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The Parched Grain Chant: Parallel verse and simultaneous action in Magar rituals

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1. Introduction

This article deals with a particular ritual chant of the Northern Magar, who live in the foothills of the Dhaulagiri Massif in the north-western part of central Nepal. The song is called *lawa kheti* or Parched Grain Chant and constitutes one in a multitude of different oral texts, as sung by the local healers or shamans (*ramma*) in the course of their séances. The repertoire of the shamanic oral tradition in the region is quite extensive – consisting of more than 10,000 regularly performed verses – and may be divided roughly into three categories of chants: narrative genesis myths to be performed in healing séances; auxiliary chants explaining the origins of the right implements to be used in the rituals; and chants, both narrative and auxiliary, reserved for shamanic initiation rites. Occasions notwithstanding (healing or initiation), these three categories may be reduced to two: narrative genesis stories and plotless auxiliaries.

As a rule, the narrative genesis myths are longer, more colourful and consequently more attractive to the lay audience than the auxiliary chants, which are sparse in dramatic content. Yet, for different reasons, both are equally instructive to the ethnographer. And in regard to their formal design, both kinds of chants display an identical artistic make-up.

All chants of the Magar shamans are emphatically religious in nature as they are never sung or performed outside the ritual context. Furthermore, the chants are absolutely indispensable components of any ritual event; indeed, next to certain material implements and a great range of ceremonial acts, they provide the basic modular elements for the composition of a ritual. As rituals differ in length and purpose, their compositions also differ. In initiation rituals for a new shaman, the basic modular elements, put together for the ceremonies, diverge from those for a regular healing séance. Many of the basic components are specific for this occasion, just as others are exclusively reserved for healing rituals. In the latter, the composition of elements reflects the diagnosis of the case at hand: it is the suspected cause of misfortune, foreseen by the healer and occasionally retouched by him in the course of a séance, which informs the shaman's choice, formation and sequential order for the ritual's constituent parts. They are selected from a large toolbox of

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modular parts – from a large contingent of ritual acts, from a broad choice of material objects and from an extensive set of chants. The circumstantial arrangement of the modular parts can be read as the test track of a ritual in which each element gains its indispensable role.

The Parched Grain Chant is one such modular element in the shamanic healing rituals of the Magar. In order to comprehend its position and function in the entire ritual, it must be viewed against the background of the other modular elements of which the rite is composed; and its place must be indicated in relation to the other chants forming the body of the local oral art.

1.1 The repertoire of narrative myths

There are altogether nine consecutive genesis stories dealing with certain creation acts. Set in the beginnings of time, they constitute the solid body of the first category of chants. Each of these creation myths is named after one or two of its protagonists. In each of them, cosmic disasters occur and capital crimes are committed – as a basis for positive creations in the orders of nature and culture. The laws of nature (as they govern the world today), the social institutions and rules (which guarantee order among humans) and the technological inventions (which lighten the burden of life), are all, according to these myths, the result of lawless and wicked behaviour by the primeval beings.

Somarani, the first of the creation myths, relates the story of an empyrean girl by that name, who, forced to marry a human on terrestrial ground, has to suffer the cruelties of her in-laws until she takes revenge by way of a cosmic cataclysm caused by nine moons and nine suns that burn down the Himalayan forests and depopulate the earth. Her matrimonial contract, however, establishes the basic rule of alliance: matrilateral cross-cousin marriage and unequal relations between wife-givers and wife-receivers.

Hargam and Hargameni are an old couple beyond the age of procreation, the only survivors of the conflagrated world. Inventing the plough, they are able to cultivate grain. But they feel desolate and lonely on earth. So they beg god Mahadev for descendants. After many unsuccessful attempts, the god manages to mould two human figures that can walk and talk from chicken shit and the ashes of burnt Himalayan forests. These twin brothers will propagate the human race.

Hardly created, *Goroho and Separang*, the twins moulded by god Mahadev, start to quarrel over the ownership of the land. With tricks and by physical effort, they try to cheat one another and to gain, each for himself, the

entire inheritance. Finally, by erecting boundaries that should not be trespassed, they divide up the territory. Goroho gets all the arable land, Separang claims the wilderness; and by way of this solution, Goroho becomes the forefather of man and Separang the master of the spirit world, henceforth two antagonistic realms.

To make negotiation between the antagonistic realms of man and the spirit world possible, a mediator has to be installed. *Ramma Puran Tsan*, the first shaman, is the chosen one. He invents the rituals, introduces the art of healing and goes on ritual journeys to the supernaturals for his clients. One of his clients is a king, whose son is healed by Ramma. But due to insidious slander put forward by his competitors – a spirit medium and an astrologer – the first shaman is persecuted instead of remunerated. Hiding in the underworld, he barely escapes death.

While living in the underworld unrecognized, Ramma practices the craft of a blacksmith. Nine years pass, until the king's messengers find his hiding place and persuade him to return to the palace and heal the royal offspring a second time. This time Ramma's healing success is crowned by honours and opulent gifts. But he has other adversaries – nine witch sisters, *Nau Goname*, who were born on the same day as he was and who try to wreck all his accomplishments. Ramma invites them on a common pleasure trip to the lowlands, and on the way he destroys one after the other. Only the last one he leaves unscathed, suggesting a pact with her: from now on, she will bring illness to man, which he, Ramma, will then heal. Both will share the recompense.

Barcameni is the story of a primordial cowgirl, her seven witch brothers and their vicious wives, who treat her like a slave. As she is weary of their malice, she decides to go on a secret journey to the underworld, a place identified with the Indian Plains. Barcameni is accompanied by a wild boar, which carries her on its back across rivers and fords. The physical contact with the girl enamours the animal and encourages it to propose marriage. The girl finds the proposal prohibitive, but consents on the condition that the wild boar destroy all her brothers and their wives with its tusks, which is done. On the return journey, Galde Bir, the wild boar, liberates all human souls lost in the underworld by lifting them up to the surface. By this act, the animal becomes one of the nine helping spirits of the first shaman.

Pudaran and Biselme are an incestuous couple that decide to go on a hunt. Pudaran, male blood brother of Biselme, acts as beater, while Biselme assumes the role of the archer. Due to the inversion of the proper sex roles – females are never allowed to use deadly arms – Biselme's arrow misses the

target and kills grandfather instead. Bewildered, the two go insane, tumbling down into the underworld. Here Biselme makes a loom and, while weaving, kills her brother by mistake with the weaving sword. She puts his body on a pyre and jumps after him into the flames. Out of his ashes grows the first grain that a bird brings up to the human world in its beak. Committing crime after crime, Pudaran and Biselme have become culture heroes – inventing the bow and arrow, the hunt, the art of weaving, the custom of *sati* (widow burning) and agricultural crops.

Ra and Serajyea is about the foundling Kubiram, who, on account of his adoptive mother's neglect to feed him, turns into a vicious bird. Landing on the top of a tree of immortality, he jumps from branch to branch, ringing his baby bells that are still attached to his legs. His father, passing by on a return journey to a market place, recognizes the bird as his son and begs him to return to his lap. But Kubiram, meanwhile called the Child Killing Spirit Ra, is irreconcilable and warns his father not to come close to him. Climbing the tree, the father is hit by Ra's claws and tumbles down to his death. Due to the accident, he, too, turns into an evil spirit, Serajyea, the Spirit of White Lime, responsible for untimely death by falling off cliffs and trees. The two spirits, father and son, decide to share their sacrificial gifts whenever a shaman offers meat and animal blood to one of them. Death of a child and premature death of an adult henceforward require an identical rite.

The story of *Barca Pargil Pu*, the son of the First Shaman and Ramma's senior wife Padma Uti, concludes the series of genesis myths. When Ramma feels that his days are coming to an end, he hides his professional armour and his hair tuft in a secret place and designates his son as his successor, provided he finds his father's paraphernalia. As soon as Ramma has died, his body burnt and his son has covered his bones under a cairn, Barca starts his search for his father's things, trembling constantly. One by one, he finds them all, except for the hair tuft, which Ramma's second wife, Jhuma Jhankrelni, has misplaced, hoping that in this way she might divert the succession to one of her own sons from another man. But after a long period of incessant roaming, Barca Pargil Pu gets hold of the missing item and he can start, despite the vileness of his stepmother, his father's succession.

The first eight of these creation and origin myths are regularly chanted in healing séances. Their particular choice depends on the length and the diagnosed type of the ceremony: the first four or five myths are selected for one-night sessions, myths six to eight during two-night sessions and all eight in two-night séances for cases with violent death involved. The ninth myth – about the first shaman's successor – is normally heard only in rituals

connected with an initiation, a funeral or a commemorative act, such as a grave repair, for a professional colleague.

As indicated before, ritual events connected with the initiation of a new shaman, such as the preliminary suitability tests (*chamne*, *thumbu*), the fabrication of his professional gear (armour, bells, necklace and drum) and the big inauguration ceremony, the shaman's 'birth' (*bohshine*), are provided with their own stock of auxiliary chants, both narrative and non-narrative. Narrative chants sung at initiation events include: long versions of the first healer's life and adventures, of his death and remembrance, of his cairn care and his succession, and of the solidarity pact uniting all shamans (*maya bandi*). Amongst the auxiliary chants specific to initiation events, the following are to be mentioned: a chant for the shaking test (*chamne*), a chant for the spirit flask, a gourd (*thumbu kheti*), a chant about the craft of future telling (*paisine*), one for the search of the new shaman's life tree (*suwa khimne kheti*) and another for its dismantling (*suwa dalaine kheti*), a chant for the making of the iron necklace (*guru mala jaine kheti*), and a whole series of chants dealing with the fabrication of the first drum (*dangori murine kheti*). Among these are a chant occupied with the search for the right tree to make the wooden hoop (*regor khimne kheti*), one occupied with the proper animal skin to make the membrane (*syelo khimne kheti*), one for the leather lacings (*tana khimne kheti*), another for the iron rivets (*tas kheti*) and one relating the origin of the right yeast to make the consecration beer (*chokora kheti*) for the drum once it has been built.

1.2 Auxiliary chants for standard séances

The auxiliary chants may be classified into several subgroups, depending on their respective addressee or purpose. The most important, and consequently the most frequently called upon target group, are the deceased predecessors of the acting shamans. No séance, irrespective of its length or brevity, can be held without appeal to the ancestors in the profession, for it is only through their support that the shamans feel entitled to act at all and assured that their actions may be crowned by success. 'Calling the ancestor' (*gel/pittr khulne*) is therefore the first chant to be sung in any ritual and in the progression of the ceremony, especially after intermissions, the call to the predecessors may be repeated several times.

The next group of supernatural beings to be addressed in ritual healing séances are particular spirits whose names provide the titles for their specific chants. *Sime kheti* is a song about a deity residing in marshes and swamps; infringing upon *sime's* territory may lead to grave consequences for the

trespasser. *Siure muine* 'to blow over *siure*', refers to the ghost of a deceased whose evil eye can be averted by mantras blown over the patient and be expelled on the back of a sheep adorned with garlands of flowers. *Chare* is the name of a spirit causing rheumatic fever or distortions of the spinal column; the song of the same title is not performed to the beat of the drum – like all other chants – but to the acoustic accompaniment of bow and arrow, whereby the officiating shaman beats the string of the bow with an arrow. The spirits addressed in these chants are harmful and the danger that lingers around them is proven by the fact that specific songs exist in their names.

Another class of auxiliary chant is occupied with divination. There are various ways to divine and, accordingly, different chants reflect this methodological spectrum. *Paisine* is a practice to reveal something under the influence of a helping spirit (*dohwa*) possessing the shaman. It is a form of prophetic trance, in which either the healer's ancestral spirit or one of his theriomorphic helpers enters him, pronouncing messages in fictitious Tibetan (*lama kham*), an idiom articulated only in ecstatic moments. *Parche*, derived from Sanskrit *pariksa*, is a technique by which the shaman gets a hint to the future from the manipulation of some material object, such as turning a plate or throwing a burning log, or by running a crumpled ball of filthy cloth over the horizontally held membrane of a drum (*rih ruhne*), or else by listening to the voice of a raven (*kah parche*). A special auxiliary chant is attached to each of these divinatory techniques.

One group of auxiliary chants deals with ritual journeys of the shaman in search for lost souls. *Satu khulne* 'to summon the *satu* soul' and *aili paili khimne kheti* 'to search for the footprints of the soul' are both chants with direct reference to the lost or escaped soul of the patient. *Dawata bane*, or 'to go in iron armour', is a chant sung by the shaman when dressed in full gear. The dangerous route described in it is the one taken by the fugitive soul; it ends at the gate to the Beyond, a pass on the eastern border of the Magar habitat, beyond which there is no way to return for the patient's life force. *Ripa sadumne*, or 'enumerating the waters', gives the names of places along the valleys and riverbeds, starting from the village and ending also at the border of the human habitat. All the locations mentioned in these songs are real geographic places, toponyms, strung together in precise succession of a trail. *Nangga baza* 'the naked bird' refers to a live chicken suspended from a beam by a string. It is considered to be gifted with foresight and therefore capable of indicating the whereabouts of a patient's lost soul. When it shakes on the suspended string, the shaman will abruptly stop singing and catch the escaped soul in the bird's feathers, in the guise of an insect, which the patient has to swallow as a sign of the soul's reincorporation.

Yet another group of auxiliary chants is occupied with the discharge or return of evil influences to those who have caused them. *Ban pharkaine* 'to return magical arrows' is a non-personalised chant in which magical missiles shot at the patient are returned to the causing agent, a supernatural archer. One of these archers is *masan*, a wandering ghost of a deceased person and servant to witches; and *masan ban pharkaine* is a recital dealing with the harmful missiles that are to be sent back to the ghost of this name and nature. *Masan* can also be removed by a ritual act called *masan bagaine*, in which the wandering ghost *masan* is placed, in the form of a small dough figure, onto a leaf-plate raft and lowered into the river. At the same time, the healer, staying behind in the patient's house, recounts the passage of the raft down the river. *Graha khyene* 'to get rid of unfavourable planetary constellations' is a chant to be synchronised with a ritual act of the same denomination, in which a small model pyre with nine wooden levels – representing the nine planets – is burnt down and the patient released from his unfavourable bondage. *Kanul banul poine* 'to get rid of evil omens' and *gohnda poine* or *gohnda khyene* 'to get rid of / throw away narrow passes' are both chants to accompany ritual acts, which are meant to accomplish exactly what their titles suggest: avert negative symptoms and overcome climactic moments of danger. *Man khyene* 'to throw away *man*' is about an evil force that causes failure in hunting or fishing. This force can be kept at arm's length by leaving offering gifts laid out on a leaf-plate outside the village. Such offering gifts in the guise of a kneaded figure and small portions of food stuff are called *plah* and one chant, the *plah khyene*, or 'to throw away *plah*', is specially concerned with this safeguarding measure. *Mohoni kheti*, a 'love charm', is sung when it is the wish of a patient either to be freed from an erotic spell that someone has cast over him or that he wishes to cast one upon someone else.

The last group of auxiliary chants, one to which the *lawa kheti,* the Parched Grain Chant, belongs, has to do with the fabrication and preparation of material implements needed in the forthcoming ritual acts. The *lo kheti*, or 'chant of the *lo* mat', is sung when the officiating shaman requires a large bamboo mat (*lo*), normally used for drying grain, but which in rituals is laid out on a neighbouring roof to form the contours of the inhabited world. He will dance around this 'world mat', accompanied by his simple-minded helpers – the dumb dog couple (*lata lati*) – in order to find out whether or not the fugitive soul of his patient is still within the radius of his reach. The *suwa kheti*, or 'song of the life tree', is sung when an evergreen tree is brought to the patient's house and installed there next to the central pillar in order to represent his life force. The song 'providing the frog plant' (*te jaine*) is recited when the shaman needs a particular root to be burnt as spiritual incense. The *lawa kheti* is about the primordial search for the right type of grain to be

roasted in a particular ritual act, in which the popping of buckwheat in a heated iron pot signifies the return of the materialised soul of the patient from the underworld, its 'popping up', so to speak. The *chokora kheti*, or 'chant of the first beer', is due when fermented barley is prepared by the women of the house, an alcoholic beverage needed at all ritual events in great quantities, but sung in particular when a newly fabricated shaman's drum is about to be consecrated. Moreover, each step in the drum's fabrication process has its own origin myth and will be chanted at the same time as the respective production phase is going on. Collectively, the auxiliary chants that accompany the different drum making operations are called *dangori murine kheti* or 'stretching a skin over the drum'.

The *lawa kheti*, being one in a mass of auxiliary chants, can vary in length from one hundred to two hundred lines or verses; a line being defined by two hemistichs of almost equal lengths, between which there is a small caesura and at the end of which the singer breathes in before the next line is sung. As the entire body of shamanic chants recited from memory by today's Magar healers has a volume of ten to twelve thousand lines, the Parched Grain Chant occupies approximately one hundredth of the total number of verses regularly performed. The quantitative aspect of the chant analysed here has to be seen against the background of the categories of chant and their various types and content, with due attention to the position the Parched Grain Chant occupies within the totality of acts and chants performed in a single séance.

2. The place of the Parched Grain Chant in a one-night session

The Parched Grain Chant as analysed below has been recorded twice in situ: in a one-night séance performed by Bal Bahadur Buda as lead singer and Man Bahadur Buda as echo singer, and in another one-night séance led by Man Bahadur and backed up by Bedh Bahadur Gurung, both in Taka village, Rukum District in 1978. The latter performance had a total length of 209 verses, the former only 119 verses. A rough comparison between these two variants will be attempted further down, and it is the first version that is analysed in more detail here.

In order to make out the exact place the *lawa kheti* occupies in the structure of the entire ritual, of which it is a constituent modular part, it is advisable to establish three separate vertical columns (see Table 1): one for the succession of chants, as they were recited in that particular séance (on the left side of the table); one for the succession of ritual acts as performed that night (on the right side); and one for the pattern underlying the order of one-night sessions in general (in the central axis). As the general pattern is

an abstraction, documenting the ideal course of a one-night séance as conceived among the Magar of Taka, I have given Latin denominations to the individual scenes of action. One may say that each enactment of the pattern is unique, differing, if only slightly, from any other enactment, while the pattern remains the same. It is as if each performer keeps a picture of the pattern in his mind – like a shell to be furnished with the bricks and plaster at hand. To describe the sequence of the chants and ritual actions on the two sides of the diagram, I shall start and end with the stages of the pattern in the centre.

What I have called SALUTATIO on the pattern column corresponds in real action with the shaman's greeting of the audience, his unpacking of his paraphernalia box inside the house of his patient and the shaking out of negative influences by moving around his armour belt toward the people present in the room. At this stage, chanting has not yet started.

INVOCATIO is an appeal by the acting shamans to their professional ancestors and predecessors, made in the form of a chant called *pittr khulne* and renewed several times in the course of the night. The ancestors mentioned are deceased shamans; teachers and teachers' teachers of the singers, going back several generations of predecessors, but also referring to Ramma Puran Tsan, the mythical first healer. While the call of the ancestors can be read as a professional genealogy, its main function is to secure the metaphysical support of the precursors for the difficult tasks that follow.

DIAGNOSIS is a process by which the shaman tries to determine the supernatural agents responsible for the present state of his patient. This state is the result of a cosmic imbalance, caused willingly or unwillingly by a false step taken by the client, a slip that has upset the invisible forces. By smelling his patient's body, by throwing lots, by going into visionary trance and by reciting portions of divinatory chants (*paisine*), the healer looks for possible pathogenic agents with whom he could later negotiate about his patient's lost life force.

Aetiological analysis and prognosis are inseparable: they are two sides of the same divinatory process. Finding out who's done it, what can be done and what the chances of success are when one has done what should be done, are interrelated questions, so DIAGNOSIS and PROGNOSIS form a single cluster. 'Running the filth ball' (*rih ruhne*) over the drum is one such aleatoric measure to get a hint at the outcome of the ceremony. Since the diagnosis has suggested that the main cause for the patient's illness may have been his pollution of a water source owned by *sime*, it is a chant

addressed to this master of the swamplands (*sime kheti*) that the shaman found appropriate to intone.

Purifying the ritual place and the people assembled there is an act indispensable in every ritual. This PURIFICATIO can be done with water, with fire and with smoke. Preparing the incense to be burnt requires the right choice of plant, about which 'searching the frog plant chant' (*te khmine kheti*) provides instructions set down in primeval times.

PRAEPARATIO is a cluster of physical activities in the course of which the shaman and his lay helpers – family members and in-laws of the patient (his wife-receivers) – provide the material requirements for the subsequent ritual acts: setting up an ambulant altar, modelling figures of the ritual's addressees and of the patient in clay, wood or dough, measuring his body with strings, and making receptacles for the offering gifts (model boats, rafts and leaf-plates). All these manual preparations consume a large span of time, during which the officiating shaman and his antiphonic counterpart have plenty of leisure to sing through the bulk of the obligatory creation myths, such as the story of the celestial daughter (*somarani*), of the childless old couple (*hargam / hargameni*), of the quarrelling brothers (*goroho / separang*), of the first shaman and his main antagonists, the Nine Witch Sisters (*ramma puran tsan* and *nau goname*). In the séance documented on tape, the recital of the last two stories was given priority over the other three, normally sung first. Inserted into the performance of the main narratives were two auxiliary chants: the recital of the 'world mat song' (*lo kheti*) and the 'song of the life tree' (*suwa kheti*), for part of the preparations were concerned with the provision of a *lo*-mat and the instalment of an evergreen tree at the central post of the house.

The next phase of the ritual, headed here as PEREGRINATIO, is occupied with the search for the patient's lost soul. To find it, the shaman, unaccompanied by his echo singer, has to go on an imaginary ritual journey. This starts at the central fire place of the client's house, circles in spiral movements round the living room and conspicuous places inside the village, crosses the river and moves either up the crests of the summer pastures or down along the riverbeds toward a pass in the east – the dividing line between the Magar's familiar world and that of foreign tribal populations. This pass, called *Jaljala*, is an emotional watershed: the source of both 'the waters of remembrance' running toward home and 'the waters of forgetting' flowing out into an alien land. Once the fugitive soul has crossed this pass, if the the shaman cannot catch up with it, the patient, so one believes, will die. Jaljala is therefore also the visual border of life and death. The ritual journey is marked out in minute topographical detail in several separate

route songs. One of them is simply called 'to summon the soul' (*satu khulne*), another one 'searching the footprints of the soul' (*aili paili khimne kheti*), a third one hints at the dangers awaiting the travelling healer on his way. To be forearmed, he has to put on his full gear, and that is why the chant is called 'to go in iron armour' (*dawata bane*), while a fourth one, 'the naked bird song' (*nangga baza kheti*) shows in aerial perspective the stopovers and hiding places of the escaped soul. The shaman will have to complete one or several of these songs in succession before he can lure back the fugitive soul and enter into negotiations with those powers that have abducted it.

INCITAMENTUM is the sum of enticements with which the healer tries to attract both the fugitive soul and the supernatural soul robbers. The soul is lured back by promises of a warm place in the mother's lap, honey and milk and gentle treatment in the family's circle. The soul robbers, for their part, are enticed with offering gifts and sacrificial blood, provided they agree to let the patient's soul go. These barter goods are praised by the healer with flattering words, and they are exposed on the leaf-plates in an appetizing presentation.

INVITATIO is an address to all supernatural helpers of the shaman, not only the ancestors and predecessors who were already invoked at the beginning of the séance. In addition to these, the theriomorphic helpers, such as the snake, the wild boar, the bear, the monkey, the tiger and the flying squirrel are now called upon, as well as the ancestral, lama and mute spirits. All of them, collectively called the 'nine helpers' (*nau dohnwa*), are invited by the shaman to enter his body one by one. To demonstrate that they have done so, the healer mimics the physical characteristics of each of them. At the end of this invitation phase, two remaining narrative myths are recited: the story of the incestuous couple (*pudaran / biselme*) and the adventures of the cowgirl with the wild boar (*barcameni*).

Once the healer has increased his strength by incorporating the powers of his helping spirits, he can carry out another transfer: extract the poison from the body of his patient – poison that has weakened him and made him ill – and divert it onto a substitute. This act labelled here as TRANSMISSIO is visualised physically by transferring the substance of the patient in the guise of a substitute figure onto one of the offering gifts. With this transfer, the way is paved for a return of the fugitive soul into the owner's body. The return is also enacted in a physical manner – the reincorporation of the soul in insect form into the patient's mouth. Before the reincorporation can be enacted, the patient – and with him all his family members – have to be lifted from the underworld. Two separate auxiliary chants with

corresponding actions put this resurrective transport on stage, making it concrete and plausible. The shaman, reaching the end of the narrative about the cow girl and her helper the wild boar, transforms himself into this animal, crawls over the floor on all fours, scrapes and grunts and takes the family members on his back and lifts them up one by one. This act is called *galsine* 'to act as a wild boar' and signifies exactly the lifting of souls from the underworld. Another representation of this act is seen in the popping up of buckwheat grains in a heated pan, a ritual action performed in synchrony with the recital of the Parched Grain Chant (*lawa kheti*), i.e., the passage in which the right grain of primordial times has been found, is thrown into a pan and starts to jump.

As soon as the identity of the patient has been restored by the reincorporation of his soul, measures have to be taken to keep the deal with the supernaturals. The foremost of these is the IMMOLATIO, the test of the selected animal of its suitability as sacrifice. This test can be made with water, hot coal, ashes or flour strewn on the animal's head. As long as it remains immobile, no one would dare to slaughter it. The acceptance by the supernatural powers is signalled only when the animal has shaken off the grit. The immolation act (in Latin, the word means 'flour strewn on the sacrificial animal' is obligatory, irrespective of the animal's size and value. For serious cases, large and expensive animals must be chosen (pigs, sheep or goats), for light ones, poultry or even small chicks may do. In any case, blood must be shed, for blood is the currency of transcendental deals. And by definition, the sacrificial animals must be domestic, part of the patient's household and property.

SACRIFICIUM. Although it is the culminating and most dramatic moment of the entire ceremony, the slaughter of the sacrificial animal is a sudden and hasty affair. It happens as soon as the animal has signalled its acceptability by shaking. The butcher's job is executed by in-laws (wife-receivers) of the patient, who, for his part, is considered the donor; and it is the shaman who, shaking heavily, takes the first taste of blood from the warm animal, before some drops are offered to the supernatural partners of the deal, shed on to their offering plates.

The next act in the ritual drama, the EXPELLATIO, consists of sending away the offering gifts dedicated to the agents of misfortune. It is hoped that this shipment will also evacuate the recipients from the vicinity of the human sphere. Several auxiliary chants support this intention. One of them is called 'to throw away *plah*' (*plah khyene*), a term denoting the entire gift arrangement to the supernaturals, including the model figure of the patient. Other components include meatballs made of rice and corn mixed with

sacrificial blood and set down on the offering plate adorned with flowers; strips of cloth in red and white; models of a bow and arrow, kneaded figurines and images; and even a necklace belonging to a female member of the patient's clan (which will be removed discreetly from the gift plate in due course). The forwarding of the *plah* is enacted simultaneously in words and deeds. While the assistants of the shaman grasp the whole bunch of offerings, rush to the river and lower them all to the floods, the shaman, left alone with the patient in the deserted house, will recite in paean words all the place names that these offerings will pass on their way down the river. The expulsion of the spirits will be wrapped in beautiful verbal decoration. Another auxiliary chant, 'the throw away song to the spirit called *man'* (*man khyene*), whose evil influence is hoped to be shipped out of the village in similar fashion, is sung when the assistants leave for a second time, bringing another set of offering gifts to the crossroad that separates the civilised world of humans from the domain of the spirits in the wilderness outside.

The definitive separation of the two worlds has to be sealed by unequivocal gestures. The SEPARATIO is composed of three steps: the shares of the sacrificial animal have to be clearly divided into two portions: here, in the house, the principal parts of the meat to the assembled people, and there, outside, a bite to the spirits; the links between the two spheres have to be cut in a visible way by making nine crosses on the path outside the village, cut with a knife; and the boundaries between man and the spirit world have to be redefined by recalling those fixed in primordial times by the quarrelling brothers, Goroho and Separang.

COMMUNIO. After the shares have been separated, the dangerous powers expelled and the borders reset, a common meal between all participants in the nightly events will bring the ritual to a boisterous conclusion. All metaphysical fear and tension will be drowned in plenty of alcohol, a good piece of meat and a general atmosphere of mutual joking. It is daylight when the shaman's paraphernalia box is carried back to his house. In it will be stowed – on top of his gear and the drum – a leg of the sacrificial goat, some coins and a wooden bottle with liquor, his REMUNERATIO.

The following chart summarizes at a single glance the preceding description of acts and chanted recitals in a one-night shamanic ritual. It shows the sequence of ritual events as they should happen and as they did in a particular night, and it shows which positions are taken by the selected chants in relation to the various activities. Moreover, it pins down the role played by the *lawa kheti* in the overall ritual drama.

Figure 1: One Night Séance – ekrate

Sequence of chants	**Pattern**	**Sequence of acts**
	SALUTATIO	greeting the audience shaking out negative influences Unpacking paraphernalia
pitr khulne	INVOCATIO	calling ancestors and predecessors
paisine	DIAGNOSIS	finding out causing agents for misfortune oleofactory, aleatory, divinatory diagnosis
sime kheti *ri ruhnne*	PROGNOSIS	divination on possible success of ritual
te khimne kheti *pitr khulne* *ramma puran can kheti*	PURIFICATIO	cleaning place and personnel with incense and purification water
nau goname *lo kheti* *suwa kheti* *somarani* *hargam/hargameni*	PRAEPARATIO	providing material requirements set-up of ambulant altar modelling of protagonists in wood, clay, dough measuring patient's body with thread
goroho/separang *satu khulne*	PEREGRINATIO	ritual journey search for lost souls
dawata bane *nangga baza*	INCITAMENTUM	luring agents of misfortune to place of action by means of words and prepared offering gifts
pitr khulne *pudaran/biselme* *barcameni*	INVITATIO	performing arrival of auxiliaries ancestors and animal spirits
galsine *law kheti*	TRANSMISSIO	extracting poison from patient to substitute depositing soul substance on offering gift lifting patient from underworld popping up souls return of materialised soul into patient
	IMMOLATIO	test of sacrificial animal's suitability with water, coal, ash and flour
	SACRIFICIUM	slaughter of sacrificial animal offering of blood in exchange for soul
pla khyene *man khyene*	EXPELLATIO	sending away of offering gifts shooting back of magical arrows dismissing agents of misfortune
mantra	SEPARATIO	separation of shares cutting off supernaturals from human sphere resetting boundaries
	COMMUNIO	common meal for all participants in ritual in patient's house dissolving metaphysical tension
	REMUNERATIO	payment of healer in kind and cash sacrificial meat, alcohol, money

2.1. Content of the Parched Grain Chant in two versions

As mentioned, the *lawa kheti* or Parched Grain Chant was recorded twice, both in ritual situations. It may be of interest to show to what extent both versions are similar and in which respects they differ.

Both versions – the 119 verses version I, as sung by Bal Bahadur and Man Bahadur and the 209 verses one, version II, as sung by Man Bahadur and Bedh Bahadur – begin with the obligatory invocation of teachers and predecessors. Invocation I lasts 14 lines and addresses the immediate predecessors of Bal Bahadur and Man Bahadur, invocation II has 24 lines and is divided into two sections: lines 1-15 call the living teachers of the two singers, lines 16-24 their deceased ones. Lines 15-29 of version I recall the first shaman Ramma Puran Tsan in passing, lines 25-48 of version II place his appearance into the timeframe of the Four Ages, stating that his successors had no grain suitable to be parched and fried (lines 49-62).

In the next phase of both recitals (30-34 in I and 63-70 in II), the shamans call for action: the right popcorn has to be sought! This search should be made from east to west and from north to south. The appeal is only four lines short in version I (35-38) and twice as long in version II (63-70).

By far the longest part in both versions is occupied with the actual search for the proper grain (from lines 39 to 96 in I, and from lines 71 to 157 in II). This lengthy search is segmented in both cases into four stages. The first search in I (lines 39-52) is conducted in the west and in the south with the result that *tori* mustard seeds and *sarsiu* mustard seeds are found, but they are not useful for the purpose. In version II, the corresponding first search happens at the lowland gate, in the lowland country (lines 71-85), i.e., in the south, where the silk fibre seed is found, but to no use.

In version I, this silk fibre seed is discovered at the lowland gate on the excursion of the second search, along with onion, soya bean and lentil seeds (lines 53-65), whereas in version II, the second excursion (86-96), directed once again toward the lowland gate in the lowland country, brings to light precisely the seeds found in version I during the first excursion: *tori* mustard seeds and *sarsiu* mustard seeds. In other words, the results of trips I and II are inverted in the two versions.

Search Three in version I (66-81) brings maize, millet, high altitude barley and high altitude wheat, whereas excursion Three in version II (97-112) results only in the discovery of maize. This trip in version II is directed toward the high pastures and the twelve hills, i.e., to the northern country, whereas in version I once again the low countries and the Terai in the south are

mentioned. This must be a mistake in the actual performance (a misplacement of lines, which is not rare in oral recitals), for the grains found are clearly those growing further up in mountain regions.

Search Four, the last excursion, is oriented in both versions toward the north (and the high pastures in II), where in the end the one and only right grain for the pop-up ritual is found: buckwheat. In version I, this final search takes 14 lines (82-95), whereas in version II it is considerably longer, i.e., 45 lines (113-157). This remarkable difference in length can be attributed to the fact that both searches insert different mythological episodes into this final and conclusive trip. In version I, the old primordial couple (Hargam and Hargameni) sow a wild, edible green called *cangge*, before the buckwheat is created. In version II, soya beans are harvested before proper field cultivation is invented high up in the north, thanks to the blacksmith of the Four Ages, who forges the necessary agricultural tools, ploughshare and yoke. From this moment on, the buckwheat can be cultivated, and its place of origin is named: Tanatali in the cold region of Dolpo.

Once the buckwheat is created and discovered by man, the grain gives a speech to the people in version I (96-119), indicating that by frying, it will see the route of the emerging souls, it will do away with dangers and narrow passes, it will bring the redemptive dance, and it will be able, by jumping out of the frying pan, to lift people from the underworld. At the end of version II, on the other hand, a speech is addressed in reverse – from the singing shaman to the freshly created buckwheat (158-209) – in which all its charitable effects are enumerated in praise: that it will foresee dangers and narrow passes for the ill, that it will pacify witches and spirits, and that it will lift up lost souls from the underworld by jumping skyward when fried.

A comparative chart summarizes the preceding content order of the two recorded versions in synoptic juxtaposition:

Table 2: Content order of lawa kheti in two versions

Bal Bahadur & Man Bahadur Version I: 119 lines		Man Bahadur & Bedh Bahadur Version II: 209 lines	
01-14 Invocation of immediate predecessors	14 lines	01-15 Invocation of living teachers 16-24 Invocation of dead teachers	15 lines 9 lines
15-29 Recalling Ramma Puran Tsan	15 lines	25-48 Four ages and Ramma Puran Tsan	24 lines
30-34 Notice: no parched grain	5 lines	49-62 Descendants of Ramma, notice: no parched grain	14 lines
35-38 Call for action: search! N-S, E-W	4 lines	63-70 Call for action: Search! N-S, E-W	8 lines
39-52 Search No.1: in W & S Result: *tori* mustard seed, *sarsiu* mustard seed	14 lines	71-85 Search No.1: lowland gate / lowland country Result: silk fibre seed	15 lines
53-65 Search No.2: at lowland gate Result: silk fibre seed / onion seed soya bean seed / lentil seed	13 lines	86-96 Search No.2: lowland gate / low country result: *tori* mustard seed / *sarsiu* mustard	11 lines
66-81 Search No.3: lowland country/Terai Result: maize grain / millet grain high altitude barley / high altitude wheat	16 lines	97-112 Search No.3: high pastures /12 hills Result: maize grain	16 lines
82-95 Search No.4: in North		113-120 Search No.4: high pastures in North Result: soya bean seed	8 lines
		121-133 Request to blacksmith of 4th age to make agricultural tools	13 lines
Primordial old couple sowing *cangge* seeds Result: buckwheat grain created	14 lines	134-136 Cultivating fields with tool in N 137-157 Growing buckwheat in N, in Upper Dolpo/Tanatali	3 lines 21 lines
96-108 Speech of buckwheat	13 lines	158-187 Speech to buckwheat	30 lines
109-111 Right dance brought	3 lines		
112-119 Speech of buckwheat continued	8 lines		
		188-209 Pacifying work of 9 auxiliaries	22 lines

2.2 Synchronisation of chanting and ritual acting

No matter how much the two recorded versions may differ in length – the second being almost twice as long as the first one – in terms of their formal construction they are basically the same. Both versions run through the same sequential episodes, arranged in identical order: invocation of the predecessors (reference to the first shaman), call for action to find the right grain (four futile trips to get it), acquisition of the buckwheat and speech of (or to) the buckwheat in regard to a successful performance.

When recited, the shorter version, as presented below, takes approximately twenty minutes to be sung in its entire length and the longer one takes a little over half an hour. The craft of the officiating main shaman consists in

ritual are as follows: supplying small pieces of firewood and stirring up the flames (both done by an assistant); heating the iron pan on the tripod at the central fireplace of the house (also done by an assistant); putting buckwheat grains into the pan and, by constantly moving them, frying them until they pop up into the air (done by the head shaman while singing). The actual frying of the buckwheat may take about six minutes until it starts to bounce. Ideally, the first grains should jump when the chanting healer has attained the following verses:

> And in the month of Asar/ the buckwheat parched grain// had been created/ in the northern sector// the buckwheat parched grain/ was born in Tanatali// in cold Dolpo/ in black Dolpo// the buckwheat parched grain was born/ in the month of Mangsir jumping up into the sky// and it brought the *jyeanai* witches' dance/ it brought the *manai* witches' dance (lines 90-95).

In other words, the grains should jump from the iron pan right before the buckwheat of the myth, newly created, gives its inaugural speech to the shaman, beginning with the words: 'All my hosts, my owners/ of the buckwheat fields…' (line 96 etc.).

The popping up of the fried buckwheat seeds symbolises the sudden shooting up of the patient's lost soul from the underworld, just as prefigured in the genesis story of the parched grain. Primordial conduct, as modelled in the time of creation and recounted in the chant, should coincide with the current ritual activities as carried out in the present situation. The two planes should match in perfect congruence. The better the two planes fit – the relevant episode of the myth and the momentary course of the current ritual – the better the chances for the healing séance to be effective. For this reason the shaman takes great care to attain this congruence; it is a test situation for his art. As soon he has finished singing and the frying pan is taken off the tripod, a general discussion may flare up as to the synchrony of act and chant. The events of creation and those of the present ceremony are to be two layers of one and the same thing. This is the aim of all ritual acting and singing.

2.3 The presentation of the chant

Before the full text of version I is given in transcription and translation, a word may be said about the language in which the Parched Grain Chant is recited. The language is a mixture of Kham and hill Nepali, in other words a mixture of the mother tongue of the Northern Magar (a Tibeto-Burman language) and the *lingua franca* of the Nepalese (an Indo-European language).

The most surprising fact is the extremely high proportion of Nepali words in the text. The relation of Nepali words to those in Kham is 8:1, whereas in everyday speech in Taka village this relation is probably reversed, if one counts as Kham words also those that are derived from Nepali but have been modified into Kham. One might have expected that the mother tongue, being one of Tibeto-Burman stock, would have left more visible traces in an idiom that by its very nature refers to tradition, i.e., a ritual language with a regular use of archaisms. This cannot be said of the language employed by the Magar shamans in their chants. One possible explanation for this astounding fact could be that the local tradition of the ritual chants is itself a borrowed one. As candidates for extraction, the neighbouring Kami populations in the south (Bhuji Khola) and those of areas further west (Jajarkot) come to mind, where indeed very similar oral traditions prevail, and then in Nepali.

Imported or not, the shamanic lore of the Northern Magar is an unalienable treasure of their cultural identity and as deeply rooted in everyone's consciousness as the mother tongue can be. Kham words occur in the following word classes: as personal pronouns, first person singular pronoun and first person singular possessive prefix 'I', 'mine' (*nga*) first person plural pronoun, etc., (*ge*), second person plural pronoun and subject prefix (*je*); as nouns like *manmi* (humankind*), mãlai* (lowland), *sardam* (shaman's gear), *jyeanai/manai* (witches), *tanje/wanje* (underworld), *munduru* (patient), *carcaredo* (sizzle), *dodor* (an iron pan for parching grain); as verbs such as *hosine* (to be), *yene* (to retrieve a soul from the underworld), *bohne* (to be born), *tutine* (to emerge), *jaine* (to make, to create), *raine* (to bring), *line* (to have, to be at), *male* (there is not); as negative prefix *ma-* (as in *ma-le*, *ma-tai*) and as nominal prefix *ma-,* functioning as an ornamental filler, (as in *ma-dodore*, *ma-khore*, *ma-sahãnadu*); and as a subjunctive suffix *-kin*, 'if..'. However, the chant of the popping grain does not include a single adjective in the Kham language.

The text of the recorded Parched Grain Chant (version I) is presented in transcription and in English translation. For both, I was helped substantially by Rana Prasad Gharti Magar, the living encyclopaedia of his tribe. Typographically, I have chosen a symmetrical way of formatting, spacing the hemistichs throughout in the same fashion. This is meant to visually support the formal feature of parallelism as a guiding principle for nearly all verses in Magar prosody. In a few exceptional cases (in lines 1, 41, 62, 75, 84, 85 and 94), the verses are divided into three sections instead of two and this has been noted correspondingly by tripartite spacing.

Table 3: Lawa kheti (Bal Bahadur & Man Bahadur Taka, 1978)

1	*gurai babu jaye*	*ekai dinla ekai barla*
	ãusi jogla	*punni jogla*
	ramma utkar bhaige	*ranju nitkar bhaige*
	guru babu jara	*maryo pitra jara*
5	*najaneko ghata*	*nabhujeko bata*
	ghata laera die	*bata laera die*
	kawa rakhi die	*tawa rakhi die*
	guru babu jaye	*babu anan singhe*
	layo gita tamro	*gayo gita hamro*
10	*sikyo biddhye tamro*	*sadhyo biddhye hamro*
	gura babu jaye	*babu kamareye*
	na ageye sama	*na bageye sama*
	jijyu utipanna	*bajyu utipanna*
	ge jijyu ja ramma	*ge bajyu ja ramma*
15	*una dinko sakho*	*una dinko bakho*
	dharmo jugko ghata	*dharma jugko bata*
	sati jugko ghata	*sati jugko bata*
	dawapur jugko ghata	*tirtha jugko bata*
	carai jugla	*una dinla*
20	*carai manmila*	*una dinla*
	uttra khanda jala	*uttra mukhala*
	ramma utkar bhaigo	*ranju nitkar bhaigo*
	nauai lata sita	*nauai lati sita*
	nauai celme sita	*nauai balme sita*
25	*ramma utkar bhaigo*	*ranju nitkar bhaigo*
	andha desla	*andha mulukla*
	ramma calit bhaigo	*ranju balit bhaigo*
	rajai gharla	*dhanna golkhdala*
	ramma puran tsante	*nauai celme sita*
30	*manmi sirjan lagi*	*manmi upjan lagi*
	goye yeno lagi	*gopi yeno lagi*
	ghamai jhulka bela	*tureniye bela*

nauai celme jara *nauai balme jara*
ge lawa ja maleo *ge lawae khoje*
carai dhokala hosio *carai mandalla hosio*
utra dakhin hosio *purbai pachim hosio*
mãlai dhoka lesai *barao mandal lesai*
akhatela cahio *bikhatela cahio*
manmi sirjan lagi *manmi upjan lagi*
nauai celme jara *pachim mukha bara*
dakhin mukha bara *dakhin mukhala* *mãlai dhokala*
mãlai namla *madesh namla*
tori lawa jaira *sersiu lawa jaira*
mabhujunggi jala *madodore jala*
nauai celme jarai *nauai balme jarai*
carcaredo jaira *murmuredo jaira*
carcaredo matai *murmuredo matai*
cangge cala leyena *mangge cala leyena*
ramma puran cane jalai *ramma ranju lai*
cangge cala bhaena *lata cala bhaena*
goye ma ukasio *satu ma ukasio*
osakhu ja male *obakhu ja male*
ge lawae khoja *mãlai dhokala*
nauai celme jarai *nauai balme jarai*
kadio lawa jaira *kadio lawa jaira*
resa lawa jaira *pyesa lawa jaira*
bhatta lawa jaira *phãdo lawa jaira*
mabhujunggi jala *madodora jala*
carcaredo jaira *murmuredo jaira*
carcaredo matai *murmuredo matai*
ramma puran can lai *ramma ranju jalai*
nauai sardam jata *cangge cala male* *mangge cala male*
deoye cala bhaena *dhami cala bhaena*
satu ma ukasio *kultu ma ukasio*
osakhu ja male *obakhu ja male*
ge lawae khoja *ge lawa paena*

	mãlai namla	*madesh namla*
	kadio lawa jaira	*kadio lawa jaira*
	makai lawa jaira	*kodo lawa jaira*
70	*oama lawa jaira*	*pima lawa jaira*
	nauai celme jarai	*mabhujunggi jala*
	nauai celme jarai	*madodore jala*
	carcaredo jaira	*murmuredo jaira*
	carcaredo matai	*murmuredo matai*
75	*namda maguwa nadui*	*tureniye bela yesai bela*
	ramma puran can lai	*mangal bara dinla*
	kaksi masahãnadu	*boksi masahãnadu*
	jyeanai masahãnadu	*manai masahãnadu*
	siure masahãnadu	*masan masahãnadu*
80	*sepa masahãnadu*	*serong masahãnadu*
	sime masahãnadu	*bhume masahãnadu*
	ge lawa khoje	*ge lawae paena*
	sakhai rahane bhaena	*purkhai rahane bhaena*
	ge lawae khoja	*utra khanda jala utra mukhala*
85	*ge lawae khoja*	*hargam sera jani hargameni jani*
	sombare dinla	*sombare barla*
	kartik mahinala	*kartik masla*
	utra khanda jala	*makhore ja jani*
	cangge durja laiwo	*mangge durja laiwo*
90	*phapar lawa jata*	*asar mahina jala*
	osirjana tanae	*utra khanda jala*
	phapar lawa jata	*tanatali jala*
	jadai bhotla	*kali bhotla*
	phapar lawa bohke	*Mangsir mahina jala namda guwada raje*
95	*jyeanai cala raijeo*	*manai cala raijeo*
	ngarge khoyam jara	*phapar lawa jaye*
	phapar lawa jaye	*ngarge gosayera*
	ramma puran can	*ramma ranju jara*
	tada nga jalikin	*je saca jala*

100	*mabhujunggi jala*	*madodore jala*
	tada nga jalikin	*gelai mundurulai*
	tuteo nga ruhnaye	*bhagyo nga ruhnaye*
	tuteo nga maruhkin	*bhagyo nga maruhkin*
	cangge cala leola	*mangge cala leola*
105	*ngarge mundurulai*	*ngarge khoyam jalai*
	tanje teo jalai	*wanje teo jalai*
	gaudi ukasideo	*galbi ukasideo*
	sime hã hã jaijeo	*bhume hã hã jaijeo*
	lata cala leyege	*lati cala leyege*
110	*deoye cala leyege*	*dhamiye cala leyege*
	nauai celme ralai	*suhare ralai*
	gaudi ukasideo	*galbi ukasideo*
	carai jugla	*carai manamila*
	samapurna bhaigo	*samaratha bhaigo*
115	*nga sirjana bohke*	*nga upjana bohke*
	deo charjar bhaigo	*satu charjar bhaigo*
	lata khelne bhaigo	*lati khelne bhaigo*
	lati calne bhaigo	*deoye calne bhaigo*
119	*samaratha bhaigo*	*samapurna bhaigo*

mantra…

Table 4: Parched Grain Chant (Translation of lawa kheti)

1	My teacher fathers on a certain day	in a certain year
	At half moon time	at full moon time
	The ramma came into being	the ranju came into the world
	All my teacher fathers	all my dead ancestors
5	On the unpassed fords	on the unknown paths
	Lead us on the fords	lead us on the paths
	Let’s put on the frying pan	let’s put on the iron plate
	My teacher father	father Anan Singh

	It was yours to give the songs	it is ours to sing the songs
10	It was yours to get the knowledge	it is ours to practice knowledge
	My teacher father	father Kamare
	According to your order	according to your word
	The great grandfather was born	the grandfather was born
	Our great grandfather was a ramma	our grandfather was a ranju
15	Ancestors of many days	forefathers of many days
	On the fords of the religious age	on the paths of the religious age
	On the fords of the true age	on the paths of the true age
	On the fords of the second age	on the paths of the third age
	In the fourth age	many days ago
20	Among the people of the fourth age	many days ago
	In the northern sector	at the northern exit
	The ramma came into being	the ranju came into the world
	With his nine male dumb dogs	with his nine female dumb dogs
	With his nine assistants	with his nine helpers
25	The ramma came into being	the ranju came into the world
	In the blind country	in the blind land
	The ramma had departed	the ranju had been called
	To the king's house	to (un)blessed Golkhada
	Ramma Puran Tsan went	with his nine assistants
30	For the creation of man	for the birth of man
	For retrieving the goye souls	for retrieving the gopi souls
	At the sunrise time	at the time of the setting sun
	All the nine assistants	all the nine helpers
	We all had no parched grain	so let us search for parched grain
35	Let us jump to the four gates	let us jump to the four circular points
	Let us jump from north to south	let us jump from east to west
	It may be at the lowland gate	it may be at the twelve circular points
	In difficult times parched grain is needed	in hard times it's needed
	For the creation of man	for the birth of man
40	All the nine assistants	went to the western exit
	Went to the southern exit	at the southern exit at the lowland gate
	In the lowland country	in the country of the plains

	They got the tori mustard grain	they got the sarsiu mustard grain
	And all the nine assistants	all the nine helpers
45	Put them in the frying pan	put them in the iron pan
	To make them sizzle	to make them smell sweet
	But they did not sizzle	they did not smell sweet
	They did not bring the good health dance	they did not bring the healing dance
	For Ramma Puran Tsan	for Ramma Ranju
50	The dance for good health did not come	the dumb dog dance did not come
	The goye souls were not lifted	the satu souls were not lifted
	The grains had no ancestry	the grains had no pedigree
	Let us search our parched grain	at the lowland gate
	We all the nine assistants	all the nine helpers
55	What kind of parched grain should we get	what kind of parched grain should we get
	They got the silk fibre parched grain	they got the onion parched grain
	They got the soya bean parched grain	they got the lentil parched grain
	They put them in the frying pan	they put them in the iron pan
	To make them sizzle	to make them smell sweet
60	But they did not sizzle	they did not smell sweet
	For Ramma Puran Tsan	for Ramma Ranju
	On the roof there was no good health dance	there was no healing dance
	The deities' dance did not come	the spirit medium's dance did not come
	The satu souls were not lifted	the kultu souls were not lifted
65	The grains had no ancestry	the grains had no pedigree
	Let us search our parched grain	we haven't got our parched grain
	In the lowland country	in the country of the plains
	What kind of parched grain should we get	what kind of parched grain should we get
	They got the maize parched grain	they got the millet parched grain
70	They got the highland barley grain	they got the wheat parched grain
	All the nine assistants	put these in the frying pan
	All the nine assistants	put these in the iron pan
	To make them sizzle	to make them smell sweet
	But they did not sizzle	they did not smell sweet
75	They could not jump into the air	at sunset time at that time
	For Ramma Puran Tsan	on a Tuesday

	He could not pacify the kaksi witches	he could not pacify the boksi witches
	He could not pacify the jyeanai witches	he could not pacify the manai witches
	He could not pacify the siure spirits	he could not pacify the masan spirits
80	He could not pacify the sepa spirit	he could not pacify the sero spirit
	He could not pacify god sime	he could not pacify god bhume
	Let us search our parched grain	we haven't got our parched grain
	No ancestry remained	no descendency remained
	Let us search our parched grain	in thenorthern sector at thenorthern exit
85	Let us search our parched grain	and both old Hargam and old Hargameni
	Sowed on a Monday	on the day of Monday
	In the month of Kartik	in the Kartik month
	In the northern sector	on a newly cultivated field
	The seeds for the good health dance	the seeds for the healing dance
90	And in the month of Asar	the buckwheat parched grain
	Had been created	in the northern sector
	The buckwheat parched grain	was born in Tanatali
	In cold Dolpo	in black Dolpo
	The buckwheat parched grain was born	in the month of Mangsir jumping up into the sky
95	And it brought the jyeanai witches' dance	it brought the manai witches' dance
	All my hosts my owners	of the buckwheat fields
	Of the buckwheat fields	all my hosts my owners
	All Ramma Puran Tsans	all Ramma Ranjus
	If you burn me once	according to your method
100	In the frying pan	in the iron pan
	If you burn me once	for our patient
	I will see the emerged soul	I will see it run away
	If I don't see the emerged soul	if I don't see it run away
	The good health dance will bring it back	the healing dance will bring it back
105	To my host the patient	to my host the owner of the fields
	Who fell into the underworld of tanje	who fell into the underworld of wanje
	Let me lift his narrow passes	let me lift his narrow ways
	Let me satisfy god sime	let me satisfy god bhume
	The male dumb dog's dance was brought	the female dumb dog's dance was brought

110	The deity's dance was brought	the spirit medium's dance was brought
	To the nine assistants	in a portion of the field
	Let us lift the narrow passes	let us lift the narrow ways
	In the fourth age	among the people of the fourth age
	The preparations are concluded	the preparations are completed
115	I the buckwheat was created	I the buckwheat was born
	The deities have been rejoined	the satu souls have been rejoined
	The male dumb dog has been playing	the female dumb dog has been playing
	The female dumb dog has moved around	the male dumb dog has moved around
119	The preparations are completed	the preparations are concluded

3. Formal characteristics of chanted verse

If one admits that the staging of a shamanic ritual is an art form, in which verbal craftsmanship, chanting, drumming, dramatic acting and dancing are tuned into a matching whole – a *Gesamtkunstwerk* – then it is suggestive to analyse it also according to aesthetic criteria, such as the formal characteristics of its compositional parts.

METRON. The chanted verse of Magar shamanic tradition is built on the basis of one elementary mode to construct the lines, irrespective to which type of class a recital belongs, to the narrative myths or to the non-narrative auxiliary chants. The standard metre is always the same, exceptions are trisected lines as mentioned above and moments in which the performers deviate from their antiphonic norms. This may happen in situations of time pressure (when a recital lags far behind its schedule and the singers have to speed up) and in situations when two performers (or groups of performers in an initiation) enter into a mode of competitive singing.

The standard metre of a verse is as follows: measured in terms of words, the line is divided into two equal parts (six syllables for the first hemistich and six syllables for the second hemistich, which makes twelve syllables in all). As a rule, a hemistich consists of three disyllabic words and a line, consequently, of six. When chanted, however, the first hemistich of a line is extended by an additional *–e* or *–o* at the end, stretching the last syllable; while the second hemistich receives two additional syllables by way of an exhaling *a-hum* at the end of the verse, after which the bard takes his breath for the next verse. The echo singer repeats the line at the moment the head singer exhales his *a-hum*. Whether or not these breathe-out syllables at the end

of the line can be linked to the mystical interjections *a* and *hum* (as in *om-a-hum*) of Hindus and Buddhists alike can only be guessed. Adding the three non-literal syllables of the chanted verse (a vocalic *–e* or *–o* at the end of the first hemistich and the two exhaled interjections *a-hum* at the end of the second) to those made of proper word syllables, the single verse comes to a total of fifteen sung and uttered syllables. Stress is on the first, third, fifth and seventh; on the eighth, tenth, twelfth, thirteenth and fifteenth of the syllables:

CHANTING. As already stated, the chants are normally sung in antiphony, either by two performers in a healing séance or by two groups of singers in some of the initiation chants. The first singer (or the first group of singers) takes the lead, reciting a single verse from beginning to end and – while exhaling – the second singer (or group of singers) repeats the verse; and so on through the entire chant (and the whole repertory where necessary). If one realises that normally in the second hemistich of a verse the same thing is said as in the first hemistich (due to Magar style of intra-verse parallelism in slightly different words), one can say that each statement has been made four times, once the echo singer has repeated the line.

An experienced master functions as precentor, while the second or echo singer is usually his pupil or a less experienced shaman. The repertoire, which is voluminous (thirty to thirty-five hours of uninterrupted singing), is learnt by doing. By serving as an echo singer to a master over a period of six to ten years, a new shaman acquires the oral texts in the course of running ritual performances. Private coaching or separate tutoring is not practiced. In the beginning, when the verses are not yet inscribed in his head, a pupil may just do his part by humming the syllables or inventing similar sounding ones. Many years later he will become a precentor himself and teach what he learnt from mouth to ear. Each pupil has two masters, just as each master had two teachers himself. Therefore he learns the corpus from two regular sources and, as these sources differ, even if only slightly, from one another, the tradition is in constant movement, reorganisation and change. These hardly perceivable transformations, due to the mechanisms of transmission, account for the many divergences in the corpus even at the most local level. And they help to explain why a fixed canon cannot be established in this type of oral tradition.

DRUMMING. The chanting is accompanied by drumming. Each of the two performers beats his own drum. When there are entire ensembles of performers, as congregated in initiation ceremonies, again each of the ritual specialists plays his own instrument. When these assembled shamans play in unison, the resonance of the beat can become very strong and one can understand why an initiant will go into repeated trances. In a healing séance, the two shamans may play their drums together or in alternation. The beats are

divided into strong and weak beats. The initial syllable of a hemistich gets a strong beat, followed by two weak ones. The second strong beat in the first hemistich is given to the fifth syllable, followed again by two weak ones. The pattern is repeated in the second hemistich. A full line gets four strong and eight weak beats for the textual part, plus two strong and four weak ones for the exhaling section at the end of a line, which makes a total of six strong and twelve weak beats per line. This pattern can be modified depending on the situation and the mood of the performers. For instance, when the officiating shamans feel they have to speed up and gain time, they can change the basic rhythm and play double time; or they can shift into a syncopic mode to disturb the spirits, the audience or even their pupils. Drumming is a craft of its own, which will not surprise when one looks at the great range of functions that a shaman's drum has to accomplish in the course of a ritual.

DRAMATIC ACTING AND DANCING. The shaman officiating in a healing séance or in an initiation ceremony is not only a poet, a bard and a musician, he is also an actor – a showman in dramatic scenes – in the course of which he personifies other beings such as his helping spirits. These embodiments require the professional gifts of acting in roles that are not those of his profane daily life. Like his chanting and drumming, his acting role is assessed by his audience (and critically by himself) after every performance. And when his ritual journey, recited in great detail during the different soul searching chants, changes from a verbal into a kinetic mood, he also turns into a dancer – one who moves from the house to the world mat, spread out on a neighbour's roof, in choreographed steps that are timed by the beat of his drum. Although his dancing and role acting do not coincide precisely with his chanting, (for he interrupts his recital when in trance and when moving in dance), these performative functions are all part of a single dramatic package.

PARALLELISM. The dominant formal principal of Magar shamans' chanted verse is parallelism. As a pervasive feature, it deserves special attention. Among the many forms of parallel construction, by far the most frequent is internal parallelism of hemistichs, i.e., one that takes place between the two halves of a single verse.

Example (line 3) *ramma utkar bhaige / ranju nitkar bhaige*

There are six words in this verse, three in each hemistich. The first words in parallel position, *ramma* and *ranju*, are both denominations for 'shaman' and in particular for 'mythical first shaman'. While *ramma* is still in contemporary use, *ranju* is limited to ritual chants as a pair to *ramma* and it is not employed

independently. The last words in parallel position, *bhaige* and *bhaige* (further down in the chant also as *bhaigo*) are identical, the second repeating the first. The words in the middle position, *utkar* and *nitkar*, both carry the meaning of 'to bring forward', 'to come into being', of which the second term *nitkar* modifies (or, perhaps more correctly, manipulates) the first one phonetically, just for variation in the chant. In internatal parallelism of hemistichs, one or two of the members are usually at variance and again one or two appear in repetition. More than one hundred verses of the *lawa kheti*, counting the shorter version of 119 verses, are constructed in this way; that is about 90% of all verses.

In sharp contrast to this, distich parallelism between words in two lines, very frequent in many poetic traditions in other parts of the world, is practically nonexistent in Magar shamanic verse. The only case that could be found in the *lawa kheti* as presented here is the following:

Example (lines 71/72) *nauai celme jarai / mabhujunggi jala*
nauai balme jarai / madodore jara

The parallel members at variance in the two adjacent lines are *celme* 'helpers' and *balme* 'assistants' in the first sections of the respective lines and *mabhujunggi* 'frying pan' and *madodore* 'iron pan' in the second, whereas the other members in parallel positions are identical. It is the only veritable couplet in the entire chant.

However double parallelism, combining the mutual symmetry of hemistichs in single lines with the distich symmetry of two adjacent lines, is relatively frequent (see lines 9/10, 16/17, 23/24, 35/36, 40/41, 75/76, 86/87, 102/103, 109/110).

Example (lines 09/10) *layo gita tamro / gayo gita hamro*
sikhyo biddhye tamro / sadhyo biddhye hamro

Here, 'having given' (*layo*) the 'songs' (*gita*) and 'having sung' (*gayo*) the songs, as well as 'yours' (*tamro*) and 'ours' (*hamro*), are parallel members at variance in the first line; just like 'having learnt' (*sikhyo*) the 'knowledge' (*biddhye*) and 'having practiced' (*sadhyo*) the knowledge are similar ones in the second line, including once again 'yours' and 'ours' at variance. In addition to this, both lines are parallel to each other in their totality.

In some rare cases, the parallel construction may be maintained over three lines (as in 55 to 57, in 68 to 70, and in 116 to 118).

Example (lines 55-57) *kadio lawa jaira / kadio lawa jaira*
resa lawa jaira / pyesa lawa jaira
bhatta lawa jaira / khãdo lawa jaira

In this triplet, if one may refer to it as such, the first line displays no variance at all between the first and second hemistich, both halves being identical (an extremely rare occurrence), whereas both subsequent lines change the first member of the hemistich in all four cases: 'silk fibre' (*resa*), 'onion' (*pyesa*), 'soya bean' (*bhatta*) and 'lentil' *(khãdo*).

In very rare cases (lines 16 to 19 and 77 to 81), parallelism even extends over four or five lines.

Example (lines 16-19) *dharma jugko ghata / dharma jugko bata*
sati jugko ghata / sati jugko bata
dawapur jugko ghata / tirtha jugko bata
carai jug la / una dinko bata

Example (lines 77-81) *kaksi masahãnadu / boksi masahãnadu*
jyeanai masahãnadu / manai masahãnadu
siure masahãnadu / masan masahãnadu
sepa masahãnadu / serong masahãnadu
sime masahãnadu / bhume masahãnadu

In the former of the last two examples, the extension of parallel construction over several lines seems appropriate because the bard, referring to the 'fords' (*ghata*) and the 'paths' (*bata*) of the four ages, emphasizes each of these world eras separately: i.e., the 'religious age' (*dharma jug*), the 'true age' (*sati jug*), the second, the third and the fourth ages (*dawapur jug*, *tirtha jug* and *carai jug*) in order to stress the enormous mythical time span. And in the latter example, the bard wants to give his audience an impression of the overpowering number of dangerous supernatural forces that he has to deal with, such as the *kaksi*, *boksi*, *jyeanai* and *manai* witches, the *siure*, *masan*, *sepa* and *serong* spirits, and the *sime* and *bhume* deities. In both cases it is the enumerative intention that accounts for the extended parallelism over several lines.

Chiastic parallelism in adjacent lines as well as delayed chiasmus in lines separated by several inserted verses are both very rare. An example of the former is to be found in lines 96/97:

ngarge khoyam jara / phapar lawa jaye
phapar lawa jaye / ngarge gosayera

Here, the second hemistich of the first line and the first hemistich of the second line, both dealing with the buckwheat fields, are identical, while the first hemistich of the first line and the second hemistich of the second line, both dealing with the 'masters' and 'owners' of these fields, display some variation in the wording.

Delayed chiasmus is equally rare and may be easily overlooked, because several other verses are inserted between those two where it occurs. Thus, lines 114 and 119:

samapurna bhaigo / samaratha bhaigo
……. / ……
samaratha bhaigo / samapurna bhaigo

These lines are separated by five lines which are constructed differently. Delayed chiasmus of this kind, although it fulfils the formal requirements of its definition, may also be interpreted in another way: as recurring formulaic expressions covering an entire line with exchangeable hemistichs, which may then be fitted into different sections of the chant.

The complete repetition of verses in different positions of the chant is relatively frequent. This is restricted, however, to verses that can be recognized as formulaic expressions extending over an entire line. Such cases are:

Examples	(lines 03, 22, 25)	*ramma utkar bhaigo / ranju nitkar bhaigo*
	(lines 33, 45, 54)	*nauai celme jara / nauai balme jara*
	(lines 30, 39)	*manmi sirjan lagi / manmi upjan lagi*
	(lines 52, 65)	*osakhu ja male / obakhu ja male*

Complete repetition in two successive lines, on the other hand, does not exist. In addition, repetition of half lines in a single line, i.e., duplication of a hemistich, is also frowned upon. The only case found in the *lawa kheti* is in line 55, repeated again in line 68:

Example (lines 55, 68) *kadio lawa jaira / kadio lawa jaira*

Solitary single lines without internal parallelism of the hemistichs are also quite rare. The few occurrences are the lines 11, 29, 88 and 90:

Example (line 11) *gura babu jaye / babu kamareye*

Trisected lines, as already mentioned, do occur (lines 01, 41, 62, 75, 84, 85, 94). Most of them display an intraline parallelism between the second and third sections:

Example (line 62) *nauai sardam jata / cangge cala male / mange cala male*

Trisected lines with no intraline parallelism are, however, practically nonexistent. The only exception in the *lawa kheti* is line 94:

phapar lawa bohke / magsir mahina jala / namda guwada raje

Something should be said of the relationship between repetition and variance of words in parallel constructions. The most common way to fit together the words of a verse with intraline parallelism is according to this formula: one word variance and two words repetition in each hemistich.

Example (line 6) *ghata laera die / bata laera die*

In this model, which constitutes the absolute standard of parallelistic construction in Magar shamanic verse, *ghata* and *bata* are at variance and *laera die*, which comes twice, is the repetition.

Two-word variance with only one member being repeated is occasionally practiced, but far less often than the former option. The repeated word or member in these cases is usually the last one, while the two first ones in the hemistich are made to vary.

Examples (line 32) *ghamai jhulka bela / tureniye bela*
(line 36) *utra dakhin hosio / purbai pachim hosio*

Quite rarely, the middle word is repeated while the words either side are varied.

Example (line 9) *layo gita tamro / gayo gita hamro*

This type of intraline parallel construction is highly valued by local experts as being a most elegant way of phrasing.

Finally, a thought should be given to words and word classes that are modified in parallel constructions. Or, to put it differently, which words are matched and moulded to form (more or less fixed) parallel pairs. Most of such pairs are nouns, followed by verbs; these are followed by numerals, personal pronouns, interrogatives and suffixes. Practically nonexistent are pairs shaped by adjectives, for the simple reason that adjectives are extremely rare in ritual chants. An exception is: *jadai* / *kali* 'cold'/ 'black', both qualities of Dolpo).

Frequent pairs among nouns with temporal meanings are: *dinla* / *barla*; *ausi* / *punni*; *jugla* / *manamila*; *mahina* / *masla*; *sakho* / *bakho*. Among nouns containing locative information, the following are frequently coupled to form standard pairs: *ghata* / *bata*; *khanda* / *mukha*; *desh* / *muluk*; *dhoka* / *mandal*; *mãlai* / *madesh*; *tanje* / *wanje*. Among nouns with botanical meaning, the following may become pairs in parallel positions: *tori* / *sarsiu*; *cangge* / *mangge*; *bhatta* / *phãdo*; *makai* / *kodo*; *oama* / *pima*. Names of spiritual beings are never arbitrarily coupled. These are the preferred combinations, as extracted from the chant at hand: *goye* / *gopi*; *satu* / *kultu*; *deo* / *dhami*; *kaksi* / *boksi*; *jyeanai* / *manai*; *siure* / *masan*; *sepa* / *serong*; *gaudi* / *galbi*; *sime* / *bhume*. Nouns describing shamanic activities are also paired in formulaic fashion, such as *lata* / *lati*; *celme* / *balme*; *ramma* / *ranju*. Among the verbs which form frequent pairs, the following ones stand out: *utkar bhaigo* / *nitkar bhaigo; calit bhaigo* / *balit bhaigo; layo* / *gayo; sikhyo* / *sadhyo; sirjan* / *upjan.*

A conspicuous feature, noticeable in a majority of the pairs listed above, is their affinity in sound and their jiggling. Some of the words in the second position seem to be made only for the purpose of phonetically modifying their counterpart in the first position. Moreover, the pairing is not arbitrary. A substantial number of words pair only with one other word and only in a certain order. Their sequence is irreversible. In other chants, several of the

words may pair with other words, just as other words do not pair at all. In conclusion, the process of pairing is selective and, once the words that may pair are determined, the combinations are binding and their sequence is compulsory. One may call this the shaping of formulaic expressions in the mould of parallelism.

What could be the reason for all this parallelistic versification? Is it perhaps that 'our ancestors spoke in pairs', as the Rotinese of Eastern Indonesia suggested so charmingly to their ethnographer (Fox 1974: 65ff)? Or, as the Kodi people of Sumba affirm, that paired couplets are the words of the ancestors, a language endowed by spiritual beings, composed of phrases 'sewn up in couplets' (Hoskins 1988: 31)? Undoubtedly, the oral poetry of the Magar shamans – their ritual language so overwhelmingly rich in parallel constructions – is a metaphysical communication system in which the mediator of man, the healer (*ramma*), addresses the supernaturals: his dead ancestors, his helping spirits, cohorts of mythical beings, negative and ambiguous forces, ghosts and witches. In this system, spirits speak amongst themselves and to him, material objects raise their voices, and buckwheat speaks and is spoken to. It is certainly a language different from village talk, if not in content, at least where the opposite partners of conversations and negotiations are concerned. This difference is expressed by the artistic refinement of the elevated and chanted language.

At the practical level of learning this idiom – a long path for those who cannot claim to have received it in a flash – parallel constructions come to help as mnemonic devices. The intraline phrases are short and almost reduplicated, textual progression is slow and minimalistic, and many of the verses reappear as formulas in different positions. With only one semantic change of parallel terms in a line, the chant can become a lengthy affair, but also easier to remember. In fact, Magar chants with one or sometimes two such changes are prime examples of oral composition. It is generally agreed that the dividing line between oral and written forms of parallel composition can be drawn at four parallel terms per line; more cannot be handled in great quantity by memory.

But there must be something else in parallel composition that is so attractive for transcendental communication. Both analogical parallel verse, in which different phrases are juxtaposed to express similar thoughts, and synonymic parallel verse, in which the same thing is said by exchanging one or the other word in otherwise identical phrases, underline their messages by restating them. Emphasis by restating is their raison d'être. The same thing can be observed in the medium of ritual action. Many of the separate acts that comprise a ritual are repeated in the course of the event, either as plain

duplicates (such as the acts of a one-night séance, which are staged twice in a two-night séance) or as different actions conveying identical meanings. One such example is provided by the jump act of the popping buckwheat: it signifies the sudden lift of the lost soul from the underworld. The same meaning is conveyed by a different act, *galsine* or 'doing the boar's job', when the patient is kicked up on the back of the kneeling shaman who is momentarily possessed by the wild boar spirit, the mythical lifter from the underworld. Modified repetition governs both ritual chanting and ritual acting; and as both modes serve the same purpose – a successful restoration of relationships between man and the spiritual world – the chants may be regarded as doing the same thing as the acts in a different way, and vice versa. Both amplify each other. It is this booster effect that is expected from the alternate reiterations of chant and act. After all, the supernaturals are hard to convince, and hard to move.

4. Precursors and perspectives

The scholarly study of parallelism has an imposing tradition. Only a few milestones can be mentioned here in passing. It all started with Reverend Robert Lowth in the mid-18th century who, in his studies on sacred Hebrew verse (1753), defined parallelism for the first time as the correspondence of one verse with another. He referred to parallel lines as equivalent in their form of grammatical construction, and parallel terms were the words or phrases corresponding to parallel lines. Lowth labelled these correspondences as *parallelismus membrorum* (he wrote in Latin). In his succession, Joh. Gottfried Herder stated that the two members 'bestärken, erheben, bekräftigen einander' (1782). These beginnings were followed by voluminous studies in biblical parallelism.

In the 20th century the pioneering works of Wolfgang Steinitz (1934), an East German ethnomusicologist, were concentrated on parallelism in Finno-Ugric languages, Karelian and Ostyak in particular. Analysing the chants of a Karelian bard, Arhippa Terttunen, Steinitz delivered a detailed typology of parallelism. His findings were expanded in the Ob-Ugrian subfamily by those of Robert Austerlitz on Vogul (Mansi) and Ostyak folk poetry (1958).

Roman Jakobson paid his tributes to parallelism on many occasions. As early as 1919, in a study on avant-garde Russian literature, he described parallelism as a basic operation of poetic language in which two elements are brought together. In his essay on grammatical parallelism in Russian folk poetry half a century later (1966), he called parallelism and alliteration two natural harmonic principles, perhaps the universal basis of songcraft. In

Russian folk poetry, as in Chinese poetry, to which he dedicated another separate study in a Festschrift in honour of his friend Lévi-Strauss (1970), he recognized the distych as the basic structural unit for the operation of parallelism, the foremost effect of which is to reinforce the repeated pattern. According to him, grammatical parallelism is a binary structure of corresponding lines, in which variables and invariants are apportioned in grammatical and lexical alignment. He characterised rhyme as condensed parallelism, as its minimal margin.

In the Chinese world, where parallel composition prevails both in prose and in verse, studies have been mainly on written material. After the early ventures by John Francis Davis (1830) who declared that constructed parallelism 'pervades Chinese poetry universally, forms its chief characteristic feature and is the source… of its artificial beauty', various Sinologists have given it special attention. James R. Hightower (1959) isolated three categories of parallelism: metrical, grammatical and phonic. To this one may add, considering the calligraphic aspects of the ideographic characters, a pictorial dimension. The basis of metrical parallelism in Chinese is the couplet, which may extend to two couplets. Beyond, rhythm is varied and grammatical parallelism requires that every (written) word in the first line be matched by a corresponding one in the second line of a couplet. Phonic parallelism, generated by rhyme, alliteration, repetition and tonal pattern, is a category of sound embellishment. For Peter Boodberg (1954), parallelism is not merely a stylistic device of formulaic syntactical duplication, but is intended to achieve a result of binocular vision – the function of the second line of a couplet is to give a clue to the construction of the first, resulting in a stereoscopic (and stereophonic) effect, registered by the senses as a poetic panorama from different angles.

The literary heritage of the Vietnamese, undeniably influenced by the Chinese, has developed its own ways of parallelism that can be found in all forms of verbal production: in the poetry and prose of the classics, as much as in popular literature. Parallel structure requires the use of two phrases that 'will run like two horses in front of a cart', and as soon as they are parallel any two sentences will automatically turn into poetry (Nguyen Dinh Hoà, 1955).

For the epic poetry of the Mongolian oral tradition, as studied by Nikolaus Poppe (1958), a distinction was noticed between strophic parallelism in songs and the verse parallelism preferred in epics. For Tibet, Rolf A. Stein (1972) ascertained a massive use of parallel constructions through the ages and irrespective of genres, from ancient poetry to contemporary ritual texts, from alternating chants in Dunhuang manuscripts to the marriage songs of modern

times, from the aphorisms and proverbs of folk religion in prose to the epics sung by the bards.

On distant shores, on both the American and Australian continents, the practice of various forms of parallelism has come to the attention of scholars. In Central America in particular, both oral and written traditions were making use of canonical (compulsory) parallelism. In Maya hieroglyphic writing, in Nahuatl poetry, in the Popol Vuh of the Quiche Maya, in Tzotzil speech performance, in the oral literature of the Cuna and in many other local ways of poetic expression, parallelism has played a principal role (Thompson 1950, Garibay 1953, Edmonson 1971, Gossen 1974, Kramer 1970).

In his detailed study of the songs of the Aranda in central Australia, T.G.H. 'Ted' Strehlow verified that parallel composition was the fundamental principle of Aboriginal oral literature. He pointed out that as a rule, two individual lines stand in complementary relation to each other: musically, rhythmically and in verbal construction. The second line restates or reiterates in similar words the first one or introduces a new statement, thereby completing or advancing the subject. In rhythm, the complementary line is either identical to the first, or it balances it antithetically with a contrasting rhythm of its own. The same applies to the tonal pattern (Strehlow 1971: 109f.).

For anthropologists, perhaps the most rewarding research on parallelism was undertaken in Eastern Indonesia. The testimonial evidence brought together in this part of the world is very rich and diverse, and the formal qualities of parallelistic verbal craftsmanship were accommodated here in exemplary fashion to their particular cultural settings by linking textual composition to the practice of religion, with cosmological ideas and modes of thought, and with the conceptualisation of social categories. The latter connection in particular, between the binary qualities of parallel composition and dual social classification, has been tested with some success. Instead of enumerating individual ethnographic studies with such links in mind, it may suffice to single out one publication where this goal was achieved with united effort. *To Speak in Pairs*, solicited and edited by James Fox (1988), is a collection of essays written by a dozen experts on Eastern Indonesia with the professed intention of studying ritual language – and in particular parallelistic composition – in the frame of specific cultural conditions. Yet it is also couched in a wider anthropological perspective: to understand individual cultures by comparing them with those of their neighbours.

Comparative studies of parallelism in the Himalayan regions are likewise no longer out of sight. Oral texts have now been collected and documented

from various local societies which indicate a promising start in this direction. Considerable bodies of myths, ritual chants, legends and stories in original languages have been gathered over the last decades from various hill peoples of the cis-Himalaya, such as the Kami populations of western Nepal (by Maskarinec), the northern and southern Magar (by de Sales, Oppitz and Lecomte-Tilouine), the Chepang (by Riboli and Rigling), the Gurung (by Strickland, Pettigrew and Yarjung Tamu), the Ghale (by Zimolong), the western and eastern Tamang (Höfer), the Khaling (by Toba), the Thulung (by Allen), the Dumi and Koyi (by von Stockhausen and Greter), the Chamling (by Ebert), the Chintang (by I.P. Rai), the Mewahang (by Gaenszle), the Lohorung (by Hardman), and the Limbu (by Sagant). Some of these texts exist on tape, others in transcription; some were noted down, translated and annotated, but only a few of these collections were also studied with regard to their verbal art and in particular to their parallelistic composition. Apart from the progressive attempts made by Strickland (1982, 1983, 1987) on Gurung, by Höfer (1993, 1994, 1997) on Tamang, and by Allen (1976, 1978) on Thulung, as well as the more timid ones by de Sales (1982, 1991) and Oppitz (1998) on Magar and by Gaenszle (2002) on Mewahang, the proclaimed goal of a comparative 'ethnography of the performed word' or a 'philological approach to ritual language' has remained but a desirable suggestion.

One step in the right direction would be to compare various forms of parallelism already to hand in available collections. While similarities would probably turn out to be greater between immediate neighbours and speakers of idioms in common language families, there might also be surprises of unexpected affinities between local traditions removed from one another in time and space. For this reason too, narrow limits should not be set. The oral traditions of the diverse faith-healers, as they were documented more recently in Nepal, could then be compared to those in the Sino-Tibetan marshes, such as the ritual languages of the Naxi, Yi and Chiang, to those of the mountain peoples in Burma, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and South China; and lastly to those of pre-Buddhist Tibet, as recorded in ancient manuscripts. In this way, the wide-ranging transformatory relations that have come to light regarding the content of myths would find their equivalent at the level of form.

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