; but they will serve the limited purposes of this paper. Vocalic and consonantal analyses are presented by Burdon-Page (1955, p. 112, note 2) and by Glover et al., (1977, pp. v-vii). The present orthography uses the following rough equivalences; where different from these linguists’ conventions: ts [c], ds [j], t [t], sh [s], ng [G]; aspiration is marked by h after stops, and where this aspiration contrasts with breathiness on the vowel the letter is marked by a postvocalic H. Accential stress and tones are left unmarked, because of the difficulties involved in working with recorded recitations rather than with controlled spoken articulations. Nasality is marked by the superscript tilde ~ over vowels. Pignède recognized eight vowels according to the scheme: i [i], e [e], è [è], á [a], á [a], o [o], o [ö], u [u], (1966, p. 18). In attempting a phonemic analysis the present author likewise heard these or closely similar distinctions which were significantly distinguished by local speakers, although neither of the linguists who have worked on Gurung noted these vocalic contrasts as meaningful. As a non-linguist the author has decided to mark these phonetic differences even though they may not be phonemically significant within the language of the chanted recitations of the priests. The diacritics used are the French grave and acute accents, and the scheme adopted as a follows: è [è], è [e], á [a], a [a], o [o], o [ö]. It is with much hesitation, therefore, that the Gurung words used in this article are presented by the author; and it is clear that a great deal of work remains to be done to take the study of the priestly recitations beyond this linguistically elementary stage. The present author has chosen not to try to combine Devanagari and Roman scripts; and his orthography must be regarded as a provisional attempt to represent the Siklis dialect subject to further refinement. Tones and accentual stress are unmarked.
learnt by heart at the time of his initiation” (1974 b, p. 171); but he goes on to reveal, on the other hand, that “There is a saying which compares the lama’s work with that of the shaman and which runs in free translation as follows: “The lama proceeds step by step i.e. following a prescribed liturgy, the bombo proceeds by his voice i.e. following spontaneous inspiration” (idem, p. 172). Likewise, Gorer gives an account of the mun Gongyop who “very easily falls into the sing-song rhythm of a Mun’s invocation, often saying the same thing twice or four times in different words, rather after the fashion of the Hebrew psalmist. He uses onomatopoetic words a great deal, many of his own invention” (op. cit., p. 217); but he goes on to tell of the mun’s myth of the origin of marriage which “is always repeated verbatim, though not necessarily to an audience, by the Sacrificer on the second day of the marriage feast” (idem, pp. 224–25). Similarly, the Sunuwar nasso “is trained to memorize a great variety of propitiatory formulas or chants by repetitive mnemonic procedures” (Fournier, 1978, p. 169); and this officiant contrasts with the puimbo and ngiami who learn through gaining the experience of various specialists, sometimes from different places (Fournier, 1976, pp. 103–105). Finally, Macdonald suggests that, “Le jhâkri greffe sur des croyances préexistantes son intèret, fruit de son expérience, de sa formation personnelle. L’intègration du client dans ce novel ensemble peut être et est souvent purement provisoire. Elle n’est déterminée que lorsque le jhâkri transmet intégralement son enseignement a un élève, ce qui est un fait exceptionnel pour l’ensemble de la société” (1962, p. 128)

The argument of this paper is that it is necessary to examine the nature of oral performances by ‘priestly bards’ of these kinds in order to show, and to account for, the degree of individual creative liberty which they are permitted or encouraged to demonstrate. This approach provides a guide to characteristics of ritual activity which have been ignored by ethnologists looking for circumstantial accounts. It also provides a perspective on the role of ‘possession’ and ‘trance’ as reasons and justifications for the creative freedom of the officiant as a bard. Where spiritual inspiration is present, there the specialist may be expected to show greater creative variability between performances than his non-ecstatic counterpart, when certain other features are correlated with each type of case.

II The Soul (plah) and the Demon (mô)

The Gurung poju and hleuvi do not claim to learn from inspiration, nor do they generally become entranced by spiritual contact in rites. Both kinds of priest learn by accompanying their masters when the latter perform, trying to listen and pick up the rapid flow of phrases, joining in where confident, faltering when the way is unsure and it is necessary for the teacher to reiterate the appropriate words.
The fact that no spiritual encounter is involved in this process is, it may be argued, intimately connected with the characteristics of the particular cosmological notions with which these officiants are principally concerned.

The plah, rendered here ‘soul’, is composite in that men possess nine and women seven; and it is recognised to be in the image of its owner. One or more of the plah may leave the body so defining the states of illness, dreaming, and death. The twitch in sleep or startled surprise is plah lüwa ‘soul jerking’ as the plah departs, hence the custom among Gurungs of placing the hands to the head while saying shya’i ‘caught’ so to hold someone’s soul back if he is temporarily shocked. In illness and before departure from home for a long stay away, when the soul is deemed to have left the body, a frequently held rite is the plagu lawa ‘making tame the soul’. At this event, the absent plah is retrieved for the beneficiary who also receives a feast and gifts from relatives. At death, when some time after the disposal of the corpse is held the three-day long pwe funeral, a central part of the rite is the plah wiwa ‘summoning the soul’ to receive a feast from those gathered at the home of the deceased whose soul is called. A much emphasised part of the same rite is the building of the bla, an image (murti) of the deceased which is inhabited briefly by the plah. Together, the plah and the bla constitute the personal identity of the deceased. There is also a connection between the soul and both material prosperity (yō) and long life (tshe). Particularly when death has afflicted a household, the loss of this soul entails great expense incurred on behalf of the dead at his pwe; hence at a later date it is sometimes thought necessary to have performed the rite ‘telling prosperity to come’ (yō khówa). Comparably, when the priest is making tame the soul, he also aims to bring back prosperity upon the household hurt through illness.

Pignède asserted for the Mohoriya dialect that, “Le même mot plah est employé pour désigner la construction... car elle est, pour les vivants, l’âme du mort sous une forme concrète, lorsque l’âme errante du mort a été retrouvée par le prêtre et est venue habiter le plah” (1966, p. 348). The Siklis dialect upholds a verbal distinction between plah ‘soul’ and bla ‘image of the dead’, though this does not of course mean that they are not cognates. Stein (1957) has many interesting and pertinent remarks on the notions and terminology of souls in the Sino-Tibetan-Mongolian area. Comparative material of relevance is in Lessing (1951), for example. The term pwe means ‘interruption, pause’. Messerschmidt and Pignède write it pae and pae respectively (1976a glossary s.v., 1966 index s.v. respectively), presumably because they have transliterated from Devanagari spelling by villagers; this leads Messerschmidt into some unnecessary speculation about the philology of the word (1976b, p. 216 note 14). Macdonald provides interesting comparative material on funerary rites in the region as a whole (1976/ 1975, pp. 153-56 note 48), and Pignède’s account (1966, pp. 346-56) is generally sound although obscure in places.
The mō, rendered here ‘demon’, is an impersonal aspect of the soul parted from it during the pwe funeral. This parting or separating (pihwāwa—pihwa ‘peeling’ plus wāwa ‘throwing away’) of the soul and the demon is the principal purpose of the long funeral rite. The soul is taken by narrative chanting to the land of the souls of men (mi phah' e nasag), situated to the North of the mountains and across the Marsyandi River. The demon, in contrast, is introduced to all the villages throughout the area inhabited by Gurungs and others, stretching from Thak Kholā through Manang, down the Marsyandi River, and across to the West as far as Ghandrung village. Each village or place named possesses a genius loci; and the naming of each place identifies also the deity dwelling there. These deities are invoked to accept among them the mō demon of the dead. They are termed shin mru ‘kings of the dead’; but they are also termed shyolto nolto. Both demons and the local deities of places are classed together as shyōrawa se ‘things in the rivers’; as such, they are also termed tsē. These beings are the chief source of harm for people.

The means of harming of which these beings are capable consists in the stealing of souls, but also in the drinking of the blood of children. Thus the mō is on the one hand a derivative of the soul at death, and on the other tends to cause harm by stealing the souls of the living. It is consistent with this notion of harm that the priest, in a cure by making tame the soul, journeys in search of the demon possessing the soul of the patient, negotiates with the demon by displaying his wisdom to satisfy the demon’s requests for a show of knowledge, and returns home bringing the soul and prosperity with him. This journey, like all other priestly activities, is performed without trance or spiritual possession of

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3 These are echoed by Pignède, who refers to “sildo ou sildo-naldo: nom d’ une divinité” (1966, p. 307), by Allen writing on the Thulung tosi shrines (1978a, p. 160), and by Höfer on the Tamang sipda neda (1971, p. 147, and 1981, p. 13). On the mō, comparison is made by Höfer for the Tamang (1981, p. 23). The distinct beings define different aims of rites, and they also play a part in discriminating the two kinds of priest: like the Tamang lāmbu, described by Höfer (1981, pp. 35-6), the hlewri acts on behalf of the whole village in sacrifices to the local deities of places; and the syllable hle may link him with hle meaning ‘king’, consistently with Höfer’s remarks (ibid. footnote) and those of Allen (1976b, p. 523). But both poju and hlewri honour the local deities frequently in their phē; and the contrast between these priests is vague. In the pwe, the hlewri is in some ways more dramatically involved with the mō demon of the deceased, the poju with the phah soul, than either is with the other aspect of the human being; but both priests officiate cooperatively.

the priest. Two points thus need to be made: on the one hand, the patient is not possessed by a spirit which requires exorcism; rather he has lost his soul (his own 'spirit') which is to be returned to its rightful owner. Secondly, the priest is not possessed by any exogenous spirit; his own breath (só) or, according to the varied opinion on this subject, his soul (plah) goes in the narrative on the journey recited.

The question arises of whether, given such ideas of harm and cure, the concept of 'spirit possession' is superfluous or, more strongly phrased, logically inconsistent. Höfer has suggested that, "To a certain extent, possession may be considered a logical alternative to the shamanistic journey to the Other World. (Both, possession and journey aim at a direct contact with the superhuman. While, in a journey, man goes to the gods, in a state of possession, the gods come to man — to put it in the simplest terms.)" (1974a, p.162). Certainly it is possible to argue that the coherence of each scheme may, hypothetically, suggest that the one excludes the other. The shaking which elsewhere characterises the possessed officiant or sufferer so to indicate the presence of the spiritual, is, crudely speaking, transposed in the Gurung context to the shaking of a chicken, goat or sheep which thereby indicates the arrival of a soul or demon summoned appropriately. The shaking of a person, on the other hand, indicates not the arrival of a possessing demon but the jerking of a soul about to depart. The harmful demon possesses not the person but his soul; and given this view, the idea of possession of the person appears irrelevant in this context. For these reasons, therefore, it is arguable that the patient is not possessed, nor the officiating priest, because the cosmological notions with which they are concerned make such a possibility superfluous. This does not mean that spiritual possession may not occur in circumstances other than those of loss of the soul; it does assert that loss of the soul, as a conception of harm, will tend to exclude spirit possession also harmfully construed; and this is an empirical question.

On the part of the priest, there is one important exception to the lack of spiritually induced trance. Once annually in winter, but also at the puwe funeral of a poju priest, it is necessary for the poju to honour his Master Deity, the originator of all priestly knowledge not only for the poju but also for the hlewri and lama. This Master Deity is called chop, pwhel, or guru rimerache, and principally takes the form of a deer although capable of turning into and emerging from any thing or being. The deity is honoured by making a large rice effigy of roughly pyramidal form, substantially larger than that depicted by Pignède (1966, plate XXIII: 64) and made from nine gallons (páthi) of rice; it is decked with a goat's leg. The poju priests attending chant in unison some twelve pé narratives and finish by drumming and playing cymbals in honour of the god. Sometimes, apparently not
always, one priest shakes in the course of the drumming episode at the end; he is said to be ‘touched’ (tswiwa ‘touching’) by the deity, where the same verb is used of the animal shaking from the presence of a soul or demon summoned to the spot.

It is important to note that this occurs in only one rite, that in honour of the Master Deity, and that it does not occur while the priests are chanting. In the many other kinds of rite conducted by poju and hlewri, this phenomenon does not occur. The nearest analogy appears to be the case of the Lepcha mun ‘possessed’, twice annually according to Gorer (1938/1967, p. 220); but to translate tswiwa ‘touching’ by ‘possessing’ would do serious injustice to the subtlety of the notion at stake. The contrast is considerable between this account and the descriptions given by Gorer for the mun (idem, pp. 220-22), and Hitchcock for a specialist near the Bhuji River in West Nepal (1967, p. 156). Nor do the priestly chants show any evidence which would compare them with the Tamang bombo who, as Höfer has put it, “is not acting ‘in the person’ of his divine helpers but as an ally of them” (1974b, p. 176). For the Gurung priests, the discrimination between a person and either a harmful or a benevolent being is sustained and not compromised through the use of ‘possession’. On the other hand, the idea of the soul and the demon in varying relationships to each other is central to the person and to his identity; and this arrangement of notions does not favour the concept of an exogenous spirit possessing somebody. From this it follows that the priest cannot justify creative innovation in his performances by referring to exogenous spiritual encounters.

III The Priest as Poet

Goody has remarked that, “the distinction between the role of composer and reciter relates to the manner in which they acquire their knowledge naturally or supernaturally, be copying or by inspiration, and hence to the cosmology itself; the body-soul dichotomy lies close to the heart of ideas of creativity” (1977, p. 121). The poju and hlewri strive to copy and to recite rather than to compose creatively; and in the soul or demon they do not find spiritual justification for novelty in their performances, although hypothetically they might look elsewhere. On this argument, the body-soul contrast is less important than the special discrimination between soul and demon which makes spiritually inspired performance appear peculiarly inapt.

That having been said, it is clear that both kinds of priest are specialists in oral ‘literature’. Their rites consist in the reciting of bd ‘examples, principles’, which are narratives in verse or parallel prose, and in the muttering of ngo ‘spells’.

5 For meanings which have been attributed to this term may be consulted Pignède (1966, pp. 323-24), and comparably the Tibetan dpe discussed by Snellgrove (1967/1980, p. 20), Stein (1971, p. 504), and Macdonald (1966/1975, p. 147 note 21). It is often linked with the term lu, for which may be consulted Das (1902/1976, p. 1215a-b, s.v. lungs) and Höfer (1981, p. 69). Pignède’s understanding of this word as ‘song’ is probably unsound.
This paper is chiefly concerned with the former, of which it was possible to collect dictated versions of sixty-three amounting to about 11,000 lines, and roughly fifty hours' of tape-recorded performances which would have been extremely hard to understand without the aid of the dictated versions. These all come from poju priests; and the quantity of pé collected from the hlewri is somewhat limited in comparison. The remarks which follow are therefore based upon the poju's chants.

For any particular rite, the number of pé chanted is specific and distinct rites are defined, at least in large part, by the various pé in which they consist. For example, 'making tame the soul' comprises thirteen distinctly named chants, whereas the rite 'making meat for the demon' (mō she lawa), in which the priest summons a demon to receive offerings and compels it to depart, consists of thirty three recitations. In the latter case, the priest recites in company with other priests for about ten hours; and collectively they chant in the region of 25-30,000 words or 5,000 'metrical phrases' ('lines').

Since this is so, the techniques for studying an oral tradition are appropriate to a study of Gurung priestly rites, the more so because the priests claim to learn by memory and to recite pé as much as possible invariably on different occasions. Although this is largely the case, it is recognised that, lacking books from which to chant, they will not necessarily achieve exact repetition in distinct performances. More generally, Finnegan has pointed out that "even when themes and basic forms are very stable, verbal variability and originality in oral performance are extremely common, and almost certainly more typical than unchanging transmission, even though the extent of memorisation as against originality cannot be predicted in advance from some universal theory" (1977, p. 153).

While this is no doubt so, it has been suggested that ritual chanting will tend to be more stable than other kinds of performance. Thus Lord contrasts those, like the Yugoslav gustar, who are specialists in "composition during oral performance" with those who recite "sacred texts which must be preserved word for word" (1960, p. 5 and note 9). Some support for this comes from Phillips who concludes a study of the West Sumatran (Minangkabau) sijobang narrative with the view that, of the two categories "according to which oral poetry having an important ritual function (such as the Vedic hymns and Finnish oral epics) tends to be fixed in form, while poems performed for entertainment are relatively unstable, sijobang clearly belongs to the second category" (1981, p. 170)\(^6\).

\(^6\) For this scheme Phillips refers to Kiparsky, P., 'Oral poetry: some linguistic and typological considerations' in B. Stolz and R. Shannon, editors, Oral literature and the formula, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 1976. The present author has been unable to consult this article.
The argument expounded earlier suggests, however, that those specialists who derive their knowledge from spiritual inspiration or who justify their words in terms of spirit encounters possess *eo ipso* a justification for creative originality in their rites, whereas the priest who lacks this kind of reason should be treated distinctly. The classification ‘ritual chanting’ or ‘sacred text’ may not be so uniform as Lord and Phillips appear to accept: the degree of creative variability between performances needs to be assessed for the distinct kinds of officiant, so testing the hypothesis that there will be greater originality in the work of the inspired than in that of the non-ecstatic performer. It is unfortunate that ethnologists of the Himalaya who refer to specialists have not taken the opportunity to provide transcribed texts compared for stability and variation since these are necessary for comparison with the material to be presented below. It is possible, however, to point out certain characteristics of the *poju*’s chanting which are consistent with the thesis argued so far; and this is the purpose of the remainder of this paper.

IV The Language of *pé*.

Gurung priestly chants are linguistically complicated to the extent that the recitative is generally not understood by any other than performers themselves. This is an observation made by Pignède (1966 pp. 294, 297), noting that the language of the *poju*’s chants was relatively more intelligible than that of the *hlewri*’s. The existence of ritual languages has been reported elsewhere, for the Tamang by Höfer (1971, p. 148, 1981, pp. 38–9), for the Thakali by Gauchan and Vinding (1977, p. 104) for the Thulung Rai by Allen (1975, p. 168, 1978b, pp. 248–49), for the Sunuwar by Fournier (1976, p. 116) and perhaps also for the *jha kri* described by Macdonald (1962, p. 127). In all these cases, the utterances of the officiant are set apart from colloquial speech by varying degrees of intelligibility, either by the use of terms from different dialects and languages, or by the presence of archaisms and kinds of vocabulary which may have been devised especially for the occasions concerned.

In the case of the Gurung priests, this complexity is connected with the characteristic parallelisms of the verse which they intone. Parallelisms are a feature of oral poetry noted in many parts of the world, for instance in Toda songs of South India discussed by Emeneau (1966, p. 331), in early Chinese ‘parallel prose’ examined by Hightower (1959, *passim*), and in some Tibetan songs recorded by Francke (1901, pp. 330–33); and Allen has pointed to their importance for Thulung

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7 Pignède’s view is corroborated by the evidence from Siklis, though the language of the two priests’ *pé* is certainly very closely involved and the contrast asserted should not be over-stated. There are more obscurities in the *hlewri*’s than in the *poju*’s chants; but they are syntactically comparable.
ritual language (1978b, pp. 251-52). More generally, and in view of the difficulties of vocabulary observed, Fox has stated that, “all elaborate forms of parallelism possess dialect variants in their repertoire of poetic words. Language diversification is a process that parallelism exploits” (1974, p. 83).

The reasons for the existence of parallelism and its accompanying linguistic complexity are not easily isolated for generalisation to all cases. Phillips suggests that “Parallelism in sijobang ensures that the story proceeds at a leisurely pace and that much of it is stated twice in different words. In this way it probably does serve to counteract somewhat both the transiency of the performance and the problems of noise and inattention” (1981, p. 115); and he concludes that the aesthetic appeal of this feature “seems to lie in the variety of expression which it demands, rather than in the repetition of sense or structure” (idem, p. 116). These aspects may be important for the few Gurungs who understand what the priests recite, less so for the majority who do not.

The language of pé is such that novice priests must learn the chants without understanding them, following a principle noted for Tibetan priests by Snellgrove (1961, p. 119). The meaning of pé so learned tends to be acquired haphazardly, unless the pupil specifically requests his master to explicate the words. From this it follows that the pupil cannot freely compose with the language of the pé as if it were his own, since he does not acquire the meanings to be manipulated until he has learned the words verbatim.

A second constraint on the priest lies in the fact that the laity, with few exceptions, do not understand the chants. This means that the priest cannot play to his audience when performing. Lord argued that, “the essential of the occasion of singing that influences the form of the poetry is the variability and instability of the audience” (1960, p. 16); and Phillips has noted the subtle ways in which bard and listeners may influence each other (1981, p. 169) and so the performance of the singer. The language peculiarities of the pé are idiosyncratic in ways which hinder or very largely eliminate this as a variable to be taken into account in the examination of the priestly chants.

A third, and extremely important constraint on the priest is the demand that he chant in the company of, and in unison with, other priests of the same kind. Although minor rites are usually performed by one priest alone, he may yet be accompanied by a pupil; and in larger rites, such as ‘making meat for the demon’ or the pwe funeral, priests almost always recite in harmony with others. In his study Heroic Poetry, Bowra observes that, “This habit of singing songs with two bards is certainly not usual, but it shows that in certain circumstances improvisation may give place to more careful preparation” (1952, p. 442). The careful preparation of
the poju and klenwi consists in the more or less careful learning by memory of the pé to be recited, rather than the learning of the “techniques of composition” on which Lord placed great emphasis (1960, p. 24). Were each priest given free reign to improvise or to perform creatively, then confusion would result.

These three constraints, together with the nature of the soul and the demon outlined earlier, correlate with the absence of spiritual inspiration of the priestly bard. There is a fair degree of coherence, if not of logical necessity, in this scheme; and it is appropriate to give added weight to the argument by presenting a transcribed text of one pé followed by a detailed comparison with performances by the same priests on different occasions and by different priests.

V The pé of Sirkulami, Leūrati, and Porulapwe

The text presented below was transcribed from a recording of the rite ‘making meat for the demon’ performed by P.S. and Y.B.B. in November 1980. The ‘lines’ correspond to metrical phrases defined by a falling cadence marking the end of such phrases or groups of phrases, and also by the rhythm and intonation which distinguish phrases before the final cadence and therefore internally. Although somewhat crude, this method shows clearly the various kinds of parallelism characteristic of pé. This version is version ‘A’; and in the analysis following, it is compared with version ‘B’, performed by H.P. and M.P. during a different kind of rite some days earlier in the same village, and with version ‘C’ by P.S., M.P., and S.P.B. performing nearly one year before in ‘making meat for the demon’.

The pé tells of little sister Sirkulami, her brother Leūrati, and their father Pórolapwe. Leūrati is unruly and will not receive his father’s bequest of priestly knowledge by learning from him and accepting the paraphernalia which rightfully belongs to a poju. Instead, he spends his time hunting, shooting and playing at sports. When Pórolapwe is about to die, Sirkulami sends a message to her brother telling him to return to inherit his due; but he returns only after Pórolapwe’s demise. Leūrati demands his inheritance from Sirkulami, who has received it, and the two compete for the paraphernalia in a contest. Sirkulami defeats her brother whom she kills, taking the parts of his body up to Moon and Sun. Leaving them there, she journeys about the priestly livings and returns to the Moon and the Sun in the form of a cat. She retrieves the parts of Leūrati’s body and, changing into a vulture or bird of prey, swoops down on medicine being prepared by certain priests for the specific purpose of bringing Leūrati back to life. Sirkulami then puts back the parts of Leūrati’s body and revivifies him with the medicine. All is now back to normal.8

8 Local opinion stresses how the girl defeats not only Leūrati but also the other priests whose medicines she steals. The legend is widely present in Gurung
Notes to the Gurung text are listed separately from the footnotes. These textual notes are confined to obscurities of language which P.S., the principal poju and most knowledgeable informant, was unable to clarify. The dictionary of Gurung prepared by Glover and others (1977) is of little use in justifying the renderings given in English, and it is unfortunately not possible to attach a glossary here.

1 tsö'iyë hlemai péda luda sōji sheko sume
   tsö'iyë hlemai péda luda sōji shemaku
   rime chyō sirkulami myūme chyō leūrati póba pórula pwēmai
   péda luda sōji sheko sume
   póba pwēturupwēlō

1 Starting to tell the péda-luda of the kings of Tso
   When telling the péda-luda of the kings of Tso
   Starting to tell the péda-luda of little sister Sirkulami,
   little brother Leūrati, and father Pórulapwé
   Father Pórulapwé

5 rime chyō sirkulami ri narilō
   myūme chyō leūrati rinarilō
   tsö myūme chyō leūrati na
   khi apa'i ade àkina
   apa'i bide àkina

5 Looked after one little sister Sirkulami
   Looked after one little brother Leūrati
   That little brother Leūrati
   Did not take his father's property
   Did not take father's wealth

...
10 apa'i ngorulo márulo siraludi àkina⁴
    ta hyerayé pharadi yashi
    oyela chyolo preme thuodi honashi
    taladi honoshi
    adedé honashi

10 Did not take father's spells, medicines and things
    When (he) had gone up to the highlands for deer
    When (he) had gone to play the shot-put with distant companions
    When (he) had gone to play at archery
    When (he) had gone to play in contests

15 rime chyö sirkulamime
    nge apa'i pwali prisö apa'i to tōdē ki yulushi⁴
    apa'i mru tōdē ki yulushi
    apa'i ade ki rilö
    apa'i bide ki rilö

15. Little sister Sirkulami (said)
    When you have come down to our father's clans' lands
    When you have come down to father's kings' lands
    Ask for father's property!
    Ask for father's wealth!

20 apa'i ngorulo márulo siraludi ki rilö
    apa póba pórulopwéna ti shyö shyöna shyokhadsé
    mwai shyö shyöna shyókhadsé
    nàyi rudsu kwoye ngyosho shima male some male sedé tidsé
      nidsé sadsé nèkhadsé
    ngyo apa'i adedé kiyu ó

20. Ask for father's spells, medicines and things!
    Father Pórulapwé has become old old old
    Has become old old old
    Has become ill deathly, lively, sickening, recovering
    Come down to take our father's property!

25 apa'i bidedé kiyu o
    apa'i ngorulo márulo siraludi kiyu ó
    e myûme chyö leïrati ó
    rime chyö sirkulamidi thöye prîëya labridsé⁵
    saraki rómeya labridsé
25. Come down to take father’s wealth!
   Come down to take father’s spells, medicines and things!
   O Little brother Leûrati!
   Little sister Sirkulami had (that) message sent for him
   Had (that) word taken for him

30 apa póba pórupwëna ti shyō shyōna shyōyadsē
   mwai shyō shyōna shyōyadsē
   nāyi rudsu kwoye ngyosho shima male sóma malé sedsé tidsē
   nidsé sadsé nēyadsē
   rime chyō sirakulamido sōyā puye kwaisō mela karape nosō
     yābyō tēnadsē
   hubyō wānadsē

30. Father Pórulapwë went old old old
   Went old old old
   Went ill deathly, lively, recovering, sickening
   Little sister Sirkulami cast him away in a coffin at the
   crossing of ways
   Cast him away

35 rime chyō sirakulamido sōyā puye kwaisō mela karape nosō
   yābyō tēnābwe lisō
   hubyō wānābwe lisō
   tsa myūme chyō leûratiya peyudsē
   ngi apa’i ade nga kîmô
   apa’i bide nga kîmô

35. After little sister Sirkulami had cast him away in a coffin—at
   the crossing of ways
   After (she) had cast him away
   That little brother Leûrati arrived down
   I shall take our father’s property
   I shall take father’s wealth

40 apa’i ngorulo màrulo siraludi nga kîmô
   e rime chyō sirakulami ó
   ngyo apa póba pórupwëna ti shyō shyōna shyōkhamangyere
   mwai shyō shyōna shyōkhamangyere
   nāyi rudsu kwoye ngyosho shima male soma male sedsé tidsē
   nidsé sadsé nêkhamangyere
40. I shall take father’s spells, medicines and things
O little sister Sirkulami!
When our father Pórulapwé was becoming old old old
When (he) was becoming old old old
When (he) was becoming ill, deathly, lively, recovering, sickening

45 ngadi thóye priteya labrilama
soroki rómeya labritago
e myúme chyó leúrati ó
ngi apa póba pórupwéna ti shyó shyôna shyôyadsé
muwi shyó shyôna shyoyadsé

45. I had (that) message sent for (you)
Had (that) word taken for (you)
O little brother Leúrati!
Our father Pórulapwé went old old old
Went old old old

50 náyi rudsu kwoye ngyoshò shima male sóma mal sed sé tied sé
nidsé sadsé nèvadsé
ngami sóyá puye kwaisó mela karape nosó yàbyó tènàdsé
hubyó wànàdsé
e myúme chyó leúrati ó
apa’i tsami nga ngyengye

50. Went ill deathly, lively, recovering, sickening
It was I who cast him away in a coffin at the crossing of ways
Cast him away
O little brother Leúrati!
It is I who am father’s son

55 apa’i kradsepó-madsepó pana-tsana lade-tarawa yówa-lewa
ngardó-ngashi chivama ngagadi thóngye
e rime chyó sirakulami ó
ama’i tsami ki ngyengye
ama’i kwërsásá thórisa rëshisa nabi kyera póga-tëshima
kigadi thóngye
e rime chyó sirakulami ó
55. Father's feather head-dress, long-haired hat, leather belt of bells, drum and cymbals, I shall receive
   O little sister Sirkulami!
   It is you who are mother's daughter
Mother's loom, stout loom-holding poles, weave-setting poles, 'ear'-rod, closing-bar and spreading-pin you will receive
   O little sister Sirkulami!

60 ngi apa'i kradsepó-madsepó pana-tsana lade-tarawa yöwa-lewa
   ngardō-ngashi chivama tsuradi nōyu
   e rime chyō sirakulami ó
   ngyo adedé hlōlé
   bidedé hlōlé
   ngorulo mārulo sirałudi hlōlé

60. Bring down here our father's feather head-dress, long-haired hat—leather belt of bells, drum and cymbals:
   O little sister Sirkulami!
   Let us play for our property!
   Let us play for the wealth!
   Let us play for the spells, medicines and things!

65 e rime chyō sirakulami ó
   rime chyō sirakulami myūme chyō leūratine
   kyemai adedé hlōwaka
   bidedé hlōwaka
   ngorulo mārulo sirałudi hlōwaka

65. O little sister Sirkulami!
   Little sister Sirkulami and little brother Leūrati
   They play for the property
   Play for the wealth
   Play for the spells, medicines and things

70 myūme chyō leūratina kwodsé karata tsora tenuka tēyudé
   rime chyō sirakulamina thōri rēshi tsora tenuka tēyudé
   myūme chyō leūratina morogyō puruba tsora tenuka tēyudé
   rime chyō sirakulamina nabi kyera pōga-teshi tsora tenuka tēyudé
   myūme chyō leūratina tali ade tsora tenuka tēyudé
70. Little brother Leürati set down and stood on the points of a broad knife and a small knife
   Little sister Sirkulami set down and stood on the points of a stout weave-holding pole and weave-setting pole
   Little brother Leürati set down and stood on the points of a bamboo pole and a wooden stake
   Little sister Sirkulami set down and stood on the points of an 'ear'-rod, closing-bar and spreading-pin
   Little brother Leürati set down and stood on the point of a bow

75  rime chyô sirakulamina kodu chyudu tsora tenuka têyudsé
    myûme chyô leûratina taye tsora tenuka têyudsé
    khina ta mi kyułono makana
    pri mi kyułono makana
    rime chyô sirakulamina taye tsora tenuka têyudsé

75. Little sister Sirkulami set down and stood on the point of a water jug
   Little brother Leûrati set down and stood on the point of a needle
   He could not pass through the needle's eye
   Could not pass through the needle's eye
   Little sister Sirkulami set down and stood on the point of a needle

80  khina ta midi kyułushi
    pri midi kyułushi
    myûme chyô leûratina rime chyô sirakulamidi marasô hloolo
    nónó lawâdzé7
    mrísô hloolo nónó lawâdzé
    tsa myûme chyô leûratiyé têdsu hlodsudi tiyeshi

80. When she had passed through the needle's eye
    Having passed through the needle's eye
    Little sister Sirkulami killed little brother Leûrati
    Killed
    Having extracted the heart and lungs of that little brother Leûrati
85  khaidsu ngidsudi tiyeshi
nekrodsu krôdsudi tiyeshi
ridsu shedsudi tiyeshi
tidsu mwâidsudi tiyeshi
alaye kwâida nora yelatsadi tsôshi

85. Having extracted the kidneys and liver
Having extracted the bowels
Having extracted the bones and flesh
Having extracted the skin and hair
Having put (them) inside her gown

90  yulutsadi tsôshi
  ta murubwe tône murubweyê shyôra
kâulo-kume marabayê tsôra
shili-ngme mrabayê tsôra
  ta mari piri nora tsôtêdsê

90. Having put them (there)
Up in the village of the sky stream of the sky
In the nest of Moon-Nine
In the nest of Sun-Seven
Put them there inside a golden box

95  mwije  piri nora tsôtêdsê
mrâwa tôtêdsê
liwa tênadsê
kawa utêdsê
pelaka plîtêdsê

95. Put them inside a silver box
Set closed the door
Set down the ladder
Set over the lid
Set across the bar

100  tsu tsâ ârabwe nóra sôptiru yashi
myû ârabwe rîna ôdara chiyêshi
khina shyâjô lojô nojô chyôjô yeda yeji korawara honudsê
na tiro takhadêsê
na ngiro takhadêsê
100. This woman without a son having gone away alone
Girl without a man having left secretly
She went to journey about the priestly livings East, South,
   West, North,
One day passed
Two days passed

105 na sŏro takhdṣé
   na pliro takhdṣé
   na ngara takhdṣé
   na ngiro takhdṣé
   na kuro takhdṣé

105. Three days passed
Four days passed
Five days passed
Seven days passed
Nine days passed

110 tala na ngi na kuro mangyere
   tsu tsu ārabwe nóra sŏpliru yaléya
   myū ārabwe rina ḏara chiléya
   khina kâyera yerany yatokhdṣé
   chyayera yerana yatokhdṣé

110 When it was seven and nine days
This woman without a son going alone
Girl without a man leaving secretly
She set off coming back kâyera-yerana
Set off coming back chyayera-yerana

115 ta murubwe tōne murubweyé shyōra
   tsu kāula-kume marabayé tsōra
   shili-ngime mribayé tsōra
   khina ngyaũ ngyaũga rakhadsé
   ngyaũ ngyaũga rakhadsé

115 Up in the village of the sky stream of the sky
To the nest of that Moon-Nine
To the nest of Sun-Seven
She came miaowing ngyaũ-ngyaũ
Came miaowing ngyaũ-ngyaũ
120 au she nöra khadsé kaññoye-kume ó
   ru nöra khadsé shiliye-ngime ó
   tsa nyûme chyô leûratiye tidsu hloûu khâidsu nûgìdsu
   krodûu krodûu yëshî têlo
   yishi têlo
   kye kaññu-ku shili-ngime sudamaga

120 Came to carry away the flesh O Moon-Nine
   Came to carry away the bones O Sun-Seven
   Where did (you) put that little brother Leûrati’s heart
      and lungs, kidneys and liver, bowels
   Where did (you) put them
   She asked Moon-Nine and Sun-Seven

125 ngidi mari pîri nora tsûtêshimu
   mwiye pîri nora tsûtêshimu
   mëko tôtêmô
   liko plîtêmô
   kago utêmô

125 We have put (them) inside a golden box
   Have put (them) inside a silver box
   Have set closed the door
   Have set down the ladder
   Have set over the lid

130 pelaka plîtêmô
   kaññu-kume pyôhye towara yabwe lisô
   shili-ngime kuûra towara yabwe lisô
   mra tôma khâdsé tôkhâdsé
   li krëma tsêdse krëkhâdsé

130 Have set across the bar
   After Moon-Nine had gone to weave a mat
   After Sun-Seven had gone to weave a cloth
   Came opening the door opened the door
   Pulled climbing the ladder climbed the ladder
135 ta mari piri ka tishi poshi
mwiye piri ka thodi poshi
tsa myume chyö leiratiye tidsu kladu khaisu ngidsu krodsu
krodsu tidsu shegsu tidsu muaidusdi tishi
ki kwaida norayelatsadi toshi
yulutsadi toshi

135 Having removed and taken the lid of the golden box
Having held and taken the lid of the silver box
Having removed the heart and lungs, kidneys and liver, bowels,
bones and flesh, skin and hair of that little brother
Leürati
Having put them inside her gown
Having put them (there)

140 ta murubwe tøne murubwëye shyöra
ta kãulo-kume marabayë tsöra
shiï-ngime mribaye tsöra
khina chya puru nobe kade tsuridsë
furu nobe pede tsuridsë

140 Up in the village of the sky stream of the sky
In the nest of Moon-Nine
In the nest of Sun-Seven
She changed into a bird of prey
Changed into a bird of prey

145 mara lama guru tsoriye guru pwëga guru urgyena guru gyà nowa
guru tse tawa gurumai
kyemi maison maina arule mai kishi
maiye maina karulë mai kishi
maiye maina kukule mai kishi
maiye maina tabu mai kishi

145 Down below the Lama Master, Tsogi Master, Tibetan Master,
Urgyena Master, Poju Master and Hlewri Master
They having brought medicine medicine Arule medicine
Having brought medicine medicine Karule medicine
Having brought medicine medicine Kukule medicine
Having brought medicine medicine Tabu medicine
Having concocted breath-giving bespelled medicine
Having concocted blood-giving bespelled medicine
Having concocted warmth-giving bespelled medicine
There in the village of the sky stream of the sky
In the nest of that Moon-Nine

In the nest of Sun-Seven
Up there (she) has mysteriously become a bird of prey
Has mysteriously become a bird of prey
O hide the breath-giving bespelled medicine!
O hide the blood-giving bespelled medicine!

O hide the warmth-giving bespelled medicine!
The Lama Master, Tsogi Master, Tibetan Master, Urgyena Master, Poju Master and Hlewri Master
They could not hide the breath-giving bespelled medicine
Could not hide the blood-giving bespelled medicine
Could not hide the warmth-giving bespelled medicine
khina murubwe tōne murubweyé shyōra
kāulo-kume marabaye tśōdsé
shili-ngime mribaye tśōdsé
khina kāyera yerana yapuru yudsé¹²
chayayera yerana yapuru yushi

In the village of the sky stream of the sky
From the nest of Moon-Nine
From the nest of Sun-Seven
She swooped down kāyera-yerana
Swooped down chayayera-yerana

khina kāyera yerana yatopo’ iyadsé
chayayera yerana yatopo’ iyadsé
lama guru tso’ iye guru ṣuṣama guru urgyena guru gyā
nowa guru tse nowa gurumana
kyema sabu ṣuṣama krolu tśōridśé
mabu ṣuṣama krolu tśōridśé

Swooping she snatched away (the medicines)
Swooping snatched away
The Lama Master, Tsogi Master, Tibetan Master, Urgyena
Master, Poju Master and Hlewri Master
They wept speaking to the ground
Wept speaking to the sky

na ribwe ru labwe krolu tśōridśé
tsa tsambwe kri labwe krolu tśōridśé
gyā prebwe ne labwe krolu tśōridśé¹³
rime chyō sirakulamime myūme chyō leūratiye chyedele
tone shyō nane dhira tsukhadsé
rime chyō sirakulamidi māiye māina arule māi kishi

Wept as dusk fell
Wept as darkness came
Wept as (they) walked the path
Little sister Sirkulami came back to the village and stream,
dwelling and house of little brother Leūrați
Little sister Sirkulami having brought medicine medicine
Arule medicine
māiye māina karule māi kishi
māiye māina kukule māi kishi
māiye māina tabu māi kishi
samera tsōbwe māi ngodi prulushi
romera tsōbwe māi ngodi prulushi

Having brought medicine medicine Karule medicine
Having brought medicine medicine Kukule medicine
Having brought medicine medicine Tabu medicine
Having concocted the breath-giving bespelled medicine
Having concocted blood-giving bespelled medicine

kamera tsōbwe māi ngodi prulushi
myūme chyō leūratiye kwodaye nosō
tīdsu hlodsudi pyānimō
khaisu ngidsudi pyānimō
krōdsu krōdsudi pyānimō

Having concocted warmth-giving bespelled medicine
Inside the body of little brother Leūrati
(He) went to put the heart and lungs
Went to put the kidneys and liver
Went to put the bowels

ridsu shēdsudi pyānimō
tīdsu mwaisdsudi pyānimō
mwaisds’ āyowa kōdsidi rulushi
kods’ āyowa tīdsu hlodsudi rulushi
hlods’ āyowa khaisu ngidsudi rulushi

Went to put the bones and flesh
Went to put the skin and hair
The hair insufficient, having added spleen
The spleen insufficient, having added heart and lungs
The lungs insufficient, having added kidneys and liver

ngids’ a—... /TAPE END/
... /TAPE START/ ... —adi sōshi
koye nena tīra hloradi sōshi
hloye nena khāira ngiradi sōshi
ngiye nena krora kroradi sōshi
195 The liver in— ... /TAPE END/
... /TAPE START/ ... having completed the ...
From half the spleen having completed the heart and lungs
From half the lungs having completed the kidneys and liver
From half the liver having completed the bowels

200 kroye nena rira sheradi sōshi
  sheye nena tira mwairadi sōshi
  mwaiye nena shashera noye shado no àru
  ngishera none ngido to àru\textsuperscript{15}
  tode po' i àru

200 From half the bowels having completed the bones and flesh
From half the flesh having completed the skin and hair
From half the hair the broken was made faultless
The broken was made perfect
There was noone missing from the clansmen

205 nodse po'ì àru
  àde po'ì àsu
  tsedse po'ì àru
  ngyebdse po'ì àru
  tundse po'ì àru\textsuperscript{16}

205 There was no harmed person
There was no man missing
There was no long-life absent
There was no neighbour absent
There was no villager missing

210 rime chyō sirakulami myūme chyō leūrati póba pórulo
  pwémai péda luda sōji shebwe ridé\textsuperscript{17}

210 Finished telling the péda-luda of little sister Sirkulami, little
  brother Leūrati and father Pórulapwé

VI Stability and Variation in Performances

Although versions A and B differ in metre and in the fact that they were
performed by different priests, the consistence of number, sequence and general
sense of episodes in the narrative is impressive. Table 1 sets out a comparison
between the two performances at this level, the difference in the number of lines
resulting largely from the metrical change. Distinctions derive here principally
from the repeating in B of four short passages totalling twenty-six lines, which occur only once each in A; and there is a minor change in order where two points which occur in the same order on first expression in both chants, are repeated inversely in B. A small addition to A of four lines does not appear in B, since the corresponding passage in the latter performance is obscured by the priests chanting for a moment incoherently and it is not possible to discriminate their words against the background of drumming. Likewise, there are two brief additions to B, totalling seven lines, of which five may be important but which again are unfortunately obliterated by the conditions of reciting. Despite these difficulties, there is no sense in which B could be said to be the performance of a different pé from that of performance A: they are very clearly the same narrative. The version C, performed almost twelve months earlier, is almost completely identical with A, such differences as there are being at the verbal level rather than at the level of narrative events.

Comparison in more detail focuses on the quantity of those complete lines repeated verbatim in the different performances, and those which are unique to each (where ‘unique’ includes both the quite unrepresented lines and repetitions of common lines). Attempting to compare A and B by these criteria results in

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<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Sense</th>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Sense</th>
<th>Lines</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Lines</td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Lines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>Starting</td>
<td>1–3</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Starting</td>
<td>1–3</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Looked after</td>
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<td>One little</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Not taking</td>
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<td><strong>3.</strong></td>
<td>Not a son</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>L. playing</td>
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<td>L. playing</td>
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<td>11.</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>S. Journeys</td>
<td>100–114</td>
<td>17. Contesting</td>
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<td>115–119</td>
<td>18. The contest</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>S. takes organs</td>
<td>137–139</td>
<td>22. S. the cat</td>
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<td>Impossible</td>
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<td>S. concocts</td>
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<td>31. Impossible</td>
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<td>32.</td>
<td>S. operates</td>
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<td>32. Swooping</td>
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<td>33.</td>
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<td>33. Impossible</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Ending</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>34. Weeping</td>
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<td>35. S. returns</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36. S. concocts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>37. S. operates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>38. All well</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39. Ending</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** the asterisks ** mark those points absent from the other version; these points include repetitions (B 11.32–37, 81–88, 297–308) of which the first instances are common to both A and B and therefore unmarked.

The abbreviations should be clear by reference to the translation:

L—Leûrati, S—Sirkulami, P—Pórułapvé; M & S—Moon and Sun.

Table 2, which argues that about 20% of A are whole lines common to B, 11% of B common to A, while 15% of A are unique to itself and 18% of B likewise unique. These figures are complex for two reasons: firstly, they exclude lines which are comparable but modified through the substitution or addition of individual terms within the same grammatical structure; secondly, they exclude those lines which, in B, are distinct because they are recited to a metre demanding generally meaningless, ‘filler syllables’ and the dismemberment of what in A are whole lines.

To deal with the second point, it is necessary to devise a method of comparing ‘line equivalents’, that is to say lines which, excluding the largely meaningless filler
syllables and the apparent dismemberment, turn out to be identical to their correspondents in A. Although this is an artificial procedure, it is important to note that around a quarter of the lines in each version are in this sense equivalent, as presented in Table 3; and the percentages of ‘whole line equivalents’, derived from Tables 2 and 3, rise accordingly.

The change from A to B in metrical terms is a change from greater to less metrical freedom. Gurung verse of these kinds is characterised by accentual stress rather than number or quantity of syllables. The former is a feature noted for some Tibetan poetry according to Tucci (1949/1966, p. 16), Poucha (1950, p. 235) and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Whole Lines</th>
<th>Unique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Common</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1–3</td>
<td>1–3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9–11</td>
<td>14–16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18–23</td>
<td>21–27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25–27</td>
<td>29–31</td>
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<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38–41</td>
<td>51–54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54–56</td>
<td>68–70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63–65</td>
<td>75–77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66–69</td>
<td>78–80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85–88</td>
<td>128–131</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42/210</td>
<td>42/379</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=c. 20%</td>
<td>=c. 11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|         | Unique      |        |
|         | A           | B      |
| 4       | 6–12        |        |
| 13      | 32–37**     |        |
| 15      | 42–43       |        |
| 28–29   | 46–47       |        |
| 42–44   | 57–58       |        |
| 47–50   | 62–65       |        |
| 95–99   | 81–88**     |        |
| 106     | 126         |        |
| 110     | 135         |        |
| 127–128 | 142–145     |        |
| 149     | 147         |        |
| 152     | 187         |        |
| 167     | 196         |        |
| 182     | 211–212     |        |
| 196     | 248–250     |        |
| 198–200 | 255–260     |        |
| 208–209 | 284–285     |        |
| 31/210  | 303–308**   |        |

=c. 15%  318–319
335–336
357–359
362–363

68/397
=c. 18%

NB Asterisks ** = ‘repeated lines’.
Vekerdí (1952, p. 229), though in a context of relatively fixed numbers of syllables per line. The change between A and B is, however, one in which the number of syllables per line in A, varying from five to twenty-five, becomes in B constrained to between six and eight by the need to chant to the rhythm of a drum. The 'filler syllables' or 'carrier sounds' permit this change to occur without any necessary variation in the vocabulary and syntax of the phrases recited. In this way, the need for

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70–75</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76–78</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79–81</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**(79</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89–90</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92–93</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100–101</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103–105</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107–109</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120–121</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131–132</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138–139</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147–148</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150–151</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>173–174</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180–181</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>183–185</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>205</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19/210 = c. 23%
99/379 = c. 26%

NB The Asterisks ** denote a line repeated in B but not repeated in A; it is excluded from the arithmetic of A, included in that of B.
'formulae' of various kinds to fit varying constraints is avoided by the singer "with an essential idea to express under different metrical conditions" (Lord, 1960, p. 35); and in spite of the metrical change, the chants remain relatively very stable.

To address the first point stated above, it is necessary to examine the character of lines classed as 'modified' by substitution of distinct individual terms or their addition within a consistent grammatical structure, even where this structure is dismembered by the metrical peculiarities of B. The notion of a 'line equivalent' is therefore again useful, and the resulting comparisons are set out in Table 4. This compares individual lines of B with corresponding lines and part-lines of A, and concludes that about 42% of A are lines modified in terms of B, and 45% of B are modified in terms of the lines and part-lines of A.

The kinds of substitution concerned may be qualified as 'weak' and 'strong', depending on whether the sense of the terms differs so changing the sense of the phrase. There are very few instances of 'strong' changes of this kind: the full name of a character is replaced by a pronoun, or the onomatopoeic miaowing ngyaïng ngyaï of l.119 is replaced by yema yeku; and there are some changes in the suffixes of verbs which yet do not alter the tense or mood of the phrase. These changes might not even be regarded as 'strong' at all.

The kinds of additional term present in A compared with B (which is more economical) are also limited. Particles giving emphasis (-ga), pronouns (tsa 'that', khina 'he, she'), or minor qualifiers (ta 'up above') form a large proportion of these extra items. More pertinent to the narrative are the inserting of the verb sudamaga 'asked' and the phrase gyà pèbwe 'path walking'; but these are very few, and certain

**TABLE 4**
Comparison of Modified Lines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5(S)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>133(S)</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>133(S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6(S)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>133(S)</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>133(S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>7-8(+)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>134(S)</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>134(S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>12(S)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>134(S)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>134(S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>16(+)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>135(S)</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>135(S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>17(+)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>135(S)</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>135(S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>24(+)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>135(S)</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>135(S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>30(S)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>135(S)</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>135(S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>30(S)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>136(X)</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>136(X)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>31(S)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>136(S)</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>136(S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>32(S)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>137(+)</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>137(+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>189 - 124(+)</td>
<td>283 - 164(+)</td>
<td>371 - 204(S)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>190 - 123(S)</td>
<td>286 - 165(+)</td>
<td>373 - 206(S)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>191 - 124(X)</td>
<td>287 - 165(X)</td>
<td>374 - 207(S)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>192 - 125(X)</td>
<td>288 - 166(S)</td>
<td>375 - 210(+)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>193 - 125(S)</td>
<td>289 - 168(X)</td>
<td>376 - 210(+)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>194 - 126(X)</td>
<td>290 - 168(S)</td>
<td>377 - 210(X)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>195 - 126(S)</td>
<td>291 - 169(S)</td>
<td>378 - 210(S)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>197 - 129(S)</td>
<td>292 - 169(S)</td>
<td>379 - 210(S)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>198 - 130(S)</td>
<td>293 - 170(+)</td>
<td>170 88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>379 210=c.42%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>=c.45%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key:** S = a term or phrase in A replaces its substitute in B  
+ = a term or phrase in A is added to opposite line in B  
X = line in B is part of a longer modified line in A but itself contains no distinguishing features. ‘Filler Syllables’ are not counted as distinctive.

(1.106) are the unpractised ‘errors’ of the inexperienced assistant pupil, subsequently corrected by the principal priest, his master.

In his study of the Sumatran *tukang sijobang*, Phillips found that, “about 40 per cent of the lines in the first performance recurred in the second, whether in full, or as regards grammatical structure (with substitution of vocabulary), or as regards vocabulary (recombined in a different construction), (1981, pp. 167–68). Applying the same criteria to the pe, it may be observed that A and B are close to the extent that about 85% of A recur in B, and 82% of B recur in A, where there are no clear cases of recombination in Phillips’s sense and where ‘recur’ includes the repetition of whole line equivalents and the presence of ‘modified’ lines according to the analysis given above.

If the two versions A and B are so close, then it is to be expected that different performances by the same priest will be still closer. This is the case. Table 5 enumerates the only distinctions at the verbal level between A and C, performed nearly twelve months apart; and Table 6 summarizes the comparisons between A and B and A and C in percentage terms. The stability is undoubtedly impressive.

Bowra argued that, “A poem of a hundred or so lines is more easily composed and retained in the head than a poem of several thousand” (1952, p. 232), with the implication that greater variability could be expected in the performances of longer poems. A comparison between two performances of a different pe, roughly for times as long as A and C but performed shortly before these and on the same occasions, showed percentage similarities and differences which are almost exactly the same.
If the same average degree of variability occurs between performances of the same precation by the same experienced priest in a rite like 'making meat for the demon', then

TABLE 5
Differences between A and C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.97 ṭenadsé 'having set down'</td>
<td>plitedsé 'have undone' *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.106 chanted by pupil alone</td>
<td>Absent**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.122 terms absent</td>
<td>ridsu shedsu tidsu mwaisdu 'bones flesh skin and hair' **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.135 ka tishi 'having removed the lid'</td>
<td>ka di—ka ti'i 'removed** the lid (and then)' ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.136 ka tho'di 'having held the lid'</td>
<td>ka tho'i—ka tho'di* kya lama guru tso'iyé— ( gurü pwéma guru urgyena- ) ( guru gyá nowa guru tsi- ) ( nowa gurumana 'those Lama ) Tibetan Masters, Urgyena ( Masters, Tsogi Masters, ) Masters, Hlewri Masters Poju Masters*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Insert between 11.157 & 158 | \( nadsa pura ngaidsa yudsé \) \( nedsa pura ngaidsa yudsé** \) \( 'came down back to the place/ came down back to the spot' \)

Note: One asterisk * = 'modification absent from B'
Two Asterisks ** = 'modification identical or very close to B'

TABLE 6
Similarities between A and B, and A and C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Identical</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>141</td>
<td></td>
<td>205</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210</td>
<td>379</td>
<td></td>
<td>210</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=43%</td>
<td>=37%</td>
<td>=97%</td>
<td>=97%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>Substitutes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>&amp;</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=42%</td>
<td>=45%</td>
<td>=2%</td>
<td>=2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Unique</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210</td>
<td>379</td>
<td></td>
<td>210</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=15%</td>
<td>=18%</td>
<td>=1%</td>
<td>=1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the percentage have been rounded.
the Gurung poju as a bard can perform approaching 5,000 lines of verse with remarkable consistency.

VII Concluding Remarks

To the extent that it is possible to generalise on the basis of the foregoing material, it may be asserted that the experienced Gurung priest comes very close indeed to achieving his aim of exact repetition in the ritual chanting of pe. In contrast, the Sumatran bard Munin "seems to have acquired, over the years, an ability to vary expression by substituting alternative words within the same grammatical framework and recombining the same vocabulary in various patterns, and he relies more on these resources than on straightforward repetition. The comparative novice as appears not yet to have developed this faculty to the same degree, and instead depends more on memory and repetition" (Phillips, 1981, p. 168). The experienced bard is not the same as the novice; and the extent to which the long practised poju differs from his pupil has yet to be assessed. But the contrast between the two kinds of bard, the reciter and the composer, appears to be an important contrast.

This paper has suggested certain characteristics of the Gurung priest which elucidate how his poetic performances differ from those of the Sumatran bard: the highly obscure language of pe, the method of learning which stressess retention in the memory before understanding of the words, and the need to be able coherently to chant in the company of other priests. It has also argued that these three factors may be connected with the absence of spirit possession or trance and the spiritual justification for individual creativity which these experiences provide.

It will be observed that the Sumatran bard does not require such spiritual justification for his creativity, although credited with certain powers and mystical knowledge for learning and improving his performances (Phillips, 1981, pp. 16-17); and it will be concluded that there is no necessary connection between the absence of spirit encounters of trance and the conservatism characteristic of the poju. But it is of interest to know how far the ecstatic, 'possessed' or spiritually inspired officiant faires by the criteria of originality adopted above, since he will be expected to resemble more the Sumatran than the Gurung. This hypothesis, when tested, will fill a gap noted with some despair by A. T. Hatto complaining justly that, "it may never be possible for Westerners closely to compare shamanistic with bardic utterance, either at the level of voice-production, intonation and metre, or in details of style, diction and content" (1970, p. 2). It is certainly possible to do so in Nepal; and there is every reason to hope that more will be achieved in this field.
Notes to the text of the pe of Sirkulami

1 11-1-2 tso ~ unnasalised tsō, the land to the North from where Gurungs are said to have come down, may be an unsound opinion. sjōi ~ sōshī ‘having made’ cf. II 196ff; sheko and shemaku ~ shewa ‘informing, telling, knowing.’ The priest P.S. was often unable to specify more than the general sense of a phrase.

2 1.4 pwéluruwpwēla substitutes for póurlapwē; pwēmai denotes the sora jāt clans, pwēmai refers to ‘Tibetans’, but the substitution here seems to carry no weight.

3 ngorulo márulo sitaludi in 1.10 was glossed ‘property’ (sampati); ngo ‘spell’? mà mai ‘medicine’? si~ sē ~ ‘things’? There is clearly some assonance intended.

4 1.16 pwáli prisō is obscure; ki yulushi was heard as kyulushi ‘having passed through’ (cf. 181) which appears difficult here. to is a linked kingly (car jāt) subclan with itspwēmai serving clans, to which priests belong through clanship. Note mru‘ king’ in parallel 1.17; tō ‘village, place, forest clearing’.

5 1.28 chanting sometimes adds or blurs vowels, hence sirakula. Generally, word variants have been transcribed since they may be linguistically important; but nasality on vowels has been standardised although rather irregular on the recordings.

6 1.33 mela karape ‘coffin’ ~ karapth ‘bed, shelf’? và and hu are obscure; byō ~ byōwaw ‘throwing away’? The word boundaries here are hard to sustain: yabyōtēndāsē/habyōwānāndsē would be defensible as a transcription of compound verbs.

7 11.82–3 maraso hlolo nônó/mrisā hlolo nônó always carries the meaning ‘dead’ with a suitable verb accompanying it; the distinct terms are obscure. Colloquially, sewa ‘killing’ is used also to mean ‘defeating’; so the idiom is doubly apt here.

8 1.100 nóra is obscure, though paired with rma‘girl, sister’ in 1.101. sōpliru ‘three and four days’? òdara ~ odal yawa ‘going off secretly, eloping’?

9 11.111-12 verbs ending in -léya here are presumably adverbial rather than first person imperative.

10 11.143-44 chya puru nobe kade/puru nobe pede was glossed as kre ‘bird of prey’; but the phrase is certainly more complex and contains terms which P.S. did not understand.

11 11.156-57 dkwōdsē ‘did not understand’; if the colloquial equivalent (d kwō’ī) occurred in this position, the phrase would mean that Sirkulami did not understand that she was becoming a bird of prey; P.S. argued that the verb referred to the priests who were unaware that Sirkulami was changing into a bird. The preferred rendering here is ‘mysteriously’.

12 11.168-69 yapuru is obscure but compares with ya-pówara ‘to go to bring’ as a plausible reconstruction; the participle suffix-wa ‘-ing’ is often lost when completed with the locative and purposive -ra ‘to, in order to’.

13 11.175-77 ru labwe ‘thread making’? kri labwe is unclear.
14 The full lines missing while the tape was replaced were present in version C as follows: ngids' ayowa krödsu krodsu rulushi/krods' ayowa ridsu shedsu rulushi/sheds' ayowa tidsu mvaidsemi rulushi/mwaï ayowa mväiye nena köradi sōshi 'liver insufficient, having added bowels/bowels insufficient, having added bones and flesh/flesh insufficient, having added skin and hair/hair insufficient, having completed the spleen with half a hair.

15 11.202–03 are obscure in all details except for the final term ḍru 'there being not present'. The general sense was glossed by P.S.; and the renderings given in the translation are loose guesses.

16 11.204–09 are obscure, like the preceding couplet. The rendering offered assumes that the first terms in 11.205–06 are verbs in -dse qualifying pó as 'somebody'. But the syntax is difficult; and the subsequent lines still more obscure: tsedsé is only crudely and superficially similar to tše 'long life'; but P.S. could not suggest detailed explications of this passage.

17 1.210 söji shebve ridsé was glossed as 'finished telling' (shelkha'i). The infix -ri- for verbs introduces a declarative and continuitive sense to the action stated; but it is not clear whether the same term is represented in ridsé.

The material for this study was collected during 1979–1981. The author gratefully acknowledges the privilege of an S.S.R.C. post-graduate studentship at the University of Cambridge, Department of Social Anthropology, and of the affiliated status granted by Tribhuvan University's Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies during the period of fieldwork.
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