THE GURUNG PRIEST AS BARD

S. S. Strickland

Cambridge

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 jhâkri 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 Gorer 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 ngiam are stated by Fournier to become possessed by an evil forest spirit (banjhâkri) which teaches them “formules propitiatoires, mantrâ et les techniques pour façonner (leur) tambour chamanique (âhyânro)” (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 Gorer (op. cit. p. 220) and Siiger (1967 I, p. 165), and the pan-Nepalese jhâkri 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 khetra.¹ These priests learn arduously from their teachers the spells (ngo) and recited narratives (pe) 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 kilbri (1966, p. 35), Messerschmidt paju and kebre (1976 a, glossary pp. 143, 140 s.v.), Glover and others paju or paju and khlyebri or lxebrri (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 knowledgable 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 ō after stops, and where this aspiration contrasts with breathiness on the vowel the letter is marked by a postvocalic ō. Accental 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 [ë], á [a], ã [ã], o [o], o [œ], 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: e [ë], è [e], á [ã], a [a], o [o], o [œ]. 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. 168); 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 interprétation, fruit de son expérience, de sa formation personnelle. L'intégration du client dans ce nouvel ensemble peut être et est souvent purement provisoire. Elle n'est définitive que lorsque le jhâkri transmet intégralement son enseignement à 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 hleuuri 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 līwa ‘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 khōwa). Comparably, when the priest is making tame the soul, he also aims to bring back prosperity upon the household hurt through illness.

2 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 pai 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 (1975b, 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 phlaḥ'e nasā), 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.3 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.4

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 pē; 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 phlaḥ 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 pwe 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 hleuri 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 Pignede (1966, plate XXIII: 64) and made from nine gallons (pāthi) 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 pd ‘examples, principles’, which are narratives in verse or parallel prose, and in the muttering of ngo ‘spells’.

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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. lugs) 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 hleuri 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 sche 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 guslar, who are specialists in "composition during oral performance" with those who recite "sacred texts which must be preserved word for word" (1960, p. 5 andnote 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 *pe*.

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, 1978 b, pp. 248-49), for the Sunuwar by Fournier (1976, p. 116) and perhaps also for the *jhākri* 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' *pe* 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 sjobang 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 hlewri 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, Leũrati, 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 Leũrati, and their father Pórulapwé. Leũrati 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 Pórulapwé is about to die, Sirkulami sends a message to her brother telling him to return to inherit his due; but he returns only after Pórulapwé’s demise. Leũrati 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 Leũrati’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 Leũrati back to life. Sirkulami then puts back the parts of Leũrati’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 Leũrati 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'îye hlemai péda luda sôji sheko sume
   tsö'îye hlemai péda luda sôji shemaku
   rime chyö sirkulami myüme chyö leürati póba pórula pwémai
   péda luda sôji sheko sume
   póba pwélurupwèlò

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 Leürati, and father Pórulapwé
Father Pórulapwé

5 rime chyö sirkulami ri narilô
   myüme chyö leürati rinariô
   tsa myüme chyö leürati na
   khi apa'i ade àkina
   apa'i bide àkina

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

country, versions being recorded by Pignède in Mohoriya (1966, p. 296) and by Messerschmidt in Lamjung District (1976b, p. 202). It is used to justify the wearing by a young priest, at the pwe thewa ‘great interruption’ funeral of a poju, of a red gown usually worn by women; and it is mentioned to indicate that there was once a woman priest. Leürati is a recalcitrant son (to bishi ángîwa ‘refusing whatever one says’), and the same name is applied in another pé to a similar character. The legend is clearly a case of ‘dismemberment’; but it appears to have little to do with what Allen has seen as “the relationship between myths and concepts using the bodies of supernatural beings to express territorial unity and those using such bodies to express genetic or ethnic unity” (1978a, p. 163). The echoes of myths from the far North are extremely vivid here; any apparent similarity with Allen’s material may lie more in the mind of the ethnologist than in the genesis of these narratives.
10 apa'i ngorulo márulo siraludi àkina³
ta hyerayé pharadi yashi
oyela chyolo preme thuodî honashi
taladi honoshi
adedé honoshi

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 sirkalamime
ngi apa'i ñwali prisö apa'i to tõdè ki yulushi⁴
apa'i mru tõdè 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 shyokhadsé
nàyi rudsu kwoye ngyosho shima male söme male sedsé 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 o
emñumé chyö leúrati ó
rime chyö sirkulumidi thöye prittëya 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 Leürati!
Little sister Sirkulami had (that) message sent for him
Had (that) word taken for him

30 apa póba póruwpwéna ti shyō shyōna shyōyadsé
mwai shyō shyōna shyōyadsé
nāyi rudsu kwoye ngyosho shimanga male sóma malé sedsé tidsé
nidsé sadse néyadsé
rime chyō sirakulamido sóyā puye kwaisō mela karape nosō
yābyō tēnadsé
hubyō wānadsé

30. Father Póruwapwé 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 sóyā puye kwaisō mela karape nosō
yābyō tēnābwe lisō
hubyō wānābwe lisō
tsa myūme chyō leüratiya peyudsé
ngi apa'ī ade nga kimō
apa'ī bide nga kimō

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 Leürati arrived down
I shall take our father's property
I shall take father's wealth

40 apa'ī ngorulo mārulo siraludi nga kimō
e rime chyō sirakulami ō
ngyo apa póba póruwpwéna ti shyō shyōna shyōkhamangyere
mwai shyō shyōna shyōkhamangyere
nāyi rudsu kwoye ngyosho shimanga male soma male sedsé tidsé
nidsé sadse nēkhamangyere
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 ḫritēya labrilama
    soroki rómeya labritago
    e myûme chyō leûrati ó
    ngi apha póba pórupwéna ti shyō shyōna shyōyadsé
    mwai shyō shyōna shyoyadsé

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

50  nêyi rudsu kwoye ngyosho shima male sóma mal sedé tiedsé
    nidsé sadsé nêvadsé
    ngami sóyâ puye kwaisî mela karape nosô yâbyô tênâdsé
    hubyô wânâdsé
    e myûme chyō leûrati ó
    apha'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 Leûrati!
    It is I who am father's son

55  apha'i kradsepô-madsepô pana-tsana lade-tarawa yôwa-lewa
    ngardô-ngashi chivama ngagadi thôngye
    e rime chyō sirakulami ó
    ama'i tsami ki ngyengye
    ama'i kwêrsa thôrisa rêshisa nabi kyera póga-teshima
    kigadi thôngye
    e rime chyō 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. 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. O little sister Sirkulami!
    Little sister Sirkulami and little brother Leûrati
    They play for the property
    Play for the wealth
    Play for the spells, medicines and things

70. O little sister Sirkulami!
    Little sister Sirkulami and little brother Leûrati
    They play for the property
    Play for the wealth
    Play for the spells, medicines and things
70. Little brother Leûrati 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 Leûrati 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 Leûrati set down and stood on the point of a bow

75  rime chyō sirakulamina kodu chyudu tsora tenuka tēyudsē
  myûme chyō leûratina taye tsora tenuka tēyudsē
  khina ta mi kyuulono makana
  pri mi kyuulono makana
  rime chyō sirakulamina taye tsora tenuka tēyudsē

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 kyuulushi
  pri midi kyuulushi
  myûme chyō leûratina rime chyō sirakulamidi marasô holo
  nônô lawâdsē
  mrisô holo nônô lawâdsē
  tsa myûme chyō leûratiyê tëdsu kłodsdi 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
drodsu krodsudi tiyeshi
ridsu shedsudo tiyeshi
tidsu muwaidsudo tiyeshi
alaye kwaida norayelatsadi tsoshi

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 tsoshi
    ta murubwe tone murubweyé shyora
    kulo-kume marabaye tsora
    shili-ngme mribaye tsora
    ta mari piri noratsöledsé

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  mwiye piri noratsöledsé
    mrawa tsöledsé
    liwa tënadsé
    kawa utödsé
    pelaka fitödsé

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 tsarabwe nóra sopliru yashi
    myu arabwe rina ödara chiyeshi
    khina shyajlojolozolofoloyoi jeda yeji korawara honudse
    na tiro takhadsé
    na ngiro takhadsé
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 sūro takhadsé
na pliro takhadsé
na ngara takhadsé
na ngiro takhadsé
na kuro takhadsé

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

110 tala na ṅgi na kuro mangyere
tsu tsā ārabwe nóra sōpliru yaléya
myū ārabwe rīna ōdana chilēya
khina kāyera yeran yatokhadsé
chayera yerana yatokhadsé

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 kāyera-yrana
Set off coming back chayera-yrana

115 ta murubwe tōne murubweyē shyōra
tsā kāula-kume marabayē tsōra
shili-ngime mribayē 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 nóra khadsé kāuloye-kume ó
   ru nóra khadsé shiliye-ngime ó
   tsa nyūme chyō leūratiye tidsu hloodsu khaidsu ngidsu
      krodśu krōdsu yeshi tēlo
yishi tēlo
kye kāulu-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 Leūrati’s heart
   and lungs, kidneys and liver, bowels
Where did (you) put them
She asked Moon-Nine and Sun-Seven

125 ngidi mari piri nori tsōtēshimu
   mwiye piri nori tsōtēshimu
   mrāko tōtēmō
   liko plītēmō
   kago utēmō

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 plēlaka plītēmō
   kāula-kume p'yōhye towara yabwe lisō
   shili-ngime kwēra towara yabwe lisō
   mra tōma khadsé tōkhadsé
   li krēma tsēdse kēkhadsé

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 pöshi
mutiye piri ka thódi póshi
tsa myüme chyö leüratipje tidsu hlodsu khaisu ngidsu krodsu
krodsu ridsu shedsu tidsu mwaisuds tishi
ki kwäida norayelatsadit oföshi
yulutsadit tóshi

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 tönemurubweyë shyöra
ta käulo-kume marabayë tsöra
shili-ngime mribayë tsöra
khina chya puru nobe kade tsuridsë¹⁰
puru 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 tso’iye guru pöegaguru urgyena guru gyènowa
   guru tse tawa gurumai
kyemi mäiye mäina arule mäi kishi
mäiye mäina karule mäi kishi
mäiye mäina kukule mäi kishi
mäiye mäina tabu mäi 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
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!
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
165 khina murubwe töne murubweyé shyōra
kāulo-kume marabayé tsōdsé
shili-ngime mribaye tsōdsé
khina käyera yerana yapuru yudsé\textsuperscript{12}
chyayera 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 käyera-yerana
Swooped down chyayera-yerana

170 khina käyera yerana yatopo’ iyadsé
chyayera yerana yatopo’ iyadsé
lama guru tsō’ iye guru pwéma guru urgyena guru gyā
nowa guru tse nowa gurumana
kyema sabu pwōbwe krolu tsōridsé
mabu pwōbwe krolu tsōridsé

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

175 na ribwe ru labwe krolu tsōridsé
tsa tsambwe kri labwe krolu tsōridsé
gyā prebwe ne labwe krolu tsōridsé\textsuperscript{13}
rimė chyō sirakulamime myūme chyō leūratiye chyedele
tone shyo nane dhira tsukhadsé
rimė chyō sirakulamidi māiyē 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 Leūraṭi
Little sister Sirkulami 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 the breath-giving bespelled medicine
Having concocted blood-giving bespelled medicine

Inside the body of little brother Leûrati
(She) went to put the heart and lungs
Went to put the kidneys and liver
Went to put the bowels

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
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

kroye nena rira sheradi sōshi
sheye nena tira mwairadi sōshi
mwa"ye nena shashera noye shado no ãru
ngishera none ngido to ãru15
tode po' i ãru

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

nodse po'ì ãru
àdse po'ì ásu
tsedse po'ì ãru
ngyebsdse po'ì ãru
tundse po'ì ãru16

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

rime chyö sirakulami myùme chyö leûrati póba pórulo
pvémai péda luda sôji shebwe ridse17

Finished telling the péda-luda of little sister Sirkulami, little
brother Leûrati 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

TABLE I
Number, Sequence, & General Sense of Points in A & B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. Sense</th>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>No. Sense</th>
<th>Lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Starting</td>
<td>1–3</td>
<td>1. Starting</td>
<td>1–3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Looked after</td>
<td>4–6</td>
<td>2. One little</td>
<td>4–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. L. playing</td>
<td>11–14</td>
<td>**4. Ask for;</td>
<td>11–12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. L. arrives</td>
<td>35–37</td>
<td>**8. L. playing</td>
<td>32–34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. L. contests</td>
<td>54–65</td>
<td>11. P. buried</td>
<td>44–45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. S. to sky box</td>
<td>84–95</td>
<td>15. L. Contests</td>
<td>62–77</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—Pórulapwé; 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 counterparts 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>Common Whole Lines</th>
<th>Unique Whole Lines</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>1–3</td>
<td>1–3</td>
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<td>9–11</td>
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<td>128–131</td>
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<td>42/379</td>
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<td>= c. 20%</td>
<td>= c. 11%</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>6–12</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>32–37**</td>
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<td>95–99</td>
<td>81–88**</td>
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<td>255–260</td>
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<td>208–209</td>
<td>284–285</td>
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<tr>
<td>31/210</td>
<td>303–308**</td>
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<td>= c. 15%</td>
<td>318–319</td>
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<td>335–336</td>
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<td>357–359</td>
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<td>362–363</td>
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<td>68/397</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>= c. 18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB Asterisks ** = 'repeated lines'.


Vekerdi (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>TABLE 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line Equivalents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(79) = 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83 = 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>89-90 = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92-93 = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-101 = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103-105 = 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>107-109 = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113 = 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>117 = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120-121 = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131-132 = 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>138-139 = 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>140 = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142 = 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>147-148 = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150-151 = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155 = 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 49/210 | 99/379 |
| =c. 23% | =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 nyaän nyaän of 1.119 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 prebwe 'path walking'; but these are very few, and certain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comparison of Modified Lines</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>39</td>
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<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>41</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>205</td>
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<td>206</td>
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<td>66</td>
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<tr>
<td>72</td>
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<tr>
<td>75</td>
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<td>121</td>
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<td>122</td>
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<td>125</td>
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<td>127</td>
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<td>136</td>
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<td>188</td>
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<td>191</td>
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<td>192</td>
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<td>193</td>
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<td>194</td>
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<td>195</td>
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<tr>
<td>197</td>
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<tr>
<td>198</td>
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<tr>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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 percent 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 pê 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 tênadô ‘having set down’</td>
<td>plûtêdsô ‘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 tîshi ‘having removed the lid’</td>
<td>ka di—ka ti’i ‘removed** the lid (and then)’ ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.136 ka thôdi ‘having held the lid’</td>
<td>ka tho’i—ka thôdi* kya lama guru tsô’iye—guru pwêma guru urgyena—guru gyâ nowa guru tsi—nowa gurumana ‘those Lama Tibetan Masters, Urgyena Masters, Tsogi Masters, Masters, Hlewri Masters Poju Masters’*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insert between 11.157 &amp; 158</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.178 tsukhôdsô ‘come back’</td>
<td>nadsa pura ngâidza yudsê</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>141</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=43%</td>
<td>=37%</td>
<td>=97%</td>
<td>=97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>Substitutes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>&amp;</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=42%</td>
<td>=45%</td>
<td>Additions</td>
<td>=2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Unique</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210</td>
<td>379</td>
<td></td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=15%</td>
<td>=18%</td>
<td></td>
<td>=1%</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 pé. 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 straight forward 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 pé, the method of learning which stresses 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 fares 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 pé of Sirkulami

1. ll–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 ~ sōshi ‘having made’ cf. ll 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 puérurupwēla substitutes for pórulapwē; puwēmai denotes the sora jāt clans, puwēmai refers to ‘Tibetans’, but the substitution here seems to carry no weight.

3. ngorulo mārulo siraludi in 1.10 was glossed ‘property’ (sampati); ngo ‘spell’ ? mā maɪ ‘medicine’ ? sī~ sē ~ ‘things’ ? There is clearly some assonance intended.

4. 1.16 pwi prisō is obscure; ki yulushi was heard as kyulushi ‘having passed through’ (cf. 181) which appears difficult here. to is a linked kingly (cer jāt) subclan with its pwēmai 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’ ~ karāpīh ‘bed, shelf’ ? yā and hu are obscure; byō ~ byōwa ‘throwing away’ ? The word boundaries here are hard to sustain: yābyōtēnādē/huyōwānādē would be defensible as a transcription of compound verbs.

7. ll.82–3 marasō hloło nōnō/mrisō hloło nōnō 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’ ? ṥdara ~ odal yawa ‘going off secretly, eloping’ ?

9. ll.111–12 verbs ending in -léya here are presumably adverbal rather than first person imperative.

10. ll.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. ll.156–57 ḥkwōsē ‘did not understand’; if the colloquial equivalent (àkwō‘i) 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. ll.168–69 yapuru is obscure but compares with ya-pōwara ‘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. ll.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' àyowa krōdsu krodsu rulushi|krōds' àyowa ridsu shedsudi rulushi|sheds' àyowa tidsu mwaidsudi rulushi|mwaï àyowa mwaiye nena kôradi 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 āru ‘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 –dsé qualifying pó as ‘somebody’. But the syntax is difficult; and the subsequent lines still more obscure: tsedse is only crudely and superficially similar to tshe ‘long life’; but P.S. could not suggest detailed explications of this passage.

17 1.210 sōji shebwe ridsé was glossed as ‘finished telling’ (shelkha’i). The infix –ri– for verbs introduces a declarative and continuative 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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