Epics Along the Silk Roads

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Epics along the Silk Roads: Mental Text, Performance, and Written Codification

Lauri Honko

The idea of launching studies on the epics to be found along the Silk Roads was born in France and Finland almost simultaneously in 1989-90. At the 25th General Conference of UNESCO held in Paris in October-November 1989, a long and bureaucratic, yet historical process was brought to a happy end when the Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore was adopted by the Conference. The aim of this hitherto most authoritative document about the importance of folklore and oral traditions for national, ethnic, and regional cultural identities and for world culture in general was to raise awareness of the role of modern documentation work in creating new cultural resources through conservation, preservation, and dissemination of fragile local traditions (Honko 1989a, 1990b).

Among the members of the Finnish delegation at the conference the idea was born that a comparative survey of some valuable, fairly widespread oral traditions in the form of an international research project or conference would signal the value of oral traditions to the international community. Someone mentioned fairy tales as a possible topic. In the same session, information was disseminated about the UNESCO project called "Integral Study of the Silk Roads: Roads of Dialogue." It was part of the UNESCO program for the World Decade of Cultural Development and funds were allocated to a vast number of conferences and projects in many humanistic fields bringing together scholars from East and West. What about fairy tales along the Silk Roads? They were widespread and well liked by young and old.

After some consideration, however, oral epics came to the fore in our informal discussions. They had more obvious connections to cultural identities and worldviews. What was more important, there were living oral epics among peoples living along the Silk Roads, both the Desert Route (Turkey, Caucasia, Central Asia, China) and the Maritime Route (the

Balkans, India, the Philippines, China). In fact, the Silk Road cultures seemed a veritable repository of vanishing long epics. Earlier in the same year, I had witnessed the singing of Tulu oral epics in southern Karnataka, India, where Indian and Nordic colleagues joined forces to train young scholars in modern fieldwork along the guidelines of the UNESCO Recommendation. It was easy to see that a rescue action on oral epics would not be out of place.

In 1990, the Finnish UNESCO Commission formulated a proposal that epics along the Silk Roads be made an object of international, comparative study. Several other countries showed interest in the initiative. Only at this point did we learn that in Paris, at the C.N.R.S., Dr. Nicole Revel and her colleagues had planned a series of conferences on exactly the same topic as part of the UNESCO Silk Roads Project. An important third partner was Germany, where Professor Walther Heissig (Bonn) had over many years conducted a series of international symposia on Central Asian epics. There was an obvious need to integrate plans.

In November 1992, Dr. Revel, Prof. Heissig, and I visited UNESCO in Paris to explore the potential for a series of conferences under the auspices of UNESCO. It was decided that Finland would arrange the first workshop in June 1993, small in size but European-Asian in its recruitment of scholars. UNESCO and the Finnish Ministry of Education provided financial support, which made the organizing of the workshop possible at such short notice. The Oral Epics Project, a Finnish group of researchers at the University of Turku led by the present writer and sponsored by the Academy of Finland and the Kordelin Foundation, undertook the practical arrangements.

Thirteen scholars were invited to participate in the workshop, which convened at Turku University on June 3–7, l993. The four Asian scholars came from China (Liu Kuili and Mingming Wang, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing) and India (Viveka Rai and Chinnappa Gowda, Mangalore University). The four European participants were from France (Nicole Revel, C.N.R.S., Paris), Germany (Walther Heissig, University of Bonn) and Russia (Alla Alieva and Sergei Nekljudov, Institute of World Literature, Moscow). The Russian delegation was present through its papers only, because its trip had to be cancelled at the last minute due to visa difficulties. The host country was represented by Harry Halén and Petteri Koskikallio from Helsinki University and Lotte Tarkka, Lauri Harvilahti, and the present writer from the Oral Epics Project in Turku. Most of the participants gave two papers, one for the closed workshop session and the other at a concluding mini-symposium that was open to the public.

The scholarly focus

The scholarly interests were twofold. First, we wanted to emphasize the importance of fieldwork and the documentation of living oral epic traditions that still are remarkably rich along the Silk Roads, both the Desert Route and the Maritime Route. The scholars expressed their support for all initiatives aiming at the modern documentation and archiving of invaluable oral epic materials on an international basis. Such materials are needed badly, partly because they are in danger of disappearance in many places, partly because modern audiovisual documentation of epic singing and its social context is necessary in view of the nature of the problems posed by recent research. We want to know more about the learning and producing of long oral epics, their various modes of performance, their ideology and meaning, their relations to ethnic, regional, or religious groupings and identities. This is not possible without new materials created in dialogue with living singers of epics.

Second, the focus was on the process of textualization, starting from the mental text in the singer's mind, becoming empirically observable in the performance, and ending in the written codification, editing, and publishing of the epic text. We want to know how a dynamic, variable oral story, most alive in a dramatic performance, recitation, and dance, can be put into book-form. What are the principles of documentation, codification in writing, comparing variants, and editing a master version for an oral epic that ceaselessly continues to vary?

This scope of interests was too wide to be sufficiently covered by one workshop; it would require a series of conferences. Another goal too ambitious for a small group of scholars was the systematic mapping and comparing of all the epics along the Silk Roads, whose number alone is large enough to prompt a separate inventory project. Despite common trends in the making of epics, the performance traditions and social contexts of epics bestow them with remarkable individuality and in turn make quick generalizations risky.

Because of the short preparation time for the workshop and partly because very different research traditions were represented at our discussion table, it was not possible to harmonize the theoretical points of departure. All the participants came with their own expertise and interests and were free to suggest their topics. The exchanges were vivid as a result of our modest-sized assembly of scholars. Wide horizons and an interdisciplinary

atmosphere were everywhere evident. Undoubtedly, the topic would prove fertile for more systematic work.

Before turning to the papers themselves, let me sketch, however briefly, the general theoretical ambition that lies behind the three keywords: mental text, performance, written codification.

On mental text

By way of "text," what precedes a performance of an oral epic? This classic question arises as one observes the smooth unfolding of a lengthy story from the mouth of the epic singer and the knitting together of its events and episodes into a full-fledged text. What one hears is just one possible realization of the story among many. Even with one and the same singer there is no single master text that the singer simply reproduces. Yet much that existed before and was sung before is being reproduced. Much is remembered and reused, consciously or unconsciously. Still, to characterize the act of performance simply as a performed memorization of the story in question is obviously false; the different renditions of the same story by the same singer vary too much to support that hypothesis.

To accept memorization as the key to epic composition would be tantamount to saying that excellent singers are poor memorizers. On the other hand, memory is their world and instrument at the same time. They are capable of displaying great accuracy of memory, if need arises. Singers of oral poetry may easily master a store of tradition much larger than is usual in a culture dominated by literacy. Thus the aim in their work of composing epics cannot be a word-for-word reproduction of something. Such a verbatim reproduction may occur in sacred texts, for example in charms, incantations, and prayers, but even there objective accuracy may prove an illusion. On the other hand, the singer may claim the "sameness" of renditions that are far from identical.

To be able to understand the production of text in actual performance, it seems necessary to postulate a kind of "pre-narrative," a pre-textual frame, that is, an organized collection of relevant conscious and unconscious material present in the singer's mind. This material consists of (1) textual elements and (2) generic rules for reproduction; we may call it a "mental text." It is not as fixed as its documented manifestations may suggest, but it is only through its fixed manifestations that we can try to construct components of a particular mental text.

The apparent fixity of verbalizations proves to be transparent and fluid when we analyze their variation at the levels of texture (language),

text (content), and structure. The concept of textural similarity is different from the textual one, since similar content may be conveyed by linguistically dissimilar expressions. The same relation may be observed between content and structure: different structures may reside behind similar contents and dissimilar textual contents may reveal the same structure. The singer's concept of "sameness" may reside on the content level, whereas our observation of "differences" between two texts may be based on textural or linguistic criteria.

On mental images

As we try to conceptualize a "mental text," it may be useful, at least in the beginning of our analysis, to avoid the textural level of "textual elements" evident in the available renditions of the story in question. Since fixed verbalization is the final result of epic composition, we should not start there but look for more basic elements, which we may discern through a variety of manifestations of the same narrative. In other words, we may try to proceed in the same order as the singer and begin with what he seems to consider first when preparing a performance.

Let us assume that memory works by mental images and units of meaning rather than by verbal expressions. The images may be lucid and powerful regardless of what their verbal description will be in actual performance. It is the power of mental images that translates into word power. Image power cannot be exhausted by particular words. Hence the variation of linguistic means becomes a method of reaching toward maximal expression, a goal that can be reached only momentarily. The force of an image may be pressed into a particular function for a moment, but when the actual expression is over and the aim has been achieved, the image returns almost intact to its original and polyvalent form of existence in the human consciousness.

Mental images may, just like verbal expressions or for that matter models of mime and gesture, coexist in fairly free and loose order in the human mind. As such they need not "mean" much. Units of meaning are created only when images are related to each other, combined in a particular way or put into a sequence. If we read an epic text from this point of view, what we find are sequences of traditional images. If one does not wish to postulate repeatable verbal expressions or "formulas" as the basic units of epic composition, another possibility for the traditional "basis" is prearranged sets of units of meaning. What Paul Ricoeur calls

"emplotment" (1991:21) may come close to the sequencing of traditional images by the performers of oral epics.

On storyline

Empirical evidence seems to support the idea that two factors dominate the conscious part of epic composition in performance. They are "storyline" and "performance strategy." To be able to decide "what to perform" the singer must be in command of the storyline, a sequence of events and episodes, that is, the plot units necessary for the progress of the story to be told. The number and order of these units is important but not necessarily stable: certain plot units may be said to be more necessary than others, consisting of a kind of *sine qua non*-units (if they are omitted the story tends to be disrupted), whereas some are optional and function as means of emphasis and embellishment.

The storyline is the backbone of the mental text and subject to a careful conscious editing throughout the performance career of the singer. Theoretically, changes may occur in all parts of the storyline, but much of it remains fairly stable for long periods of time. The singer is aware of most major changes he or she has made and may vividly discuss the reasons for them.

On performance strategy

To be able to decide "how to perform" the singer must design a performance strategy. In this work he must pay attention to generic rules and situational limits of performance. This is the behavioral side of performance. The keyword here is adaptation. Large epics can never be performed in their entirety, and performers and audiences have their preferences. The context of performance may determine what parts of the epic must, may, or need not be performed. The singer must define the limitations and contextual requirements that the performance situation sets on his singing of the epic. For instance, a working or ritual context normally implies extensive collateral activities that cannot be ignored by the singer. He must select a time-frame and decide when, how much, and what parts of the epic can be rendered (such decisions may have to be readjusted in the light of unfolding events in the ritual process, audience reaction, and so on). He must also select the mode of performance.

On performance modes

Epics may be performed in solo, with or without instrumental accompaniment, in linear monovoiced narration or with shifts to different tones, melody, poetic category (prose, poem, dialogue, or drama), or by one or more ensembles (lead singer, accompanying singers, dancers, orchestra, and so on). What is essentially the same story can be delivered through a wide variety of modes of performance. In fact, the register may be so broad that it reflects not one but a cluster of genres. Such a situation may bring us to the border of the epic genre and lead us to ask how the performers view this problem. What do they regard as epic and on what basis? The choice of performance mode by the singer normally takes place in advance and affects the preparations. In the performance proper that choice both guides and sets the limits for action.

On performative styles

Within a particular mode of performance, the same singer may utilize different performative styles. In the Tulu tradition of southern Karnataka, for example, one singer may know many epics, each of which has a melody and recitation pattern of its own. Within one epic there is the possibility of linear singing in the third person singular as well as a variety of other performance styles, such as emphatic singing in the first person singular at the peak of the ritual process ("song of presence") or dialogic, antiphonal, and responsorial forms of epic singing representing dramatized alternatives to linear narration. The impact of performative style on the epic text will have to be studied more closely as well as the nature of information and types of expression preferred in different performative styles.

Much of epic scholarship is based on texts without much contextual information. Unfortunately, even in empirical research on oral, living epic traditions these basic distinctions by genre, mode of performance, performative style, and mode of documentation (dictation, singing, induced or societal context) are seldom made. This lack of important contextual information may well render some older materials useless for the study of phenomena sketched above or at least call for new methods of treating the available evidence.

On tradition system

A mental text is thus not only a particular story with some collection of episodes and sequenced plot units but also a source of multiple realizations of a narrative constantly open for editing and rearrangement by poetic or divine inspiration. It is based on the tradition store of the singer, a system of internalized traditions, their earlier performances, and the singer's beliefs, attitudes, and values. Anything relevant in this store may be retrieved to the sphere of mental programming and processing of a particular narrative act. The system is open and the boundaries of the mental text fluid, enabling the singer to select, order, and combine the elements of expression for a particular performance.

In other words, in the tradition system of a singer there are several mental texts of epics and of other genres. They are embedded in a wider "pool of tradition" (cf. Honko 1989b:167-68) from which textual elements may be retrieved across genre boundaries and adapted to new functions. This dynamic brings about an internal intertextuality in the singer's tradition system, a greater availability of materials than we may observe on the basis of actual performed epics. The restraint put on free borrowing comes from the generic rules of reproduction, which determine how diverse elements must be adapted and, above all, what is appropriate and possible to include in the first place.

Mental texts are more fluid than their manifest renditions make us believe. Yet they also preserve their individuality. Because of internal intertextuality, it might be assumed that different mental texts reflect the singer's worldview in a cohesive way. This need not always be the case. For our singer in Karnataka at least, each epic and its ritual context seemed to constitute a world of its own. "I am living in the Siri world," he confessed after having sung another epic (*Kotichennaya*), one that celebrates the virtues of warrior-heroes. His own system of values was anchored in the Siri epic with its female heroines and virtues of nonviolent resistance; it was the worldview of his Siri cult group (Honko 1992).

On manifest text

The text as manifested in performance is a performer's combination of words, gesture, mime, body movement, and musical and rhythmic patterns produced in an interactive collaboration with other co-performers on stage or in the audience. The confines of the manifest text are determined by internal and external factors such as the skill, mood, and

inspiration of the singer, as well as the pragmatic considerations of available time, space, audience, and collateral performance.

Just as the mental text must remain a hypothetical unit, the full representation of the manifest text is extremely hard to achieve regardless of our attempts to reproduce everything in print and picture through modern audiovisual means. The printed text of an epic will always remain a pale reflection, not at all the equivalent of the text manifested in performance.

On multiforms

In a recent paper we contend that an oral epic *breathes* through multiforms (Honko and Honko 1995). The breathing metaphor refers first to the fact that an oral epic has no fixed length; that is, its text may appear in shorter or longer form depending on the factors listed above (situational context, mode of performance, performative style). Second, variation in length is essentially produced by resorting to multiforms, which may be defined as repeatable, artistic descriptions and expressions that are constitutive for the oral epic and function as its generic markers. Although easily perceived as fairly constant elements of epic discourse, multiforms are largely responsible for variability in the epic because their presence or lack, as well as their different manifestations, offer the singer different strategic solutions in the composition-in-singing. Another feature of multiforms is their mobility: they may be transferred from one epic to another, or from one textual position to another, within one and the same epic. This kind of variation makes multiforms polysemous.

It may seem that the enigma of epic composition is largely solved by assuming that the production of epic text is based on a chain-like knitting together of multiforms. Yet the matter is not that simple. For example, multiforms are not absolutely necessary for epic narration. Certain passages may be expressed without any observable multiform, since there exists an epic discourse, a kind of plain narration, without easily repeatable and artistically elaborated expressions. In fact, multiforms belong to the realm of the focusing of meaning, embellishment of detail, and elaboration of expression. They are bearers and transmitters of epic art, not merely of epic plot.

On formulas

It may be asked what the relationship of multiforms is to oral formulas. The basic limitation of the Oral-Formulaic Theory[1] is, in our view, its starting point. Milman Parry's dissertation focused on formulas less than a single line in length, on attributes and epithets that, having once been chosen, seem almost irreplaceable or inevitable under strict metrical rules. This constitutive beginning from the smallest textural unit made the theory very slow indeed to approach larger units and the rules of their application. Even "theme," apparently the term closest to multiform, is somewhat unclear in its orientation to form and meaning: is it basically a plot unit also to be found in what we call plain narrative discourse? The fact remains that Parry and Albert Lord never paid enough attention to the overall storyline or narrative structure. The Oral-Formulaic Theory is almost naive in its neglect of comprehensive narrative models and its innocence in relation to contemporary structuralist trends.

Our approach starts at the opposite end, with the overall storyline and the singer's performance strategy. We wish to examine the mental text and the outline of the epic plot in the mind of the singer. Multiforms seem to hold a strategic position in the textural composition. The storyline endows the singer with the possibility of engaging himself in epic embellishment and the recruitment of multiforms. The moment he prefers elaboration to plain narrative, the store of multiforms is open to choice. Through multiforms it becomes possible to regulate both the length and the emphasis of narration. Multiforms are reproduced in a semi-automatic fashion; "words and sentences begin to invite each other," as our singer in Karnataka put it. Yet the borderline between conscious composition and automatic reproduction is fluid. The shorter elements (or formulas) are more "frozen," less variable than wider multiforms (descriptions), and their reproduction represents what cognitive science calls "implied knowledge," models unconsciously stored in the memory.

Microanalysis on epic production

Much of the present interest in oral epics is thus focused upon the individual singer and the context of his performance. Broad comparative surveys cannot solve the enigma of the making of an epic. Instead, we seem to need detailed, process-based analyses of the learning, "memory

[1] On the history of the Oral-Formulaic Theory, see Foley 1988.

editing," and performing of living oral epics. These must be based on careful fieldwork, detailed documentation of the epic performance in different settings, and well documented interviews with the singers. The method to be applied has been called dialogic: the singers are experts who are able to converse about difficult analytical problems on the basis of their professional experience. In most cases, they are fully capable of becoming our co-researchers.

Among the papers published in the present volume, there is one laudable example of carefully reported microanalysis of epic singing: a collection history of the Kudaman epic in the Palawan Highlands in the Philippines. For more than twenty years Nicole Revel has worked with materials provided by a singer and mapped out his learning and performance career with linguistic and anthropological data. Shamans and epic bards are close colleagues in the Palawan culture: possession by spirits and epic heroes belong to both, as do the nightly seances of performance, the sacred character of their songs, and the similarity of their melodies. During his long career the singer has developed the epic toward dramatization; what he learned as a basically monovocal recitation has become a multivocal play where not only spoken lines as such but also the voice, tone, and intonation—the soundscape—help to create the characters. Revel makes use of the term "mental text" but in a slightly different meaning from the one sketched above. For her it seems to mean "a ready-made and fixed text" and a "semantic structure," and she refers to the "multiple drafts model" suggested by a reseacher of cognition.[2]

A Finnish-Indian team has documented the Siri epic of Tulunad, in southern Karnataka, in the context of full-moon possession rituals and by way of interviews. The singer of the epic has given valuable information on the sacred and profane contexts of singing, his own learning and singing career, and, most interestingly, his technique of epic production. The differences between the actual sung and dictated versions of the Siri epic and the singer's view on them were studied by Chinnappa Gowda, whose paper could not, for technical reasons, be included in this volume. His observation was that the singer was well aware of the stylistic differences between dictation and singing and their textual impact on performance. The singer found the extra time made available by dictation to be of no use; rather it hampered the natural knitting together of episodes and resulted in

[2] The model denies the existence of a "master version" in the processing of perception and of a "center" where this processing could take place. The analogy is probably more useful in research on cognition and brain mechanisms (where it has also been criticized; cf. Revonsuo 1993:85-87).

more prosaic, less elaborated forms of expression than were typical of the sung epic.

Intergeneric and intertextual relations of epics

In his contribution Viveka Rai examines the place of epic in the Tulu genre system and elucidates the relationship of long epics to shorter epic poems and work songs. The transition from epic (*sandi*) to work song (*kabita*) is smooth indeed, for example, in the paddyfield, where the women pluck paddy seedlings singing the Siri *sandi* and after a moment plant them in a nearby field to the tune of *kabita*. Such a functional cohesion creates affinity between genres, an affinity that may not be visible in the epic and song-texts but is reflected in the worldview of the singers, who are in this case women. Rai emphasizes the importance of context for our understanding of epics and applies native genre terms and systems when studying intergeneric relations. Rai also warns against quick generalizations about epics that, in Tulunadu at least, "have different origins, contents, forms, styles, structures, contexts, functions, frequencies, and distributions." This kind of individuality means that they may reflect different worldviews—as was pointed out above in the case of *Siri* and *Kotichennaya* epics—and that their intergeneric linkages may entail different partners.

Intergeneric relations are important for Lotte Tarkka, too, but from a different perspective. The material base of her analysis is even more cohesive than Rai's: a handful of variants of the cosmogonic, mythical poem *The Creation* from a relatively limited area in northernmost Karelia. These she analyzes from the point of view of intergeneric linkage (for example, between epic poems and incantantions) and, perhaps more importantly, from the point of view of intertextuality. By studying the concepts of time, space, and ego that permeate this oral body of poetry and finding a cohesion in their utilization, she postulates an "epic universe" based on "the whole of a local culture's narrative texts." Tarkka compares her results to Elias Lönnrot's handling of *The Creation* in the *Kalevala*, discovering certain similarities and differences between him and the oral singers. Interestingly, she defends Lönnrot's solutions against some recent criticism (based on the analysis of the variants of just one poem) by referring to the oral intertextual universe where such solutions are common.

Conglomerate epic

The proposition of an "epic universe" as the basis of epicality and epos may inadvertently change the concept of epic. We are not talking about one epic but many or, as in the case of Finns and Russians who do not possess long oral epics, a conglomerate of poems and narratives in which the same or similar heroes appear. Tarkka is aware of the criterion of length, but she deals with the problem only in passing.

The conglomerate epic appears more frequently in the thinking of Russian colleagues (cf. Honko 1990a:19–21). In theory, conglomerate epics could be postulated on the basis of geographically limited local traditions, the epic poetry of an ethnic or linguistic group, or that of an entire nation or even larger regional entity. The Caucasian Nart epic has many "owners"—Adyghs, Ossetes, Chechens, Balkars, Ingushes, and some peoples of Dagestan and Georgia. It consists of several separate narratives constantly mixing fantastic and realistic features, hoary antiquity, and everyday flesh and blood. The heroes are handled with different emphases in different ethnic groups. Yet the Nart epic is unified, says Alla Alieva in her essay, by its common heroes and the plots attached to each of them. It creates a composite "epic biography of a hero" and portrays the Nart epic society as basically leading a life of high moral standards and laws worked out through centuries by the Caucasian mountaineers.

Epic and identity

The close connection between epic and society guarantees that there is always at least one group who hails the epic as reflecting their own history and character and accepts it as part of their cultural identity. This quality makes epic poetry a tool of politics. First there may be an oral, living epic poetry culture, but the advent of literary culture creates "sacred texts" and eventually, as Lauri Harvilahti shows in his contribution, a literary epos serving the purpose of national identity and integrity, the final stage being perhaps a collation (even in a language other than the original) fabricated in accordance with the concept of culture as defined by the ruling party.

The hegemony of the Romantic paradigm dominated the politics of national epics in Europe from the late eighteenth century onwards. In Asia we also find nationalism, epics, and cultural identity connected, but without the burden of "oral authenticity" required by the Romantic theory on epics. In Asia literary influence on oral materials has not been conceived as the kiss of death; on the contrary, it has increased the value of, say, the Telugu

national epic *Palnāṭivīracaritra*. In Europe, Macpherson became an outcast once his literary share in the *Poems of Ossian* was discovered. The compiler of the Finnish national epic *Kalevala* did everything he could to avoid Macpherson's fate and created a patchwork out of authentic lines of oral poetry. The result is not, as I postulate in my paper, a literary epic, but it is not an oral epic either. Many great epics in Europe, Asia, and Africa belong to this category of tradition-based or semiliterary epics and preserve much of the oral epicality of their source.

Occasionally, the epic concept is attached to a particular place or object that becomes the center of stories representing the fate of a nation. The Wall of Gongwu Town in Quanzhou, built in 1387, is such an object-turned-into-heroic focus, aptly located at the starting point of the Maritime Silk Road in China. Its role was, as Wang Mingming showed in his paper (which we are not able, for technical reasons, to publish here), to deter foreign enemies (the most recent intruders being the Japanese), but in the l980s, when the wall was beautifully restored from ruins, the interpretation of this Chinese identity symbol changed into something else, namely a token of friendly relations with other nations, tourism, and trade. This means a return to the Golden Age of Quanzhou, the second largest port of medieval China, with all the blessings of the Silk Road.

National identity is but one connection with identities that the epic can secure within a culture. My contribution attempts to illustrate that the epic as the "ultimate song of truth" is present at all levels and gives symbols and meaning to the expression of regional, communal, and individual identities.

Epics in adaptation

That the Silk Roads really were early roads of dialogue between East and West may be substantiated by the distribution and development of great epics such as Geser and Jangar. When these story-cycles spread from one ethnic or linguistic group to another, they interacted with local traditions and ideologies, adapting to particular traditional milieux and often developing new topics and motifs unknown to the donor culture. Thus, for example, when the Geser epic spread to Mongolia from Tibet, several new chapters or sub-epics evolved. According to Sergei Nekljudov, of the twelve chapters of the Mongolian Geser epic only five can be identified, and those in modified form, in the original Tibetan Geser tradition. In his paper he not only establishes this fact but also illustrates the typical changes and developments of plot that fueled the process.

This observation reminds us of two things, namely that many different nations may own a great epic and that the charm of epic narration may not be revealed to foreigners. As Harry Halén notes in his contribution to this collection, "I have skimmed through some of the epics, the aesthetic side of which, as always, disappoints me, whatever the value for linguistics and general social history. To my mind (brought up on the *Nibelungenlied* and Homer and of course the splendid *Kalevala*), hyperbole of the sort which prevails in Mongol hero-tales and those of southwest Asia, virtually destroys human interest." And yet, as Halén also points out, "the Mongols themselves, for whom the epics are meant, certainly enjoy them as much as present-day youths enjoy the unbelievable deeds of action-film heroes." In other words, understanding epics easily becomes a test in intercultural translation, a work of comprehending the Other.

Along the Maritime Route, India is the motherland of epics, where parallel streams of oral and written epics have flown for centuries. The conflux of these streams has constantly brought about adaptive changes in the ideology of epic tradition: for example, as Petteri Koskikallio shows in his paper, the classical epic story has been used in post-classical folk epics as a tool in propagating a new religious worldview and a new legitimation of ritual.

Silk Road epics—a heritage in danger

When speaking of the Silk Roads, we always remember trade and the material silk thread that put the two early superpowers in contact, Rome (and Egypt) in the West and China in the East. We should remember as well that it was not only goods that traveled along the Maritime and Desert Routes; it was also products of spiritual culture such as epics. In those ancient times, many peoples along the Silk Roads lived in societies of high mobility. In his contribution Walther Heissig refers to Mongolia and its history of warfare, nomadism, and intensive caravan trade. Among the caravan employees was often "one helper who was able to tell tales and epics during the evenings."

The striking fact about the epics along the Silk Roads is that there are so many of them still alive, often almost unknown and undocumented, and certainly in danger of extinction. In Mongolia alone, about 350 epics have been recorded, of which roughly a third have been published. As Heissig tells us, they were all performed by persons aged between 50 and 75, professional singers or people who remembered the texts. In the younger age-groups the interest and ability to perform is becoming rare indeed.

Considering that the normal age for learning epics is between ten and twenty, a dramatic decline may consequently be expected as the old generation of performers passes away. What is going to be lost is not only the epics but oral history at large. An example of the power of this oral memory is the ability of Mongolian singers to recount the line of inheritance of each epic by citing 10-12 predecessors. This genealogy of epic singing thus reaches back nearly 200 years in history.

As Heissig points out, "a territory like Mongolia, situated between all possible influences from all the Silk Roads, tracks, and extensions, must be a mine of motifs, myths, literary plots, and transformations. Under the present circumstances, however, there is not much time left to record the great volume of oral literature still to be found there before the impact of modern technical civilization makes these basic memories obsolete." Mongolia is not the only example. That is why the scholars of the workshop cited UNESCO's Recommendation for the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore, expressing the hope that oral epics would be one of the first targets of rescue action by way of fieldwork, proper documentation techniques, and archiving of the most important materials. The price of this action would be modest against the background of what is at risk.

Considering the multinational situation of comparative research on oral epics, the members of the workshop discussed the political implications of research and expressed the hope that UNESCO will find means to create an international archive for the conservation of the most valuable materials. Safe storage of, especially, audio and audiovisual documents on oral epics and a computerized archiving system to guarantee the proper availability and use of these sometimes delicate materials would be ideally placed on impartial ground under the guidance of an international scholarly board.

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Epic and Identity:
National, Regional, Communal, Individual

Lauri Honko

As late as 1981 Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian, and Swedish ethnologists and folklorists introduced a debate on the analytical value of the concept of "tradition" at their triennial Nordic conference (Honko and Laaksonen 1983:233-49). It was stated that this key term in cultural studies had remained largely unexplored for far too long. One of the reasons for the new interest in this concept was a perceptible change in the research climate: people in the traditional communities to be studied had begun to employ the term in relation to certain parts of their own cultural heritage. This emancipation of previous "informants" into "co-researchers" brought about the need to survey the meanings of "tradition" in scholarly contexts.

The ethnologists and folklorists present at the meeting agreed that the term was used in three different ways, firstly, "tradition as something that is handed down in a continuous process of transmission." This meaning was the least interesting of the three, because it reflected only the most common everyday usage found in dictionaries. It seemed to lack analytic power; that is, it was not problematic in a fruitful way. The second meaning, "tradition as the stuff out of which cultures are made and which we have deposited in our folklore archives," was problematic because it raised the question of how tradition and culture relate to each other. Tradition was seen as a haphazard collection of material and immaterial items. The third meaning, "tradition as something representative of a social group (based on selection by members of the group or by outside agents)," proved to be the actual core of the debate. As in the previous case, an additional term offered itself—"group identity." The third meaning clearly referred to those elements in the traditions of a group that signify the group's typicality, its character and possibly uniqueness.

A division of labor between "tradition," "culture," and "identity"

The conference was able only to state the problem. In an article published several years later, I argued that it was poor economy to use the concepts "tradition," "culture," and "identity" almost interchangeably (1988:9-11). In an attempt to create a division of labor between these keywords I decided to settle for just one of the three available meanings. My personal choice was and still is the second one. To me *tradition* refers primarily to materials only, to an unsystematic array of cultural elements that have been made available to a particular social group in different times and contexts. Tradition would thus look like a store, only some parts of which are in use at any given time. The other parts are simply waiting to be activated, stored in the library of the human mind, always in danger of passing into oblivion because of the lack of use, lack of function.

The important aspect of "tradition" defined as the stuff out of which cultures are made is that it need not be described as a functioning system. Rather, it is a cumulative entity. Its boundaries will change with every new person entering the group or passing away. Tradition, in other words, would denote the cultural potential or resource, not the actual culture of the group.

I should mention that, in the meantime, three years after the Nordic conference another debate on the concept of tradition took place at an American-Hungarian Conference on Culture, Tradition, and Identity organized at Indiana University, Bloomington. In his lucid paper (1985), Dan Ben-Amos surveyed the varieties of the meaning of "tradition" in American folklore studies. He found no less than seven different strands of meaning, among them the meaning that I would prioritize, namely, "tradition as mass." It seems to be a naturally evolving meaning, needed by folklorists.

Culture has likewise been used in many different ways, also as a mass concept. To me the term does, however, imply something more than mass, namely order: the organization of elements into an integrated and functional whole, that is, a system. I resist the temptation to make culture the umbrella concept and tradition something specific within it. The analytical value of the culture concept lies in its systemic application. We are not inclined to use it by content but by function; in other words, culture is not in things but in people's way of seeing, using, and thinking about things.

When tradition is transformed into culture, something important happens. The often haphazard supply of tradition offered to a group of people through various channels acquires a systemic character. Certain parts of tradition become cultured; they are made relevant to the community

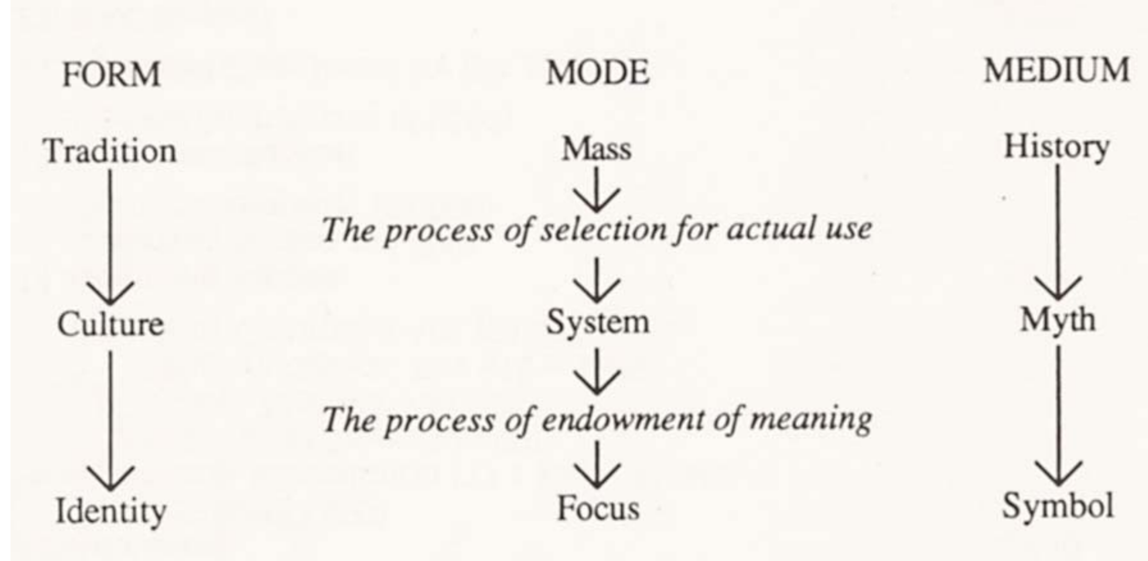
here and now. They become integrated in its way of life. The key to that ordering process is selection. Without alternatives, without potential for adoption or rejection, without the adaptation of available elements into systems of interests and values, without social control and interpretation, no tradition can pass into culture.

If culture confers order upon tradition as "mass" or as "a store of available elements," the concept of *identity* takes one more step in the same direction. The systemic character of tradition prevails, but it becomes more specific and focused. Part of the collective tradition is singled out and made to represent the group in cultural communication. These traditions may refer to language, geographical location, music, dance, costume, architecture, history, myth, ritual, and so on. In this process of selection and added emphasis, flags, colors, and names, for example, cease to denote objects, qualities, and persons or places. They become emblems, representative symbols of the group in question.

The selection of items may look peculiar, but it is not to be judged by external form or by content only, because each thing and behavior stands for more than itself: it carries a symbolic meaning. An air of sacredness is perceptible around these symbols. They carry meanings and emotions that cause the identity group to unite and develop a sense of cohesion and togetherness.

It is now possible to define group identity as a set of values, symbols, and emotions joining people, through constant negotiation, in the realization of togetherness and belonging, constituting a space for "us" in the universe (as well as distinguishing "us" from "them"). The little word "we" is able to bring semantic unity to the set of selected symbols, be they material or abstract, ideas, things, words, or action. Much of this unity may be based on semantic compromise, even misunderstanding. Many of the symbols may have been manipulated by members of the group or even by outsiders. Yet the power of traditional elements selected and integrated into the system of identity expression is remarkable. Perhaps we should call them "supertradition" or focalized tradition to denote that they carry more meaning than their texture and content are able to reveal.

Let me summarize what I have said so far by presenting a chart intended to illuminate the translation of tradition into culture into identity. I venture to connect these concepts with other keywords, such as history, myth, and symbol.



The first two columns from the left reflect what has just been said. The third suggests the following reading: as inchoate historical facts become cultured, they are integrated into world order and attain sacredness comparable to myth, and may develop into markers of identity and carry a symbolic loading that exceeds their literal meaning.

Epics as tales of identity

What is the locus of epics in this methodological context? I submit that they may be characterized as "tales of identity," comparable to identity symbols and able to convey extratextual meaning to those groups who recognize them as "our story." An epic is, in the words of Bridget Connelly (1986:225), "a saga of identity and, as such, a saga of alterity"; that is, by creating "us" the epic simultaneously creates alterity, a contrast to and distance from other groups. Unity is impossible without alterity.

Epics usually rank very high among literary and traditional genres. They are great narratives or superstories that excel in length, power of expression, and weight of content compared with other narratives. Their value, however, derives less from their literal content than from their cultural context and function: they are seen in relation to something beyond their text, such as people's perception of group identity, core values of the society in question, models of heroic conduct and human endeavor, symbolic structures of history and mythology. This means that a rather tedious and repetitive narrative may also attain greatness in the consciousness of the particular group that identifies itself with the

personages and events of the epic. Thus the reception of epics is part and parcel of their existence. Without social approval and even enthusiasm registered by at least some group, it becomes difficult to place a narrative in the category of epic (cf. Honko 1993c:618).

A host of epic scholars have pointed to the identity-structuring function of epics. As one example, let me quote Susan Wadley (1991:220-21):

> Epics have a unique relationship with the community in which they are performed: they are "our story," and stand apart from other songs and stories because of community identification with them. As presentations of regularized world views, oral epics make a statement that other folk genres cannot. Hence epics are sung: through the non-discursive statements of music and with paradigmatic metaphoric constructions, they are not making arguments, but are stating fundamental realities.

The short definition of the epic given above, "a superstory that excels in length, power of expression, and weight of content," should thus be read from the viewpoint of the community that recognizes, owns, and maintains it. This reading presupposes at least some kind of knowledge of the social and situational context of the various performances of a particular epic. That is why empirical studies and fieldwork on living oral and semiliterary epics have become so important in recent decades. Such investigations may help us, once more, to construct models for a better understanding of those epics known only through textual evidence.

Literary, semiliterary, and oral epics

By way of definition it may be useful to divide the variegated world of epics into literary, tradition-based, and purely oral epics. By literary epics I mean great narratives created by a writer or poet; an example would be Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Their form and structure are given by the literate poet, and if there is some reference to preliterary sources and traditions, these elements do not direct the choice of plot or form. In short, they do not constitute a problem for the creator of the epic. He is master of the elements available. For the compilers of tradition-based epics—like Elias Lönnrot, the compiler of the Finnish *Kalevala*—the situation is different: they are sometimes led to include elements whose meaning they do not fully comprehend. In short, whereas oral poetry is just flexible material for the literary epic, it retains its mystery and poetic idea for the

tradition-based epic, although admittedly to varying degrees from one compiler to another (cf. Honko 1993c:620).

By pure oral epics I mean lengthy epic poems or prose narratives that live or have lived in oral tradition. Of each such poem there are normally a number of versions, and it is generally impossible to point out a master copy among the versions, a single version that dominates over the others because of its originality (*ibid*.:621-22). They survive in the minds of illiterate singers as "mental texts" and may also undergo processes of editing. This is not the place to describe all transitional forms between pure oral and semiliterary or close-to-literary epic. It may suffice to say that they are numerous and their identification also requires extratextual evidence.

Oral epics as carriers of communal and regional identities

Good contextual information and some empirical inquiry are necessary before one is able to establish the relation of an oral epic to the identities of the social groups and communities surrounding its performance. The problem is complex because one group or some of its members may be responsible for the performance while another group "owns" the epic in question or identifies itself with it. Claims of ownership and opinions offered by performers and audiences may give important clues, but sometimes the connection between a group's identity expression and the epic remains latent. The best way to proceed is probably to look for a "community of truth," a group that takes the epic more seriously than others and derives its social origin, rank, legitimation of certain rights and duties or morals from the contents and teachings of the narrative.

This may mean, among other things, that one and the same narrative constitutes an epic for one community but something else for another. According to Stuart Blackburn and Joyce Flueckiger (1989:6, n. 19),

> The "same" narrative, even performed in similar styles, may thus be epic in one community and not in another. For example, the tradition of Ḍholā is performed as a long, sung narrative in both the northern plain of Uttar Pradesh and the central Indian region of Chhattisgarh. In U.P., it is an epic tradition, whereas Chhattisgarhi performers and audiences do not perceive it to be a true story or a story specifically identified with their community.

Susan Wadley represents a slightly different view on Ḍholā. Even when this epic is performed as entertainment, it "relates fundamental

cultural categories" (1991:221). It is possible to argue that a text that maintains a content and performative style characteristic of epics also retains some of its truth value when gliding into an entertainment function. I have witnessed the performance of *Bhuta* epics in south Karnataka at agricultural fairs called *Krishi Mela*. The dance of Bhuta is totally out of place and out of context when reduced to jumping in procession or on stage in front of a large audience. Yet I cannot be sure if the majority of spectators feels that this is, after all, a kind of visit by a deity to the fair. Furthermore, entertainment is not "pure" entertainment but may easily attain features of rather serious, soul-searching questioning and answering. If entertainment is temporally or spatially perceived to be in conjunction with important activities such as hunting, travel, and so forth, it may turn into a latent ritual taking its value orientation from the actual context.

At the societal level, however, I think it is sound to view epic, in the strict sense, as a functional term and thus to assume that there must be at least one group and one situation where it becomes the supreme song of truth and relates directly to the identity of the group. Having said this, I also find it necessary to reserve a place in the category of epic for narratives that fulfill the formal criteria but have not yet been proved to perform the function of epic in relation to group identity. This broader use of the term will also include texts that have lost that function but might well attain it in a suitable context, adding another dimension to comparative research on the genre.

It should be possible to posit that the moment a wandering narrative is seized and converted into a song of truth for a particular group, an adaptation of tradition must take place. The story must be fitted to both the physical environment and the mental tradition-morphology of the group. It must be able to reflect local ideals, dominant values, socioeconomic structures, and social rank prevalent among the core audience (cf. Honko 1993a:52). Even if the audience of an epic performance is of a mixed nature, consisting not only of believers but also of skeptics, mere onlookers, and passers-by, there is a core audience to which the message is directed.

From this point of view, the conclusion of Velcheru Narayana Rao's analysis of six Telugu folk epics is illuminating (1986:162-63):

> Each of the six epics examined in this essay has "heroes" who defied death. The manner of defiance, however, is what makes it possible to classify the epics into martial and sacrificial types. That each of the epics has its own audience/participants makes it necessary for us to relate the narrative to the life and culture of the patron community. It appears, from the evidence, that the socioeconomic features of the community have influenced the nature of heroism, as well as the ideological processes which the story has

> undergone. The stories are considered epics, not simply because of the formal features of length, performance style, and poetic quality, but because the narratives have ordered the world view of the communities that identify with them. The participating communities, for their part, see the epic as recording true events. The transformations of such a narrative thus follow the ideological trajectory of the community that participates in its truth value.

The cohesion of the identity group behind the epic may vary. One important type of identity on which the epic discourse may be based is *regional.* This term refers to multi-class, multi-caste settings where the internal cohesion of more than one social class or caste is at stake. The epics may depict origins, relations, and even conflicts between or among a number of social groups in one region. Such a sociopoetic portrait of existing communities and their ranking, their rights and duties, may bolster loyalties toward local sources of social power and teach, in effect, rules of peaceful co-existence. Or it may turn into a dialogue between great and little traditions as described by Brenda Beck (1982:196-97):

> A long succession of storytellers must interact with numerous live audiences to produce a folk epic. As these stories gradually grow from legends, they become more and more embroidered by community tradition. They may even become a root story for a great civilization. The *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyana*, India's two great epics, presently enjoy a pan-Indian status of just this kind. The process that gradually refines such epics and makes them respectable vehicles of dominant class attitudes, however, helps to separate them from everyday peasant life. When the gap between high-status outside views embodied in such works and the attitudes of marginal folk groups becomes too great, a new space opens in community tradition for legends that better express regional concerns. In the local Brothers epic, for example, artisans and farmers are the important figures, not the teachers, warriors, or ascetics of Indian classical tradition. Such a story can depict a poignant set of counter-identities precisely because it finds ways to place new but familiar themes in relation to the frame points of a known superstory . . . . The Brothers story is a mouthpiece for the powerfully mixed judgements of those who live in the margins of a wider political system. It describes their view of those who move at the center. References to India's great epics and to known Brahmanical views are found throughout this regional legend. What is more impressive, however, is that this account mocks so many pan-Indian norms. Opposition and inversion both play key roles in this epic's thematic organization. These structural features help to define the story as separate from the great literature of India in many ways. In fact, these particular details thoroughly color its oral variants.

This adaptation of epic stories into local tradition, morphology, and geography puts the great tradition on the defensive and gives vent to expressions of regional identities. It probably exerts a unifying effect on a local population divided by linguistic, religious, and caste boundaries.

Multiple identities, communal and individual: The Siri epic

Beck's observations concern South India, especially Tamil Nadu. In a similar fashion, the interplay of great and little traditions is conspicuous in the epics of Karnataka (Ramanujan 1986:55-68), both the Kannada- and the Tulu-speaking areas. They mix both in the temple sites where epics are performed in connection with full-moon-night possession rituals and in the epics themselves. The still unpublished Siri epic, probably the longest among Tulu epics, performed in paddyfields and in women's possession rituals,[1] has all the Trinity gods in its plot: Iisvara (Shiva) orders the epic to be created for Tulunad, Narayana (Vishnu) appears regularly in the most repeated refrain line of the epic, and Bermeru (Brahma) is one of the protagonists, "a poor Brahmin man," who in this and other disguises represents the divine will and judgment. Yet the epic is not about these gods, even if their action determines the flow of events. The scene is occupied by feeble men and strong women who reflect the identity of a matriarchal cast, the Bunts, the present "owners" of the epic. The heroine is a victim of male dominance and complex rules of inheritance. Yet caste identity is not the all-important issue. In fact, the 70-odd women who belong to the cult group studied by our Finnish-Indian team since 1989 represent several castes. Siri, her two daughters, and twin granddaughters provide five models of identification for harassed women with mental disorders; that is, they have been selected for cult membership by their illness and not by their caste.

Sanskrit traditions dominate the cult place where epic performances take place in front of three temples during feasts organized for the high-god of the main temple, with the local Bhuta-heroes paying their annual visit to the village population, and Siri groups devoted to the memory of an exemplary woman of divine birth. The idol of the main god is "shown to people," or carried in a pompous procession around the temple site several times and put back on the main altar. Bhuta-impersonators are of lowly caste and may never enter the temple: they dance in front of its threshold. The Siri groups stay in the less sacred areas of the site as well.

[1] Claus 1975, 1986; Honko 1993b; Rai 1986; B. Rao 1986.

It is obvious that many identities are displayed during the two-night possession rituals, partly through epics, partly by other means. There is no epic told about the high-god of the main temple, but the procession of its idol is a powerful reminder of the divine hierarchies. The event may be viewed as a corroboration of the Sanskrit traditions and the status of higher castes: the head priest of the temple site is a Brahmin who very authoritatively conducts the procession and auxiliary rituals, meets the Bhutas on the threshold of the temple, and keeps an eye on, but does not join in, the possession frenzy.

Bhutas are constitutive of the identity of the village community. This is clearly expressed in their epics, parts of which are recited gently in linear narration by an assisting drummer during the masking ceremony of the impersonator. This singing is intended more to set the impersonator in the right mood than to affect the audience—a distant parallel to a shamanistic seance. The Bhuta performance proper employs another, more dramatic mode: pantomime, dance, exclamatory song, short dialogue, frenzy possession with shouts, jumps, staring looks and shivering, imitation of battle with a sword or a burning torch in the impersonator's hand. All these and other features join into a dramatic enactment of the key element of the epic, which is not a narrative proper but a message to the village people: Bhuta, their hero-god, has traveled widely but has returned to them with the purpose of reoccupying his place in the village pantheon and guaranteeing the well-being of the villagers in the forthcoming year. In the background, one may sense the corroboration of past feudal systems: a network of fiefdoms and landowners, officially abolished as late as 1972 but still alive as a mental structure in the minds of the peasant castes and in its way also a source for religious and regional identity.

The identity provided by the Siri epic for the devotees gathering from nearby and distant villages to the temple site is of a slightly more individual and therapeutic nature. Its social dimension, sketched in the narrative, focuses not only on caste, notably a matriarchal caste, but on moral values like justice, family honor, fidelity, chastity, female independence, and freedom. In this sense, one may view the Siri epic as a relatively modern, even feminist epic that offers models of behavior sometimes unthinkable in everyday life. The female heroines are non-violent but as models of exemplary behavior they may well surpass their male counterparts in other epics (like the *Kotichennaya*), who are depicted as brave warriors. The bravery of Siri is of a social nature; she revolutionizes her male-dominated, morally inferior village environment by simply leaving her infidel husband, an unheard-of act in normal life. What is more, she maintains her charm and moral standard and continues to lead a

life of relative independence that culminates in a second marriage and the birth of a daughter, Sonne.

In the eyes of men and women alike, this is a great story of self-reliance and moral confidence. And it is just this element that is somewhat shaky in the personal identity of the troubled Siris in the cult group, many of whom have suffered a classic weakness feared most by the women of India, namely, barrenness. Lack of progeny is healed in the epic several times. In everyday life, the prime female source of marital problems seems to be a lack of self-confidence that leads to difficult human relations in the family, and eventually into mental disturbances and undesired physical states conducive to infertility and other disorders.

With this epic we reach one end of the identity register, where basically just one individual desperately seeks a locus in the universe and is put on the path of salvation by being taken into a group of Siris. In the ritual, she is able to distance her everyday identities (and the accompanying troubles) and construct a new self-reliance that is made to last until the next annual feast of the Siri group. The support from other Siris is important, since their life-histories create a sense of peers and a group identity. Yet a Siri is mostly alone with her divine status, as if hanging on a string leading from one annual Siri festival to the next. She feels protected by the divine power of the ritual and the figure in the epic with whom she has identified herself, or rather, who has chosen her to be her vehicle in the world of people. For a long time, she may not meet other Siris. Occasional visits by the only male cult person, the leader of the Siri group, called Kumara, Siri's son, may help her to solve her problems and bolster her status at home and in the village.

The national epic: Natural growth or political construct?

Having made this brief survey of oral epics in relation to regional, communal, and individual identities, let me conclude by touching upon the other end of the register, namely, epics in relation to national identity. The interplay of great and little epic traditions as sketched by Brenda Beck above renders a picture of natural growth from a local legend into a national story of roots. Oral and semiliterary regional versions of great epics have made the process more complex than this ideal type of development envisages. The localization and familiarization of epic stories according to the expectations of innumerable small audiences has played a far greater role, as recent research seems to show. Oral retellings of classical stories have proved to be radically different from their assumed

originals. Many times it seems that the reference to classic models functions merely as legitimatization of the version to be performed; after that the singer and his community are relatively free to mold the story (cf. Blackburn and Flueckiger 1989:8).

If the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* are regarded as the national epics of India, we should bear in mind that this statement is probably truer now, in the modern media age, than in the past, and further that the sheer variety of Indian languages and ethnic, regional, and other subcultures as well as the number of available epics and communal identities greatly qualifies such a conclusion. On the whole, the concept of national epic is tricky because more often than not it results from ambitious structuring by a literary élite in accordance with some earlier model, rather than from natural growth and expansion as seen by Beck. The creation of a national epic is not a poetic but a political act.

Great epics are so different that there can be no objective criteria for the choice of model epic. Once such a choice has been made, however, it leaves its imprint on the development of epic literature. Homeric epics are just one, fairly rare case of the formation of epics, but once the *Iliad* had established itself as the paradigm of great epic, the entire European cultural and literary way of thinking about epics was organized according to its example.

This view was enhanced by the Romantic philosophers such as the brothers Schlegel, Hegel, Herder, and later Wolf and Lachmann, who drew the profile of literary development in general on the basis of ancient Greek evidence and imagined the process of epic compilation in detail. The Romanticists conceived of the epic as the very beginning of literature, the first genre in the emergence of literature, to be followed by drama and lyric poetry. Such an order could not have occurred had Homer not emerged so early and had the epics ascribed to him not constituted the paradigm of good literature (cf. Honko 1993c:619).

The formation of an epic signaled not only the emergence of literature but also the emergence of a nation. As Hegel wrote in his *Ästhetik* in 1842 (quoted and translated by Reichl [1992:122]): "The entire world-view and objectivity of a nation, represented in its objectivizing form as something that has really happened, constitute therefore the content and the form of the epic in its proper sense." This is probably one of the most lucid early definitions of epic as the "song of truth" of a particular community. History, world view, and identity converge and a conglomerate of people transforms into a community, nation, or whatever, and it is the task of the epic to report on this event.

The idea was later adopted by Marxist ideology and made the Soviet Union one of the last bastions of Romantic attitudes toward folk poetry. Because Russian *bylini* were shortish poems, Soviet scholars tended to declare the epic proper a literary genre, not a folk genre. On the other hand, they also contended that the totality of poems with the same or similar heroes constituted the epic of a nation (cf. Honko 1990b:19-21). In fact, this line of thought makes the existence of an epic (and a nation?) a matter of scholarly judgment.

The politics of national epics in Asia and Europe

Such is the hegemony of the Romantic paradigm in comparative studies not only of European but also of African and Asian epics that we must still work hard to disentagle ourselves from its domination. Recent fieldwork on oral and semiliterary epics has, however, greatly helped in producing more balanced research paradigms. Yet the concept of national epic retains its political gist, in non-European contexts as well. As Gene H. Roghair tells us, it was Akkirāju Umākāntam's accomplishment that the more than 700-year-old *Palnāṭivīracaritra* (printed 1911) became the Telugu national epic (1982:8):

> Umākāntam established the *Palnāṭivīracaritra* as a heroic epic to which the Telugu people could look with pride. Just as peoples in other parts of the world had their great heroes of the past, the Telugu people could look to these heroes of their own past. He also established to his own satisfaction that *Palnāṭivīracaritra* was written by a Telugu poet of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century, Srīnāthuḍu. The epic was important to a Telugu-speaking people in search of a Telugu identity and local models in a past that seemed too often dominated by foreign rulers and adopted foreign models for behaviour. The question of authorship was equally significant. The establishment of *Palnāṭivīracaritra* as the work of Srīnāthuḍu increased the epic's value in the eyes of historians and among the literary élite, but it also diverted attention from the roots of the tradition itself.

Four things are typical in this and other stories about the origin of national epics: first, there is the individual intellect to define the needs of the people by following an international model at a particular historical moment; second, there is the poetic material of ancient origin; third, there is the literary élite to receive and interpret the epic; and fourth, the whole process amounts to a transference of tradition from one type of environment to another, totally different type. In the hands of a cultural élite, naturally

growing epic tradition undergoes a process of editing and interpretation. What emerges from this process is a supreme tale of community identity that the editors and interpreters had in mind when transferring the tradition from its hide-outs, its manuscript sources, and living oral environments, to the community of its final reception.

It is such a reception that marks the birth of a national epic. Without the approval and enthusiasm of the receiving community, the process of creating a national epic comes to an abrupt end and passes into oblivion. Only when the society hails the epic as the carrier of its cultural identity, accepts its "song of truth" about its own origins, communal history and mythology, and the ultimate set of values and aspirations, seen as coming from the past but in fact reaching to the future, only then does its status as a national epic become established. The inescapable price of this process of transference and transformation is the growing distance between the traditional environment of the epic poetry in question and the new life of the epic in a literate, educated, and mostly urban milieu. The epic has been moved from the periphery to the center: epic texts reflecting local identities have become a global symbol for the entire nation, also for areas and people who never knew the epic in its oral form.

This narrative about the birth of a national epic is but one example of what I have called the folklore process (1991:25-47). *Mutatis mutandis,* the narrative applies to a host of epics claiming communal or national status. Its distinctive features are as valid in Asia as in Europe, in the Telugu country as well as in Finland. Elias Lönnrot, the compiler of the Finnish *Kalevala* (1835), did what Umākāntam was to do later: he defined the needs of his people by following an international model of making the epic. He also did what Srīnāthuḍu was assumed to have accomplished: he unified the ancient poetic material into a larger whole, more refined than the previous texts. In this work he was not alone, in the sense that he was surrounded by a literary and political élite who had cherished hopes for a national epic long before it became clear that Lönnrot was the best man to carry the project to its conclusion. It was the reception by this élite that made the *Kalevala* what it still is today—a paramount symbol of the cultural identity of the Finns. Only much later, when the epic had become part and parcel of a Finnish educational system that did not even exist at the time of its appearance, did the *Kalevala* become familiar to the Finnish population at large. The distance from original oral poetry cultures was remarkable: the Karelians and Finns near the eastern border of Finland, who had preserved the poems out of which the epic was compiled, led a life quite different from that of the cultural urban élite in the capital of Finland. Eventually the oral poetry began to wither away in its natural environment, but its

second life in the literate culture of Finland continued, mainly through the national epic.

The value of a literary touch: A difference between paradigms?

There are, however, also differences between the political narratives about the nationalization process of the Telugu and Finnish oral epic poetries. One of them is the connection of the *Palnāṭivīracaritra* with a literary poet. For a European audience seeking its identity in preliterary roots, such a connection would have been unthinkable during the heyday of Romanticism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. We may have here a paradigmatic difference between Asian and European views on oral and literary poetry: what are sharply separated in Europe are accepted in Asia as truly interacting and cooperating units of cultural heritage. Regardless of the nature of Srīnāthuḍu's alleged contribution, it is obvious that the epic, surviving through both manuscripts and oral performance, gained enormously in importance when a famous poet emerged from behind a *poeta anonymus*.

Not so in Europe. One of Elias Lönnrot's main concerns to avoid incurring the kind of criticism that had demolished Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian* a few decades earlier, namely, that the compiler had in fact composed, written much of the epic (see Thomson 1987, 1990). Lönnrot firmly denied, and rightly so, any involvement in purely literary verse-making. Only three percent of the lines of the epic are from his pen, most of them at the beginning and end where the personal voice of the epic poet is heard. Lönnrot used the lines and passages he selected from oral poems as a protective shield: as long as his material came from illiterate oral singers, he could not be accused of literary creation or forgery of oral sources. The truth lies somewhere in between: even if the lines themselves were original, their combinations were more often than not from Lönnrot's editorial pen. He justified this method by saying that he only did what the illiterate singers were prone to do when creating cycles of poems, new entities on the basis of previous textual models.

Lönnrot saw himself in two roles: one was that of an editor, comparable to the hypothesized editors of Homeric texts in the Peisistratean period, as argued by Wolf,[2] the other was that of a contemporary singer of ancient oral poetry (cf. Honko 1990c:181-229). Lönnrot became the medium of the last singers of Karelian, Finnish, and Ingrian epic poetry

[2] See, e.g., Schadewaldt 1959:9-24 and de Vries 1963:2-21.

during its heyday and incipient decline. He internalized their poetic systems, created a competence, a command of multiforms and poetic rules that was eventually unique, representative of not only one but many regions. In his hands the collected texts first became homeless, that is, separated from their original contexts and co-texts, but were later amalgamated into his personal tradition-system. The existence and development of this system may be studied through the five versions of the epic that Lönnrot produced during the Kalevala process—in the narrow sense of the phrase (Honko 1986)—lasting from 1828 to 1862. As a creative poet Elias Lönnrot was of mediocre talent, but as a medium for oral epic singers he was remarkable. Yet it was his vision, not theirs, that materialized in the *Kalevala*. His creation was not to be sung but read; he wanted a book equal to "half of Homer."

From an Asian perspective, the debate around Macpherson, Lönnrot, and other proponents of the Romantic theory on epic may seem impenetrable. The fine line separating Macpherson, who wrote many of the actual lines in Ossian but modeled them according to ancient sources, and Lönnrot, who created a patchwork out of originally oral lines but yet presented a unifying epic vision of his own, may seem immaterial. If the result was good epic poetry in both cases, both men could have been hailed as national literary heroes. Yet Lönnrot is accepted and Macpherson discarded as a national hero: the *Kalevala* survives as a national symbol whereas *Poems of Ossian* belongs to the history of literature, even though both men followed the norm appended to the list of tales in the twelfth-century Book of Leinster (quoted by Thomson 1990:128): "He is no *fili* who does not harmonize and synchronize all the stories."

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Epos and National Identity: Transformations and Incarnations

Lauri Harvilahti

Myth, History, and Nationalism

In his 1990 book E. J. Hobsbawm outlines the history of nationalism. He begins with the French Revolution, proceeds through stages like "proto-nationalism," "transformation" (1870-1918), and the "apogee" of nationalism (1918-50) to the late twentieth century, and finally ends up with a prophecy according to which (in light of the progress in the study and analysis of nations) nationalism is past its peak: "The owl of Minerva which brings wisdom, said Hegel, flies out at dusk. It is a good sign that it is now circling round nations and nationalism" (182-83).

Obviously something unexpected happened to Minerva's owl. The book was published in 1990, and as we now know, Hobsbawm's vision did not come true. One of the reasons might be that in his book the word *myth* appears only in the subheading—not anywhere else. It is perhaps to history that we have to return in order to discover the roots of our ideas and ideologies, triumphs and tragedies—but the problem is that national history is a myth suppressing and surpassing time rather than a true history.[1]

For an epic scholar the mythic patterns of history are well known: heroic ancestors and their monstrous antagonists, golden ages of cultural prosperity and the darker ages, migration and settlement stories, defeats and victories (cf. Smith 1984:292-93). There is no single, specific heroic or mythic age, but a constant interplay between myth and reality, past and present—no history, but "a perpetually re-created song of truth" (Zumthor 1990:84). We may take as an example the South Slavic epic poetry that experienced a dynamic, productive period continuing well into the twentieth century (e.g., Lord 1960:14-17). The chief reason for this phenomenon

[1] On returning to history, see Hutchinson 1992:103; on national history as myth, Herzfeld 1987:82.

was that there were clear points of comparison and analogy between the contents of the old poems about earlier history and what was occurring in more recent history: the uprisings of 1804-6 and 1815-16, the constant resistance to Turkish rule (in which some of the singers likewise took part, sometimes actively, sometimes watching from the sidelines). Continuous warfare with occupying forces, conflict between different sectors of the population, social, cultural, and economic heterogeneity—all helped to strengthen the vitality of improvisatory poetry (among Christian as well as Moslem singers). This situation also inspired a large number of new epic songs. Narrative poetry did not find itself in a state of stagnation; it was in use as a productive pattern adapting to new situations.[2] From that point of view the meaning of, for example, the Battle of Kosovo (1389) for the Christian Serbs is more myth than history—a myth of defeat.

Transformations of Epic Models

As is well known, German romanticism took Homer as a paragon or pattern for the epos in the eighteenth century and, as Lauri Honko has stated (1992:2), the birth of an epic signaled the emergence of literature, but also the emergence of nation. This paragon was not a blueprint, but a flexible tool in the hands of educated, nationalistic authors.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the German politician, poet, and wandering bard Wilhelm Jordan (1819-1904) created the epos *Die Nibelunge* consisting of two parts: *Die Sigfridsage* (1868) and *Hildebrands Heimkehr* (1874). In his *Epische Briefe* Jordan declared that he was in fact "The German Homer," a kind of embodiment or incarnation of an epic poet, matured at the correct stage of development of the people, in a fateful hour occurring only once in a thousand years. According to his epic vision, the German people were on the way toward becoming the leading world power and supreme religion. The task of the national bard was to disclose the "ripened fruit" that was the work of the people (*Volksarbeit*) over those thousand years (1876:27-37, 56; cf. Martini 1974:387-88). Jordan traveled from town to town throughout half of Europe performing his own epics and also made a tour to America in 1871. His works remained relatively unimportant in the history of world literature, but they form an interesting example of using (or adapting) some of the poetic devices of epic folk

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[2] Koljević (1980:215-321) gives a comprehensive account of the context of Christian Serbian epics.

poetry, plot structures, tropes, images, and allusions in a new sociohistorical context.

It is worth noticing that this model of creating an epos, based on romantic-heroic historicism and nationalism and eulogizing the politics of Bismarckian Germany, was the one championed by Andrejs Pumpurs, the author of the Latvian national epos *Lāčplēsis* (*Bear Slayer*). In the preface to his work Pumpurs stated that he wanted to prove that the Baltic peoples also belonged to the Aryan epic peoples of Europe—and not only the Greeks and the Germans, as Jordan insisted (Pumpurs 1988:141; Rudzītis 1988:17-18). He went on with creating his epic on the basis of Latvian etiological tales, folktales, local legends, wedding songs, and other items excerpted from folklore. The origin of the main plot is to be found in folktales describing a powerful, supernatural hero, brought up by a she-bear. In folktales this hero fights against various monsters, while in *Lāčplēsis* he strives not only against mythic but also against human enemies, the German Knights of the Sword. Even with its abundant folklore motifs his epic is—because of its passages of national romantic proclamation and artistic metrical devices—very far from a folklore-based work, resembling in this sense the works of Wilhelm Jordan. Pumpurs' natural, mythical philosophy is, however, significantly removed from the militant, expansionist overtones of the German nationalist.

The epos of Andrejs Pumpurs did not fall into oblivion. At the end of the nineteenth century the *Bear Slayer* had the same kind of significance as the *Kalevala* for the Finns or the *Kalevipoeg* for the Estonians. Despite its romantic-nationalistic groundwork the epos continued to be published even during the Soviet period. One reason for this phenomenon was probably that the antagonists in Pumpurs' tale are the knights of the sword and feudal rulers. Recently, in the years of struggle for independence, the *Bear Slayer* acquired new political connotations. During the celebrations of the centennial of the epos (1988), the periodical *Avots* (*Fountain*) published a libretto of a rock opera based on the poem. Taking place at the same time was the premiere of the dramatization of Pumpurs' work, and the Latvian writers' union organized an international seminar dedicated to the *Bear Slayer*.

Once again the old paragon has been adapted according to the changing political and sociohistorical contexts. Models of textualization appear to be productive when their conventions, basic contents, and networks of interpretation are related to the dynamic (or emerging) trends of thought or dominant ideological concepts (cf. Bauman and Briggs 1990:75-78). The process of using these models is very often stimulated by a general idealistic current represented by a nucleus group of cultural

activists or by an organization, although the national-political stimulus may come from the power machinery of society.

The Epic of Geser

The term *epos* has normally been used of literary epics created by known or unknown authors, in some cases even of oral-derived epic collations or conglomerates. In fact, the borders between these categories are flexible. Sometimes the term has been used to refer to a cycle of epic poems (for example, incorporated around one main hero) belonging to some particular nation or ethnic group; this takes place when the poems have an epic-like significance for the community in contact with them. Such significance can reach from mythic and cosmogonic meanings to the contemporary use of folk epics, for instance to propagate national identity and integrity.

The epic of Geser is among the best known and most widespread epic traditions in the world. The influence of Tibetan civilization can be seen in most of the oral and literary versions of this epic. It is known in Tibet, Mongolia, Inner Mongolia (in China), Buryatia (in Russia), and Ladakh (India). There are also versions in Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal, and among various Tibeto-Burmese, Turkish, and Tunghus tribes (Herrmann 1990:485; Nekljudov 1984:145; Stein 1959:59-60). In many cases the translation of the hero to some particular tradition has been so natural that scholars formerly disputing matters like "original form," "initial stage," or "origin," or trying to locate the "original manuscript" or searching for the idealistic "poeta anonymus" (see Herrmann 1990:496-501), have been able to produce evidence in order to explain the epic of Geser as a national treasury of this or that nation.

On the basis of new (oral as well as literary) collections and materials, it is possible to create a more complete and complex picture of this epic. At present there is enough evidence to state that Geser is best preserved in Tibet and its adjacent areas in oral and in literary form. Formerly, unfamiliarity with the Tibetan literary monuments and the scarcity of collected oral versions led to various speculative fallacies created at the writing table by European scholars (Herrmann 1990:500-1). The western concept of epos modeled on Homer was misleading, and research was conducted without sufficient knowledge of cultural history, religion, educational conditions, oral tradition, and so forth. During the past few decades, research based on new materials and methods has been able to

override these earlier concepts,[3] sometimes even in cases in which the prior results seemed to be on solid ground. In addition to the research on the epic of Geser, we find parallel examples on Central Asian epic.[4] In the following I intend to examine a few examples of Geser epic as a manifestation of cultural identity, but dozens of other cases may be found as well.

In outline the Tibetan version (from Amdo) could be summarized in the following way (see Nekljudov 1984:169-80):

> In the kingdom of gLing there was no king and chaos prevailed. One of the sons of the Heavenly God was sent down to the earth. He was reborn into a noble family (or as a son of a mountain spirit). As a baby he was slobbering and deformed, and was given the name Džoru. Even as a child he began to destroy demons and various monsters. As an adolescent he came to the throne and earned the beautiful Brugmo as consort. He also obtained his magic horse, heroic shape, and proper name. The first heroic deed was annihilation of the demon of the North. The demon's wife Meza Bumskiid helped him to accomplish this task, but after the victory she gave Geser the herb of forgetfulness and so he stayed in the North. At home Geser's uncle Khrotung tried to seduce Brugmo—without any success. Khrotung betrayed his land and led the Hories to gLing. The Hories carried off Brugmo. Geser was finally able to break the spell with the help of heavenly forces and hurried to the camp of the enemies disguised as a scabby boy. By means of magic and supernatural power he destroyed the king of the Hories, subdued his kingdom and returned to gLing.

Most of the main elements of the above-mentioned summary (its "plot-structure" or "macrostructure" or "chain of macropropositions" or "mental text") are also found in the Ladakh and Mongolian versions. There are, however, huge differences in different regions that I have not mentioned. The variation is abundant, especially on the level of surface structure, and not only in the oral versions but also in the literary texts.[5] As a result we get a multi-dimensional network of possible actualizations of this epic.

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[3] See, e.g., Bayartu 1989; Halén 1990; Heissig 1980, 1983, 1987; Nekljudov 1984.

[4] For example, the Oirat/Kalmyk epic Džangar or the oral epic poetry of the Turkic peoples—see, e.g., Bitkeev 1992:6-14; Džamtso 1988:139-48; Harvilahti 1993; Reichl 1992.

[5] See Nekljudov 1984:146; Herrmann 1990:486-87, 490-96; 'Jam-dpal rgyal-mtsho 1990:478.

According to the materials now available, there are in Tibet dozens of volumes, more than one million verses in different "versions" of the epic. The collection of the Geser epic started during a critical stage: the work that had begun in the 1950s was totally interrupted during the cultural revolution and continued only after 1978. By 1986 Tibetan scholars had already recorded 29 chapters (as they say) of the oral forms of this epic, a total of 985 sound cassettes (see Tunzhu 1988:154; 'Jam-dpal rgyal-mtsho 1990:472). It is clear that research conducted on the basis of these collections will give unprecedented results.

The Tibetan Oral Epos

As to their artistic skill, the Tibetan performers can be divided into several classes—from respectable and skillful masters to untalented and poor ones. The performances formerly had a ritual character: when the singers started to sing, an incense table was set up with a big portrait of Geser, his thirty heroes and concubines on either side. Different paraphernalia (bows, arrows, swords believed to have been used by the hero) were brought, butter lamps were lit, and bowls with alcohol were served for the Gods. By reading the Buddhist scriptures, with eyes closed, legs crossed, beads in hands, the singer got into a trance and during the possession Geser or some other hero entered his body. Once the sacred spirit had entered him, the performer started to sing. Usually the mode of performance was flexible and varied. The singers could perform on various occasions and for different audiences, who were able to choose the chapter to be performed according to the situation.[6] Such a description of "the epos in the making" clearly shows how important it is to modify our Western literary-based concept of the epos (cf. Honko 1992).

Geser as a Buddhist Epos of the Mongols

In the *Nomči qatunu Geser*, one of the Mongolian literary versions, there is an appendix, a sort of religious legend or sutra, called "Scripture of the meeting of the Dalai Lama and Geser Khan." In this chapter Lama Erdeni (Dalai Lama) is meditating when he suddenly hears a booming sound from heaven: Geser Khan appears to him in the night sky and gives

[6] 'Jam-dpal rgyal-mtsho 1990:474-78; see Stein 1959:7-9 and Nekljudov 1984: 150.

strict rules and instructions concerning ritual behavior and sacraments. Then he disappears back into the night with his magic horse at a fantastic speed. According to this holy scripture, Geser Khan is in fact the reincarnation of Avalokiteśvara. Those who believe in these words will find the way to salvation, but Geser Khan's spirit will bring the unbeliever misfortune.[7]

This sutra added to the heroic epic of Geser aimed at the creation of a lamaistic religious epic text. Bayartu (1989:232-33) and Halén (1990:159-63) have even found a historical basis for this sutra. In 1578 the dGe-lugs-pa leader bSod-nams rgya-mtsho (later the third Dalai Lama) and the leader of the Tümet Mongols, Altan Khan, met each other near Köke-nuur. The Altan Khan became a Buddhist, and the yellow sect and Geser spread over the Mongolian world. According to Halén (160-61), Geser Khan might have been identified with Altan Khan through folk etymology, based on the identical meaning of Mongolian *altan* "gold" and Tibetan *gser* "gold." The joining together of Geser and the Dalai Lama may have been conscious lamaistic propaganda, as Bayartu indicates, or an unambitious expression of piety and cultural identity: Geser was as an object of worship equal to the Supreme Divinities. Later Geser was also identified with the war god Guan Yu, and in consequence the warlord Baron Roman Ungern von Sternberg was also considered to be an incarnation of Geser.[8]

The Beijing Xylograph Edition of Geser

The epos was printed in Beijing as a block-printing edition in old Mongolian script in 1716. This edition does not contain any information about the compilers.[9] The reasons were political: the publishers had good reason to be cautious with the censorship of the Qing dynasty (see Bayartu 1989:2, 197, 249). On each page of this edition is, in Chinese characters, the title *Sān gúo zhì,* "The Chronicle of Three Kingdoms," a title that referred not to the epic of Geser but to a chronicle published under the first Qing emperor. According to Bayartu, this was a trick invented in order to

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[7] See in detail, e.g., Bayartu 1989:228-30 and Halén 1990:159-61.

[8] See in detail Bayartu 1989:234, 244; Halén 1990:163; Riftin 1991:163-64.

[9] According to Heissig (1983:513, 1987:1156), this edition is most probably based on a West Mongolian Oirat oral version; see also Damdinsüren 1957:56. Halén (1990:163) states additionally that the language of the Beijing version differs from the classical written Mongolian and is close to the spoken vernacular of the Köke-nuur Öölöts.

mislead the censors: the chronicle was in fact translated into Mongolian (*ɣurban ulus-un bičig*), but remained unpublished. Under this disguise the epic of Geser was published in Mongolian, although the work clearly propagated the heroic ideals of the Mongols and maintained the national spirit, longing for restoration of the Mongolian Yuan dynasty (see Bayartu 1989:246-47, 249-50).

The Buryat Epic of Geser in the Oral and Literary Tradition

In Buryat oral epic tradition the versions produced may range from more than ten thousand lines among one group of the northern Buryats (Ehirit-Bulagats) to less than a thousand among the Hori Buryats. Ehirit-Bulagat epic poetry also contains more archaic, mythical features than that of the other groups. In some of the oral versions this epic has clearly maintained the macrostructure of a literary version (for example, the Beijing xylograph), but the stylistic figures and the poetic devices are used in accordance with the Buryat oral epic tradition alongside elements attributable to the singer's personal style (see Lörincz 1975:64-65, Nekljudov 1984:208, 211). Many of the Buryat versions represent the structures and contents of the local tradition and are relatively independent of the literary sources. The Ehirit-Bulagat version is especially interesting with its abundant shamanistic features (Nekljudov 1984:206-7).

On the basis of versions collected among the Buryats, a compilation bearing the title "The Heroic Epos of the Buryats" was published in Russian in 1973. A Russian poet named Semën Lipkin has declared himself to be the translator. The text of this version of Geser is based on Namdžil Baldano's collation in the Buryat language (24,000 verses), and is founded (as stated in the book) "almost entirely" on original versions. Four chapters (the first, second, sixth, and ninth) have actually been translated into Russian by the folklorist Aleksei Ulanov in a word-for-word prose format, and five are included only as summaries. In his preface Ulanov states that in the translation process "the content, style and poetic devices have been observed" and that "only side-episodes hampering the integrity of the plot have been removed." Finally, Lipkin has contrived a poetic translation using regular rhyme and other poetic features unknown not only in Buryat but also in Russian epic poetry. Baldano thus played the role of the Elias Lönnrot of the Buryats, Ulanov translated his text into Russian prose, and Lipkin versified the result called "Geser: The Heroic Epos of the Buryats." The title page does, however, announce "Translation from the Buryat language by Semën Lipkin."

The different forms of the Geser epic I have mentioned give a glimpse of the different dimensions of the concept of "epos": 1) oral, living epic poetry, 2) literary epos containing elements of sacral text, 3) literary epos serving the purpose of ethnic or national integrity, and 4) collation (in a language other than the original) created in accordance with the ideological program of a multinational state.

In the life-cycle of the Geser epic, the situation is right now rather interesting. The ritual forms of performance and genuine oral traditions are on the decline, although there still are productive singers in Tibet. During the 1980s the singers won social appreciation as members of the Political Consultation Committee and the Tibet Society for Folk Literature and Art. Through modern editions, radio and television programs, orchestral arrangements, and conferences the epic of Geser reappears in new forms and in new incarnations. As for the Mongols, Geser and Chenggis Khan are the main national heroes. In the folk tradition there is also a belief that, according to a decree given by Buddha and Hormusta, the Heavenly God, Geser will reappear as an incarnation of Chenggis Khan in order to rule over the world (Bayartu 1989:243-44). The present-day revitalization of the worship of Chenggis Khan, the new editions of the Geser epic, festivals, concerts, and so forth are indications of the new life of the heroic culture. These new avatars of the old epic heroes will certainly imply new meanings and consequences.

Conclusion

It is possible to identify a whole network of epic genres serving the purpose of epos: oral and literary creations, short epic poems, and long conglomerates. The works also vary in genre: sacral texts and secular forms, poetic forms but also prose-texts and mixed forms in which verse and prose alternate. In addition to these, as a rule, excerpts from different genres play an important role (chapters in verse hagiography or panegyric, fragments of lyric elegy or laments, for example). In oral epos narrated, recited, and sung modes are possible—with or without the accompaniment of an instrument. There are evidently folklore-based written versions, but also abundant examples of literary creations in which the poet has used only a limited number of the basic elements of folk poetry. Whatever the case, the desire to reinforce the people's self-esteem and to arouse respect for their own heritage and culture is among the main tasks of an epos (even within an oral epic poetry culture): the hero is unconquered, invincible, since he is ours—and even if he was once defeated, he will be back one day,

as a liberator of his people, driven by revenge. When events warrant—in times of political awakening, conflicting ideological interests, or even a state of war—an epos may be employed as a kind of myth-like weapon for ideological purposes, but that is only one of the manifestations of the use of epics in the folklore process (cf. Honko 1991:32-33, 44). The political role of the epics in strengthening cultural and national identity varies over a large spectrum according to the prevailing sociocultural situation. The use of epics in cultural life involves many positive values but also elements demanding careful deliberation. But we may well ask who will conduct the deliberations, since we are dealing with a phenomenon capable of surviving historical periods, empires, and ideologies.

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Transformations of Epic Time and Space: Creating the World's Creation in Kalevala-metric Poetry

Lotte Tarkka

To illustrate the "ancient and authentic disposition" of the Karelians still persisting in 1829, the vicar of Utsjoki parish, Jacob Fellman, described the "classical country of the Finnish Muse" in the following words (1906:496-98):

> Enchanted by the charm of their abode, the people do not give a thought to the good of this world, but live in the remembrance of singing praises to the deeds of their gods, heroes, and fathers . . . in the echo of the harp left on the gates of the North by their forefather Väinämöinen . . . . When I asked an older man in Vuokkiniemi what he believed to be the world's creation, he answered: "Well, my holy brother, we have the same belief as you. An eagle flew from the north, placed an egg on Väinämöinen's knee and created the world out of it. See, our beliefs are kindred."

Fossilization of the people into the memory of its own heroic past was a substantial part in the wider project of framing the Finns' Golden Era within the Karelian ethnographic present. The two cultures confronted one another on many levels—the ethnic, political, religious, linguistic, and aesthetic. The Orthodox old believer from Vuokkiniemi presented for Fellman his syncretic cosmogony as one shared with a Lutheran, Swedish-speaking clergyman, and condensed a local variant of the cosmogonic epic poem *The Creation* into a brief statement. This credo encapsulates an oral mythology, and alludes to a rich epic universe. In Elias Lönnrot's *Kalevala*, these representations of the "authentic dispositions," epic poems in Kalevala-meter, were transformed into a literary epic.

Both a supposedly sublime style and superior length make the epic the story of stories: a "superstory" that not only represents the models of

heroic action but even works as a model for other texts (Honko 1990a:14; 1993a:195; 1993b:617-18; Zumthor 1990:80-89). It reflects upon the culture's other texts and ways of narrating. In this metatextual aspect it is a grand narrative central in the cultural construction of textuality, narrativity, and temporality. The symbolic status of the epic emphasizes its textual autonomy and identity. According to classical, literary-derived, and canonical criteria, the epic text is easily identified with its written manifestation: it is a bound work, a literary artifact, often a national monument.

How does this monumental epicality emerge from a tradition of oral narratives? How does inscription and editing transfigure the oral epic from an open symbolic system into a symbol? As a national literary epic compiled of oral epic poetry, the *Kalevala* provides an ideal case for analyzing these processes of transformation. Creating and manipulating texts and authorizing them has been discussed as a set of con-, en-, de-, and retextualizing strategies by Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs (1990:72-76)—from this perspective, most stress is laid on contextualization within the epic universe, as further elaborated by Bauman (1992).[1] Here, the story of the world's creation in the *Kalevala*'s first canto is compared to the cosmogonical oral epics that served as Lönnrot's sources: the *Sampo*-cycles collected from 1820 to 1920 in Vuokkiniemi parish, Archangel Karelia. In the Vuokkiniemi corpus, *The Creation* appears independently and in many narrative chains, of which the *Sampo*-cycle is the most common.[2]

As a cosmogonic beginning for both epics, *The Creation* illuminates the respective mythological structures at work in its oral and literate renderings. In the present paper these transformations are going to be assessed by analyzing generic intertextuality, reported speech, and spatial description in Kalevala-metric epics. These factors seem to suspend narrative progression by describing, motivating, and expanding on themes, and they are often trivialized in narratological models and hierarchies of textual organization. Variable and subordinate to the narrative mainstream as they may be, however, they never remain epiphenomenal. They show that the epic, despite its textual, mythopoetic, and historical authority, is

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[1] On con- and entextualization as textual strategies in ritual discourse, see Kuipers 1990:4-7, 62-79.

[2] On oral epic cycles and the *Kalevala*, see Kuusi 1990; Honko 1993b:622-23. On the *Sampo*-cycle, see Kuusi et al. 1977:110-34, 525-29; Honko et al. 1993:655-63, 768; Honko 1993b:630.

profoundly contextualized discourse emerging from a definite "now," "here," and ego.

The Epic Universe: The Oral Corpus as an Intertextual Space

The epic universe, the whole of a local culture's narrative texts, is a fictive world bound to and motivated by its temporal, spatial, and social context. Its thematical and structural coherence is not one of strict narrative logic and chronological order but is created by redundancy, with analogies stretching from one traditional scene and landscape to another. Its stories can be made long or short and linked to others with explicit ties or by way of allusion. Instead of any one "superstory," various stories spin around the same thematic core, weaving different and even conflicting versions of elementary events, trivial pursuits, and dead ends. Even in the case of *The Creation*, the fragmented and allusive texts give rise to many contradictions in common sense and narrative logic. At the time of Creation, the world was already complete and filled with intrigues and plots—in other words, stories.

As tradition and as an intertextual universe, the epic is always "already told" (Barthes 1982:160): known, ready-made, and yet emergent. Shared knowledge of the epic universe makes explicitness and narrative synthesis unnecessary: narrating was not explanation aiming at closure, but meditation on themes central to the singers (Kuusi 1990:148-49; T. DuBois 1993:261, 265). The oral epic is an "art of allusion" working through metonymic association, in which the tradition works as an "enabling referent" for the understanding of partially formulated messages (Foley 1991:10-13, 46-48, 245; 1992a). The inter- and intraculturally variable length of epic texts is often used as a criterion in defining epics (e.g., Honko 1990a:19), but only the depth or the density of tradition's intertextual network, the enabling referent, makes the epic meaningful.

Both Foley and Paul Zumthor see the grounding of traditional oral semiosis in formulaic techniques of composition. For Zumthor (1990:89-90) the formulaic style is "a discursive and intertextual strategy" which "integrates into the unfolding discourse . . . fragments borrowed from other preexisting messages that in principle belong to the same genre, sending the listener back to a familiar semantic universe." Here, the semantic universe extends beyond the epic genre to other genres using the same poetic style and meter (cf. Foley 1991:15, 55-56, 192), the Kalevala-meter. Use of a common poetic language in epic and lyrical poetry, as well as incantations, ritual songs, epigrams, and proverbs makes the intertextual network of the

oral corpus dense and the boundaries of genres permeable. Instead of distinct genres, the analysis thus focuses on the interplay of aspects of formalized speech-acts used in defining genres: voices and modes of discourse, and the functions of language as defined by Jakobson (1987:69-70).[3] Epic poetry provides the synthetic level of this particular system of genres: its multivocal textual universe is saturated by interventions of voices and rhetorical structures dominant in other genres. The interplay of epics and incantations is both culturally significant and the most common instance of generic intertextuality, even if lyrical songs, epigrams, and proverbs occur throughout the epic corpus. The dialogical nature of narrative discourse links even the genres in verse form to prose narratives: several folktales, some of them closely linked to the epic poems, include sung passages in Kalevala-meter.

Regional and cultural differences in the function of Kalevala-metric poetry seem to determine the dominant type of generic intertextuality. In Archangel Karelia, the epic was closely related to the institution of sages: the ritual specialists' activities as healers and seers, as well as those of social and supranormal troubleshooters.[4] The grand narrative of Vuokkiniemi epics is to be found in metafolkloric texts that elaborate on the related themes of singing songs, ritual incantation, and the power of the word. The position of these themes and the intergeneric strategies connected to their elaboration, for instance in the etiological cycle starting with *The Creation*, point at the cultural significance and the mythological meaning of Kalevala-metric epics even without explicit testimony about "belief" or ritual use.

From the Epic Universe to a Linear Epic

Lönnrot knew the depths of the epic universe and used its potentials as a basis for his extended style in the *Kalevala*. Generic intertextuality was cultivated by including lyrical poems, ritual songs, and, most of all, incantations in the epic.[5] In Magoun's translation (Lönnrot 1963:410), the

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[3] On generic voices and genres as "leaking" and dialogical, see Bauman 1992; Tarkka 1993, 1994; Wadley 1991.

[4] On regional differences in the cultural function of Kalevala-metric poetry, see Siikala 1990; on the Finnish-Karelian sage, *tietäjä*, and the tradition of incantations, see Siikala 1992:68-86.

[5] See the index of 57 named incantations inserted in the *Kalevala*.

generic inserts are demarcated from the narrative text by headlines, an editing style that portrays intertextuality as consisting of closed quotations, not open-ended allusions. This "epic of charms" was criticized for the mix of genres but the questioning of *Kalevala*'s epic unity is more informed by normative literary aesthetics than sensitive to the source's semiotic system (Kaukonen 1990:172-74; cf. T. DuBois 1993:265). Even chronological and causal flaws in the *Kalevala* could be explained by the "religion of disconnectedness," the "magical" mentality (Kaukonen 1956:437). Blurring of genres was deplored not only for its aesthetic defects, but for ideological reasons. Incantations introduced a "magic" element into the epic, which stood both for archaic authenticity and condemnable paganism.

As in the case of parallelistic embellishment, Lönnrot exaggerated and mechanized manifestations of generic intertextuality. The paradigmatic depth of the epic universe was molded into a linear text, and elusive shifting voices and generic allusions were displayed explicitly. Even genres that, because of their strictly ritual context of use, were relatively isolated from the epic were added in as descriptions of the rituals in question. Lönnrot (1963:375-76) specified that many ritual "passages . . . in the *Kalevala* are sung separately" but referred to explicitly by the singers as they commented on their epic performances. The synthetic epic universe was re-created as a description of its singers' and the ancient Finns' lives.[6]

Lönnrot's handling of generic intertextuality well exemplifies his way of working toward a unified epic plot: he assembled texts alluded to and "filled them out with the general help of all songs of this kind, regardless of whether they were sung in one sequence . . . or separately" (1963:376). Profound changes in linear sequencing made the narrative elements lose their roots in the epic universe.[7] An ethnopoetical analysis of these changes as reflected in texts by a Vuokkiniemi singer and *Kalevala*'s fiftieth canto is presented by Thomas DuBois (1993). Confinement to the variants of one poem by one singer mispresents Lönnrot's sensitivity to Kalevala-metric tradition's intertextuality: some of the associations questioned by DuBois (1993:259-66) are motivated within the wider epic universe. Presentation of the oral tradition was conditioned by a narrative "in the eye of the beholder" (see Goody 1991:91; Honko 1993a). A linear logic of explicitness was the literate scribe's way of compensating for the

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[6] See Lönnrot 1963:372-73; Kaukonen 1990:174; Honko 1990c:566-67; 1990b: 212.

[7] See Honko 1993a:199-200; 1990b:209-23; Kuusi *et al*. 1977:69-72.

enabling referent that within an oral tradition caused the allusions to resonate with meaning.[8]

Using poetry from various cultural areas "to fill in the gaps" in local epic corpora or unsatisfactory storylines has been said to produce *Kalevala*'s "epic breadth and detail" (Kuusi 1990:144), but simultaneously the epic's deep cultural resonance was sacrificed. Lönnrot did not stay within the pool of tradition of one community or even one cultural area, but created a "visionary fantasy" all his own (Kaukonen 1990:157; Honko 1990b:196). As opposed to the numerous local epic universes, the fabricated epic was not grounded in communication between and among the singers. The pooling of all Finnish-Karelian poetry was supposed to echo a national, unified poetic voice and culture projected into history. Lönnrot's narrative was radical both as an ideological and textual reinterpretation of the epic universe.

The new narrative order forced a unitary plot out of a universe of alternative stories and a multitude of plots. Rearrangement and combination of the sources' plots meant not only breaking their internal narrative time. Decontextualization of the narrative elements and the narrative tradition as a whole also disintegrated the epic universe as narration taking place *in* cultural time (see Goody 1991:91).

Times of Epic Performance—Voices in Epic Discourse

Etymologically, the Greek word *epos* is a metaphorical designation for oral poetry: "words conveyed by voice" or "oral utterances."[9] Etymologies stressing the epic's oral delivery lead to a specific phenomenology of the oral epic rooted in the classical, Homeric tradition. The epic universe's temporality actualizes as discourse, as "language put into action," not only as a plot unfolding in narrative time. Following Benveniste (e.g. 1971:223), the concept of discourse refers to the level of linguistic action in which the act of narrating leaves a trace in the text itself (see Tarkka 1993:180-83).[10] When alluded to or metonymically evoked in

[8] See Foley 1991:11-12, 54-57, 245; 1992b:86-88.

[9] Zumthor 1990:81; Bynum 1969:248, 250; see also Findlay 1984:169.

[10] See also Foley 1992a:292-93 on keys to oral performance, and Bauman and Briggs 1990:73 on incorporation of contextual elements in the text that comes to "carry elements of its history of use within it."

any performance of an epic poem, the epic universe reaches toward and merges with the present universe of the singers: performance is, in Foley's words, the "enabling event" for any interpretation of oral tradition (1992a).

Fusion of the two temporal orders, the time of the epic universe and the present of performance, is in sharp contrast with Bakhtin's characterization of temporality as a past tense "locked into itself and walled off from all subsequent times," especially the "eternal present" of performance (1981:17). Bakhtin's notion of an absolute epic distance is rooted in the idea of the heroic age as the referential background of epic poetry. The epic's cultural and ideological functions are trivialized, even if these very functions define the epic as an untouchable literary monument. He notes (1981:38) that the roots of the novel, epic's dialogical counterpoint, were to be found in genres with an oral origin; discussion on the epic was, however, limited to the literary canon of epics. The notion of an absolute epic distance denies the coevalness of the epic universe and the world of those who produced it, "the incessant fluidness of lived experience" grounding the epic's historicity (see Zumthor 1990:84). Continuity with the temporal orders of the past, with the past within the time of the narrative and the past performances of the traditional narrative, is, however, one of the main aims of the epic performance.

Bakhtin goes on to argue that "tradition isolates the world of the epic from personal experience . . . , understanding and interpreting" (1981:17). The argument of the epic as monological and authoritative is paired with a notion of the anti-subjective nature of epics traceable to classical poetics (see, e.g., Aristotle:96-97). Even when the epic is defined as an "autobiography" of its audience, and the heroic as a "community superego," the epic is still "impersonal," isolated from individual lives and histories (Zumthor 1990:84-85, 88; see Connelly 1986:147-66). The only individual subject is the hero, and his actions and emotions model and reflect the "communal" and the "ideal," not the "personal" and the "real."

Even the notion of epic anti-subjectivity evaporates in the context of performance. Plato's distinction between two poetic modes (*Republic*:90-94; see Havelock 1963:20-31), *mimesis* (imitation or enacting) and *diegesis* (narration or recounting), was built on the Homeric performance in which the bard and the audience identified themselves with the characters of the epic. *Mimesis*, or the singer's imitation of and identification with his characters, extended in concentric circles to the listeners, producing a collective and yet intimate experience of group identification.[11] This

[11] Havelock 1963:145-64, 197-214; Foley 1984:441; cf. Okpewho 1979:18-19, 238.

dramatic and ritual nature of the epic performance subordinates the narrative function to the mimetic one. Familiarity with and redundancy in the stories diminished their propositional force based on the stories' contents. In this context, the significance of oral epics rests largely on performative or illocutionary force: the actuality of meaning saturating the texts when enacted, the meaning of utterances as deeds.[12] In such performances, symbolic reality is created not by describing reality or presenting arguments but socially, by "constructing a situation in which the participants experience symbolic meanings as part of the process of what they are already doing" (Schieffelin 1985:709; see also Kapferer 1986:192-93).

Distance between the subject and the textual universe varies in different cultures, traditions, and genres, even if the oral mode worked toward its minimization (see Ong 1977; Foley 1984:441-48; Okpewho 1979:227-39). Contextualizing reduces the distance, but entextualization heightens awareness of the performance as distinct from everyday discourse and action (Bauman and Briggs 1990:73-74) and thus helps in creating distance for "performance reality" via a set of expectations, dispositions, and motivations distinct from the flux of unmarked communication. The idea of identification between the singer and the characters portrayed by him need not remain speculation over the psychodynamics of performance. The multitude of voices and identifications is portrayed within the limits of and made possible by the conventions of the poetic language, and the processes of performance are realized on the level of the text. Here we enter the sphere of discourse where the act and scene of narrating leave their imprint on the text. But whose are the voices?

A. T. Hatto has pointed out the multitude of narrating voices in the world's oral epics: third-person narration is intermingled with first-person narration in all possible tenses: in first-person present narration "the Hero . . . speaks through the bard's mouth," and identification reaches the intensity of possession (1989:153-57).[13] Identity of the actual singer, the narrator intrinsic to the text, and the hero—"the happy fusion of persons" (Okpewho 1979:238)—stands opposed to literary theories' categorical differentiation between narrator and author, or diegetic universe and reality.

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[12] On the illocutionary force of genres as the source of their authority, see the discussion initiated by J. L. Austin's 1975 formulation of speech-act theory—e.g., Bauman and Briggs 1990:62-66; Kuipers 1990; Wadley 1991:211-18.

[13] On applying the idea of possession to an analysis of rhetorical identification within the Kalevala-metric epic performance, see Tarkka 1993:183, 187; 1994.

A literary text is transmitted from the real-world storyteller (author) through an "implied narrator" and an "implied reader" to the real reader.[14] The protagonists are separated by a span of time and situated in different places and "realities." In between the real-world storyteller and the audience emerges the diegetic universe: the realm of the story. Crossculturally however, the differentiation may well prove to be misleading—one "established by generations of scholars nourished by the scribal culture" (Okpewho 1979:239; see also Havelock 1963:22). As Ward Parks (1987:518-21) has pointed out, oral performance differs crucially from the literary act of communication.

In oral performance, these conceptual divides are bridged. The temporal and spatial distance collapses into a shared presence: both the singer and the listeners "are absorbed in the tale" (Parks 1987:520). This phenomenological collapse leads to a mimetic identification by the singer and the audience into the diegetic, epic universe, as discussion on Platonic mimesis already showed (see Okpewho 1979:234-39; Hult 1984:255-56). At the same time, the border between the diegetic and the real cracks: a mimetic relationship in its broader sense is established (see Foley 1984:448). The mimetic nature of the oral epic is thus not a matter of stylistic realism or verisimilitude (Okpewho 1979:14-27; Zumthor 1990:88), but is grounded in the communicative structure of performance.

Dramatic moderation in the performance of Karelian epics does not undermine the rhetorical play of voices and identities at the level of discourse. The poems were ideally sung by two singers, the other repeating the lines sung by the foresinger (see Kuusi et al. 1977:72-73). The tendency to favor dialogue in Kalevala-metric epics offers the structural slots, and formulaic expressions highlight the shifts of voice within the text. In their reported speech, the heroes constantly use genres dominated by direct discourse, and the multigeneric nature of oral epics is rooted in this very resource (see Tarkka 1994). Reported speech is Bakhtin's prototype for dialogic speech-acts, and it is a prime example of both generic intertextuality and metalinguistic elements in folklore.[15] The framed reported speeches

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[14] Author is here replaced by singer or storyteller, since the idea of authorship in oral tradition can be seen as the process of authorization of the discourse by references to the chain of performances constituting that tradition (see Bauman 1992:135-37) or by referring to the supranormal powers behind that tradition (see Kuipers 1990:7, 71, 79, 163-64).

[15] Bakhtin 1986:92-93; Bauman 1992:132-33, 138; Bauman and Briggs 1990:63-64, 69-70.

with clear incantatory or lyrical functions create a new level in the textual hierarchy as well as open the textual universe to extratextual reality.

Inserts and allusions may be embedded in the narrative in many ways. In Archangel Karelia, there are relatively fixed combinations of epic historiana and incantation, idiosyncratic combinations that blend epics and incantations through thematic association, shorter or longer incantations placed in the mouths of epic heroes, as well as epic descriptions of names, epithets, magical substances, and ritual practices rooted in the world of incantations (Tarkka 1994:272-74). Furthermore, recognizable allusions to epic poems or short epic songs transformed into first-person form can be used as incantations (*SKVR* I:1, 173, 368). Apart from actual combinations, foregrounding the theme of incantatory singing and the sage's heroic role encourages the mutual embeddedness of incantations and the epic.

Reported speech within the epic typically opens with a mediating formula that draws attention to a performance taking place within the epic text. Impulse for a new mode of narration may rise from the incidents narrated: in the case of incantatory lines, orientation toward the mythical epic universe is dramatized, and the referential or descriptive modes give way to direct involvement, moving from "telling about" to "telling to." Bauman (1992:133-35) notes that quoted speech is not merely recounting or referring to the speech-act, but representing or re-enacting it. Thus reported speech maintains a trace of the illocutionary power of incantations (Tarkka 1994:273). The use of other genres known to the singer, and linked to his ritual roles, may lead to identification: shift of voice activates the frames of mind at work while performing an incantation, a process that, at its most extreme, leads to embodiment of the mythical hero.

As spoken imitation of speaking, reported speech epitomized mimesis for Plato (Hult 1984:255-56). The mimetic relationship between the epic universe and the present reality of performance is clearest when the roles within the narrative universe coincide with those of the situation of narrating. When epic heroes are presented as tradition-bearers similar to the performer and audience, and the traditional song is about tradition and singing, the narrative event merges with the narrating event (Bauman 1992:133; Lönnroth 1979:95; Tarkka 1993:180-83). In Vuokkiniemi, the singer of the epic was most usually a sage, a colleague of the main epic hero, Väinämöinen. Inserting incantations in his mouth served both as a metalinguistic statement of the singer's own cultural competence and as legitimation for the tradition of incantations. Within the epic universe, tradition was constantly defining and evaluating itself—the "precise truths," knowledge, and "holy words" of "bearded heroes," "custom, knowledge,

might and memory" of the singers themselves (*SKVR* I:1, 185, 64). All this was accomplished by portraying the origins of traditional acts of communication and by testifying about the successful action of the heroes.

In the *Sampo*-cycle Väinämöinen resorts to the magical power of words repeatedly. He utters the words of the world's creation and of sowing, raises the wind and a hail storm with a spell, and sings his enemies to sleep. A *Sampo*-cycle from the village of Aajuolahti provides an example of the singer's rhetorical identification with the hero and a shift to the incantatory mode. As Väinämöinen drifts towards the otherworld, he raises a storm to throw him ashore by a spell usually used as an invocation for rain, for extinguishing fire, or for preventing the firing of arms (*SKVR* I:1, 78):

"Oi Ukko ylijumala,	"You Ukko, the supreme god,
yli toatto taivahani,	the highest father in the heaven,
taivahallini jumala.	the heavenly god.
Luo sie pilvi luotehelta,	Create a cloud from the northwest,
toini on lännestä lähätä,	send another from the west,
kolmas on koko teraltä.	a third one from all over.
Lomatusta loukahuta,	Bang them against each other,
kassa polkalla porohkat."	water the flintlock's powder."
Sekä nousi, jotta joutu,	And it rose, and it fell,
kasto polkalta porohkat	watered the flintlock's powder . . . .
Tuop'on vanha Väinämöini	It is the old Väinämöini
itsepä noin sanoiksi virkko:	who himself put it into words:
"Nossa tuulta tutkutointa,	"Raise a wind of no measure,
seän mänövä meäritöintä."	the ill-weathers untold."
Sekä nousi, jotta joutu	And it rose, and it fell . . . .

The positive outcome of Väinämöinen's incantation is underlined by a typical parallelistic pattern: the plea of the incantation is repeated as a narrative statement. Bauman's (1992) analysis of Icelandic legends (and tentatively of a passage from the *Kalevala*) points out that generic dialogue not only effects the plot's temporal flow by articulating it and opening it towards the time of the performance. Serving as a testimony of the power of words, the embedded incantations are more than mimetic representations of speech-acts: they call attention to and validate cultural patterns of action, and articulate notions of cause and effect.

The incantation can make its presence obvious even without the shift of narrating voice. Generic intertextuality can be triggered by descriptive passages woven into the narrative, for instance by crystallized descriptions belonging to ritual discourse. In a *Sampo*-cycle from the village of Lonkka, the heroes obstruct the enemy's sail by creating an islet (*SKVR* I:1,

649):

Siit' on vanha Väinämöini	Then the old Väinämöinen
sanovi sanalla tuolla,	said with these words,
virkko tuolla vintiellä:	uttered by this twist of tongue:
"Annas piitä pikkaraini,	"Give me a piece of flint,
taki takloa muruni!"	or a crumb of tinder!"
Siit on seppo Ilmorine	Then the smith Ilmorine
anto piitä pikkaraisen,	gave a piece of flint,
taki takloa murusen.	or a crumb of tinder.
Siit on seppo Ilmorine	Then the smith Ilmorine,
Iski tulta Ilmorine,	he stoked the fire, Ilmorine,
välkähytti Väinämöini	he flashed the light, Väinämöini,
kolmella kokon sulalla,	with three feathers of an eagle,
vii'ellä Viron kivellä,	with three stones of Estonia,
seittsemellä sieran peällä,	over seven whetstones,
kaheksalla kannikalla,	with the help of eight crusts,
tulitaulan loi merellä	he created a flint on the seas,
kautti kainalon vasemen,	from under his left arm,
yli olkasa merehe.	over his shoulder to the sea.

The epic heroes took a role even in the myths on the origin of fire, and the association of flint with striking a fire gives birth to a passage from the incantation describing the origin of fire. Flint and steel were among the sage's most important magical tools, and striking a fire one of the most widely applicable magical acts. In Vuokkiniemi, the same mythical image of Ilmarinen's stoking was referred to whenever striking a fire, or when a thunderclap was heard. Description of ritually central acts and paraphernalia in conjunction with one of the plot's climaxes motivated the emerging incantation in manifold ways. The epic universe opened to the temporal praxis of observing the natural and manipulating the supernatural.

Identification of the narrator and the actual epic singer is clearest when the text takes on idiosyncratic twists or emphasis motivated by autobiographical information. In the *Sampo*-cycle by Jeremie Malinen, a famous and self-conscious smith and boatbuilder from the village of Vuonninen, the singer's commitment to the epic universe shows already in the choice of the main hero. Väinämöinen's leading role is taken by the smith Ilmarinen. He builds and equips boats for a journey to the otherworld, forges the fantastic harp, and through his music creates a handyman, his real-life double. On Ilmarinen's arrival in the otherworld, the following dialogue takes place (*SKVR* I:4, 2134):

Pohjan akka harvahammas	The gap-toothed hag of the North

jopa vastahan tulovi.	now comes to meet him:
“Tiäsiäkö, tuntiako,	“Do you know, do you recognize,
näkiäkö, kuuliako	have you seen, have you heard
sitä seppä Ilmarista?”	the smith named Ilmarinen?”
Sano seppä Ilmarini:	Said the smith Ilmarinen:
“Sekä olen nähnyn, jotta kuullun,	“I have seen and I have heard,
Kun olen itsekin seppä.	since I am a smith myself.
Katso itä, katso länsi,	Look eastward, look westward,
katso pitkin pohjan ranta,	look along the northern shore,
katso taivaskin peäs peältä.	look to the sky upon your head.
Onko oikein otava,	Is the Plough in the right way,
Tähet taivon taitavasti?	stars on the sky laid with skill?
Mie olen taivoni takon,	It was I who forged the sky,
Ilman koaret kalkutellun	I did hammer the firmament . . . .
Soatan mie sammon takuo,	I can forge the sampo,
kirjokannen kalkutella	hammer the bright–colored lid
yhestä oztranjyvästä,	of one grain of barley,
vielä puolesta sitäkin.”	and even the half of it.”

The hero acts and utters his boasts at the text’s deictic focal point.[16] The demiurge Ilmarinen merges with the singer-smith Jeremie whose autobiographical interview testifies the same: “I will hammer just anything,” “I am a smith myself,” “It was I.” Deictic expressions in the epic provide an opportunity for a breakthrough from the time of the tale to the time of the telling. In this very case, the breakthrough reached all the way to mythical times, making the deictic gesture into a ritual utterance. The ego and the singer constitute one of the world’s creators, a possessor of the know-how and knowledge of the origins of time and universe.

The singing ego’s voice is loudest in the singer’s opening words, which are rhetorically akin to the formulae opening heroic speech-acts within the narrative universe. They signal the start of a song “as a particular kind of speech-act” and invoke “the fictional world of mythic enterprise” by activating the traditional universe of reference (Foley 1991:69-70). In a typical invocation by Arhippa Perttunen, the singer paraphrases his singing as an itinerary into the epic universe (*SKVR* I:2, 1105):

“Siitä sinne tie menee,	“From here goes the way there,

[16] Deictic expressions “single out objects of reference or address in terms of their relation to the current interactive context in which the utterance occurs” (Hanks 1992:47). On deictics and referentiality in Kalevala-metric poetry, see Tarkka 1993:180-83.

rata uusi urkenee	the new track clears itself
paremmille laulajille,	for better singers,
tietävimmille runoille.	for more knowledgable poets.
Laulun tieän, ehken laulan,	I know a song, I might sing,
tietä karsin, ehken tieä	I clear the way, I might know
paremille laulajoille,	for better singers,
tietävimmille runoille.	for more knowledgable poets.
Noin kuulin laulettavaksi,	This I heard being sung,
tiesin tehtävän runoja . . . .”	knew the poems being made . . . .”

The singer's words contextualize the epic by pointing out its embeddedness in the interactive setting and its role in the series of previous and future performances. They depict the origin of songs and of the singer's competence, the concrete act and the sensory whirl of singing, as well as address the co-singer and audience. The singer's words are even entextualizing devices (Bauman and Briggs 1990:72-78), in that they highlight the relative autonomy of the poetic text by signaling its particularity, beginning, and end. In local festivals and singing contest, the singer's words were used to present the singers and raise their spirits, and thus pave the way toward the epic universe.

Contextualization similar to that provided by the singer's opening words often takes place within metafolkloric epic poems that highlight the hero's role as an unrivaled singer, or tell about singing contests. The tale of Lemminkäinen's quest associated with the feast at the otherworldy Päivölä usually starts with a myth recounting the first brewing of beer, and an invitation for a singer to perform at the feast. The stage for a performance such as the ongoing one is being prepared within the text. After attempts by some lesser singers, the hero takes over, “instantly accepts some beer, and thus starts his singing” (*SKVR* I:1, 362). A text whose context of performance is identical to the setting of the poem is particularly mimetic, or characterized by a “double-scene”: it is “performed by people engaged in the very activity that they are singing about” (Lönnroth 1979:95, 97). This logic, particularly characteristic of songs sung at festivals, such as drinking songs, indirectly motivates even the bond between incantatory themes and intergeneric links between incantations and epics. In the *Lemminkäinen* poem, a singing contest is initiated by a dialogue of conventional singer's opening words (*SKVR* I:2, 811):

Sano Päivölän isäntä:	Said the master of Päivölä:
“Ruvekkama laulamahe,	“Let's start singing,
soakama sanelomah on.	let's get on with uttering.
Kump' on laululta parempi,	Which one is better in singing,

runoloilta rohkijempi?”	braver in the poetry?”
Sano lieto Lemminkäini:	Said the unsteady Lemminkäini:
“En ole laulajan lajie,	“I am not of the singing kind,
enkä soittajan sukuvo.”	nor from a *kantele*-player’s family.”

Within the epic, the singer’s quest for inspiration may extend beyond the pint of beer. On the third day of singing, the “sleigh of songs” of even “the best of singers, most knowing of poets” may crack, and help must be sought from the land of the dead. In Arhippa Perttunen’s poem, the singing hero finds the lost words but concludes the epic by uttering an epigram warning posterity of visits to the otherworld and ultimately, as a dedication to his art, includes conventional singer’s concluding words addressing posterity (*SKVR* I:1, 362). In Arhippa’s case, singing about singing contests merges into autobiography. The famous bard told Lönnrot “that the people of his village often persuaded him to take part in contests and he could not remember ever being beaten” (Kuusi et al. 1977:74). In his epic and lyrical songs Arhippa told the same story in various forms, enriched with descriptions of the know-how, joy, and magical potency of singing.

Lönnrot used the thematic weight of the singer’s words as a way to frame the *Kalevala*. The intention was not a hidden one, as Lönnrot quoted the singer’s opening words to explain his editor’s license: “I cast myself to incantations, and threw myself to singing,” and “I regarded myself as a singer, as their equal” (Lönnrot 1993:403; see Honko 1990b:222-23). *Proto-Kalevala*’s preface starts Lönnrot’s self-authorization (1963:365, 374) by thematizing aspects of handing down tradition in a manner similar to the singer’s words. The writer-singer explains “how these songs were got,” and urges them to reach the audience and posterity: “Go forth now . . . poems of Kaleva’s District . . . after spending time in my hands . . . .” Paradoxically, the dialogical essence and contextualizing devices of oral tradition worked in the *Kalevala* for monological authority (Sawin 1988:194-95; cf. Okpewho 1979:233-36). The singer’s extended opening words start the epic by presenting Lönnrot-as-singer (1:1-104), and then move on to narration by alluding to the appearance on stage of the “eternal bard,” Väinämöinen. The closing words of the singer (50:513-620) are likewise linked to the epic proper by an account of Väinämöinen’s exit and a mention of the songs he left as his heritage (50:501-12). Via these subtle mediations, Lönnrot authorized himself as a singer of tales and framed the epic as one belonging to an authentic tradition.

Similar processes of authorization permeate the *Kalevala*. Väinämöinen’s singing activities are displayed lavishly, but in a logic

different from the oral sources. The singing contest described above is echoed in a preparatory celebration of a wedding, where Väinämöinen and other singers exchange conventional singer's words (21:255-438). Väinämöinen is presented as the foresinger at bear cult festivals (46:159-644) and weddings (25:405-672). Lönnrot's vision of the epic's performative context and the wider ethnographic setting was projected onto the epic universe. This vision was partly motivated by the epic universe's themes of singing and courtship, as well as its contextualizing processes, but most of all by Lönnrot's conviction that the poems reflected an ancient way of life. This way of life, including the enabling referent of tradition and the enabling events of performances (Foley 1992a), were narrated into one ethnographic account or mythohistorical still life.

The Epic Universe and the Beginning of the World

The singing ego's presence in the "here and now" of performance and his mastery over the epic's "there and then" makes the epic discourse into a narration taking place in and manipulating cultural time. The epic is not, however, confined to the unfolding present, but rather extends to the past marked as historical or mythical. The very process of creating continuity between the past and the present is one of the main functions of epic tradition, part of the culture's formulations of its historicity (cf. Hale 1990:60-67, 163). The performative formulation of historicity would nevertheless remain hollow without a thematic foundation in the texts being performed. On this level, an epic such as the *Sampo*-cycle is a narrative *of* cultural time—on the origins of time and constitutive acts of creation. The cycle starts with the world's creation, dwells upon the creation and loss of the symbol of "all the good(s) in the world" (*SKVR* I:1, 83a), the *sampo*, and ends with a description of a battle fought with words. The hero and the matron of the otherworld curse each other's fields with hail and frost. Abundance and riches are lost to the sea, and the fertile soil is rendered vulnerable to climatic hazards.

The mythical nature of the cycle's time has been pointed out by Lauri Honko, who describes its cohesion as "a balance between all the cosmological elements permeating the story: the cycle ends . . . as it began, with magnificent acts of creation" (1993b:630). The time of origins is projected onto subsequent times by building multiple temporal orders within the text. The story starts from the the source of power and authority: the creation of the universe and the beginning of time. Already at this point, the word of traditional utterance was in force; the world was

created with words. The incident ending the poem explains the impoverished *status quo* and offers a solution based on the magical power of the word. The third order puts the word into action: the events recounted are acted out in a ritual performance. The *Sampo*-cycle was chanted in sowing and plowing rituals, together with incantations, and the ending was said to describe how "Väinämöinen removed the frost that had been sent by the mistress of the North" (*SKVR* I:1, 88b). Explicit statements of ritual use support the contents and the temporal and rhetorical strategies of the poem. Aggression between competitive neighbors was, in everyday life, articulated by the notion of envy and the practice of cursing the neighbor's lot. The myth tells how misery was born out of similar conflicts.

In the *Sampo*-cycle, aggression takes the shape of a dialogue of blessings and curses (*SKVR* I:1, 79a):

Sano vanha Väinämöinen:	Said the old Väinämöinen:
"Ohoh Pohjolan emäntä,	"You mistress of the North,
läkkäämäs jaolle samon,	let us go and share the sampo,
kirjokannen katsantaan	to survey the bright-colored lid
nenääh utusen niemen!"	at the tongue of a misty land!"
Sano Pohjolan emäntä:	Said the mistress of the North:
"En lähe jaolle sammon,	"I shall neither share the sampo,
kirjokannen katsantaan."	nor survey the bright-colored lid."
Siitä vanha Väinämöinen . . .	Then the old Väinämöinen . . .
itse nuin sanoiksi virkko:	himself put it into words:
"Tänne kyntö, tänne kylvö	"Here the plowing, here the sowing,
tänne vilja kaikenlainen	here the crops of all kinds
poloiselle Pohjan maalle,	to the poor lands of the North,
Suomen suurille tiloille;	to the great farms of Finland;
Tänne kuut, täne päivät!"	Here the moons, here the suns!"
Sano Pohjolan emäntä:	Said the mistress of the North:
"Vielä mä tuohon mutkan muistan,	"I remember one more trick,
keksin kummoa vähäisen	I will find one more puzzle
sinun kynnön, kylvön pääle;	over your plowing, over the sowing;
soan rautasen rakehen,	I shall send the hails of iron,
teräksisen tellittelen	and throw the steely ones
halmettasi hakkaamahan.	to beat your land sown with grain,
pieksämään peltojasi!"	to batter your fields!"
Sano vanha Väinämöinen:	Said the old Väinämöinen:
"Satoos rautaista raetta,	"Let the hails of iron rain,
teräksistä tellitellös	the steely ones fall
Pohjolan kujan perille,	upon the ends of the Northern lane,
saviharjan hartioille!"	on the shoulders of the clay-hill!"

Väinämöinen's first utterance, "here the plowing, here the sowing," corresponds to the farmer's charms performed in sowing rituals. The particular words used in the epic are not known to be employed as incantations or curses in the ritual proper, but the contents of the epic reverberate in notions of the North's mistress as frost's and the north wind's personification, or in short charms associated with harvesting.

The Creation's embeddedness within the *Sampo*-cycle sets the mythical matrix for the whole cycle. Because the *sampo* is the embodiment of all that is valuable, it may absorb into itself the whole cosmos: the *sampo* can be equated to the sky; it may contain the moon and the sun, and even the "birds in the sky" (*SKVR* I:1, 97, 79, 647). The *sampo* that falls to the sea is distributed by Ilmarinen (*SKVR* I:1, 83a):

Ite nuin sanoikse virkki . . . :	He himself put it into words . . . :
"Meillä kyntö, meillä kylvö,	"Ours the plowing, ours the sowing,
meilä kuu on, meilä päivä,	ours the moon, ours the daylights,
meilä armas aurinkoinen,	ours the dear sun,
meilä tähet taivahalla!"	ours the stars in the sky!"

As a symbol containing the central cosmographic elements as well as potential for growth and wealth, the *sampo* finds a parallel in the bird's egg containing the substance of the cosmos. In *The Creation* that opens the cycle quoted above, Väinämöinen distributes the world out of the egg fallen to the water (*SKVR* I:1, 83a):

Ite nuin sanoikse virkki:	He himself put it into words:
"Mi munassa ruskieta,	"All that is brown in the egg
se päiväkse paistamaha.	shall shine as the sun.
Mi munassa valkijeta,	All that is white in the egg
se kuukse kumottamaha.	shall glow as the moon.
Murskaha muna muruikse.	Crush the egg into crumbs
taivosella tähtysikse."	to shine as stars in the sky."

In this poem, the world's and time's beginning is made analogical to the beginnings of different means of subsistence. The loss of *sampo* to the waves even explained the relative riches found in the sea: the sea had "all the best goodness" and "more goods," both salt and "all the things alive in the sea" (*SKVR* I:1, 83a, 84, 73). Maritime wealth was grounded in the beginning of the *Sampo*-cycle, in which Väinämöinen formed the seabed and the fishing grounds: "It was the beginning of the world, when they got started with plowing and sowing" (*SKVR* I:1, 91). Synchronicity of the season's beginning, the mythical origin of the source of livelihood, and the

creation of the cosmos could thus be verbalized explicitly or by building an analogy between a cosmic symbol and the *sampo*. The first was distributed in the beginning, and the latter in the end, at the point where the epic opens up to the ritual present.

The ritual aspect of the epic need not be grounded in a strictly ritual use of the epic. Performative strategies of creating authority are common to ritual and art (Kapferer 1986:191), and epic poetry, such as the Kalevala-metric tradition, never is "pure entertainment" or art for art's sake. Rather the epic performance is a "ritual enactment of the moral and social dilemma central to both the collective text and the collectivity" (Connelly 1986:147). The *Sampo*-cycle dealt not only with the uneven distribution of value and goods in nature, but even the ways of acting upon scarce natural resources: ethics of ownership and sharing, evaluations of craftsmanship, sentiments such as envy and aggression. In short, the *Sampo*-cycle was an elaboration—or meditation (see T. DuBois 1993:265-66)—on cultural values. The morality was not expressed in explicit statements, nor in epigrams framed as like Väinämöinen's speech so common in other epic poems; it was acted out in the plot, recounted, and enacted in performance.

The *Kalevala* severed the story of the *sampo*'s creation from its cosmogonic context and postponed it until the era of heroic action and wooing intrigues. According to both Lönnrot and his sources, the diverse and enigmatic epithets of the *sampo* presented different aspects of luck and prosperity that were lost to and regained from the otherworld. The *sampo*, "all the good in the world" and "a wealthy being" (*SKVR* I:1, 83a, 649), encapsulated the paradigm of prosperity ranging from cosmic elements and "all kinds of goods" to spouses, harvest, and game. These existed within the *sampo* without contradiction. Problems arose only when the quantitatively limited goodness was to be distributed between two neighbors. In the literary context, however, the *sampo* was forged anew to fit into notions of unambiguous symbolization. This time Lönnrot's interpretation aimed at a narrative establishing the historical emergence of the symbol. For Lönnrot, the different aspects of wealth and *sampo*'s epithets represented successive stages in the evolution of civilization.[17] The *Sampo*-cycle was thus an allegory of the pursuit of higher standards of living, both economic and moral. The new *sampo* had come a long way form the mixed economy of Vuokkiniemi. Instead of "all the good in the world," the new *sampo* was to contain "all the time of civilization" oriented towards a goal, and claimed as "ours."

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[17] See, e.g., Kaukonen 1956:466-67; Honko 1990c:563.

The Birth of Man the Hero

In the epic universe, the analogy between diverse beginnings of time even reached myths of the birth of man. The mythology of childbirth was closely connected to a legend poem in which the Virgin Mary gives birth to her baby, Jesus. *The Messiah* graphically describes Mary's impregnation, birth pangs, and delivery, and Mary correspondingly acted as the main supranormal helper in incantations and rituals of childbirth. The start of a new life connoted not only the presence of the divine in every human but even the start of the universe, coinciding with the birth of the Messiah and each man (*SKVR* I:2, 1098):[18]

Niin siellä siitä syntyy poika	So a boy was born from there
kainalosta oikiesta.	from under the right arm.
Siitä synty kuuhut, synty päivyt,	Thence was born the moon and sun,
Synty tähet taivahalla.	Born were the stars in the sky.

Despite *The Messiah*'s mythological focus on childbirth as one of the constitutive acts of creation (Tarkka 1994:286-87), Lönnrot located it at the end of the *Kalevala* (fiftieth canto); the birth of Christ was to illustrate the progression from the paganic past to the Christian present of the Finns (Kaukonen 1956:467; Honko 1990c:559). Religious syncretism in Karelia was parallel to the epic universe's multivocality, but it had to be explained as originating in monotheism and ending in Christian piety. The beginning of such linear time simultaneously dissociated the epic tradition from its ritual roots.

The prolonged and modeling pregnancies and births of the "heroes" in oral tradition and ritual were transferred by Lönnrot to the context of *The Creation*, which was already separated from the *Sampo*-cycle. An account of "Väinämöinen's birth" (1:341) absorbed into itself incantations associated with childbirth. In their original context, these represent birth as an otherworld journey strongly reminiscent of that of the epic heroes and the inside of the female body in panoramic scope as a carnal, otherworldy universe "wide as the sky, the size of the world" (*SKVR* I:4, 960; see Tarkka 1994:277-87). Lönnrot projected this panoramic representation of the prenatal state onto the maritime landscape of the world's creation through a female water goddess, the Water Mother (Lönnrot 1990:560; 1993:403-4). Being the personification of water—at once element,

[18] Timonen 1987; see Tarkka 1994:279-80.

landscape, and actor—the Water Mother drifted in the sea (*Kalevala* 1:251-54):

noilla vienoilla vesillä,	on those mild waters,
utuisilla lainehilla	on the misty waves,
eessänsä vesi vetelä,	before her the slack water,
takanansa taivas selvä.	and behind her the clear sky.

Simultaneously, she embodied another sea, and Väinämöinen (*Kalevala* 1:290-300)

kulki äitinsä kohussa	went round in his mother's womb
kolmekymmentä keseä,	for thirty summers
yhen verran talviaki,	and as many winters too
noilla vienoilla vesillä,	on those mild waters,
utuisilla lainehilla . . .	on the misty waves . . .
pimeässä piilossansa,	in his dark hideout,
asunnossa ahtahassa,	in his narrow dwelling where
kuss' ei konsa kuuta nähnyt	he has never seen the moon
eikä päiveä havainnut.	nor beheld the sun.

The Water Mother replaced Väinämöinen as the creator of the universe and as the sculptor of the seabed and the landscape. From the start, Väinämöinen is presented as "the eternal bard" (1:288), as one born of a woman, neither a God to be believed in nor a "wooden idol" (Lönnrot 1963:371-72). As a sage cunning enough to utter the incantation of his own birth, he quotes lengthy passages of incantations of childbirth.[19] As in the original incantations, the aim is to deliver the hero by transferring him from the "dark," "narrow," and sunless state to the open under "the clear sky" (*Kalevala* 1:301-14):

Sanovi sanalla tuolla,	He says with this word,
lausui tuolla lausehella:	he spoke with this speech:
"Kuu, keritä, päivyt, päästä,	"Moon, unloosen, and sun, set free,
otava, yhä opeta	and Great Bear, still guide
miestä ouvoilta ovilta,	a man out from the strange doors
veräjiltä vierahilta,	from the foreign gates,
näiltä pieniltä pesiltä,	from these little nests
asunnoilta ahtahilta!	and narrow dwellings!
Saata maalle matkamiestä,	Bring the traveler to land,
ilmoillen inehmon lasta,	man's child into the open,
kuuta taivon katsomahan,	to look at the moon in heaven,

[19] See also 1:169-76, 319-24.

päiveä ihoamahan,	to admire the sun,
otavaista oppimahan,	observe the Great Bear,
tähtiä tähyämähän!"	and study the stars!"

As the first incantation is of no help, Väinämöinen performs the first of his heroic deeds: he opens the gates obstructing his way, dives into the sea, and, ultimately, rises "on a headland with no name, on a mainland with no trees" (1:333-34).

The allusions in the original poems partly motivate Lönnrot's combination: the landscapes in *The Creation* and in the incantations of childbirth were parallel. Both described birth as a coming ashore of an embryonic hero, as "letting the traveling man rise on land" (*SKVR* I:4, 960; see Tarkka 1994:278). Lönnrot's literal interpretation stretched the allusions into a linear action-drama of the epic hero's miraculous birth. Complementarity and openness in the epic universe narrowed into a more confined epic ethos, where already the amorphous and feminine substance of the proto-sea, the Water Mother, contained the epic hero etymologically as well as physically.[20] Lönnrot derived the name "Väinämöinen" from "Vein emoinen," literally a diminutive for "water's mother."[21] Paradoxically, the literalizing interpretation joined an abstract tendency unknown to the oral sources. The physical and ritual anchoring of the incantations was hidden behind a veil of allegory and decency, where the "mother" no more connoted a carnal mother and a womb but an abstract "power or essence" (Lönnrot 1990:560).

The Creation's transformations were influenced by Lönnrot's own epical and mythological models, a Christian world view and the Genesis (Kaukonen 1956:458-59). The chaotic nothingness, "a formless void, mixture of elements" as described by Lönnrot (1990:557), was alluded to in *Kalevala*'s seventeenth canto. The proto-sage Vipunen boasted over Väinämöinen of his mythical knowledge, "spells about the Beginning" (*Kalevala* 17:541-52):

Lauloi synnyt syitä myöten,	He sang the Origins in depth
luottehet lomia myöten,	and spells in order,
kuinka Luojansa luvalla,	how by their Creator's leave
kaikkivallan vaatimalla	at the Almighty's command
itsestänsä ilma syntyi,	of itself the sky was born
ilmasta vesi erosi	from the sky water parted . . . .

[20] See Tarkka 1994:277-87, 292-95.

[21] 1990:560; 1993:403-4; cf. Haavio 1991:12-14, 226-29.

Lauloi kuun kuvoannasta, auringon asetannasta, ilman pielten pistännästä, taivosen tähytännästä.	He sang the moon's shaping, the sun's placing, the fixing of the sky's pillars, heaven being filled with stars.

A creator *ex nihilo* entered where the oral sources conceptualized neither a single creator nor nothingness. Ironically, similar flashbacks to the "deep origins" appeared in the oral sources as ritual boast in first-person narration. Sages and smiths—such as Jeremie Malinen—or lyrical subjects raised their spirits (*SKVR* I:3, 1291; see Tarkka 1994:287-91):

Olin miessä kuuventena, urona yheksäntenä ilman kaarta kantamassa, taivoa tähyttämässä. Oikein on otavat tehty, tähet taivon taitavasti, omat on kuopat kuokkimani.	I was the sixth among the men, the ninth among the heroes when the firmament was carried, when the sky was starred. The Plough is correctly made, the stars on sky with skill, the furrows are hoed by me myself.

In the oral poem, *The Spell,* Väinämöinen is forced by the cunning Vipunen to pass the knowledge to himself and posterity, thus contextualizing their common symbolic capital as tradition. Christian authorities joined Väinämöinen in the chain of empowering the sage's words, but never replaced the sage: "what flows from my mouth, flows from the mouth of the sweet God; what I drop from the tip of my tongue, drops from the tongue of Jesus" (*SKVR* I:4, 476). In the *Kalevala*, authority provided by a share in the acts of creation was distanced from the singers and the epic heroes within their rhetorical reach. Vipunen conquered Väinämöinen, and ultimate wisdom and power was credited to the Christian God. Temporality of discourse was again replaced by temporality of linear narrative and reduced to a credo of Christian mythology. Lönnrot's version of the boast and reference to the acts of creation takes the ritual pattern of the oral sources nearer to the Biblical Genesis (1:6-7), in which God with his word "separated the water under the vault from the water above it," and the Book of Job (38:31), in which God boasts by asking whether Job is able to "bind the cluster of the Pleiades or loose Orion's belt." In the Finnish Bible, the constellations referred to are the Plough (as mentioned both in the *Kalevala* and the oral sources) and Orion, the "Sword of Kaleva," translated even as "Väinämöinen's scythe" (see Haavio 1991:220-29).

The Epic Universe as Symbolic Landscape

Even if narrativity dominates in definitions of the epic, conventions of epic description, such as epic geography, ecphrasis, and ornamental extended style, are often mentioned as epic characteristics.[22] Both limited descriptions and larger configurations display description's ambivalence in relation to narrative.[23] An ecphrasis, description of a visual object within the text, can incorporate both narratives and metahistorical statements (T. DuBois 1993:29-31, 49-50). Epic geography, the spatial structure of the epic universe, is connected to the epic's metahistorical and "genealogical" functions (see Zumthor 1990:84-85): it is about "our" history and "our" land. Likewise, spatial organization of the epic universe into two opposing regions motivates the typical plot of journey, and punctuates it by signaling movement from one episode to another. Epic plots portray dense alteration between home and the otherworld, both as scenes and proverbial or lyrical evaluations of the places uttered by the heroes. Descriptions of the otherworld are the most significant and elaborated paradigmatic set of spatial descriptions in the Vuokkiniemi corpus.[24]

The epic universe's fictional landscape is mapped out with a set of interchangeable images. Topoi and epithets belong to the common stock of motifs and formulae that are easily transferable from one context to another and activated for intertextual purposes. Places such as the "tongue of a misty land" or "a headland with no name" are the stages for diverse myths of origin in the incantations, and crucial points of reference in the epic landscape, for example, the battleground in the fight over the *sampo* (*SKVR* I:4, 2134).

Conventional and stable nuclei of description bring the epic closer to other, basically non-narrative genres. The songs of homesickness sung by Väinämöinen as he drifts in the sea in the *Sampo*-cycle provide an example of spatial description as a framed unit of reported speech and, simultaneously, a lyrical poem. Fusion of lyrical songs and epics or the lyrical and epic subjects is common, even if it has not reached the degree of

[22] See Seidel 1976:12-15, 32-33, 64; Hatto 1989:215-22; Kurman 1974; P. Dubois 1982; Findlay 1984.

[23] On the statuses of narration and description in defining genres such as epics, see, e.g., Mitchell 1989:91-92; on the complex relation between description and narrative, see, e.g., Beaujour 1981:33, 47-48; Viikari 1993.

[24] On the paradigm of the otherworld and its symbolic function in the epic universe, see Tarkka 1994:291-96.

fixity found in the southern areas of Kalevala-metric tradition. (*SKVR* I:1, 83b).[25]

Jopa vanhan Väinämöisen	Now the old Väinämöinen
Itku silmähän tulovi:	feels the tears well in his eyes:
"Mie jouvuin, poloni poika,	"I ended up, the poor boy,
jouvuim moalla vierahalla,	ended up on foreign land,
moalla ristimättömällä,	on unchristened land,
paikkoihe papittomihin,	in priestless places,
pimiehen Pohjolah,	in the dark North,
paksuh Palehtolah,	in the thick Palehtola,
miesten syöpäh kyläh.	in the village that eats men.
Kuin oisin omilla mailla,	If I were in my own land,
vielä kerran kellot soisi,	once more I'd hear the bells ringing,
vaskipankat vankahuisi.	the bells of brass banging.
Teälä syöpi korppi kouhkot,	Here my lungs are eaten by crows,
muun vereni musta lintu."	all my blood by the black bird."

In this passage, spatial description is mediated by the hero's sentiment towards the place as well as the values and symbolic frameworks attached to it: nostalgia, recognition, or aversion. Despite the otherworld's negativity, it is not an abstract void but pictured with familiar and realistic details: the Other is, after all, your closest neighbor (see Tarkka 1994:292-95).

The wide connotations of the epic landscape and the hero's movement within its coordinates show that heroic action not only moves the linear narrative forward but also elaborates symbolic boundaries and social values. The spatial organization highlights different aspects of identity, a cultural self, an "Us," and a "Home." Alterity located in the otherworld is not only a negative opposite of this world, but an essential point of reference in the construction of this-worldly identity and a source of wisdom, power, and wealth. Consequently, in the *Sampo*-cycle the symbol of all goodness is transferred from the otherworld back to its lawful proprietors, "Us." After having forged the *sampo,* Ilmarinen locates the problem (*SKVR* I:1, 79):

Kuin on sampo Pohjosessa	The sampo is in the North . . . .
Siin' ois kyntö, siinä kylvö,	There would be the plowing, there the sowing,
Siinä vilja kaikenlainen.	There all kinds of harvest.

[25] For examples of co-texts of the following lyrical song, see Tarkka 1994:268-71.

Läkkä sammon nouantah . . .	Let's go and get the sampo . . .
Pimiestä Pohjosesta.	From the dark Northern land.

The ensuing fight over the *sampo* culminates in Väinämöinen's claim: plowing, sowing, and "all kinds of wealth" are to be *here*; hail and frost is to be "over *your* plowing and sowing," "*over there* . . . upon the ends of the North's lane" (*SKVR* I:1, 79). The relational structure of the epic geography is clearest in deictic elements that serve as mediators between epic landscape and the living space of the singers (see also Beaujour 1981:52-53). Significantly, the home's "here" was seldom named or described in detail: it was immanent, assumed familiar, and described either as the otherworld's opposite or in terms of nostalgia. It was the exceptional designation by Ontrei Malinen, "here, on the poor northern land, on Finland's wide space" (*SKVR* I:1, 79a) that influenced Lönnrot.[26]

The most obvious mimetic aspect of the epic lies in the epic description's verisimilitude, which can hardly be grasped without at least a tentative knowledge of the "reality" evoked or referenced.[27] This is not only the "reality" as such but a reality already culturally constituted, filled with and mapped out by the "store of cultural images": conventional "mental images" (Beaujour 1981:31, 33, 52–53), conceptual yet visually "seen" "mythical images" (Siikala 1990:87-106). Ultimately, even in the most realistic and immediate reference to the extratextual reality, the reality we are dealing with here is conditioned by the "broader picture" or "story behind" it: other texts (Tarkka 1993:178-79), the "word-hoard of tradition" (Foley 1992a).

Even the most concrete and realistic description always points in two directions: the mimetic or realistic and the pictorial or symbolic.[28] Use of metaphorical expression or images has its roots in the visual frameworks of reality, but it simultaneously foregrounds the fictive nature of representation and indicates "representation of the unreal, or . . . a non-representational, non-mimetic type of discourse" (Riffaterre 1981:107). In the epic universe, activation of the symbolic realm leads to the

[26] See *Kalevala* 43:303-4; Kaukonen 1956:340.

[27] On spatial description, referentiality, and *mimesis* in literary theory, see Mitchell 1989:91-93; on the oral epic as mimetic and realistic see, e.g., Zumthor 1990:88; Okpewho 1979:14-27; on the naive interpretations of a mimetic relationship between the Kalevala-metric epic universe and the world as "photographic realism," see, e.g., Honko 1990c:567.

[28] On this "Janus–like" nature of description, see e.g. Beaujour 1981:37; Lyytikäinen 1992:124-34, 141-45, 156-57; Riffaterre 1981:107-8; Viikari 1993:68.

paradigmatic depth of tradition. "Realistic" descriptions of the otherworld are a case in point. In the Vuokkiniemi corpus, the North is represented both in a mimetic, realistic way as a neighboring village, and as a projection of the wide field of something "wholly other." Picturing the otherworldly afterlife and prenatal existence alongside intimate images of the familiar and concrete surroundings is not only a staple of any particular system of beliefs but a condition of human language and literature (see also Okpewho 1979:226-32). Like any description, the otherworld points in two directions: the visible and visualized, perceived and concrete reality, which, when entering the processes of symbolization, changes and stretches to the multiple frames of reference provided by tradition. Simultaneously, the otherworld's homely opposite, the "here" and "now," also changes.

In textual praxis, activation of the symbolic in description of the otherworld is based on parallelism and intertextuality. The shifting conceptual frameworks of the otherworld's epithets bring about movement towards symbolic, metaphorical meanings. For example, Arhippa Perttunen caught the essence of the otherworld in images and epithets that, by links established in parallelistic chains or by etymology, build an extensive field of associations ranging from the land of the dead and the graveyard to the celestial otherworld and the sun, from Jerusalem to the mythical mountain where pains and diseases originate, and, among others, from the neighboring village to the forest.

Opening the linear narrative towards the reality of performance made the epic mimetic in the sense of being enacted: rather than being itself a representation of reality, this aspect of *mimesis* created of that reality in performance. In description, reality was captured by its verisimilitude but simultaneously postponed by the symbolic, allegorical, or metaphorical levels hinted at in the elaborate descriptions of the otherworld. These descriptions break the linear narrative from another angle by introducing new frames of reference.[29] The paradigmatic or metaphorical widening of the epic horizon does not, however, fragment the unity of the epic universe, but only enriches and fills out the fictive universe, producing an impression of coherence—an epic quality *par excellence* (Lyytikäinen 1992:145). In the *Kalevala*, a matching coherence was sought by opposing means, by syntagmatic expansion and patchwork.

In its elusive, symbolic, and contextualized embeddedness in cultural reality and praxis, the epic universe makes a solid statement: it is a "perpetually re-created song of truth," "our story," and "a saga of identity

[29] Beaujour 1981:36, 41-42; Lyytikäinen 1992:128-29, 134.

and, as such a saga of alterity."[30] It clears a foothold in the world and places communities and egos in a spatial, temporal, and social matrix. In this sense all epic and all art—even that considered "mere entertainment"—are mythological: a gesture of locating human life and action in the cosmic order, and relating the present realities to other worlds and other times. The relations are not simply displayed; they are depicted as images and related as stories, spurred into movement, transformation, and action as performances. Because of this dynamic aspect, *poiesis*, *mythos* (or emplotment), and *mimesis* extend history's and time's manmade quality.[31] Ritual enactment connects the manmade nature of the temporal universe to the makings of the Gods.

Enclosing the Epic Space

At the surface, the spatial structure of Lönnrot's *Kalevala* was faithful to the epic universe: it was based on the opposition between the North and the home of the heroes. Topographical ambiguity was nevertheless against the current aesthetic norms,[32] and so Lönnrot simplified the epic landscape's relational nature by naming the home of the heroes, the "Us" of the epic. "Here" became "Kalevala," "Kaleva's village." The act of naming the "here" severed the epic from its mythological role as a "saga of identity" for its singers, and created a completely new saga with a new role.

Lönnrot explained his choice of name through a migratory legend of his own making. Kaleva was supposed to be the forefather of the Finns who led his folk to their present abode (Lönnrot 1963:367-70, 378-79). The idea was further elaborated by Lönnrot in his poem composed in Kalevala-meter, *The Birth of Finland*. To create a nation (Lönnrot 1990:7), Kaleva

Sanan virkko, noin nimesi:	Uttered a word, named thus:
"Ollet suotu onnekseni,	"You are promised to be my fortune,
arvattu asuakseni,	allotted to be my abode,
niin sun Suomeksi nimitän,	thence I will name you Finland,

[30] Zumthor 1990:84; Wadley 1991:221; Connelly 1986:225; see also Okpewho 1979:75-76.

[31] Okpewho 1979:50-53; Ricoeur 1984:31, 33, 48.

[32] T. DuBois 1993:262; see Lönnrot 1963:374-75, 378-79.

Suomen maaksi mainittelen.”	mention you as the Finn country.”

Via a leap of etymological imagination, the name-giving was authorized by the myth of promised land: Lönnrot (1990:8-9) derived *Suomi* “Finland” from the verbs “to promise” or “to let” (*suoda*). “Here” was the land *promised* for “us.” While creating an imagined community in time and space, Lönnrot also created a genealogical link between the epic heroes and the Finns, the audience of the literary epic (Sawin 1988:195).

The decontextualized epic universe was linked to a new identity, and given a mythopoetic or historical significance. As a consequence of filling the deictic slots for a “here,” an “ego,” and any “present” with stable contents, a self-contained epic in Bakhtin’s sense was born. The sacrosanct authority of Lönnrot’s epic topography and act of naming raised few counterstatements. One of them was C. A. Gottlund’s epic compilation *Runola*, “Runeland.” Lampoons against this counter-*Kalevala* praised Lönnrot as “the eternal singer,” “the first of heroes” who had, like his colleague Väinämöinen, “straightened the Plough” and shown the right path for the generations to come.[33] The audience and posterity thus gave Lönnrot the aura of the epic hero and demiurge, a status that was already grounded in the editor-singer’s ways of framing the epic. Moreover, Lönnrot, who presented himself as the singer *primus inter pares,* in fact acted as the politicized hero Kaleva in his own poem.

The need for a definite plot, morality, and message was dictated by the literary and ideological expectations set for the romantic, national epic. Ambiguity and openness had to be forged into closure, thus constituting a heroic history and national ethos. The *Kalevala* was cut off from living tradition by a radical cultural translation that flattened and stretched the endemic epic depth into a non-allusive linear story. Yet both the oral sources—the epic universe—and the *Kalevala* were sagas of identity. Possession of the epic tradition was an ethnic boundary marker and possession of the *Kalevala* became a national one; both articulated these boundaries within their textual universes. Both were cultural constructions of time relating pasts to presents and futures. In the oral sources, the relation was both transient and continuous: it was actualized in ritual discourse and was passed on as tradition, knowledge interpreted as ancient, communal, and valuable. The literate compilation promoted identity on a different level, and established a different relation to the past. By attaching the mythical times and places to supposed (historical) referents, Lönnrot

[33] The Plough referred to was even the name for Gottlund’s other work which was, according to the lampoon, put in its proper place by the real textual demiurge Lönnrot.

created his myth of the creation of a Finnish world. This geography of Kalevala—and the *Kalevala*—was a hybrid, misplaced landscape, yet no more a "headland with no name."

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The Present State of the Mongolian Epic and Some Topics for Future Research

Walther Heissig

In the March 1993 issue of the bulletin Folklore Fellows Network Lauri Honko raised the question: "What is an epic?" As a small contribution of my own I shall confine myself here to the question of what we know about the *recent* state of the Mongolian epic (Bawden 1980). Had it not been for the intensive and praiseworthy collection of the first Mongolian epic by Russian and Finnish scholars during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the present century, we might not have reached the present stage in this branch of literary research. Through their recording projects, these scholars demonstrated the existence and dominance of the Mongolian epic.[1]

Considering that practically all Mongolian literary productions believed to belong to the category of epic have been transmitted orally, the number of epics recorded in writing or on tape is rather large. All the texts have been preserved in writing either by researchers or, as is very often the case, by Mongol scribes. The classical case here is Burdukova and his scribe (1966). This method implied a certain "dictation" by the singer himself in which the text lost some of the spontaneity of its immediate presentation. A. B. Lord and Milman Parry have already made some reservations about these shortcomings. The use by Mongol scholars of a hurriedly written "shorthand Mongol" served the preservation of the spontaneous diction of the singer far better; this is evident in the notes made by, for instance, P. Horloo of the *J̌ula aldar qan* or by J̌. Rinčindorǰi, of which I will give some samples. The use of recording machines has

[1] Nekljudov 1984; Vladimircov 1923; Poppe 1955; Ramstedt 1973.

substantially affected the qualities of the preserved texts; certainly all experienced fieldworkers agree with this premise.

Yet every performance of the same epic by the same singer has to be regarded as a new creation, because no singer will ever repeat his epic verbatim. Have we therefore the right to consider a mixture of the most beautiful and best-worded passages by various singers as the real epic (Heissig 1991b)?

The initial collection of Mongolian epics in the first part of the twentieth century was devoted to the West Mongolian epic of the Altai region, to the Khalkha territory and to the Calmuck versions of *Janggar*. Since the middle of this century not only the Khalkha-Mongols but the Mongols of Inner Mongolia and Sinkiang have likewise been very active, yielding a greater number of recorded epics. The officially sponsored actions in China to collect all possible versions of the *Geser* cycle and the *Janggar* deserve special mention for their achievements in obtaining many orally transmitted versions of these epics (Bormanshinov 1981; Heissig 1987). Oral versions of *Geser* have so far been published from the Inner Mongolian districts of Bagharin, Ulạandzab, and Dzarut as well as from Sinkiang, in addition to eleven volumes of written versions (Čuburil 1986-91). Likewise, 61 chapters of oral *Dzangar* versions have been published in Sinkiang together with 99 variants (*J̌ingγar* 1982-87/88).

It will suffice to state here that about 350 Mongolian epics have been recorded in one form or another, of which roughly a third have been published. They were all transmitted by persons aged between 50 and 75, either professional singers or simply persons who remembered the texts. In the younger age-groups knowledge, the ability to perform, and interests are declining. In other words, living Mongolian epics can still be found but it is high time they were collected. A precise picture of the relation between recorded and published texts is difficult to obtain: there are sound reasons to believe that quite a few scholars and collectors among the Mongols still have unpublished materials in their possession that have not yet been considered in scientific research. Thus stocktaking should be one of the next topics of international scientific cooperation.[2]

Approximately one-third of these epics have been used to gain a comprehensive picture of the structural characteristics of the Mongolian epic: for their analyses Nekljudov (1984) used 174 titles and Heissig (1988)

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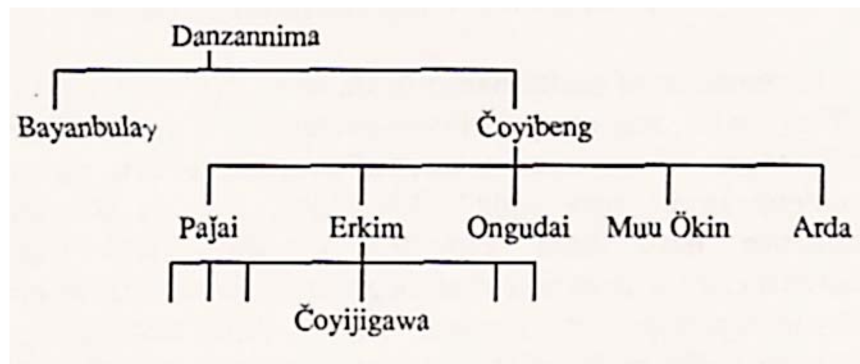
[2] Almost one hundred Mongolian epics have been translated.

about 187 titles. Many of these smaller epics elaborate the structure, subjects, and expressions of the older and more voluminous epics, transposing these items onto various other new protagonists. In this way they repeat the form of the previous Mongolian epic (Heissig 1979b).

This agrees with the conclusions drawn by Vladimircov from his research on the West Mongolian (Oirat) epic, that the Mongol singer of tales learns by heart from his teacher and predecessor "primarily" the plot, names, and characteristics of the persons in addition to a certain stock of poetic expressions, for example the so-called "formula." That the "creative exponents of the epic," the singers, learn their trade from their predecessors is further testified to by many personal interviews with singers who mention not only the names, age, and origin of their personal teachers, but also those of the teachers and predecessors of their teachers. Thus a certain North Mongolian singer from the Altai region claimed for some works in his repertoire a genealogy of many generations: the rhapsode Jilker (1858-1935) named himself as the twelfth singer in a long line of rhapsodes, transmitting ten epics to his nephew Öljei Bujan, who lived and sang from 1893 to 1967. One of these epics, *J̌ula aldar qan,* was recorded in Öljei Bujan's version in 1957, ten years before Bujan's death, by Professor Horloo of Ulan Bator, later transcribed by him in 1991, and translated by Koppe in 1992. A second version was also recorded (Coloo 1984).

I have to admit that a genealogy of 12 to 13 predecessors is rather rare, but the importance of such information in obtaining fixed data for the age of plots and poetic formulas cannot be stressed enough. Many of these interviews with singers contained information about the age when the young people start learning from their teachers: this happens mostly between the ages of ten and twenty. Applied to Jilker's eleven remembered predecessors, it takes these epics back nearly two hundred years if we count the lifespan of each of the predecessors as 35 years. Such a reconstruction is feasible because the available biographies and life data of more than 200 singers show that most of them died at an advanced age, between 70 and 80. Many of the plots and motifs are undoubtedly much older, but the above calculations at least lead to one fixed point.

We find some support for these calculations in the vertical and horizontal oral transmission of narrative plots and poetic formulas in some of the epics of such recent East Mongolian singers as Čoyijigawa (born 1933) and the famous singer and poet Paǰai (1902-62) (see further Kara 1970). Paǰai was one of four pupils of the rhapsode Čoyibeng (1858-1928),



(Sampilnorbu and Wang hsin 1990)

while Čoyijigawa is the personal pupil of Erkim, a pupil of Čoyibeng in the second generation. Čoyibeng himself was the pupil of a certain Danzannima (1836-89), a lineage that makes the present-day Čoyijigawa via Erkim a third generation (cf. the above table), thus explaining the similarities of expression found with Pajai as well as with Čoyijigawa. Fully 34 singers in the three generations after Čoyibeng referred to him as one of their sources and exemplars.

All of these correspondences illustrate the transportation of oral formulas over a certain span of time, testifying to a continued orality. This is the situation for the majority of Mongolian epics. We have, however, also to admit the existence of some manuscripts of parts of the West Mongolian *Janggar* epic, as well as of "Qan qaranggui" (Burdukova 1966; Heissig 1991b), from which some rhapsodes learned their texts in the past century. Considering the state of literacy of the Mongolian population until the late nineteenth century, as well as the great number of illiterate Mongolian singers who came mostly from uneducated pastoral families, the influence of written texts on the transmission of Mongolian epics seems to be rather small. It is therefore not feasible to assume for the Mongolian heroic epics an intermediate written popularization of formerly oral texts, such as has been documented for English ballads since the sixteenth century via printed and cheaply sold broadsheets, which finally enabled wider oral performance of the ballads (Finnegan 1977).

All Mongolian epics have in common the use of alliterating rhymes, with the meaning of the first four-line segment being repeated in a second four-line segment of varying alliteration. Further proof of the age-old dominance of alliterative rhyming within the corpus of the Mongolian epic can be seen in the recurrent citation of rhymed parts from the epic within the prose of the Mongolian heroic fairytales, which repeat the plots and the names of heroes in the epic in prosimetrical form. Since we already find prosimetrical narrations, the alternating use of prose and rhymed poetry, in the first part of the *Secret History of the Mongols* in the thirteenth century, we must assume that the Mongols had some familiarity with this form at that early period. With Chinese storytellers the use of the prosimetrum was in fact known much earlier. Rhymed poetry occurs among the Mongols in all forms of ritual and official expression like shaman songs, incantations and prayers, laudations, and formal addresses as well as didactical sayings. Rhymed laudations are paralleled as early as in the cenotaphs of the Central Asiatic Turkic rulers. The epic, stemming from such occasions, was bound to adopt that form of expression.

Present-day research in Mongolian epics has to consider six generic variations. Two of them—apparently the oldest (A and B below)—are induced by what V. Propp (1975) termed "situations of want."

A) *The courting epic*: the hero on his way to the bride has to show his prowess in various initiation-like tests culminating in the fight with a many-headed monster, the Mangus. The Mangus is a symbol for all adverse forces.

B) *The epic of recovery of lost possessions*: the hero has to fight to regain his people, wife, and chattels, all of which monsters have stolen during his absence, and to subdue the monsters.

C) *Mythicized epic*: the descent of a hero of supernatural origin and his fight for peace and order on earth. The prototype is Geser Khan.

D) *The power-delegating epic*: heroes surrounding the ruler in an Arthurian-like circle are delegated by the ruler to fight threatening enemies and aggressors. The prototype is the Janggar cycle.

E) *Composite ritualized epic*: a combination of heroic and religious motifs, sung to ward off the monster as an impersonation of threatening war, plagues, and natural catastrophes. The prototype is *Mangus-i darugsan üliger* (*Stories of the suppression of the monster*; see Nima 1992; Heissig 1992a).

F) *The book-based epic* (*Bensen üliger*): Mongolian transformations of subjects and motifs from Chinese heroic novels into a new form of minstrel songs combining prose and rhymed poetry. They are dominant and still very much alive in East Mongolia. Research has begun just recently after B. Rinčen (1961) and D. Cerensodnom (1967) proved their existence. More than 150 professional and amateur singers in the East Mongolian provinces of China still transmit these book-epics in an individually varying form.

Translations of Mongolian epics in categories A to E already exist in English, French, German, and Russian, but not enough to secure a comprehensive picture of the Mongolian epic. Additional translations with the necessary annotations as well as more popular editions should be one of the next topics for future research. In selecting texts for translation, the existence of a number of varying recordingsmust be taken into account. In the archive of folklore texts at the Mongol Academy of Sciences in Ulan Bator, R. Narantuya (1988) counted 273 different versions of 72 epics. Some small epics in this collection like Buǰin dawa qan or Gunan ulaan baatar have only four variants, while more popular texts like Again ulaan baatar feature 28 variants. The Janggar versions recorded in North Mongolia alone amount to 12 textual variants. Scholars will have to find a way of making all variants available for research; composite editions pasting together all the beautiful passages from various versions should not be condoned. Proper edition leads to comparative work, implicating an analysis of the structure of the epic and its narrative motifs.

In analyzing Mongolian epic one has to be aware that it is the literary documentation of a highly mobile society, this mobility being due to centuries of warfare, nomadic and seminomadic pastoral farming of livestock, and intensive caravan trade. The latter had a particularly strong influence on the transport not only of goods but also of ideas and narrative motifs. Most of the caravans employed one helper who was able to tell tales and epics during the evenings. These facts bring the Mongolian epic within the scope of Unesco's Silk Roads Project.

The transformation of traditional formulaic phraseology as well as the individual expressions of the singers has not yet been studied enough. Comparative analysis of various versions of one epic by different singers, juxtaposing the performance texts vertically line after line, will bring to light the creative variability and the stability of oral tradition.

There exists, as far as I know, no catalogue of Mongolian narrative motifs. Only a beginning has been attempted in analyzing the motifs of 54 epics from Khalkha, West Mongolia, and East Mongolia. This initiative has already brought out some territorial differences, following my initial proposal for a "structural motif typology" (1981). Two scholars from Inner Mongolia, Professors Bürinbeki and Buyankesig (1988), further investigated 51 epic texts from Barga, Qorcin, Ordos, Buyannoor, Kukunoor, and Sinkiang, using the proposed method. These tests showed the adaptability of the method to all epics of types A-E. For type F, the structural pattern of the Bensen *üliger* proved different because of its Chinese literary prototypes (Riftin 1987). Continued comparison of Mongol epics and Bensen *üliger* did, however, show a common structure for the meeting of heroes with the enemy, the forms of provocation, and the start of fighting (Riftin 1985).

These inaugural steps do not cover the great number of motifs in the Mongolian epic. The next necessary steps towards a catalogue of Mongol narrative motifs must include more monographs on single motifs: Mongolian and European scholars have already begun to work along that line by publishing very interesting material. Some of these studies promise to reveal the historical reality behind the symbolic codification of the motifs. Thus, the influences of old narrative themes have been studied (Yondon 1989). Various monographic papers by Inner Mongolian scholars on motifs of the Mongolian epic demand special notice. They deal with the initiatory formulae of the epic (Buyankesig and Badma 1986), its plot (Rinčindorǰi 1986), the early periods of the world (Bayar 1988), miraculous pregnancy (Aradinküü 1993) and birth of the hero (Meng-J̌in Boo 1992), home and palace (Buyankesig 1988), camp and settlement (Učiraltu 1989), features of the hero (Tegüsbayar 1992), calling the horse (J̌irɣal 1991), the horse image (Bürinbeki and Buyankesig 1992), magical transformations (Kürelša 1991), characteristics of the monster (Buyanbatu 1987/1988; Möngkeǰayaɣa 1988), the one-eyed monster (Kürelša 1991), death of the monster (Buyankesig 1989), and death and magical revival of the hero (Kürelša 1988).

More attention should also be paid to the biographies of the singers of tales and their teachers, because a better knowledge of this topic would help to discern influences and contamination from adjacent countries like Tibet and the Central Asiatic countries with Turkic populations. The influences of the Turkic epic are still not sufficiently realized (Reichl 1992). The

recent pilot study by Anatoly Kičikov (1992), identifying motifs from the Turkic epic in Calmuck versions of the Janggar epic, is just a beginning.

Research on structures and motifs in Mongolian epics has so far shown that certain motifs and heroic plots are not limited to Mongolian territory. They not only spill over into neighboring ethnic groups and their narrations, but are also paralleled in the epics and narrations of more distant nationalities of Eurasia and Northern Asia. Let us take three examples:

a) With a different title, the same topic is told not only by the Bargha-Mongols in Heilungchiang but also by the neighboring Evenki.

b) The battle with the bride, such a famous motif in Chinese and Mongolian chivalric tales, is also found in the epics of Turkic groups right up to Anatolia (Reichl 1992).

c) Not only the witchlike Kundry in the medieval European Parzival stories rides a bluish-grey mule; the same holds true of the Mongolian witchlike wives and daughters of the dangerous monster, the mule being depreciated for being a hybrid breed.

In not a few biographies of singers, wandering Buddhist monks appear in the role of transporting previously unknown literary plots, motifs, and myths from one territory to another.[3] I mention as an example of such a phenomenon the case of a wandering monk who happened to be the uncle of a singer. The monk traveled largely in West Mongolian territory in Sinkiang, the Kukunoor region, and Tibet. When he returned in 1941 to the home of his parents in East Mongolia, he taught his eleven-year-old nephew Janggar stories. The boy later became a singer who now performs the Janggar epic, formerly unknown in East Inner Mongolia. A few singers of Janggar in Sinkiang also claim to have learned their epics from traveling monks.

It seems to be clear that a territory like Mongolia, situated among all possible influences from all the Silk Roads, tracks, and extensions, must be a mine of motifs, myths, literary plots, and transformations. Under the present circumstances, however, there is not much time left to record the great volume of oral literature still to be found there, before the impact of modern technical civilization makes these basic memories obsolete. We

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[3] A laudable initiative in this respect is the edition of 250 biographies of singers born between 1836 and 1958 in East Inner Mongolia, published in Chinese (Sampilnorbu and Wang hsin 1990).

must discuss ways of preserving the remnants of oral tradition before it is too late.

The first urgent research task is therefore to establish intensive cooperation in creating a "Motif catalogue of the Mongolian epic." The first step towards this goal is to encourage monographic studies of single motifs. The second task, closely related to the catalogue, is to collect and record those epics still extant in Mongolia and in the Inner Mongolian districts of China. Although many of them are no longer transmitted by professional singers, but only remembered by a younger generation and repeated according to hearsay, the epics must not be allowed to fade out unrecorded. To secure this oral and semiliterary material for coming generations as well as to enable scholars to work on an international basis, the third task must be the creation of an archive of epic oral tradition under the guidance of an international body.

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G. J. Ramstedt as a Recorder of Khalkha Epics

Harry Halén

The ethnographer Grigorii Potanin (1835–1920) seems to be the first scholar who systematically collected Mongolian folklore, although only paraphrases in Russian, and he published this collection in 1881–83 and 1893. The Buriat teacher Matvei Khangalov (1858–1918) detected the epic tradition of his own people in 1890–1903 and Boris Vladimirtsov that of the West Mongolian Oirats in 1908 (publ. 1923, 1926). Tsyben Zhamtsarano's and Andrei Rudnev's lithographed edition of Khalkha texts (without translations) was published that same year.

In 1900, during his first journey to Mongolia, G. J. Ramstedt (1873–1950) noted down ten Khalkha epics and on his second trip, in 1909, six more. This collection was published posthumously in 1973 on the basis of his field notes (see Ramstedt 1973). This late year of publication notwithstanding, Ramstedt must be considered the real pioneer in the field of Khalkha epics and folklore because of his early and phonetically accurate field notes in the original language.

Ramstedt took down the epics by dictation. We must assume his field notes to be reasonably reliable, since there are hardly any signs indicating that the speed of the dictation may sometimes have overrun his ability to follow. For ascertaining the intended sense of an oral text, an immediate scrutiny together with the singer would reveal most of the blunders inevitably occurring during a single hearing, but, unfortunately, we do not know how frequently Ramstedt was able to conduct this kind of examination. It is hard to say whether the corrections in his field notes are due to such an examination with the singer or to his own later reasoning. Dictation was in any case necessary, as we know at least about one case when he had the opportunity to listen to a bard performing through the whole of the night a most wonderful and extensive epic about the *Shikshüütei Mergen*, but to his great annoyance the bard would not thereafter dictate it for any price.

After his expeditions Ramstedt began in 1913 to prepare his epics for publication. This work resulted in eight refined and linguistically more or

less normalized transcripts, four of which were followed by tentative translations or sketches in German. Being an active poet himself, Ramstedt did not see anything wrong in slightly emending and altering his texts, relying upon his superb command of spoken Mongolian. It is understandable that the poetic unevenness of the epics—usually performed by nonprofessional singers or just ordinary people—presented a temptation hard to resist for a man of such poetic and linguistic talent, one who was educated in the spirit of Elias Lönnrot, who artistically composed the epic *Kalevala* out of authentic materials. Ramstedt's concept of Mongol epics had developed on the basis of his increasing familiarity with their general contents and poetic form. Major changes in the plot were naturally excluded, but quite often he considered it desirable to insert words or verses or alternately to delete something.

A comparison between (1) Ramstedt's field notes of his epic No. 1, *Aguulan Khaan*, from August 1900 and his (2) unpublished final version of the same may sufficiently illustrate the main features of his manipulative technique.[1] The quotations are rendered in simplified transcription.[2]

I. Morphological adjustments involve a seemingly deliberate adding or dropping of possessive and reflexive-possessive endings, case markers, or the intensive verbal form in *-tshi-* (used against the rule even of transitive verbs), an interchange between the imperfect gerund in *-dzh(i), -tsh(i)* expressing an action performed simultaneously with the main action and the perfect gerund in *-aat (-eet, -oot, -ööt)* expressing an action completed before the main action starts, and between the imperfect preterite form in *-dzhi* (emphatically-*dzhää*) and the perfect preterite on *-wa (-we, -wo, -wö)*, *-w* (emphatically *-waa, -wää, -wee*), e.g. *xeledzhää*/*xelewee*:

(1) *aguuliing xaang,* (2) *aguul**a**ng xaang*

The name of this Khan is problematic; the field notes repeat several times an apparent genitive form *aguuliing* that Ramstedt has normalized to *aguulang* throughout. Other epics present name forms like *Agi(n) ulaan xaan* "The Artemisia-red Khan" (the stalk of Artemisia is really red, but the flowers are not) or *Aguu ulaan xaan* "The Gigantic Red Khan."

(1) *urit erte tsagt,* (2) *urit erte tsagt-**aa***

"once upon a time;" the lengthened vowel (or reflexive-possessive case ending) is added to match the closing verb (1) *baidzhää,* (2) *baedzh-**ää*** three verses later.

[1] Rudnev's edition of 1908 is very close to version 2 and is therefore omitted here.

[2] The abundantly occurring orthographical improvements striving towards normalization are mostly due to the unstable nature of Mongolian short vowels (allowing a variety of syllable structures) and to the sometimes positionally conditioned opposition between voiced and unvoiced consonants. These kinds of emendations are irrelevant from the point of view of content and therefore not discussed here.

(1) *xurdang xula morint*, (2) *xurdang xula morind**aa***
"to the/**his** swift tawny horse"
(1) *jiim-sn-tshi,* (2) *jiim-san-**dzhää***
"so it is said to have been;" the emended form of (2) is normative.
(1) *enggel-**tshi**-ügüee gor-uguee,* (2) *enggel-ügüii gor-uguee*
"it is of no avail to let it thus be undone"
(1-2) *sait **sanaa namaradzh** suudzh;* this verse cannot be understood if not read *sait **sanaan amaradzh** suudzh,* "he sat peacefully down in cheerful spirits"
(1) *baruung dzüüng öwdögenees,* (2) *baruung dzüüng öwdögönees**-in***
"from the/**his** right and left knee"
(1) *xurdang xula mori,* (2) *xurdang xula mori-**n***
"the/**his** swift tawny horse"
(1) *dzuurdl tatadzh,* (2) *dzuurdl-**in** tatadzh*
"pulled until it closed **itself** tightly"
(1) *albat irgen**iin** abdzhi,* (2) *albat irgeng abdzhi*
"he took **his** people of bondsmen"
(1) *xoroston alagdaat tab**tsh**idzh*, (2) *xorsdong alagdaat tawidzh*
"he **continued to slap**/slapped vexedly"
(1) *tüünii xaraat,* (2) *tüünii**g** xaraat*
"having seen that;" the pronoun has been changed from the indefinite case into accusative
(1) *arwang xuruun**ii** üdzüüreer,* (2) *arwang xuruun üdzüüreer*
"with his ten Fingertips;" the necessary genitive has been dropped
(1) *adaguusiing**xaa** deet,* (2) *adguusiing* (finally changed to *aduusiing*) *deet*
"as the leader of the/**his** animals"
(1) *albatiing**xaa** deet,* (2) *albatiing deet*
"the leader of the/**his** subjects"
(1) *aawaiing**xää** tölgönt üdzesng,* (2) *awaiing tölgönt üdzeseng*
"I have read in my **own** father's divination book"
(1) *ööriing biijint edelii **gedzh*** (2) *ööriing**xää** biijent edelii*
"I will use for **my** own benefit, **he said**"
(1) *ulaang luunii süüliing,* (2) *ulaang luu**giing** süül**ees***
"(the Usun Yandar) of/**from** the red dragon's tail;" this verse is put into the same pattern as the preceding two. The irregular genitive form *luunii* might be a mistake.

II. Words and expressions may be replaced by others with the same or different meaning, the replacement sometimes comprising a number of syllables better fitting the scansion:

(1) *tsugladzh weedzh,* (2) ***togladzh ween***
"were gathering together/**playing around**;" this replacement is repeated in three subsequent instances; the fourth then, in fact, reads *toglodzh weedzh.*
(1) *aexiingxaa exind,* (2) *aexiingxaa **türüütsheer***
"at the beginning of his fear"
(1) *xumas dörwöng tuureegaa*, (2) *xumas **saexang** tuuraeegaa*
"your four/**beautiful** horny hoofs"
(1) *urit shara xadagaa* (2) *urta **saexang** xadagaa*
"his long yellow/**beautiful** khadak"
(1) *gedzh jawanaa" gedzh* (2) *gedzh jawa**dzh-weena-p***

"'in order (to take) I am on the way,' he said"

(1) *gedzh xeleldzedzhee* (2) ***xojuulang*** *xeleldzedzh* ***weedzh***

"so they discussed / they **were** discussing **together**"

(1) *xaratee neg gujdii gedzh waeenuu?* (2) ***xortee*** *neg gujdii gedzh waenuu?*

"so that you can whip me savagely/**furiously**?"

(1) *amr saexng dzhargadzhää* (2) ***amtatee*** *saexang dzhargadzh-ee*

"(and) he lived peacefully/**sweet** and well in prosperity"

III. Through changing the word order and/or adding expletives a verse may be elaborated to fit the scansion better or to form subsequent patched-up verses:

(1) *xojor uxaagiing araar nutaktee,* (2) *xojor* ***saexang*** *uxaagiing* | ***xonggor*** *araar nutagtee*

"he had his homeland along the **lovely** northern slopes of two **beautiful** plateaus"

(1) *enggedzh enggedzh dzüüdellää* | *gedzh mörgödzh xelewee*

(2) *enggedzh enggedzh dzüüdellää gedzh* | ***gujdzh*** *mörgödzh xel**dzhää***

" 'I dreamt so-and-so,' she said bowing herself **solicitously**"

(1) *aduu xeledzh,* (2) *aduu* ***xaridzh*** *xeldzh*

"the herd of horses spoke **in return**"

(1) *dariuu mende saexang jawaat ireeräa,* (2) *mende saexang jawaat* | *dariuu* ***butsadzh*** *ireeräa*

"having set out well and luckily come soon **returning** back"

(1) *orodzh ireet,* (2) ***xaanaeet*** *orodzh iredzh*

"having entered / entering **the Khan's** (**palace**)"

(1) *baridzh neg sögdödzh,* (2) *baridzh* ***irdzh*** *neg sögdödzh*

"presenting (the khadak) he **came and** knelt down"

(1) *büdüüng xüneer sugduulaat mordodzhaa,* (2) *büdüüng xüneer sugduulaat* | *mordodzh* ***jawadzhää***

"letting robust men support himself under the arms he mounted the horse **and set out**"

(1) *boldzootee boro tologoee deer gardzhi,* (2) *boldzootee boro tolgoee**n*** *deere* | *gardzh* ***irewää***

"**having arrived** they climbed the hill of Boldzootee Boro;" note also the unnecessary possessive form *tolgoeen*

(1) *amitaniig xarasng*, (2) *amitaniig xara**dzh suudzh***

"he **sat** (**there**) and looked at the animals"

(1) *uridaasaa dalang xojor tobtshiig taelaat*
dalaee tshinee ***tsagaang*** *tsheedzhiig*
jaeeraat ögdzhi
xaexarasn-tshi-ügüee xüreet iredzh.
(2) *dalang xojar tobtshiig*
uridaasaa taelaat
dalaeeng tshineeng tsheedzhiig
jaraadxadzhi *ögdzhi*
xaexarsang-tshi uguee
*xüreet iredzh-**ää**.*

"Having opened the 72 buttons on his front
and exposing the ocean-wide white chest,
(the enemy) arrived without him noticing it."
— Later this description is repeated with almost identical wording:

(1) *dalang xojor tobtshi taeldzh*
dalaee tshinee tsagaang tsheedzhiig
jaeeraat ögdzhi.
(2) *dalang xojar tobtshi tael**aat***
dalaee tshineeng tsagaang tseedzhiig
***ja**raat ögdzh-**weedzh**.*

— The use of a genitive with the postposition *tshinee(ng)* ("of the size of") is preferable, but no consistency can be found here.

(1) *xed nutag-**tshin** xaana?* (2) *xet**iing** nutak xaana-**w**?*

"Where (is) your native land?" / "Where **is** the land **of** (your) origin?"

(1) *andolaee shara manggas bi waen,* (2) *andolaee shara manggas* | ***getshi** bi waen-**aa***

"I am **called** Andolae, the yellow ogre, **indeed**"

(1) ***manggas**: bi uridaar xarwaii* | *gedzh xeledzh.*
(2) *bi uridaar xarwaii* | *gedzh **manggas** xeldzh.*

"**The ogre** said: I'll shoot first!"

(1) *manggas öglöönii ulaang naranaar tshiglüüleet,*
(2) *manggas ulaang öglöönii* | ***mandaxa** narnaar tshiglüüleet,*

"the ogre bent the bow at the red **rising** sun of the morning"

(1) *tashaagiin daeruulaat täw tsoxidzh,*
tamgaiin daeruulaat dzuu tsoxidzh.
morin: xang xung boloot . . .
(2) *tashaagii-n daeruulaat*
*täb **gedzh** tsoxidzh,*
tamgaii-n daeruulaat
*dzuu **gedzh** tsoxidzh.*
xaang xüng boloot . . .

"He whipped (the horse) in passing on the flank with a slam! He whipped it in passing on the brand with a bang! The horse (said): Have you become a princely man (in order to) . . ."

(1) *daeraatxaxiing türüütsheer* | — — — — —
(2) *daeradxaxiing türüütsheer* | ***manggas gujdzh-weedzh***

"being (so) stricken **the ogre** first **begged**"

(1) *tsaashi jawaat xüreet otshidzh.* (2) *tsaashi jawaat* | *xüreet otshidzh**ää**.*

"he rode further and arrived there"

(1) *altang shireen**ii öndzegen** deer* | *aalits tshinee exener suudzh.*
(2) *altang shireen deere* | *aalitsan tsineeng* | *exener suudzh.*

"on the **corner of** a golden throne | there sat a woman the size of a spider"

(1) *enggedzh suud-uguee* | *xemeg dewsiidxedzhee.*
(2) *enggedzh suud-uguee **gedzh*** | ***xöleerää ösgildzh*** | *xemge dewsidxedzh-ää.*

"she should not sit this way! **he said** | (and) **trampled with his foot** | stamping it into pieces"

IV. Words that are felt to disturb the verse structure may be simply dropped:

(1) *xatang **bas** daxing dzüüdeledzh*, (2) *xatang daxing dzüüdeldzh*
"But the queen dreamt **once** again"
(1) *tendee neg üjmeldzedzh **waedzhee***, (2) *tende neg üjmeldzedzh*
"they **were** there swarming/swarmed there around;" (this verse is made to match its parallel that lacks the final verb)
(1) *xurdang xula mori xeledzh **waeedzh***, (2) *xurdang xula mori xeldzh*
"the swift bay horse **was** speaking/spoke"
(1) *guaa xara gedzegiig* | *gurw iileet buudzh **iredzh***. (2) *guaa xara gedzegiig* | *gurw ìleet buudzh.*
"stroking the beautiful black queue thrice he **came and** stepped down"
(1) *iredzh jawan **gedzh***, (2) *iredzh jawan**aa***
"(he) is approaching, **they say**"
(1) *xumas dörwöng tuuraeegaaraa* | *xöröstö **altang** delxiig shüürüüleet*,
(2) *xumas dörwöng tuuraeegaaraa* | *xöröst delxiig shüürüüleet*,
"with its four horny hoofs | having touched the crusty **golden** ground"
(1) *galdzuu ulaang tamixiig* | *gantsxng xojor sewsedzh **suudzheeää***,
(2) *galdzuu ulaang tamixiig* | *gantsaxang xojar sewsedzhää*,
"**he sat** (**there**) puffing out just once or twice of the intoxicating red tobacco"
(1) ***dajaar** dzüün xoet tewiig*, (2) *dzüüng xoet tewiig*
"(born to rule over) the **entire** northeastern continent"
(1) ***manggas** buruu xaradzh ujlawää*, (2) *buruu xaradzh ujladzh-zh-waa (> ujlawaa)*
"**the ogre** cried by looking to the left"
(1) *araee-tshi güjdzheldee-ügüee **jawadzh***, (2) *araee-tshin güjtseldee-ügüee*
"he **galloped**, closing on (the ogre) from behind"

V. Sometimes faultless and elucidating verses are dropped, perhaps mistakenly:

(1) *xaang gardzh xaradzhi* | ***aguulang xaanii xotiig***,
(2) *xaang gardzh xaradzhää.* | — — — — —
"the Khan went out and looked **at the city of the Aguulan Khan**"
(1) ***buruu dzüw xojoriig-tshin*** | *buursh-ügüee bujanii-tshin*,
(2) — — — — — — | *buursh-uguee bujanii-tshin*
"**the wicked as well as the correct in you**, | your indestructable virtue"

A scrutiny of the 391 verses in Ramstedt's final transcript of his epic No. 1, *Aguulan Khaan*, reveals altogether 107 verses (27 per cent) with more or

less significant adjustments. His epic No. 8, *Khüren Mergen Baatar*, of 623 verses shows in its final state 242 manipulated lines (39 per cent).

Ramstedt's Finnish translation of the *Aguulan Khaan* was published in his travelogue (1944). That version uses alliteration peculiar to traditional Finnish folklore, Kalevala metrics (trochaic tetrameter), and occasionally even rhymes—all of these features reflecting the artistic qualities of the Mongol original. Although meant for the general public, his translation must be judged a masterpiece. Unfortunately, he never had time to complete his scientific Khalkha transcriptions or translations into German. Instead, he continued during his spare time in the years 1900–19 to work on a Finnish translation of the *Odyssey*. During his university years he had made skillful translations of Sanskrit literature as well, including Shriharshadeva's play *Ratnavali* (completed in 1898) and some epic texts.

The problems are always numerous when preparing old field notes for a posthumous edition. Out of the total bulk of Khalkha folklore collected by Ramstedt in 1898–1912, comprising 16 epics, 6 heroic tales partly or wholly in prose, 59 tales, 61 songs, and 8 *jöröóls* and *mörgöls* in addition to some riddles and proverbs, he himself had time only to complete a small part. As we have seen, examples of some of the epics demonstrate clearly his normalizing and creative input. How, then, could this work be continued by another? To a certain extent there is no difficulty in normalizing the language to correspond to standard dictionaries, but in any text one always comes across obscure words and expressions that cannot possibly be identified and normalized. Ramstedt proceeded according to the best of his ability or left such doubtful words or verses out. The important question is: if one starts to normalize, can the procedure be carried out with necessary consistency and reliability? I doubt that one can always succeed. An edited epic transcript, outwardly appealing through its elegant language and elastic form, may actually be a disguised skeleton covering sores and broken bones.

The idea seems tempting that a text should be edited with the greatest consistency in order to serve as a reliable source. But there is a great difference between attempting to represent an originally perfect text and an originally imperfect text. If scholars feel confident that they are codifying a correct text, then scansion, grammar, and syntax must be (or originally have been) regular. Where there is a doubtful form, word, or verse, or where the auditory impression can be interpreted in several ways, the authentic one is not necessarily the one that would permit correct scansion or meaning. Though they might not feel satisfied with their faithfully recorded version, having in mind future readers, they must help themselves by saving their text. In this task they are not completely at the mercy of

field notes, since comparative research certainly reveals common idioms, consistent patterns, and epic parallels that aid in restoring uncertain passages. When this approach fails, creative imagination combined with poetic talent is allowed to produce something that is put to serve the same purpose as authentic verses. Consciously or unconsciously, scholars may think that it is of no avail to publish a text not fully clear, beautiful, and enjoyable.

However, I thought such a procedure desirable and in fact the only way to reproduce Ramstedt's epics entirely on the basis of his own field notes without any attempt of normalization or emendation—his or mine. The texts are in the form of neutral and reasonably reliable raw material, that is, the authentic text in a simplified but by no means normalized transcription plus tentative translations. This decision was made consciously and at the cost of consistency and clarity. Professor Nicholas Poppe, whom I consulted many times on difficult matters, did not approve of this policy. He preferred a normalized language. Since we were unable to solve the meaning of certain unclear words and passages, his approach would, however, not have led to a transcription without problems. Only Ramstedt himself would have been able to continue as he began. A good and polished text certainly has its merits from the point of view of the reader, but it conceals the linguistic, metrical, and semantic problems inherent in practically any epic text. Subsequently, I naturally have detected erroneous or ill-formulated translations of my own, but now at least we have easy access to this valuable pioneering material, enabling us through comparative research to follow the evolution of the still living epic tradition of the Khalkha Mongols and to approach a fuller understanding of different kinds of performing skills.

Satisfaction in the reading experience is not solely dependent on the absolute correctness of the text. Here it might be appropriate to quote a personal letter from a well-known scholar in the field: "I have skimmed through some of the epics, the aesthetic side of which, as always, disappoints me, whatever the value for linguistics and general social history. To my mind (brought up on the *Nibelungenlied* and Homer and of course the splendid *Kalevala*), hyperbole of the sort that prevails in Mongol hero-tales and those of southwest Asia, virtually destroys human interest."[3] This opinion cannot easily be put aside, but the Mongols themselves, for

[3] The author prefers to maintain the anonymity of this scholar.

whom the epics are meant, certainly enjoy them as much as present-day youths enjoy the unbelievable deeds of action-film heroes.

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Kudaman: An Oral Epic in the Palawan Highlands

Nicole Revel

I. Ethnographic approach

The Palawan people live in the southern half of the island of the same name between the Sulu Sea and the South China Sea. For the past 23 years, we have been working with them, doing anthropological and linguistic research. In spite of the presence of an ancient syllabic script, still in use today in certain valleys, the context is one of oral tradition, for the script has never been used to fix oral literature or knowledge. It is used to convey messages.

We have focused our attention on language and all the referents in the world, the collection and observation of natural objects and phenomena, and the taxonomies that the highlanders have elaborated in order to master, through their language, the complexity of the world that surrounds them and in which they have to survive. This has been done *in situ* through the study of nomenclatures, all the spontaneous acts of speech, all the forms of stylized discourse, the genres of their oral literature and customary law, their techniques, and savoir-faire. Hence the book *Flowers of Speech, Palawan Natural History* (Revel 1990-92) and its general title, which designates, of course, the flowers in nature but also the figures of speech, according to their rhetorics.

First Encounter

By the end of the first week of May 1970 in Tabud, we were invited to two weddings in the hamlet of Nägdaridiq. As soon as the sun had disappeared behind the mountain, the guests of Tabud started to walk upstream. They followed the waterfall, the Mäkägwaq River. What was for them a little stroll full of joy was for me the discovery of the weakness and awkwardness of my body. After walking for an hour, we deviated from the right bank of the forest to climb the embankment. Then we heard

for the first time the music of gongs whose dull amplitude seemed to emanate from the canopy of the trees and blossomed in a pink sky revealed by a vast sloping swidden.

The weddings—that is to say the jural discussion, *bisara*, and the brief ritual, *bulun*, which seals the social contract—would be celebrated the following day. On this sleepless eve, the guests, all relatives, were present, gathered under the roof of the large meeting house, *kälang bänwa*, in order to enjoy the feast, without a jar of rice wine or food, as is proper for a marriage jural discussion.

The men took turns playing gongs, *basal*, passing from one instrument to another, inviting each other by offering the mallets; the women, shaking little brooms of folded leaves, *silad*, were dancing. Beating the bamboo floor with their feet, they made a new percussion that had to fit perfectly with the gong orchestra and more particularly with the *sanang*, the small ringed gong with boss. If not, the whole orchestra would stop. And suddenly, the gongs became silent and from a dark corner of the house rose the chant of a man who was lying down, his left arm folded over his eyes, his right hand maintaining a fine piece of cloth over his chest. The man was Usuy, the shaman and most famous bard of that valley. He was chanting *Kudaman*, the Datuq of the Plain, whose abode is fringed by the rays of the sun. And thus for the first time we attempted to tape this chant. It lasted until sunrise; one does not sing during daylight. Shortly after, we were supposed to go back to Manila, but with the agreement that Usuy would chant for us in November.

With the semester break in October, we were back near our host, Jose Rilla, and settled in a small bamboo hut almost entirely bounded with rattan, located in the coconut grove not too far from a creek. Late in the evening of November 5th, I was surprised to hear Galnuq's voice; Mälä was accompanying him. They were coming from upstream with Usuy. I thought I should prepare some food to eat, but I was told that Usuy wanted to chant *Kudaman* for an acoustic recording and that he was going to start immediately and continue until dawn. Everyone converged on our small house, including mothers with their babies at their breasts. It was midnight when Usuy started, with an admirable vocal technique that molded his chant in a constant flow, with a serene tonality that was extremely beautiful and peaceful; he only stopped after sunrise, at six-thirty in the morning.

Since then, I have often heard Usuy chanting. In Bungsud, he used to come under the roof of the *kälang bänwa* of Lambung to let us hear and tape the integrality of the six nights of *Kudaman* and the two nights of *Ajäk*, but I never happened to hear him sing out of a spontaneous impulse of the daily events of his life or of the major events of his hamlet, for I

never lived near him. However, I did listen to and tape many other epics in different cultural areas and during different ceremonial contexts, as the list below shows. These epics were chanted on the occasion of a successful wild boar hunt as a counter-gift to the Master of Prey, to welcome a guest, or for entertainment.

Epics as frescoes of Palawan life and world view

The long chanted stories of the highlanders are frescoes of mores, tableaus of nature and of institutional life, testimonies to a cosmogony, an ethic, a lifestyle, a world view proper to the highland culture. The cultural content of the numerous epics that over the years I have heard, taped, transcribed, translated, and summarized allows me to distinguish several recurrent topics:

> nature and landscapes (sea, rivers, streams, mountains, forest, shore, islands, trees and vegetation, animal lore)
>
> playful activities: hunting with the blowgun, buying clothes, traveling far away, rice wine drinking ceremony, and gong music
>
> values and social practices: the rules of marriage, the custom of respect and obedience to the in-laws, the rule of residence, the custom of sharing food, of helping each other in collective tasks
>
> invisible beings (Good Doers/Evil Doers), the relationship to the superior deities and to all the beings
>
> the beautiful in physical features and shapes, ornaments, soundscape and music

But there is one dimension that I would particularly like to touch upon: the relationships that unite the epics to shamanism and to mythology. In the highlands, we observed that all the shamans are also bards but that the reverse is not true; not all bards are shamans. In addition, there is a close, performance-based linkage between the act of chanting the epics, *tultul*, and that of chanting the shamanic voyage, *ulit*.

The shaman sings the difficult experience of the voyage of his double, *kuruduwa*, by a specific chant, the *lumbaga*, whose melody is in all points assimilable to any epic melodic line. And it is precisely the ordeals that the soul of the shaman overcomes in the course of his voyage—the encounters with the Evil Doers, *Länggam* or *Säqitan*, the discussions, the bargaining engaged in with the Invisible Beings—that constitute the shamanic chant. Moreover, to sing *tultul* is to be possessed by a *Täw Tultultulän*. These "Epic Heroes" are a type of humanity who live in the

median space and intercede between people on this earth and Ämpuq. They are a Benevolent Humanity protecting the "Real Men." The act of chanting thus doubles with the embodiment, in the very person of the bard, of these heroic and semi-divine Beings. One can interpret this relationship as an act of possession in which the bard becomes a medium.

Epics are always chanted at night, ending at daybreak; it is forbidden to sing when the sun shines and during the day. This prohibition links the epic to the night and a sacred world. Moreover, one would never chant for amusement in a light joking manner.

The melodic similarity between *tultul* and *lumbaga*, their nocturnal performance (marked with gravity), and the conjunction in one person of the two aptitudes and the two social functions are among the features associating the epic and the shamanic chant. Another parallel feature would be the companion of the shaman, the *gimbar*, and the accompanist of the bard, the *bäbaräk*-player. In a seance of *ulit*, for instance, this acolyte follows the double of the shaman up to the jar of the Master of Rice, Ämpuq ät Paräj, and through his own body-trance manifests the state of drunkenness of the shaman's very soul. In the same manner, the accompanist with a small ring flute follows the voice of the bard. According to my observation, the companion of the shaman's double or of the bard's voice was always one and the same person—Kälulut, the acolyte of Usuy—and this association does not seem to be mere chance.

Finally, the experience of acquiring clairvoyant power and creative power are closely related, as we shall see. In addition, in the Bagobo language, in Mindanao, the term *ulit* actually means "epic." This permutation of meaning of the same lexical item between the two languages, Bagobo and Palawan, is certainly very revealing of the conceptual ambivalence of *ulit* and *tultul*, which is conveyed by the very person of the bard-shaman and his practice in this society of the Sulu Sea cultural area, as has also been observed in other Southern Philippine societies.

In the highlands, where the art of the epic reaches its peak and where mythological memories are abundant, it seems at first that the mythical elements referred to in these long chanted narratives are rather few. The content of the *tultul* is in no way the content of myth, and these narratives are far from etiological accounts. However, mythical references are not totally absent: the *tultul* refers to natural celestial, atmospheric, cosmogonic, visible, and invisible events and manifests these events in an indirect or rather allusive manner.

An analysis of *Kudaman* will illustrate our point. All the *Linamin* are tutelary deities of different elements in nature: trees, birds, natural phenomena, and cosmogonic phenomena. Now, in *Kudaman* one witnesses the invasion—classic and universal in the epics—of the Ilanän. They come in multitudes from the "Threshold of the World" and their attire is of stone. This invasion comprises a double homology, between the Ilanän and the aggressive beasts created by the Being who sustains the world on the one hand, and between the Ilanän dressed in stone on the other. One can proceed to a double reading of this excerpt of the epic: on the mythical plane, the Ilanän are the reiteration, the reincarnation, of the destructive powers who in the earliest times annihilated the Humanity of the Real Men. From the historical point of view, the Ilanän are pirates, the traditional enemies of the Palawan, and they come from the end of the world, namely the Sulu Sea and the China Sea (the "Confines of the World"), from Mindanao and the north of Borneo to raid these populations.

The lesson to be drawn from these epics is twofold. The presence of the forces of harmony and chaos, their clash, and the final restoration of a peaceful, harmonious social life are a constant feature of the epics that I have heard. One can perceive from a study of their epics a mythological as well as a historical authenticity specific to the culture of the Palawan, a double identity would explain the emotional resonance of these long chanted narratives.

Singers of tales: a chain of transmission

Usuy's memory

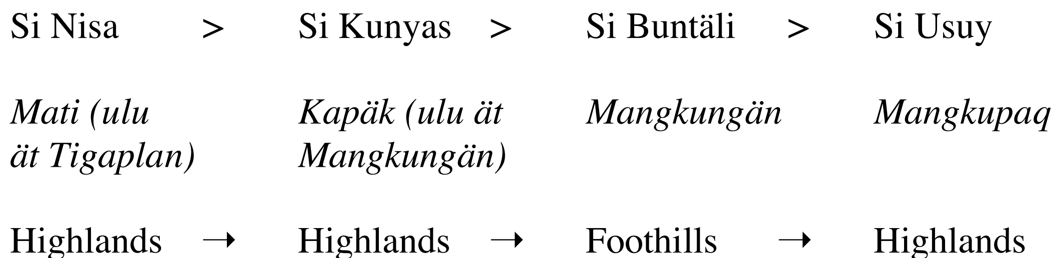
When we met, Usuy had learned this epic from Buntäli, his nephew (cf. kinship chart below), who had come to spend some time at Mängkupaq about fifteen years before. Buntäli chanted for seven consecutive nights in his uncle's house. After his departure, Usuy practiced by himself, repeating the melodic motifs of each character. He sang during the night but also while working alone in his field, "repeating" these melodies and narrations. Then one day he was confident enough that he had mastered the different musical motifs and the story he had memorized to go and sing at Carmen and Salatan's house. She was a very dear friend, and Salatan was then the *pänglimaq* of Bungsud. Carmen shed tears of great emotion upon listening to Usuy's voice and to the story.

Buntäli's memory

According to Buntäli, the story of *Kudaman* was chanted by a man whom Inya (or Kunyas) did not herself meet but learned that he was called "Kagayan" (from Cagayan de Sulu Island). In fact, this generic term applies to all the Jama Mapun people of the area. She herself had married a Kagayan and specified to Buntäli: "This *tultul* must not be sung for fun. If you have engraved it in your memory, sing it well up through the end. If not, your stomach will become swollen, *mäbusung ka* (lack of respect)."

But Buntäli only knew two musical motifs and revealed to me in 1990 that Usuy expanded them to as many motifs as characters. This discrepancy reveals that creativity is part of the chanting of epics; as Albert Lord observed (1960:ch. 5), the same epic differs in the repertoire of different singers and also in various performances by the same singer. The singer of tales is a poet who composes in the course of oral performance.

One is then able to trace the lineage of an epic by mapping the chain of bards as follows, and in parallel fashion to establish the chain of regions in which an epic has been sung (> = transmitted to):



Kunyas' memory

Contrary to my first statement (cf. Revel 1983, Maranan and Revel-Macdonald 1991) and as a result of meeting Kunyas recently, I can now say that this epic apparently moved from the northeast toward the southwest, being sung among Palawan highlanders. It was not learned from the Pullun Mapun people on the coast, but from Kunyas' maternal aunt, Nisa, who had learned it from her own mother, Bungisa, and who came to stay in Kapäk for two months while Kunyas was still a young girl. After this period, she was married to a Kagayan and was taken to Uring-Uring, where she spent two and a half years of hardship as a young woman. Then she was able to return to her mother's household in the highlands; in fact, she experienced the life of an *uripän*.

According to Buntäli, this epic chant as well as magic (*batyaq*) and hunting charms (*pangtiq*) are part of the whole set of charms (*käpandayan*) that are taught by a Good-Doer through a dream (*taginäp*). He descends, lightly, onto a human and inspires him; listening is not sufficient in order to

memorize—one must be the recipient and receptacle of a gift (*bingäy*). While daytime listening is incompatible with memorization, dream listening cannot be forgotten. It is the role of memory in a dream and hence its multiplied capacity that is emphasized. Without the presence of a Good Doer close to the bard during this state of sleeping consciousness, the memorization of the chanted narrative would not be possible.

According to Usuy, this *tultul* is a *paläpläp*, a teaching to the "Real Men" by a *Taw ät Gäbäq*, a Being of the Forest, or *Taw Mänunga*, a Good Doer present on this earth from the time of its origin but now, according to the myth, no longer visible. Only shamans gifted with clairvoyance have the capacity to meet these beings during the shamanic voyage assimilated with a very peculiar sleep.

These beings have two opposite tendencies: one maleficent, the other beneficent, and the Greek notion of *daimôn* might more accurately express this ambivalence. In Palawan, *Säqitan* or *Länggam* are either *Taw Märaqat*, dangerous Evil Doers, the "Maleficents," or *Taw Mänunga,* generous, protective givers of knowledge, or Good Doers. Thus the *Taw Märaqat* bring disease, suffering, and death, while the *Taw Mänunga* dispense knowledge, transmit the art of healing with medicinal plants and with all kinds of "charms," *pantiq*, for hunting, fishing, and food-gathering, for the art of speaking, and love magic; for fighting, war, and child delivery; as well as the *tultul*, the epic songs, ultimate gifts to the Real Men by the Benevolent half of the Invisibles haunting this earth. And the favorite moment for the transmission of this extremely positive gift to mankind is precisely the *paläpläp*.

Thus for Usuy, the matter was very clear. The *tultul* was not originally borrowed from others, nor was it invented totally by a bard; it was rather "inspired" by a *Taw ät Gäbaq*, a Good Doer of the Forest. Here we deal with a principle explaining the act of creation that is based on a representation of the close link uniting the two types of humanity originally visible on earth, one of which disappeared from sight but remains eternally present and active, as much in the good as in the evil that it brings to the other.

The creativity in a *tultul* is understood as distinct from the composition of poetry, for example. In the latter case, man's intelligence, *dängdäng*, or brain, *utäk*, is at work to compose poems ruled by fixed rhymes, a heptasyllabic meter, and a stanza made up of two distichs. Likewise, the art of the *tultul* is based not on an oneiric experience, but on a gift bestowed on the clear consciousness of the bard by a Good Doer of the forest for the happiness of Real Men.

Usuy

Usuy's father Puyang was a singer of tales in the Wäyg area, south of Tarusan. When he married Uding, he had to come and live with his in-laws, following the rule of *pinämikitan*, the rule of "adhering to your affine." Puyang chanted *Käbätangan*, which he had learned from his father, the hero bearing the name of the highest peak of Palawan, known to the Christians as Mont Mantalingayan. But he also sang *Taw ät Binalabag*, where one can see the Ilanän bringing violence and war and finally being annihilated by the hero.

As an adolescent, Usuy already knew and had memorized the repertoire of his father when he married Saliq and came to settle as a young son-in-law in Inubangan, close to Säramirig along the Mäkagwaq River, under the authority of Pänglimaq Bwat. Soon after, Usuy went to live in Mangkupaq, under the authority of Pangir, his elder brother-in-law. This hamlet is halfway between Bungsud and Kangrian. There he loved to hunt, laying traps for the wild pigs and chewing betel nuts. He was even known for the poor care of his field and used to lie down on a rainy day and sing for hours. In the surrounding hamlets lived other bards and shamans: Iliq in Tabingalan, Märadyaq Kälaq in Kangrian, as well as Lamang, a shaman who came from the beautiful Ilug valley on the South China Sea side of the island. He, more than anyone else, was the master of Usuy and transmitted to him a vocal technique and an aesthetics, namely a long breathing capacity and a voice finely ornamented with melisma. Lamang had in his repertoire *Linbuhanän*, *Bänbabang*, and *Datuq ät Palawan*, and transmitted them to Usuy, who also learned *Ajäk* (two nights) from Iliq his brother-in-law, *Puljäg* from Lamang and Märadyaq Kälaq his father-in-law by his second wife, *Käkulasyan* from Misläm his nephew from the Tämlang River region, *Sägäbäng* from Lumpat who lived in Kämantiyan and was his nephew, and *Kudaman* from Buntäliq, his junior (the son of his brother-in-law Pangir), who chanted for seven nights, as did Usuy for the recording in 1970-72.

Even with this most splendid repertoire, Usuy was not an accessible person, remaining very reclusive and secret. He had his passions and dedications and completely neglected everything that lay outside his interests. When he chanted an epic or the shamanic voyage, he was very calm, serious, and lost in concentration. He gave himself to these two major and demanding performances completely and with rare perseverance. His personality was reflected in his voice, his choice of vocal technique, and the aesthetic code of his narrative.

At a general level, it is interesting to note that the transmission of epics is linked to the residential rule of marriage, namely the necessity for males to leave their natal village and go to the place of their wives. This mobility of men has an influence on the mobility of long chanted narratives.

Buntäli

A man of more than fifty years of age in 1992, Buntäli is a highlander from the left bank of the Tämlang River who is settled now in the foothills on the right side of the Ämas River, near Brooke's Point. When he was a child, his family moved from Käsinuntingan to Mangkupaq, to Mäkuringsing, then back to Mangkupaq. As an adolescent following the rule of *pinämikitan*, he moved to Kapäk, the hamlet of his first wife, in the foothills on the right bank of the Mäkagwaq valley. This first marriage lasted six years: Buntäli was only fifteen and Käräng was a very young maiden of eleven who waited for three years before she came close to her husband. The marriage had been wished for by Pänglimaq Bwat, who interpreted the silence of the girl as acceptance. As Buntäli had no relationship with her, he spent the nights listening to *tultul* chanted by Kunyas, a Palawan woman bard who married a Kagayan. He tried to memorize these long chanted stories, and she taught him *Kudaman* and *Lambangan*. As a child, he listened to many long stories, *sudsugid*, narrated by his father night after night. He had listened to many epic chants as well, *tultul*, performed by Märadyaq Kälaq, his grandfather, who used to sing the whole night long.

As a young man, he experienced the ordeal of losing his wife: another man took her away from him. This adultery brought about a deep crisis, and he ran away to the forest and to other lands. In the forest of almaciga trees, he listened to a man of Däräpitan, Maryam by name, for when men went to collect resin, they used to sleep there in groups for several nights, and this was a time and a place of marvelous sounds, from the inspiring soundscape to the poetic experience of chanting an epic. Maryam sang the story of *Datuq ät Pänarängsangan* for seven nights, and Buntäli memorized the melodic lines and the words.

Time passed. Buntäli, as a simple man, cultivated his field, watched the ripening of *ärisuräng* fruits, and went hunting for wild boars in the forest. At that time, he used to sleep in the forest, and in his dreams he saw a woman who, though not beautiful to look at, invited him to follow her, to listen and imitate her. And Buntäli memorized the words, the events, the

wars, the distinctive voices of each character: Ilanän, Bungkanak, Ampuq ät Däräs, Linamin ät Limukän, Sawkan Siklat, and the hero himself, Sunset Datuq. As noted earlier, this experience is called *päläpläp*, teaching through a dream, or rather a state between waking and sleeping, somewhat parallel to the state of the shaman making his voyage, where a creative inspiration, a gift from a Benevolent, a Taw Mänunga of the forest, falls like dew.

By that time, Usuy had chanted *Kudaman* in Mangkupa, where he was staying after having married Säli, the youngest sister of Buntäli's father. Usuy learned from Buntäli who had learned from Kunyas. The melodic line was single at the beginning, then developed into three with Buntäli, who contrasted the voices of Tuwan Putliq and of Linamin ät Utaraq. It was expanded to so many distinctive musical motifs by Usuy, exemplifying the creative process at work.

After some time, Buntäli thought about marrying again, and he chanted in Mangkungän, the place of Sita, the second woman he wanted to marry. He sang only after his proposal was accepted. His older brother decided to help him to put together the bride-price. Buntäli went upstream to the source of the Tigaplan River to gather more almaciga resin, and it was only after his return from the forest that his second wife Sita asked him to chant. Then they went to Käkadjasan on the coast near Uring-Uring to gather clams on the beach at low tide, and he chanted again, not *Kudaman*, but the *tultul* he had heard when he first went to the forest. According to him, the root of his interest in and mastery of epic singing is the sorrow he experienced as a young man.

II. Ethnolinguistic and ethnomusicological approach

The Palawan language is closely related to the Visayan languages of the Philippines and is part of the extensive Austronesian family. Characterized by a simple phonology—a 4-vowel system /i/u/a/ä/ and 16 consonants /p/b/t/d/k/g/h/q/m/n/ng/s/l/r/w/y/—it has no relevant stress. As might be expected, the morphology is more complex, but still simpler than in Tagalog. It also has a case grammar with focus.

Aural capture and transcription of the epic chant

Kudaman was recorded in the course of 1971-72 over seven non-consecutive nights. Usuy would come to Bungsud at twilight whenever

he felt inspired, and also perhaps when he wished to receive gifts (clothes, a little money, and sardines, a favorite). He also came to please me and to be faithful to his obligation to sing up through the end of the story, which his mentor had cautioned him not to chant only for fun. He always maintained a grave and serene attitude, somewhat distant and concentrated, whenever he set himself to chant the epics of his repertoire for an entire night. He had the same attitude when he performed *Ajäk* during two consecutive nights.

Only later did I discover that this recording, already transcribed and partially translated, was distinct from what Usuy had chanted during the eve of the wedding at Nägdaridiq; that there was also a Chant I and a rather long narrated prelude, as well as all the nights corresponding to Chants III, IV, V, and VI, of which I completed the synopsis with Mäsinu on the very day following their respective performances and recordings. Since then, I have transcribed and translated the narrated prelude (fifty pages), of which a summary is presented in the Appendix, and Chant I. The translation has not yet been published, but a detailed synopsis of it is given in the Appendix. After having spent an entire agricultural cycle, I left the highlands of Palawan at the end of October 1972; by then, the translation of Chant II was completed. I checked the transcription of it in 1976 during a three-month stay, and in October 1978 I was able to provide a mimeographed edition. The whole translation, as well as that of two other epics (*Mämimimbin* and *Durus Mata*), was then revised. This year these three epics have been stored in a computer in order to be ready for another type of text analysis. In addition, since 1990, *Käswakan* has been transcribed and translated. Since 1988, four video films have been made while Buntäli was chanting *Datuq ät Pänarangsangan* (6-7 nights); two more nights were taped and filmed during July and September 1993.

Translation of the text

Let us consider the text itself and the problems encountered in translating it that led me to make certain choices. Usuy's style of chanting, mentioned earlier, is a very traditional one in the highlands and represents a certain aesthetic—not the only one—in the art of chanting epics among the Palawan. It is an ornamented style—*mäkansang burak jä*, "many flowers," say the Palawan—with numerous vocal ornamentations for, they add, Usuy "has long breath."

These "flowers" in the text are the fillers that support the melodic line and favor a certain melismatic development characteristic of this area

of the world, mainly among Islamized groups like the Magindanao, Taosug, and Sama. These fillers include the following: *bäng banar*, "really true;" *bä sälus*, an exclamation implying compassion, pity, and sympathy; *kunuq*, "they say," "the story says," "the story relates," "he says;" and *täjän*, a particle expressing a wish, such as "may it happen," "may it be possible," or regret, "alas."

Usuy very often uses these virtually meaningless phrases in uttering his text; this technique helps him stretch his voice over what can be called a "breathing unit," very long at times, according to certain melodic lines specific to each character, as we shall see. It is a chant also characterized by many circumlocutions. Other bards who do not share this aesthetic have developed a plainer singing manner (a *recto tono* and a monody).

One can easily anticipate the effect of these "flowers" on the syntax. In order to illustrate this phenomenon, I present the integral transcription of the first "breathing unit" of Chant II, word for word, followed by an initial attempt at translation. In fact, I had begun to make a translation of this kind for the first side of the tape, and gradually came to sense an impasse. First of all, Usuy was absolutely reluctant to repeat the text during its transcription. He did not understand what I wanted; he summarized the sung text in a single phrase, and, of course, I was not satisfied with it. It seemed that this work, so sterile and fastidious, was tedious for him. There was something to all of that, certainly, but there was something else as well. The text is not in verse and therefore prosody does not function as a memory support. Nevertheless, the chant is a basic template for the bard and his audience, with melodic as well as melismatic waves, and adds sophistication to the performance. The text, performed in its entirety by the bard, serves the quest for aural and emotional beauty: *mänunga kingän!* "It's beautiful to hear!" say the Palawan.

The frequency of these elements generated intolerable repetitions in passing from performance and oral tradition to textuality and a written tradition, and I felt that I could and ought to restore the simplified utterance, stripped of its vocal ornamentations, a syntactic utterance that would lose its complexity and its aural density but would allow the reader—no longer the listener—to experience the pleasure of reading the story and the dialogues in the shape of a play. In other words, I was implementing, while translating, what Usuy had candidly and with good reason proposed at an earlier stage of the work. As a matter of fact, when he no longer chanted, he had spontaneously eliminated the "filler" but tended to compress and summarize the narrative, generating a synopsis.

Likewise, for the first Palawan/French edition of the epic (Maraman and Revel-Macdonald 1991) I retained the following mode of presentation:

the libretto of the chant (corresponding to six hours and thirty minutes of recording on four tapes, both sides, 9.5 cm speed) appears on the upper section of the pages on the left; the syntactic restitution in spoken discourse faces it on the opposite right page. This righthand page, divided into two sections, also represents ethnographic and linguistic notes; while a French translation, very faithful to this second text, occupies the second half of the lefthand page. It is a diptych with four squares.

The translation below the text on the right hand page is not a word-for-word rendering. Rather, that translation is a reconstruction by a Palawan speaker, but not the authentic text as chanted by the bard. To place the word-for-word translation under the sung text would result in a genuine textual "delirium," making it impossible to show the functional succession of words in the sentences.[1] I would like to add that utterance distortions are equally accompanied by grammatical distortions, and very rarely, articulatory distortions. As in the shadow play, these are "forms of stylized oral tradition." They act as a stylistic "enhancement" of the local form of the language.[2]

• Hin dakän dagbäs kunuq Kudaman
// [opening syllable] as for me | person | says | Kudaman /

mänä bä in dimu bä
only the / to you | [closing syllable] //

• Hin dakän mäna bä pagkaq
// [opening syllable] as for me | only | because

näkäquliq kunuq bäng banar na
was able to return home | says he | truly | true / o

pinägtawän kä dimu
wife | you | as for you //

• Hin tyap-tyap kisyu batän kunuq
// [opening syllable] as / we | it is a fact | says he |

[1] For a description of the morphology and of a fundamental part of the syntax, see Revel 1979.

[2] Also designated as "fillers." They are in fact enunciative particles with a stylistic and prosodic function in the chanting of an epic.

näkäbänwa kisyu ät käla q in
was able to build up a house / as for us | of | big size [closing syllable] //

• Hin ariq Kudaman dakän sälus
// [opening syllable] younger brother | Kudaman / as for me / pity |

täyän kunuq bäng dimju bäng banar
wish / says he / really / you | really true /

ukanän sälus in täyän in
elder brother / pity | [closing syllable] | wish | [closing syllable] //

"As for me," says the person of Kudaman, "behold, you, O my spouse, since you are my first wife, it is you still whom I am addressing," said he, "really true."
Kudaman says: "O my spouse, for you are my first wife, it is you whom I address."

"As for me alone, since I was able to return," he says, "really to the house, O my spouse, as for you, since you were able to build a large meeting house," he says, "it is a fact."
"I was able, as for me, to return to the house, O my spouse. And since you were able to build a large meeting house."

"As for me, allow me, may I, says Kudaman, as for you, truly, elder brother, allow me that I may . . . ."
Kudaman says: "Elder brother, may I . . . ."

Text and music

Although the audience is present and stimulates the bard by exclamations and screams of joy and admiration during the chanted performance, the bards of this area do not sing with vocal accompaniment by a chorus as found in the area of Punang, for instance. Moreover, the accompaniment with the *bäbäräk*, a tiny ring flute with four holes, was already on its way to total extinction in the 1970s. The extraordinary beauty of these chants resides in their subtly varied melodic motifs, the quality of the bard's voice, timbre, and color, and the magnificent vocal technique that allows chanting for six to eight hours in a row.

The bard of this region successively embodies the different characters of the epic. It is an embodiment by a vocal gesture and musical motifs only, not by actual vocal expressiveness. And Usuy had an admirable mastery of all the "voices" of the characters of the epics of his repertoire. This miming demands a natural inclination, a well exercised memory, much practice, and deep concentration in the actual performance. It also demands creativity and inspiration, for I learned from Buntäli, whom I visited in July 1990, that Usuy composed melodic motifs for each character. Whereas beforehand the epic's interpretation was predominantly through a single voice, that of the hero, Kudaman, Usuy has admirably and creatively enriched it.

Listening to the wind in the treetops favors the capture of epic melodies, but is only possible thanks to the inspiration of a Good-Doer in the special place that is the forest. According to epic chanters, melodies vary a great deal; the narration remains much more constant but it too varies. Each bard enjoys great freedom of imagination. Variation arising from the imagination and creativity of the bards affects melodies as well as narration. José Rilla heard several versions of *Limbuhanän*; he also heard several voices for the hero Limbuhanän. Buntäli's version of *Kudaman* celebrated the honey-wine and *simbug* ceremony in honor of the Master of Flowers; Usuy's version transposed the whole story into the rice-wine drinking ceremony and commemoration of the Master of Rice. The shift in ritual reveals an upper in contrast to a lower highland culture.

During the first listening sessions in 1971, I had the impression of hearing various motifs, and during the transcription, this aural impression was proven to be correct: these "themes" associated with the main characters recur with them and allow the listener to identify immediately the character embodied. However, in spite of a noticeable similarity of plot, the themes do not recur from one epic to another.

These motifs are very clearly discernible by the melody, although they are very closely related; in addition, each one synaesthetically suggests a psychological and/or physical feature of the character. Thus, for example, the melody of Kudaman develops on a low register and is characterized by equidistant intervals between the syllables, a recto-tono. This slow melodic line, slightly ascending, indicates a character full of wisdom and gravity, the two fundamental qualities of a hero marked by ethical behavior, and a profile equally suggested by his decisions and gestures. The melodic motif of Kudaman is the most frequently used by the bard, since it is also sung for the general narration addressed to the audience.

In the epic the sound pitch allows one to distinguish the different types of characters. Thus the various spouses of Kudaman—the Lady of the

West Winds, the Lady of the Ginuqu Trees, and the Lady of the Emerald Doves—have melodic lines developing in the higher registers. The Lady of the West Winds is characterized by an undulation of notes, as is the mascot-bird Linggisan. The latter melody is highly reminiscent of the flapping wings of the purple heron, which I happened to hear rising from a sandbar and flying above the waves of the China Sea.

The musical units of the text are based on a "breathing group of words" or a variable sequence of words or sentences embedded in an opening syllabic formula (*hin*) and a closing syllabic formula (. . . *in*). These particles have no syntactic value but a very interesting prosodic value. According to the bards, . . . *in* can be replaced by . . . *ba*, as in the repertoires of Mäsinu and Kundipal, for instance. This particle functions, above all, as aural punctuation. It signals the end of a melodic and semantic utterance but has simultaneous value as a rhyme, for it conveys a homophony at the end of a strophe, whatever its length, and is followed by a respiratory pause, a silence of variable length.[3]

The transcription that I made of the chant takes account of each silence and each resumption by the bard. A new line not preceded by a period in the midst of the breathing unit indicates that the silence is brief, that the resumption of the text is immediate, and that the entire strophe forming part of a breathing unit is not yet completed. Hence the basic unit of the text is not the verse—there is no verse here—but an utterance in prose of variable length, be it in direct address or narrative. The meaningless words or fillers can, as necessary, supplement the meaningful words, thereby facilitating the unfolding of different melodic motifs.

III. Mental text, chanted performance, written transcript, and the notion of "multiple drafts"

The long chanted narratives we witness today belong to a specific communication space: the space of orality. By transcribing the epic chant with a written alphabetic code, we are shifting from one communication code to another, from one type of memory to another. In the Western world, the first passage, the transition from oral narrative to written manuscripts and then to printed texts, was characterized by a slow

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[3] One may note that the phoneme /h/, of a very low frequency in Palawan, never appears at the beginning of a word except in chanting epics and love poems, the *kulilal* songs. By its very nature, it favors the attack or onset of an utterance on a certain pitch by expelling the air inherent to this fricative consonant, an aspirate, and thus facilitates the melodic development.

progressive overlapping as writing was set into motion and later as printing was discovered. It meant a progressive shift from one set of values, experiences, and devices to another. Today, we are the agents and the witnesses of another shift: from books, written archives, and libraries to computerized, electronic memory. It is a new communication space and an emerging new type of memory.

In an oral-aural context, transmission of knowledge supposes a constant process of reiteration. Recently, I listened to a lecture by Daniel Dennett, who was invited to Paris for an evening organized around his philosophy, and he spoke briefly of his "multiple drafts model." I immediately thought of this as a fitting metaphor to describe the mental process at work while a singer of tales is performing as we listen to him in the context of oral tradition. He performs only one among all the possible drafts that he could perform and that he would favor on other occasions and in other contexts. In his memory he retains a mental narrative and modulable material.

In Palawan, the bard has no "mental text" as such—by which I mean a ready-made and fixed text—but rather drafts. The narrative competence of the bard is based on a narrative flow underlain by a pattern that articulates the various sequences and that unfolds to generate the scheme that I described earlier. This scheme is probably present in many, if not all, epics. Actually, the bard has no "text" at all in his mind, but a logical narrative pattern, a set of both visual and rhythmic images. This narrative competence is astonishing, for it deals with extremely diverse and always modulable material: narrative and argumentative schemes, values and cosmogonical views, topologies, associative networks. The singer weaves his text from many threads. This corpus of mental text in the memory of each singer of tales, who redistributes and always reactualizes it according to circumstances, emotions, time, and space, represents the world of tradition, but also and more particularly the bard's personal world.

The very notion of "mental text" can be misleading unless understood as a semantic structure. For six nights, *Kudaman* portrays the heroes' string of journeys and quests for spouses in various worlds. Each one is marked by a return home and an expanding nuclear family (polygamy and more particularly sororal polygamy). The story alternates a fixed center (the domestic space) and a quest in all the possible worlds (an extended space).

Elaborating on this proposition of cartography and graphic analysis of tales, J. Dournes (1990) has proposed the notion of "proto-image" and "proto-sound," analogous in its immediacy to the images of dreams. Such proto-images are infinitely faster than the actual stream of narration. When there is no audience, Buntäli, Usuy, Mäsinu, as well as an Indochinese

storyteller, Jörai or Sré, tell the story to themselves without proliferation; in other words, the story speaks or chants within the singer, the inner sounds being precisely projected when the performance occurs.

As a matter of fact, this multi-level way of narrating is inherent to the human condition, for each time we enunciate or narrate we do so in a specific context. This context, specific in time, space, emotional mood, and also in intention, takes the audience into account. Indeed, this is a correct phenomenological description of any situation of oral communication: within the density of virtual drafts, we have to select—semi-consciously, intentionally, or involuntarily—the relevant one, the accurate one within a given context. As utterance continues, decisions are necessarily being made, their sole influences being the context and the relationship between the speaking subject and his partner or his audience.[4]

Here a circularity of reasoning appears and imposes itself on us. It is arbitrary to fix a version in written text, for in fact we have only variants of a constant pattern and a system of transformation among variants. Therefore, my publication of *Kudaman* (1983) was not meant as a "first edition," a "canonical" one, although my attempt was to project visually on the pages of a book, as faithfully as possible, a breathing and rhythm perceived by listening to chanted segments as well as to silences and their variable lengths and weight, following only the vocal gesture of the bard.

The handwritten and printed texts are themselves one reflected draft among so many others. It is a text mentally composed, chanted, captured, and worked upon by a bard who in turn creates in a given context, *x*, at a given moment, *y*. In fact, the same process is at work with a bard, a writer, and a computer data analyst. The three types of memory—the oral, the written, and the electronic—are distinct in their apparent manifestations, but the results seem constant. In fact, there are three distinct visions of a text, as Vivian Labrie (1984) showed: (1) the inner vision/s of the bard, (2) the inner vision/s of his audience/s, and (3) the vision/s of the transcriber-analyst who materializes the flowing chant on paper. And I would add a fourth: the inner vision/s of the poet who composes and conceives in writing *his* version of the epic that will then be chanted, a situation of "secondary orality" (cf. Zumthor 1983).

For there are unconscious cognitive activities and conscious strategies involved in the chanting of an epic. But there is above all a great

[4] In fact, it seems that this analogy with the oral communication process made possible elaboration of the "multiple drafts model" to suit the general activity of the mind; see Dennett 1991:136: "Since these narratives are under continual 'revision,' there is no single narrative that counts as the canonical version, the 'first edition'."

fluctuation inherent in "literary-oral" texts, for they are created through performance. Albert Lord (1960:123) spoke of the preservation of tradition by its constant re-creation. There are variants of the same text within a culture, and there are versions of the same type of epic from one culture to another—the Ramayana epic, for instance. But if one wishes to be rigorous, one cannot speak of variants, for there is no genuine original. Each performance is an original. However, for the purposes of analysis, it is convenient to focus upon one or another execution, remembering always that none is more original than another.

Hence I propose that the analysis of an epic should be carried out within its entire context, not only of its variants and other texts, the "co-texts" of the given culture, but also of relevant history, sociology, archaeology, geography, iconography, technology, and the natural sciences. The purpose then becomes to think about the text as an object, as a place where meaning manifests itself, and by various means to be able to elaborate descriptive semantic models.

Consider the case history of *Kudaman*. Heard for the first time in May 1970, chanted continuously and taped in October 1970, transcribed the following year, typed and corrected in 1976, finalized in 1979 after Usuy's death, and printed in 1983 in France and then in 1991 in the Philippines with a translation in Filipino, the text, which is a transcription of the chant, has remained almost unchanged. This is the freedom and fixity involved in a mere transcription, which is not a poetic composition.

We have been in the process of making a book—a silent text—out of vibrant poetry in chanted performance, and this process has frozen one, but only one, of the possible variants. In the chain of reiteration there is a *devenir* ("becoming"), a creativity at work within a frame of reference that lives in memory. Far from being inert, the mental text is very much alive and manifests its ongoing incarnation during the performance.

Fixing the butterfly can be perceived as and indeed is a paradox, when one takes into account the vitality of creativity and collective memory in a society with an oral tradition, such as is present in the Archipelagoes. For by transcribing and establishing the text of a version, we are shifting the primeval function and transforming the very essence of the *epos*. An artist's oral performance, which constitutes knowledge in its ethical, political, musical, and poetic dimensions, sets in motion a synthetic creativity involving the bard who chants and creates and his audience—the "silent interpreters"—who perceive, understand, marvel, and memorize. Hence in the chain of generations, knowledge is continuously transmitted and is in a perpetual state of "becoming." However, the prestige of script and its progressive hegemony can reduce an oral tradition to silence. The

Old French *chanson de geste* from the romanesque world is an example of this phenomenon. But it is not necessarily the case elsewhere, and I think of India more particularly, where in fact variants are found in the written rather than the chanted form, for in India as well as in other southeast Asian cultures, memory is constantly being incarnated in various ritual gestures and events (chants and dances). Because of this collective sharing and communication process, the variablity due to oral tradition in a given culture must be carefully considered and analyzed.

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APPENDIX

Synopsis of *Kudaman*: A narrated prelude followed by six nights' chants

The Kudaman epic starts with a long narrated prelude in a tale pattern (50 typewritten pages) before the six to seven nights can develop. The nights reiterate the span of seven years that frames the ritual of commemoration of the Master of Rice, Tämwäy ät Ampuq ät Paräy.

(Prelude)

As the narrative starts, two cousins go to the river to fish. One of the two disappears; she is the heroine of the epic, Tuwan Putliq. Her father is extremely worried and asks her husband to go and look for her. This man, Mutaq-Mutaq, does not make any attempt to do so. They send the message to the Young Man of the Cumulus Clouds, Känakän ät Inarak, and he proceeds to the pool of water, notices a scale from a crocodile, and is finally able to bring back the tiny nail of the woman after picking it from between the deepest teeth of the oldest crocodile. The father of the girl had promised to give him his daughter if he took the risks and let him take the nail to his house. The young lady, suffocating in the betel-nut box where she was deposited as a tiny nail, opens it and reappears as sparkling bamboo; the house glitters like the rising sun.

(Chant I)

Hence Tuwan Putliq becomes the wife of the Young Man of the Clouds—she owes him her life. This theme is immediately followed by the Lady of the Spirits of the Sea seducing the Young Man of the Clouds while she is the spouse of Kudaman. Here, for the first time, the hero appears. As the Young Man of the Clouds seizes the Lady, Tuwan Putliq leaves him (adultery). Meanwhile, Kudaman sends the Linamin ät Säqitan Dagat to

her father, Surutan Tamparan, the Sultan of the Shore, with no comment (repudiation). As Kudaman leaves, he meets Tuwan Putliq on his way and offers her betel to chew. This gesture amounts to a request to marry her. When she accepts the betel nut, we know she consents. Thus she becomes his first wife. Meanwhile, Surutan Tamparan discovers his daughter's transgression and threatens to cut off her head with the Scissors of the World. She submits to this punishment but comes out of the ordeal more glamorous than ever. She is eager to meet Kudaman again. A new episode presents Mutaq-Mutaq paying a visit to Kudaman, offering to make a blood pact with him. They exchange gifts to seal their agreement ritually. They live under the same roof. Kudaman convenes a meeting to offer a rice-wine drinking feast. He prepares 180 jars and gongs are played to invite all around. Before joining this festive occasion, the Sultan of the Shore pronounces his judgment on the abduction of his daughter. The fine is 180 plates. He reinforces this judgment with a complementary one to avoid any conflict between Kudaman and Mutaq-Mutaq, since they are now blood brothers. Kudaman leaves for new countries in search of beautiful clothes. He rides his pet bird, the purple heron, Linggisan, and entrusts his wife to Mutaq-Mutaq, the former husband of Tuwan Putliq, since he will be absent for seven years. The hero buys clothes from the Sultan of the Shore and, on his way, meets the Lady of the Emerald Dove. As he returns home, he stops over to put her in his betel-nut box. Welcomed back by Tuwan Putliq, he is informed that the Lady of the Good Spirits of the Sea has returned (his former wife) to him and has become, by pact, the sister of Tuwan Putliq. Then he introduces the Lady of the Emerald Dove. They are now three sisters. An exchange of rings follows. The hero leaves once more, entrusting his new wives, *duwäy*, to his first wife, *puqun*. She is the eldest, they are the younger. During this voyage, it is the Lady of the Pine Trees who is stricken to the heart by the beauty of the bird and the bird's master likewise. Another woman stops over and becomes his fourth wife. They behave toward each other as "sisters."

(Chant II) (A ritual feast is planned in a peaceful world)

In togetherness they agree to build up a large meeting house in order to celebrate the rice-wine drinking ceremony. They start to play the gongs and rejoice, inviting all around. The hero makes the jars simply by opposing his hands.

(Revelation of danger by a dream)

But a sudden dream interrupts the feast, revealing the coming of threatening visitors and their intention of capturing and taking away Kudaman's four ravishing wives. But the hero is a man of wisdom who wants to avoid a war, for violence is a moral mistake towards Ämpuq, the "Master." As the Ilanän come, he and his household are ready to face these aggressive visitors. Courtesy and refined peaceful manners, as opposed to brutality and violent manners, are exemplified.

(Violence and war)

The fight starts, and Mutaq-Mutaq cannot refrain from entering a celestial battle with his magic devices. He is followed by the brave Känakän ät Inarak. Finally, Kudaman enters the fight in order to save them and takes leave of his wives, offering them basil as a token-flower. The fight turns out to be a magic game between a violent outsider chief and a wise autochthonous headman. It ends with Kudaman's victory and Ilanän's death.

(The order of the world is restored: life resumes)

On the way back, they visit Limbuhanän, Kudaman's first cousin, who recently married the Lady of the Pine Trees. After seven years, when the whole party reaches the house, the hero's welcome by his four wives is a model of behavior. Calm, dignity, and subtle tenderness are the basic constituents. Before the drinking feast resumes, they have to conduct a jural debate on the marriage of Limbuhanän. The advice to the young couple is reiterated; among these counsels is good behavior between husband and wife, duties toward the affinal relations, and observation of the main principle of the law, *Saraq*.

(The feast as a symbol of peace and harmony)

The music of gongs resumes and the ladies start to enter the dance. After three nights, they open the jars and follow the "Custom of the Jar." The Sultan of the Shore, his seven wives, and numerous followers are present and, being Kudaman's father-in-law, the Sultan is the first to drink (respect to the eldest and to affinal relations). All of them successively enter the state of drunkenness and carefully watch over each other during the "trip." Kudaman is the last one to drink and the Lady of Hooks attends him. Seduced by her graceful care and beauty, Kudaman plans to take her as elder wife.

(Mercy to his enemies)

He brings the Ilanän back to life by spitting betel nut, reiterating a mythical gesture from the creation of the world. Their blood pact is to lay down their arms. After a decision by the Supreme Judge, they have to cut Tuwan Putliq into two halves, but she comes out of this ordeal as beautiful as ever. The Radja take leave, followed by Känakän ät Inarak and all the other guests. They are hoping for another feast in the near future.

(Chant III)

This feast is to be hosted by the Sultan of Another World. Kudaman and his four wives fly on the Linggisan, their mount. There they also meet the Ilanän, who declare they have no aggressive intentions. By turn, the guests become inebriated and each trip is described in its specific intensity. But Limbuhanän asks to stop the playing of gongs, for an excess would offend the Weaver of the World. Then Kudaman makes the voyage, *ulit*, a shamanistic experience that brings him into communication with the Weaver of the World, Nägsalad. He is offered the jars but also warned against any act of violence. After a general leavetaking, they all return to their homes.

(Chant IV)

Before leaving for a new country—on a quest for a new spouse—Kudaman once more entrusts his secondary wives to his first wife, Tuwan Putliq. She feels sorrowful and begs him not to leave. In spite of Mutaq-Mutaq's opposition, however, Kudaman never cancels his plans or resists his desires. The hero leaves for seven years, offering a basil flowerpot as an icon of his person (alive or dead) while he travels. The rich merchant welcomes him with courtesy and presents his visitor with magnificent gold rings with a delicate flower as their central motif. Kudaman is invited to stay, but declines the invitation and returns, exhausted, to his house. He refuses to chew, and the wives carry him in their arms like a pillow, when suddenly he disappears. The four of them search for him, projecting themselves into the median space and mingling with the stars. The brave Lady of the Ginuqu Tree reaches Amuq's abode and questions him. He reveals to her the

essence of Kudaman's magical power. She shares this knowledge with her "sisters" and all four of them approach him and bring him back home. As soon as he returns, he plans another feast and invites the Sultan and Säwragar. The flying mount is sent to fetch them. During the fourth night of rice-wine drinking, Kudaman escapes the vigilance of his four wives and absorbs 180 jars, then consumes the whole stock of sugar canes. As he turns into a cloud, Limbuhanän assists him in his trip. This time he falls to the center of the earth. The Lady of the Young Men seizes him in her hand and cures him, wiping his face with a scarf in order to appease him and to bring him back to consciousness. Since they are attracted to each other, he decides to bring her back with him. There are now five "sisters" and the house becomes silent after the departure of all the visitors. They are alone.

(Chant V)

As in the past, and for seven years, Kudaman undertakes a journey in quest of beautiful ornaments for his spouses. (The reiteration of the travel motif is the basic dynamic principle of the narrative. This epic is basically a quest for spouses in a society where polygamy was the rule.) By passing in the sky on his flying carriage, Kudaman seduces the very beautiful Lady of the Sandbar, Linamin ät Balintang. On his way back, he stops over and makes her his wife. It is a case of *agaw ät tumang* (abduction of a fiancée), and she is introduced to the others as the seventh spouse, hence becoming the seventh "sister." The marriage and the feast of drinking rice wine are celebrated, and it is the turn of the Lady of Anduwanän, the Abode of Ampuq, to fall in love with the bird and his master. During the feast, Limbuhanän and Kudaman refrain from drinking. Kudaman asks his first cousin to fill up the jars in the future and thus ensure the continuity of the rituals commemorating the Master of Rice.

(Chant VI)

Mutaq-Mutaq is sent to Limbuhanän to organize the next feast; he does not forget his promise and prepares the yeast and the jars. As the celebration starts, the Supreme Judge and the Sultan together with his seven daughters attend, but Kudaman decides to depart for an unknown world. On his way, he captures the love of Linamin ät Mälana, the Lady of the Oil of the World, and farther on, the Lady of the Void. When he returns and they reach an agreement, he introduces these two ladies to the others and they all become sisters. Once the marriage is celebrated, the rice-wine feast can be held. But the Lady of the Hawks comes to attend Kudaman in his drunken state, according to a prior agreement between the two, and by gratitude he wishes her to become his tenth wife. Here is a lady with no dowry to pay, for she has no relatives. Meanwhile, Känakän ät Inarak marries the seventh daughter of the Sultan. As dowry, the latter provides a river flowing down from the sky to the Sultan's residence, while a syzygyum tree and a grapefruit tree continue to bear the most beautiful fruit the whole year long.

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The Mechanisms of Epic Plot and the Mongolian Geseriad

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It is a well-known fact that the performer of narrative poetry usually tries to reproduce a text he has learned from his predecessors and that he is sometimes able to do so with great accuracy. Two different degrees can, however, be distinguished in the narrator's faithfulness to his text: one relatively strict, the other relatively free. There are, likewise, two types of singer: the traditionalist and the improviser. Both identify their own variant with the text of their predecessor, but they differ according to how strictly they understand this identification. The traditionalist aims at perfection, a goal that, taken literally, produces the repetitive type of singer such as is found among the Kalmuk school (cf. Poppe 1940:3-4; Bitkeev 1983:76-77). The improviser, by contrast, remains faithful merely to a certain plot and basic theme, allowing himself considerable artistic liberty. By retaining this basic character, composition, and style, the improviser assumes he has remained faithful to his model despite considerable modification.

Both types of performers occupy places of their own in the life of folklore, and they are both essential in the normal development of tradition. The improviser extends the limits of the amount of stylistic and thematic variation permitted in the text, the result being a wide field of potential variation revolving round the fixed axis of tradition. The traditionalist rejects the extreme forms of such variation and observes greater moderation in his use of the structural elements. All of this activity affects the processes for developing the plot. A new plot clearly emerges as the result of the variation and development of some episode or motif already encountered in the tradition. New interpretations of the plot take shape, the characters change roles, their functions are reorganized, and so on. At some stage the plot variant becomes a new folklore product. Naturally this scenario applies particularly to the improviser, whereas planting the new

product in tradition and polishing it stylistically are to a greater extent the task of the traditionalist.

An example of this complex process is the development of the Geser epic, which came to Mongolia from Tibet but underwent radical changes in the Mongols' own tradition. Of the twelve main chapters familiar to us in the literary tradition of the Mongols, only five have Tibetan counterparts, and these also include a large number of plot schemes of Mongolian origin. The remaining seven have nothing in common with the Tibetan prototypes and are wholly of Mongolian origin. They are almost certainly founded on oral performances, as may be concluded from the stylistic similarities between the written versions and the oral traditions as well as from the well-known legend telling of the origin of the text used as the basis for the Peking xylograph edition published in the early seventeenth century. According to this legend, the text was written down from live performances by five southern Oirat singers. The Mongolian tradition has produced the chapters about the killing of the black-piebald tiger, the demon Lubsag and Geser's transformation into an ass, the battles against the monster Andulma, the ruler of the Rakshas demons, Gumbu Khan and Nachin Khan, the minor episode in which Geser raises his warriors killed in the war against the Sharaigols from the dead, and the episode in which Geser takes the warrior maiden Adzhu-mergen as his bride.

By means of comparative analysis, it is possible to determine a number of stages in the formation of these redactions and to find indications of the plot mechanisms by which the epic renewal process took place (Heissig 1983a; Nekljudov 1984:180-98). The central part of the Geseriad consists of the campaign against the Demon of the North, Klu-bcan (Mong. Lubsan), and the war with the Horis (Mong. Sharaigols). In the North Geser wins over the demon's wife Bum-skiid (Mong. Tümen Dzhirgalang), slays the demon himself, and settles in his kingdom. The woman gives the hero a magic potion that makes him forget his homeland. Meanwhile, three hostile Hori (Sharaigol) rulers attack his country. They seize Geser's land and cast his wife Brug-mon (Mong. Rogmo-goa) into prison. Geser's soldiers are slain by the superior forces. On shaking off the spell, the hero returns home, beats the Horis, and gets back his wife.

This is the sequence of events, especially in the Tibetan Lin-Geser. The main themes have been assimilated into the Mongolian tradition in a slightly different redaction (chapters 4 and 5 of the written version), and they also form the basis for numerous new constellations, which presumably emerged as follows:

1. According to mythic logic, winning from the original owner may in time be reinterpreted as returning something previously stolen. There is also an example of this development in the Geseriad, with the seduction of the northern demon's wife described above becoming the liberation of Geser's wife from the demon's power. The plot takes precisely this form in both the oral Mongolian epic and the written version (chapter 4). At the same time, two once-independent characters merge into one. Geser's wife Aralgo-goa and the Mistress of the North Tümen Dzhirgalang become a single synthesized person known by both names.

The process by which the plot is formed is not, however, inflexible. In the oral, northern Tibetan versions of the Amdo region this character is inconsistently defined: sometimes she is the demon's wife abducted by Geser, at others Geser's wife abducted by the demon (Potanin 1893:19, 23, 39, 42). The abduction of a wife thus constitutes part of the epic stock of the tradition, but, strange as it may seem, the direction of the abduction may be a matter of indifference. A similar dichotomy can be observed in the Mongolian version of Dzaja in which the wife, quarrelling with Geser as he prepares to depart for his homeland, calls him "he who came from Tibet," saying that she herself intends to remain "in her own country." There are further traces of earlier variation in the words of the vanquished demon: "It was not I who stole your wife!" The demon is speaking the truth, since according to the written Mongolian version Geser's wife herself sets off to rescue Geser and the entire nation from being destroyed by the demon. This apparent discrepancy is a relic of an ambivalent variation.

The following stages in the development of the plot can thus be distinguished:

1) Geser slays the Demon of the North after seducing his wife.

2) At some point a sort of "ethical dissonance" appears to have emerged, and in order to resolve it, one of the type motifs of narrative folklore is added: the wife had already belonged to the hero at some earlier stage but had been abducted. In order to make this scene possible, two once-distinct characters combine.

3) The previous state of affairs cannot, however, simply be erased from the "epic memory" and replaced by the abduction motif. The resulting interpretation is a compromise: Geser's wife sets off to the demon of her own accord.

4) Although this motif does correspond to the ambivalent nature of this character, the plot is wanting in logic and needs motivation or explanation. The result is a motif in which the wife sacrifices herself in

order to rescue Geser and the whole nation from the plague brought on by the demon.

5) The next stage, in which the demon is relieved of his responsibility as the cause of this destruction, does not so much serve the demon's original "innocence" as the overall plot of the epic, in which the dominant action is lasting conflict between the hostile uncle Tsoton, the source of all misfortune, and Geser. All conflicts ultimately center around this core.

6) Outside the literary monument, the oral tradition takes a shortcut in the plot development process. Stages 3, 4, and 5 are reduced almost to nothing and are replaced by a generalized wife-abduction motif.

This example demonstrates some of the routes that can be taken by the epic improvisation process, though it must be stressed that it so far applies to only one plot variation. Let us therefore take a look at additional examples in order to illustrate some new, independent plot formations.

2. In the Tibetan redactions the story of Geser's campaign against the North sometimes features another female character—a witch related to the Demon of the North (oral Amdo variant; Potanin 1893:25). In the plot variant quoted above, this character acquires an important role and in the Mongolian version tries to cast a spell on Geser on his homeward journey (variation on the potion motif). In order to carry out this plot, an alien text is used—an episode taken from medieval Chinese (Ligeti 1951:346-51) or Tibetan (Jondon 1989:70) tales and preserved in chapter 5 of the literary version. As the plot development proceeds, this becomes a new main chapter: the turning of Geser into an ass, encountered on two occasions in the written versions, as an extensive redaction (the Lobsag demon) and as a short variation (chapter 6; see Heissig 1980). Having bewitched Geser, the demon abducts his wife.

Altering the motivation for the campaign against the North (fetching the abducted wife) thus makes for an addition to the plot in the chapter analyzed above, and the wife-abduction motif earlier encountered in the oral tradition is developed independently, as a separate plot theme. The abduction motif is assimilated into an equally popular transformation motif so that the latter first appears virtually by way of explanation for the situation in the abduction proper. One relic of the prototype configuration of the motifs is the role of Geser's wife in the new situation: it is through her fault, or because of her deception, that the demon succeeds in bewitching the hero. Thus one main chapter becomes two as a consequence of the plot development process.

3. The interpretation of the acquiring or returning motif would appear to provide Geser with moral justification for his campaign against the North. There are, however, other possible explanations of his motives, especially the concept of the demon's inherent evil, from which the land must be freed. What is more, this fits in with Geser's mission as a cultural hero. In developing this archaic motif the demon ruler of the North is thus no longer simply the primordial ruler of his demonic world, but also a usurper from whose unlawful power his subjects, and even those closest to him, are eager to free themselves the moment they get the chance. In this situation Geser assumes the capacity of a ruler upholding peace, the ruler of the ideal Buddhist empire and the creator of a harmonious world order. The next step in this reconception is that the kingdom conquered by Geser did in fact originally (or in principle) belong to him. In other words, we have here the same process as that observed in connection with the wife to be acquired or returned.

Consider the following sequence of interpretations:

• an "alien" world is ruled by a demon but possesses valuables that can be seized;

• an "alien," demonic world possesses valuables that were once seized from their rightful owner and must be returned;

• an "alien," demonic world is by nature aggressive and a potential threat to the harmony and existence of the subject's own world and must therefore be rendered harmless and destroyed;

• an "alien" world can be purified of its demonic filth and used as part of the subject's own world;

• an "alien" world is a "demonized" part of the subject's own world and must be purified and returned to the care of the subject's own world;

• the whole world in principle belongs to the subject (= Geser), and all that is "alien" to it (= demonic) must be deemed unlawful and be destroyed.

This mythological logic is of course universal and is by no means restricted solely to the development of epic traditions; there are signs of it even in contemporary political thinking.

Assuming that the demon is potentially dangerous, Geser's campaign against him could be prevented but is essential. In this case the marriage themes recede into the background. This is precisely the state of affairs in the chapters about the Andulma Khan, the Rakshas demons' Khan, the Gumbu Khan, and the Nachin Khan, all of which describe Geser's

campaigns and hostilities against each of the demon rulers. It can be proved that all these characters are duplications of one and the same Demon of the North, since features and epithets distinguishing him are to be found in their names (see Nekljudov 1984:197-98). Further proof of their genetic affinity is the wealth of direct textual similarities. But although the first stage in the development of these chapters is tied in with the theme of the campaign against the Demon of the North, the second stage is bound up with the chapter telling about the war with the Sharaigols (e.g., the campaign episodes, the invasion of the demon's camp, the accounts of the battles and duels; see especially Heissig 1983a). Four extensive new chapters thus emerge on the basis of the productive thematic, compositional, and stylistic models originally contained in two chapters.

4. Sizeable fragments of epic entities have been lifted straight from the oral Mongolian tradition to the literary epic material. These episodes deal with a meeting between a hero and a warrior maiden or a wizard—the daughter of some otherworld deity. There are no written records of this motif as an independent entity. The story of the duel and marriage with this being belongs in chapter one of the literary version and appears as a section on its own in the Dzaja version (see Heissig 1983b). A continuation of this motif is to be found in some of the episodes in the literary version connected with the name of Geser's third wife, Adzhu-Mergen.[1] Naturally there are numerous examples of the use of Mongolian oral tradition as elements of the literary tradition, but this case alone seems to connect with the Geseriad an entire epic motif with a central figure identified as Geser. Again this is an example of a new epic formation.

5. Certain problems were encountered in creating the Mongolian epic compilation and incorporating the plot of Andulma Khan, for in it the heroes slain in the Sharaigol war appear as living beings. In order to eradicate this illogicality, a new episode is devised, in which Geser raises his heroes from the dead (Lörincz 1971:61-76). This smallish scene was probably originally intended as an introduction to the section telling of the Andulma Khan (Heissig 1971:43-44) and did not become a separate entity until later. It clearly originates in the oral tradition, or at least its rhythms indicate that it was recorded from an authentic epic recitative, as was the Adzu-Mergen episode in the Zaja version (see Heissig 1983a).

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[1] Also in the form Achu-Mergen, Alu-Mergen, or Alma-Mergen; see Nekljudov 1984:185-87.

It should be stressed yet again that in all the cases mentioned the new product was in all probability created in the oral tradition as a simple performance event by some singer. This happens, for example, when

- an improviser's plot variation strays so far that it can no longer be regarded as a performance of the same text;
- an epithet for one character begins to serve as the name of a new character;
- the duplication of an episode in a new variation becomes a new episode;
- some hero encountered in the tradition is directly identified with Geser, in which case the biography of the former becomes attached to Geser without greatly changing the text;
- it is necessary to eliminate illogicalities in the plot caused by linking episodes together, leading to the formation of a new main chapter.

We can, of course, only guess at the process by which new Mongolian epic texts were created some centuries ago. We have, however, had an opportunity to observe a similar process in contemporary folklore through the East Mongolian singers Choinhor and Sambudash. In 1974 three epic poems on Geser themes, telling of battles against Gilban Shar and Galdan-mangus and the birth of Gilban Shar, were recorded from them (Nekljudov and Tömörceren 1982, 1985).

Choinhor learned the song about the battle of Geser against Gilban Shar from the Dzarut singer Haldzhin Mangus and, it would seem, reproduced it almost verbatim. By contrast, Geser's battle against Galdan-mangus turns out to be a variation on the former. The opening and closing episodes, as well as those describing the chasing of the enemy and the duel, are almost identical in these texts, but the latter of the songs mentioned is only one-third of the length of the first and its plot has been simplified. In the former poem Geser has two adversaries (Mangus and Mangus's daughter), in the latter only one (Galdan-mangus), and the wife-abduction motif is reduced to a mere intention. The song of Galdan-mangus was, however, presented as if it were a new work, a continuation of the song telling of Gilban Shar. At the beginning of the Galdan-mangus tale Choinhor summarizes the plot of the previous song, and he also refers to a few of the episodes later in the text: Geser's charger came to a halt "at the same point as in the previous story;" the heavenly sisters give the hero a magic weapon "with the instructions mentioned before;" the horse replies to Geser "as before;" and so on. Finally, it turns out that Galdan-mangus "remained unvanquished residing in the previously

conquered land of Mangus." In other words, this is again a reference to the previous song. The name of the protagonist—Galdan—is according to Choinhor just "an ordinary Mangus name."

What makes such free variation of the original text and the birth of a "new song product" possible?

In the first song Mangus does not, to be precise, have a name. As is often the case in the epics of the Mongolian peoples, he has descriptive epithets instead of a proper name: "twelve-headed enormously giant-like" and "twenty-four-headed red-bald" (see Lörincz 1970:325-31). It is, of course, possible that this creature was in the prototype text called Galdan. But it should be noted that the vagueness of the names for the epic demons indicates that they were conceived of as a vague band of terrible beings. The singer does not commit an error of content if he calls the same being by different names (epithets typical in the Mongolian tradition or "names for the devil"). It is precisely this strategy that opens up the way to the duplication of the character, and the phenomenon does not conflict with the general content of the song.

In the latter poem the wife-abducting motif is reduced to the minimum: "Mangus came to take one of Geser's lawful wives." Nor is the plot realized, for no abduction takes place. Instead there is the motif of a plague sent by the monster, which is missing from the Gilban Shar song but is to be found in the sixth chapter of the literary version of the Geseriad. It will be recalled that in the literary compilation the plague was the outcome of a plot by Tsoton, whereas in this particular variant it is the consequence of the mythological logic outlined earlier: the plague is a manifestation of the monster's malice, its natural emanation. The epic conflict leads to a whole range of motifs: the demon must be destroyed not only because it was not completely overcome the first time but also because of its aggressiveness and maliciousness. It is not quite clear whether the singer learned the motif of the plague-bringing Mangus from a written version of the Geseriad he had read at some time or whether it was already featured in the prototype version of Haldzhin-mangus. The two explanations are equally possible. Nevertheless both the plague and the abduction of Geser's wife are to be found in the literary compilation, whereas only one of the motifs appears at a time in the oral versions of Choinhor.

Sambudash's song (on the birth of Gilban Shar) is based on a narrative in prose form that the singer heard in childhood from an old man. There were probably two such stories: the text is divided into two almost equal episodes only loosely linked to one another. The first tells of the many-headed witch Gilban Shar born into a Mangus family and of his schooling by a devilish hermit lama (Geser is not mentioned at all in this

episode). The second part tells how the newborn Gilban Shar was fed human children abducted by his father. On learning of this, Geser abducts Mangus's youngest son and does not return him until the demon promises to stop his abductions (this time there is no mention of Gilban Shar). The background to the first episode is not clear, but it fits in well with the Mongolian folk tradition. The second episode probably ties in with the didactic story popular in Central Asia of the children stolen by the man-eater Rakshas and the repentance caused by the reprimands of the emperor's devout son Sutasoma (Jondon 1989:113-14).

By a series of fortunate coincidences, we have thus had a chance to observe the life of tradition at a stage in which, in its oral form, either the plot becomes differentiated (= Choinhor's two texts in place of the one prototype), or the opposite—integration—takes place and two songs combine (= Sambudash's text). There is every reason to assume that similarities exist between this process and the formation of new main chapters in the Mongolian Geseriad a few centuries ago. Let us now take a closer look at some of the chief mechanisms in this process. These mechanisms may lead to the differentiation or integration of song motifs and may in both cases apply to characters (the hero, his partner, or his antagonist) or plot elements (motifs and episodes).

1. At the hub of the integration process is the main character, Geser, who is assimilated with the other heroes in narratives, such as heroes of the Mongolian epic unfamiliar to us, the numerous anonymous Central and East Asian characters of narratives, the emperor's son Sutasoma who admonishes the man-eater in the didactic narrative of Tibet, and so on. These elements integrate under special conditions in which one character is understood as a manifestation of another, or names that sound alike combine, or the adventures of some other, nameless hero become attached to the biography of the focal hero, and so forth. It is less common to find a merging of two partners of a single hero (as Aralgo-goa and Tümen Dzhirgalang above), and it is highly unusual (though not entirely unknown) to see the assimilation of two mutually antagonistic figures.

2. The differentiation process concerns above all the form of the antagonist. This process is a result of the attitude towards the demons in epics as an undifferentiated band, the detachment of epithets, names, and nicknames, and, as a consequence, the birth of new characters as described above. The differentiation process applies to a lesser extent to the hero's partners. An example of this phenomenon in our material is the appearance of Geser's additional new wife Has Shiher (Jasper-sugary). This figure could have emerged by differentiation on the basis of the epithets used for

the other wives. The main character does not here become the object of a differentiation process.

3. The integration process is manifest in the plot development as the coupling of new plot elements with the narrative, as the linking of one text with another, as plot contaminations, and as the formation of epic cycles. This process naturally ties in closely with the assimilation of characters and applies especially to the main character.

4. The same applies to plot differentiation, the reproduction of a plot model, the duplication of an episode, and the resulting differentiation and independence. It is particularly frequent in the duplication process of antagonistic characters.

5. One special differentiating device in the development of the plot is a change in the motivation for events. This is a highly productive device and easily leads to the emergence of new narrative entities.

Finally, it should be remembered that every case of epic redevelopment takes place within the framework of the singer's improvisation, to begin with in the form of variation on certain thematic elements of the text, so that a maximum increase in the extent of the variation leads to the evolution of the original version and the formation of a new redaction. Variation does, however, demand a certain stability in content, whereas the trend towards independence of a new product is possible only if this similarity is disrupted. It may be assumed that such disruption often occurs in the audience's reception, so that subsequent tradition serves to legitimize new products.

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From Classical to Postclassical: Changing Ideologies and Changing Epics in India

Petteri Koskikallio

The idea of this paper is to examine the variegated reality of texts classified under the notion "epic" in the Indian tradition. My aim is to study the relation between epics and various religious trends in Indian history, so I shall especially concentrate on the function of epic material as a bearer of religious ideologies. This subject includes diverse ideologies, on the one hand, and different texts, some of which might sometimes turn out not to be epics in the strict sense, on the other. In fact, the main question I want to present for discussion is the problematic idea of epic in the Indian context.

The material with which this paper deals consists without exception of written texts. The main reason for this choice is my own indological perspective. Consequently, I am treating the subject using material that mainly belongs to the great tradition, concentrating on two massive epics, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and in particular their various literary retellings. Besides textual history, I shall follow the history of ideas and emphasize the role of epics and related texts in the continuing theological or philosophical debate. As the title indicates, the central concepts are *change*, *ideology*, and *classical/postclassical*.

Epics and ideologies

In my own work the main theme has been ritual and ritual thinking. I have investigated different ideas on sacrifice filtered through Indian literature. In this way, I have followed long-term ritual change from pre-Vedic ideas to the imposing sacrificial system of Vedic ritualism and further to post-Vedic ideas about the earlier ritual system (Koskikallio 1993). I have used epics as a corpus of texts, under the broad term "postclassical" in relation to classical Vedic ritualism. In this paper,

however, the concepts classical and post-classical have been applied to the whole of Indian epics—if there is indeed any such totality. Thus, I have separated the conglomerate of the two great epics (classical) and later texts using the epic plot (post-classical) from each other. These post-classical literary works can either narrate some parts of an epic or retell the whole epic, either the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Sometimes post-classical epic texts even claim to be another branch of the ancient epic tradition. It is worth remembering that the difference between classical and post-classical epic texts is not just a matter of literary composition or structuring principles but also a matter of ideology.

It has been said that it is possible to distinguish—but not separate from each other—two continuous traditions or levels in Indian literature: that of the epic and that of the story or "folktales" (van Buitenen 1974:43). The former is understood as basically moralistic, the latter more secular. This is a very simplified starting point, even if we are willing to study Indian epic material in the context of the larger notion of Indian literature or Indian literatures. It is true that larger Indian epics are one important point of departure for other genres of literature, but because this paper principally deals with the history of ideas rather than the history of literature, I shall leave this subject matter for further discussion. Furthermore, there is no reason to overanalyze the concept of epic as stories or as ideological or moralistic issues. Actually, the latest tendency in the indological study of epics is to see an epic as a whole. The Indian epics are totalities of different, or even contradictory, ideas about morality or religion, the one *dharma*. At the same time, they are totalities consisting of a massive number of tales, with interdependent teachings and stories. Therefore, for example, questions about the core of an epic or later interpolations are not regarded as so essential as they were in earlier scholarship.

While the analytical study of the single epic has been pushed into the background, the study of different epic texts has gained ground in indology. So, we can say that indological and folkloristic research have been fruitfully influenced by each other lately. The method of studying one question by using epic material from different levels (the classical text, its different retellings, literary versions composed on epic themes, local texts, oral material) has been introduced and applied more widely. One example is what McKim Marriot and John Leavitt call a "liquid metaphor to characterize the history of tradition in South Asia" (see Leavitt 1991:444-45). This means that the continual interchange between the different categories (fixed text and folk text) has been taken into consideration. Behind the term there also lies the "oceanic" terminology of Indian tale-collections (for

example *Kathāsaritsāgara* = "the Ocean of Streams of Story"). Along with this comprehensive view of epics, even the priority of Sanskrit versions of an epic is questioned. As A. K. Ramanujan puts it, "No Hindu ever reads the *Mahābhārata* for the first time. And when he does get to read it, he doesn't usually read it in Sanskrit" (1991:419).

Now we are in a position to realize that from the native perspective Indian epics as a source of tales or teachings have been encountered primarily through local language for a long time. As a result, an average western Sanskrit scholar and an average folklorist or anthropologist might have very different ideas about the world of Indian epics. And neither notion is, of course, similar to that of the average Indian "consumer" of the epics. But the reason for these divergent ideas about epics is not only the language used, but also the fact that different versions of an epic carry their own ideological universe within them. Although a tale or plot might be almost identical from one version to the next, different texts emphasize different scenes and characters. Some versions of the epic texts are more oriented towards the idea of personal godhead (a tendency called *bhakti*), while others want to stress ideal personalities and moralistic issues. For example, the classical epics often emphasize the virtues of a soldier or a king. On the other hand, there are epic texts with, for instance, a Jainist worldview and in these works "all the popular figures . . . are made to fit the Jaina mythological molds" (Sumitra Bai and Zydenbos 1991:252). Furthermore, some later texts on epic themes are primarily the products of literary skill and many of them are in fact works of classical Sanskrit literature. Although there are distinguished studies concerning the relationship between these classics and their epic models,[1] I choose not to extend discussion to include those texts, which are intended primarily for aesthetic rather than ideological purposes.

Even if our starting point is a concrete text—a critical or popular edition of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* or *Rāmāyaṇa* or some retelling—we must not forget its nature as a bearer of tradition.[2] Before going into the subject in detail, I have again to cite A. K. Ramanujan's words: "Thus a text like the *Mahābhārata* is not a text but a tradition. It used to be every poet's ambition to write a *Rāmāyaṇa* or the *Mahābhārata*" (1991:420). In

[1] See, e.g., Gitomer 1991, where a Sanskrit drama called *Veṇisaṁhāra* of Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa is an important basis for a writer's ideas about Bhīma's role in the *Mahābhārata*.

[2] See critical editions: *Mahābhārata* 1933-66; *Rāmāyaṇa* 1960-75; the question of the priority of critical or other editions is a controversial issue in indology today, cf., e.g., Sullivan 1990:13-21, 25; Doniger 1992:286.

other words, every rewriter of an epic theme considers himself or herself a continuer of the "eternal" epic heritage. But from our point of view it is more significant that these retellers are always commenting on their own era and respective ideologies by using the epic world as a medium for their views.

If we bear in mind the Indian context, an essential explanation for this kind of intensive utilization of epic resources is the great prestige inherent in tradition—and for that matter the great prestige one can often achieve (for one's own work, too) by basing it on and linking it to the tradition. This power drawn from the tradition is what Brian K. Smith calls "traditional legitimacy" and "canonical authority" (1989:202). Smith is writing chiefly about the ritual tradition, but the idea of traditionalization, that is, the continual use of the prestige of tradition, is a very useful term when studying a changing and continuing epic tradition. He gives two explanatory and authoritative categories that he finds to be powerful channels of Indian tradition: sacrifice (*yajña*) and the notion of Veda. I do not want to overemphasize the significance of the epic category, but it is obvious that epics also form a category of continual foundation for regenerating tradition and ideologies.

The idea of epics as a stage for tradition and ideologies leads us to ask about the means that epics have at their disposal to transform traditional material for different purposes. To be able to answer that question it is necessary to look at the rules and structures behind the overall structure of an epic. One attempt is offered by Ramanujan, who has studied the unity of the *Mahābhārata* and found one "central structuring principle": repetition (1991:420). I think Ramanujan's idea about repetition is based not so much on the oral character and background of the epic as on the *Mahābhārata* as a textual whole.

In his analysis Ramanujan finds many themes that come up continuously during the epic story (1991:422-24). Many of these repetitions have something to do with a character's origin or past: for example, the theme about the heroes' two fathers, physical and social, or the idea of sons without a father or with a deficient father. There are, however, not only recurrent relationships between the figures, but also the repetitive appearance of certain characters and settings. In a way this tendency "punctuates the continuity of narrative" (423). In addition, Ramanujan mentions some themes occurring over and over again in the *Mahābhārata*, among them fires and exile linked with the disguise of the heroes.

One important characteristic of the whole of the Indian narrative tradition is the use of substories (*upākhyāna*) that seem to interrupt the

frame story. According to Ramanujan, they are "performative, i.e. they too are acts, not merely explanations" (427). The interest in substories is reasonable, since we are interested in the continuity of tradition in epics, and these minor episodes are often incorporated in the epic text precisely because of the continuity of tradition. This means in turn that they include references to Vedic mythology. Alf Hiltebeitel (e.g., 1976:97-98), whose ideas are often based on Georges Dumézil's works, has been especially active in evolving a method in which the epic text and many of its structures are seen against old mythological parallels.

When we turn from the substories inside an epic toward separate retellings of epic themes, we find ourselves once again in the midst of the continual commentary of tradition. For this reason, the postclassical epics can be understood as literal substories outside the classical form of the epic corpus. The usual datings of the *Mahābhārata* (400 B.C.-A.D. 400) and the *Rāmāyaṇa* (200 B.C.-A.D. 200) in themselves reveal that even these classical texts cannot be very homogenous from an ideological point of view. One example of this lack of homogeneity is the role of *bhakti* and Kṛṣṇa devotion in the *Mahābhārata*. It is possible to find different layers of *bhakti* ideology within the text (Deshpande 1991:347-48), and this continues in the retellings. One example of this is a work called *Jaiminibhārata*, written down in circa the twelfth century A.D., which has been of great importance to my own study.

All the above-mentioned points give only a rough idea of the continuity of the Indian epic tradition. In the next section I will concentrate on illustrating epic continuity by taking up some postclassical texts and very briefly discussing their characteristic features.

Epics and post-epics

We can summarize the diverse field of written epic texts of India under three main headings. First, we have two great epics attributed to Vyāsa (the *Mahābhārata*) and Vālmīki (the *Rāmāyaṇa*), respectively. The second group of texts is the body of various literary retellings, both in Sanskrit and other Indian languages. Usually they have one author, either historical or at least partly mythical, with the author continuing or varying the original Vyāsan or Vālmīkian tradition. Thus their works can be considered independent. This group also includes some classics of Sanskrit literature. Because texts of the second group participate in the ideological discussion of the great tradition, I call them *postclassical epics*.

The third set of Indian epics is again heterogenous; it is a group of so-called *folk epics*. They are in regional languages, either written or oral.[3] John Leavitt describes them in this way (1991:447): "Vernacular versions of the epic have generally remained autonomous while developing according to specific cultural dynamics alongside and in interaction with the continuing transmission of the Sanskrit version." In other words, they occupy the ground between the great tradition and the little tradition.[4] Ramanujan and Leavitt find two main changes when classical myths or epics are retold. The first is "fragmentation;" that is, only part of the classical whole is taken up and retold in a new form. Another feature is called "proximation," which includes "domestication," "localization," and "contemporarization." With this change the gods and heroes are seen more like tellers and listeners of the story, while pan-Indian myths are transferred to local places and everything happens nearer the present time.

In leaving the question of classical versus folk epics *per se* I shall continue within the frame of ideological change, or the movement from classical to postclassical epics. My first postclassical example is a group of *bhakti*-oriented texts attributed to Jaimini, whom the tradition mentions as a disciple of Vyāsa, the traditional author of the *Mahābhārata*.

There are at least three works included in this cluster. These texts also have a close connection to the vast entity of encyclopedic *Purāṇa*-texts, but the epic connections of at least two of them suffice for them to be called post-epics. The most important is the *Jaiminibhārata,* a retelling of the fourteenth book of the *Mahābhārata*. The others are more marginal: the *Jaiminīyabhāgavatapurāṇa* is found only in manuscripts and of the "*Rāmāyaṇa*-version of Jaimini" (*Jaiminirāmāyaṇa*) only some fragments are extant. However, it is important to note that there has been at least an attempt to rewrite the two great epics and the most important devotional *purāṇa* under the name Jaimini and with a strong emphasis on *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*.

The *Jaiminibhārata* is a narration about the horse sacrifice of the Pāṇḍava brothers. The story differs in many ways from the *Mahābhārata* original. The overall tendency is to highlight the superiority of Kṛṣṇa. This "propagandistic" idea culminates in the immolation of the horse in which the old Vedic frame is used, but the sacrifice is presented as a miraculous and nonviolent offering. It is shown as the last ritual of the era, a sacrifice to end the traditional "slaughtering." This kind of utilization of

[3] On oral epics, see, e.g., Blackburn et al. 1989.

[4] A. K. Ramanujan has further analyzed the differences between these "folk versions" and the "classical myths" (Ramanujan 1986:64-68; see also Leavitt 1991:453).

the Vedic ritual system and epic format is a clear example of the postclassical harnessing of the tradition in favor of the new ideology.

Besides the *bhakti* religion, there are also other ideologies that have used the epic tradition to promulgate their own views. One example of these is Jainism. Throughout Indian history, Jainas have devoted much energy in preserving the literary tradition, whether inside or outside their own doctrinal sphere. Many compilers of Indian story literature have been Jainas. Especially during the Middle Ages Jainism was very popular, and even various royal dynasties patronized the Jaina culture in southern and western India. At the same time the popularity of stories about the Pāṇḍavas and Kṛṣṇa were at their height. Consequently, these heroes of the *Mahābhārata* and of its supplement the *Harivaṁśa* were adapted to the Jainist literature, too, and several *Jaina-Bhārata*s, *Jaina-Harivaṁśa*s, and *Jaina-Rāmāyaṇa*s came into existence.[5] These are usually works by one author and they are written in Sanskrit, in Prakrit languages, or in local languages.

The most important of the Jaina epics is the *Harivaṁśapurāṇa* of Jinasena. This "essential Jaina Mahābhārata" again deviates significantly from the classical *Mahābhārata*. The *Harivaṁśapurāṇa* fuses the Pāṇḍava story with the biography of the twenty-second universal teacher (*tīrthaṅkara*) of Jainism, called Nemi or Ariṣṭanemi. The work also concentrates on Kṛṣṇa's life, but unlike the *Jaiminibhārata*—and partly the *Mahābhārata,* too—it does not show him as a paramount god. Kṛṣṇa's role is rather that of a prince and war hero; he is an honored person but not a man who corresponds to the Jaina ideal. Additional features illustrating Jainist ideology in the text are, among others, the final salvation (*mokṣa*) attained by the Pāṇḍavas after severe penance and a solution according to which Kṛṣṇa's brother Balarāma became a Jaina monk.

My last group of examples is from a more regional level. One can find postepic retellings all over India, but when we study the connections between the epic tradition and different ideologies, one of the most interesting areas is Karnataka in southwestern India. Kannada literature has a rich postepic tradition in which various ideological tendencies are represented. Unlike, for instance, Tamil culture, Kannada has no indigenous epics. Thus the central feature of Kannada literature "is its ability to assimilate influences" (Aithal 1987:1). We can find both *bhakti*- oriented and Jainist versions of the epics in Kannada, but other kinds of emphases also exist. The earliest and most important local version of the *Jaiminibhārata* in Kannada was written by Lakṣmīśa (thirteenth century).

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[5] See details in Sumitra Bai and Zydenbos 1991.

Another Kannada work based on the *Mahābhārata* and dominated by *krṣṇa-bhakti* is the fifteenth-century *Karṇata-bhārata-kathamañjarī* or *Kannaḍabhārata* by Kumāravyāsa (Mulagi 1990; Rao 1990). The first complete retelling of the whole of the *Mahābhārata* in Kannada is the *Vikramārjunavijayam* or *Pampabhārata* of a Jaina poet Pampa (tenth century). An interesting Kannada text called *Sāhasabhīmavijayam* or *Gadāyuddha* also dates to the same century. This last version of the *Mahābhārata*, written by Ranna, brings Bhīma, the fierce fighter, to the fore of the five Pāṇḍavas and concentrates on his figure.[6]

In conclusion we can say that there is much to study in the relationship between the Indian epics and the spectrum of ideologies. This subject is extremely varied owing to the vast collection of texts—let alone oral material. Even the classical versions of the two epics include extremely heterogenous ideas, but when we extend our interest to the postclassical literature, such contrasts multiply. One way of understanding and analyzing the skillful "utilization" of the epic story for the sake of different ideologies is to concentrate on the various characters and their relationships in different retellings. The logic behind this approach is the epic heroes' role as bearers of ideology. Even the characters of the *Mahābhārata* are "not singular but representative, tokens of a type" (Ramanujan 1991:427). Of course, this kind of reduction of epics and literature to a play of tokens and ideologies might be construed as dangerous. It can also mean that the expression of the stories is diluted and loses many of its nuances. At any rate, within the vast totality of Indian epics there is perhaps room even for this approach.

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Caucasian Epics: Textualist Principles in Publishing

Alla Alieva

Russia is one of the rare countries in the world where living oral folk poetry traditions still exist in many different stages of development. Even today, folk singers all over Russia, from the Far North to the Far East, the Volga regions and the Northern Caucasus, are still performing oral folk poetry embodying the ancient traditions in highly artistic forms. Being part of the folklore of the Russian peoples, the heroic epic has assumed a great variety of generic structures ranging from archaic mythological monuments to their historicized counterparts based on genuine historical events, and from discrete, isolated fragments to grandiose epics of more than a hundred thousand lines. The most remarkable fact is that, though "written" in different languages, folk poetry coexists with universal literacy, and with highly developed book publishing and mass media, while still preserving its living oral traditions.

The heroic epic of the peoples of Russia has been recorded, published, and studied for close to 150 years. Russian scholarship and Soviet multinational folkloristics have accumulated a considerable volume of knowledge in the fields of collecting, publishing, and research—a subject that deserves special attention. The heroic epic is of particular interest to folklorists and researchers. It is practically impossible within the confines of the present article even to enumerate all the editions of the epic monuments of the peoples of Russia published in the original languages and/or Russian translation. These editions are being issued either in the region where an epic originated and was performed, or at one of the centers of Russian research, such as Moscow or St. Petersburg.

The following represents a brief account of my experience of working on the volumes of epic monuments published up through 1992 in the bilingual academic series entitled *Epics of the Peoples of the USSR* and thereafter *Epics of the Peoples of Eurasia*. The series has been issued by researchers from the Institute of World Literature and colleagues from the different parts of the former Soviet Union for nearly 23 years. The first

volume, on the Turkish romance epic, appeared in 1971 and was followed by volumes on Ukrainian and Uzbek (1972), Altaic (1973), Kazakh and Latvian (1975), Bashkir (1977), Turkmenian (1983), Kirghiz (1983-90), Yakut (1985), Tadjik and Komi (1987), Khakass (1988) and Kalmyk (1990) epics.

A considerable amount of space is devoted in the series to the Nart epic of the Caucasian peoples. Adygeian (1974) and Ossetic (1990) volumes have already been released and work on the Balkar-Karachaev epic has been initiated. A *Kalevala* volume was scheduled for completion by the end of 1993. I have been personally responsible for the preparation of two volumes in this series for publication, on the Adygeian and Balkar-Karachaev Nart epics. The following is a brief account of the principles employed in selecting texts for publication, translating them into Russian, and writing scientific commentaries. However, I first wish to give a short description of this remarkable monument itself.

The Nart epic, or epic about the Narts, is a collection of works from a number of Caucasian peoples, among them the Adygs, Ossetians, Chechens, Balkars, Ingushes, and some of the peoples of Daghestan and Georgia. These peoples differ in origin, history, cultural background, and language. Allowing for these distinctions (though their centuries-old common history and close cultural ties should not be discounted), the Caucasian epic monument belongs by right to each of the Caucasian peoples.

Different peoples' versions of the Nart epic share the same main heroes and plots. The specific character of its national versions is manifest in the roles played by individual heroes, in the functions performed by them, in their means of portrayal, and in their distinguishing poetic features.

In the Nart epic, mythological and realistic events are intertwined in unique ways. Bound in origin to other worlds and fantastic creatures, the main heroes are at the same time "flesh and blood" men, each with a character and a unique charm of his own. Over the centuries the epic has absorbed ideas from different epochs, but the clearly archaic nature of its plots and main characters has been preserved right up to the present day, as have related ancient beliefs and religious rites. Despite the fantastic character of the epic world and heroes, the life of the "Nart tribe" is a human one suffused with high moral standards and laws devised over the centuries by the Caucasian mountain-dwellers and including details of everyday life and ethnographic reality.

None of the Caucasian peoples can claim a textually complete version of the epic (following the pattern of, for example, the massive Kirghiz

Manas). Like the *Kalevala*, for instance, the Nart epic is a composite work consisting of a large number of autonomous stories clustered around the most popular heroes. In other words, it is a history of the epic Nart society presented in separate narratives.

The various national versions of the Nart epic differ in the positions of the main characters; some (like the Adygei version) feature more archaic characters, others (like the Chechen-Ingush epic) "more modern" ones. Each story constitutes a complete work of art with an autonomous plot. There are no cause-and-effect relationships between the narratives, which are united by the common characters that "wander" from scene to scene and from story to story. Needless to say, the epic heroes are transformed according to their contexts.

Folklore establishes certain correlations among the epic heroes; this is reflected in the cyclic structure of narratives, with epic texts arranged in groups around the main heroes. Some contain a number of stories depicting different stages in a hero's epic history, from birth to death. Together these narratives re-create an epic biography of a hero, a function of the interest shown in him by a given group of people. The cyclic biography in the Adygei epic deals with the Nart Sosrukho, the Ossetic version with Batradz, and the Balkar-Karachaev with Eruzmek. Folk singers do not always narrate a cycle in a logical order, from the birth of a hero through to his death. They may relate the events in the reverse order (telling of his birth after his death), yet the epic as a whole provides a definite and consistent life history.

Research conducted in recent years has provided evidence that one narrator may join separate episodes, motifs, and plots around one hero to create a single text briefly outlining all the events. A second may attach only few epic stories to a Nart hero (one, two, or sometimes three), and describe the hero's principal deed, his struggle against and victory over an antagonist. Other brief accounts of a hero's epic life (his miraculous birth, his heroic childhood, the way he acquired his weapons and arms) may be given as a prelude to a heroic deed. As in the biographical cycles, all the principal events in a hero's life are presented, but not all of them constitute autonomous stories. The Nart epics all observe the common principle of arranging stories into groups to form the cyclic biography, but they differ in the number of stories attached to a given hero. There are more stories telling of different periods in the lives of the oldest and best loved heroes, whereas the stories about the younger heroes tend to concentrate on their principal deeds. Also contained are elements of genealogical cycles; this is more striking in the Ossetic epic than in the other versions.

The poetic structure of the Nart epic has its own unique

characteristics closely linked to its historical origin and mode of existence. This remarkable monument bears traces of the worldview and collective consciousness of ancient peoples. The Adygei Nart epic, for example, reflects the struggle of its people against hostile forces at certain periods in its history from the late Bronze and early Iron Age to feudalism. While the plots about struggles against mythological monsters were inherited from pre-state times, the stories dealing with fights for tribal consolidation are relatively late. Even when referring to the most recent periods, the Nart epic avoids the addition of historical concreteness; it is impossible to establish links even between its most recent plots and actual historical events. It is an archaic mythological medium in which epic heroes coexist side by side with characters from pagan mythology.

As noted above, the Nart epic has been recorded, published, and studied for almost 150 years. Over the decades, much experience has been gained in the recording of epic texts, their translation into Russian, and scientific commentary.

The folklorists undertaking the publication of the volumes of the Nart epic in the *Epics of the Peoples of the USSR* series should have proceeded primarily from the uniqueness of this monument in its genre, but they also took into account the experience of Soviet and foreign folklorists. By the time the first volumes of the series appeared, the experience of the textological study of folklore based on Russian sources had been summarized (*Principy* 1966). Publishing epic monuments called for some interpretation, and a book on that subject, *Folklor: Izdanije èposa* (Petrosian 1977), was later issued by the compilers of the first volumes in the series.

The experience of foreign folklorists was also assimilated in compiling the various volumes. When the volume on the Komi folk epic was being prepared for publication (1987), a detailed study was made of the principles of compiling multi-volume collections of Finno-Ugric folklore established in the field by such scholars as M. A. Castren, H. Paasonen, K. F. Karjalainen, T. Lehtisalo, A. Kannisto, S. Aikio, J. Kecskemeti, G. Kiss, E. Lagercrantz, and V. Steinitz.

It goes without saying that the achievements of foreign experts in Caucasian folklore were taken into account in producing the volumes of the Nart epic. The first name to spring to mind is that of the great French scholar and specialist in mythology and the history of religions, Georges Dumézil. He made a valuable contribution to the study of the folklore and languages of different Caucasian peoples: the Adygeians, Kabardians,

Circassians, Ubykhs, and Ingushes.[1] No less considerable was his contribution to the collection and study of the Nart epic of the Adygeian peoples. From the 1930s onwards Dumézil made regular visits to Turkey to study the Adygs, who had settled there in the nineteenth century after the Russian-Caucasian war. He made a close study of their way of life, languages, and folklore and, most important of all, he immediately published the rare material he had recorded.[2] We thus have valuable information on the modes of existence of the Nart epic in a foreign ethnic environment. Side by side with collecting materials, Dumézil wrote a series of studies based on the analysis of all the Nart epics, including the Ossetic, Adygeian, Chechen-Ingush, Balkar-Karachaev versions. His books *Légendes sur les Nartes suivies de cinq notes mythologiques* (1930), *Loku* (1948) and *Mythe et épopée* (1968) became classics for specialists in Caucasian folklore and exerted considerable influence on the development of Nart epic research in Russia. Finally, it is thanks to Dumézil's translation into French of the Ossetic Nart stories (*Le livre des Héros*), published in 1965 in the UNESCO series of masterpieces of world literature and folklore, that the Nart epic became world famous.

In setting to work on the volumes of the Adyg and Balkar-Karachaev epics, we proceeded from the assumption that each version as a rule combines stories of several kindred peoples. Thus the Adyg Nart epic is composed of the Adygeian, Circassian, and Kabardin texts. Within each national version there exist closely related variants in different dialects (the Ironian and Digor dialects of the Ossetic language, the Karachaev and Balkar dialects of the Karachaev-Balkar language, and many dialects of the Kabardin, Adygeian, and Circassian languages). From the many variants of an epic text the compiler must choose not only the most typical ones but also those that represent different language groups. An edition of some version of the Nart epic cannot be considered complete unless it includes texts from all the languages of the given group.

In the volume on *The Narts: The Adyg Heroic Epic,* we therefore considered it necessary to include ethnic material in proportion to the different peoples within the Adyg region. We also tried to sample the most typical national versions, taking into account the limits of their

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[1] See Dumézil 1931, 1932, 1935, 1937, 1938, 1975.

[2] Dumézil published the recorded texts of Adyg folklore in the following periodicals: *Journal Asiatique*, 1955:1–47, 439–59; 1963:1-19; *Anthropos*, 54 (1959):99–128, 149–70; 55 (1960):431–62; 56 (1961):269–96; *Orientalia Suecana*, 1962:41–80. Numerous epic texts of the Nart epic were published in the *Documents* 1960-65.

dissemination, the stability of variants, and relationships with national tradition. Our work was complicated by the fact that due to the popularization of the epic by the mass media and book publishing, the interdependence among versions (that always existed) is presently increasing. More than once folklorists have recorded fairly recent borrowings of epic plots and episodes from one national version to another. Likewise, publication can have a reverse impact on oral tradition. Scholars have acknowledged that the Ossetic material has had a considerable influence on the Balkar-Karachaev, Abkhazian, and Adyg epics.

The most important stage in our work of publishing the Nart epic volume was a close analysis of the archival recordings of the text and its published variants. Part of the process of working on this volume involved a textual investigation of all the available publications of the Adyg epic. Study of a large number of stories published before the Revolution yielded more precise information on many texts ascribed to the Adygs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; there appear to be fewer texts than was thought. One reason for this discrepancy can be traced to publication practice: it was not uncommon for a text to be issued both in the original language and in Russian translation. This fact does not, however, diminish the importance of these texts, since they reproduce the living oral tradition of the epic as it was a century ago.[3] The recordings of epic stories made today provide evidence that the epic has generally reached a stage of attenuation and deformation, though it is not uncommon to hear full, virtually perfect versions of stories. Last but not least, in selecting the variants for publication, we had at our disposal not only texts whose level of recording was rather high, but also texts which, due to the present state of the epic tradition, did not reproduce the entire plot, even though some episodes were elaborated in detail and were thus of interest to scholars as evidence of the unique character of the Nart epic in its present state. The most interesting texts were included in the volume.

The idiosyncrasy of the Nart epic among the different Caucasian peoples is manifest in the fact that not only epic plots but also myths, fairy tales, toponymic legends, and anecdotes are attached to the heroes. We therefore set ourselves the task of making a clear distinction among the genres. The Nart stories involving characters from Adyg pagan mythology were thus included in the volume only if they played an important role in

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[3] All the best pre-Revolution publications were included in this volume and they serve as reliable sources for folklorists studying the development of epic tradition. Epic texts that were published in Russian translation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were placed in the supplement.

the destinies of the epic heroes. Stories about pagan gods not bound to the life of the epic society were omitted. The names of the epic heroes are, among the different Caucasian peoples, linked with the names of places and historical monuments. Toponymic stories lent added weight to the heroic plots and these texts are included in the commentaries.

One distinctive feature of the Nart epic is its close relationship with fairy tales. Many autonomous fairy tales are often attached to the name of some Nart. As a rule, however, this association does not alter either the epic nature of the hero's character or the development of the epic plot. Fairy-tale plots unassociated with Nart heroes were not included in the main body of the texts. In other cases the names of heroes are linked with folk anecdotes. Sometimes they become an organic part of an epic narrative, and these texts are included in the main body of the texts. But sometimes, if they completely deformed an epic story and caused it to lose its generic character, they were placed in the supplement. It was in our opinion vital to define precisely the generic frames of the epic monument. Otherwise the concept of the epic becomes over-enlarged, as, for example, in the seven-volume edition *Narther: Adygè èpos* (Mnekayapè, 1967-71). This edition comprises various folklore materials that, though remarkable in themselves, have nothing to do with the Nart epic.

The next task we set ourselves in compiling the volumes was choosing the variants. As mentioned above, the Nart epic is composed of rather short, autonomous stories, each of which is known in many variants. Some of the variants exist in a number of performance versions. Thus, for example, some tale-variants tell of the miraculous birth of a hero from a stone, while another describes a hero born in the natural way whose mother invents the story of his birth "to conceal her disgrace." Different versions are presented in the volume, but they are chosen from a larger number of variants—those that are the most complete and of the highest artistic value. The stories were arranged into cycles united by the name of the epic hero attached to them. The cycles were then placed in a logical order, from older to younger heroes, as they exist in folk tradition.

Work on the commentaries occupied an important place in our textual research. Russian scholarship and Soviet folkloristics have acquired a vast amount of knowledge during fieldwork and this was taken into account. The commentaries provide information not only on the epic performer or the researcher who recorded a story but also on the time and place of recording. A given text is characterized in comparison with others and its archival variants are enumerated. Thus the reader can trace the dissemination of the Adyg epic.

Some specific difficulties arose in translating the epic texts into

Russian. We tried not only to render the meaning and the content of the epic, but also to re-create in the target language the unique character of the Adyg national artistic mentality as embodied in this remarkable epic monument.

The series *The Epics of the Peoples of Eurasia* is not the only one of its kind in Russia. Alongside other genres—myths, ritual poetry, legends, fairy tales, "non-fantasy" prose—heroic epics of the peoples of Siberia are being published in the series *Folklore Monuments of the Peoples of Siberia and the Far East*, to be issued in 63 volumes. Works of folklore will be published from the Altaian, Nanaian, Nivkh, Tuvinian, Khakassian, Even, Evenk, Yakut, Dolgan, Jewish, Itelmen, Kerek, Ketian, Koryak, Mansi, Nganasanian, Negidal, Nenets, Selkup, Siberian-Tatar, Tofalar, Udege, Oulch, Khanty, Choukchian, Shor, Ents, Asian Eskimo, and Yukaghirian peoples. The publication of these volumes will reveal to the world "treasures poetical and extraordinary," as the great Leo Tolstoy said of Chechen folklore.

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Epics in the Oral Genre System of Tulunadu

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Tulu is the language spoken in Dakshina Kannada district, the coastal region of Karnataka state of South India, which is also traditionally known as Tulunadu (the Tuluva region). Since the language functions as a powerful medium of folk expression in this region, oral literature in Tulu is abundant and varied. Tulu oral tradition comprises many genres, which we can study at the small group level (micro-genre), at the regional level (macro-genre), or at the global level (mega-genre) (see Honko 1980).[1] My paper concentrates on epics in the oral genre system in Tulunadu. I will start by briefly introducing the oral genres in Tulu folk culture.

Tulu culture, still a living tradition, is structured mainly on the ideology of the agriculture of the region. Tulu oral literature is thus mainly focused on paddy cultivation, the major form of agriculture, and other types of cultivation like arecanut, coconut, plantain, and green vegetables. In fact, traditional Tuluva culture as a whole is centered around the production of paddy, coconut, and areca, and the methods and tools of such production. In this respect, the oral literature based on this kind of work culture is the predominant manifestation of Tulu culture. The *bhutas* (deities) of Tulunadu and the oral epics that are the vehicles for the genesis and dissemination of such *bhutas* are created for the purpose of protecting the lands, crops, and also the people.

Tulu oral literature comprises genres like folktales, myths, legends, proverbs, and riddles, in addition to folk poetry, which is very rich compared to other genres. Collections of proverbs and riddles in Tulu have been made and studied; to date, about 10,000 proverbs and 1000 riddles have been collected and published. The contents of these smaller genres and riddles have to do mainly with agriculture, kinship, and the family system, the caste system based on different professions, and the flora and

[1] Scholars have discussed in detail the folkloristic theories of genre (cf. Honko 1989, Ben-Amos 1992).

fauna of the Tuluva region. Folktales in Tulu have also been collected to a certain extent and classified according to the international type and motif indices. The practice of telling folktales is diminishing and at present genres like folktales, proverbs, and riddles are not as vital a part of the living tradition as they were fifty years ago.

Compared to these forms, the genres that make up Tulu oral poetry are very much part of the living tradition even now. These include *paddanas* and *sandis* (oral epics), along with songs sung in different contexts such as planting the paddy seedlings, grinding, ploughing, drawing water from the well, and other kinds of work, as well as songs sung in different social and religious ceremonies, songs connected with different types of dances, nursery rhymes, and so forth.

In addition to *paddanas*, there is an important genre of Tulu oral poetry that functions as worksong. These *kabitas* are sung as group songs in the paddy fields, normally by women while planting seedlings (*neji*). As a generic term, *kabita* is not pan-Tuluvan by nature, though the people in some regions use it in that sense. In many places people either intone the chorus line of each *kabita* independently or sing *obele* songs. *Obele* is the most popular kind of *kabita* and is pan-Tuluvan in distribution.

The singing of *kabita* is controlled by one woman who is well versed in performance and who also has a rich repertoire. She sings each line of the song, while the rest join in the chorus. This process continues with different texts, depending upon the amount of work to be done in the paddy fields. *Kabitas* vary thematically, but most of them are not complete narratives; in comparison to *paddanas*, they are shorter and looser in structure, a function of the context in which they are sung. The message conveyed can be understood by considering that context: working in the field is a relaxed, non-ritualistic pursuit.

The popular *kabita*, or *obele*, deals with the working situation.[2] A landlord seeks the help of a traditional laborer to obtain women to work in the paddy fields. He goes to fetch the women laborers and on his way back mortgages two women in order to buy liquor and betel leaves. The landlord becomes angry, and the narrative suddenly tells us that his wife becomes pregnant. The *kabita* concludes positively with the landlord's fathering two children, a boy and a girl. With appreciation of the children's generosity, the song comes to an end.

An interesting *kabita*, "Ye da balla maga duji kemmaira" ("Hello, come on, oh son, oh magnificent bull"), describes different parts of the animal's body, its gestures, and its various actions. At the end there is a

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[2] The root of this term, *bele,* means "work."

reference to the bull's waiting for the cows in camouflage, and also to their appearance. Though there is no indication in the text, in the actual singing context the women at this juncture merrily catch hold of each other. On inquiry I was told that they are simulating the action of a tiger catching the cattle. But throughout the text there is no reference whatsoever to a tiger, and this action follows immediately after the mention of the bull amorously lying in wait for the cows. What is more, the whole situation is enacted in a relaxed, contented manner rather than in an atmosphere of fear. Considering the text and its context, the *kabita* can best be interpreted as a symbolic representation of the desire for mating and motherhood on the part of women.

In the paddy fields, village women transcend the boundaries of caste, family, and social and mental restrictions. The kabitas sung in the fields by women mainly reflect female aspirations, dress, and ornaments, particularly their wish to go to temple festivals and their sexual urges. Some others reflect their relationship with birds and plants. One can thus quite comfortably arrive at the conclusion that women were the actual creators of this genre. Such *kabitas* have messages to be passed on from generation to generation of working women. The female consciousness inherent in the genre and the participation of women in performance are very important in understanding the overall cultural setup.

***Paddana* (Epic)**

In Tulu oral tradition, epics, generally called *paddanas* in local generic terminology,[3] are the most popular and most widely distributed genre. Scholars have discussed the etymology, content, structure, context, and meaning of these *paddanas*, which form a major part of Tulu oral poetry and are found in different forms with different themes and presented for different communicative purposes. In other words, they vary both in content and context.

In a series of papers, Peter J. Claus has discussed the structure of *paddanas* as a genre. He identifies them as a mixture of myth and legend, maintaining that "much of this body of tradition consists of legends of the local spirits and deities, bhutas, and daivas" (1978). Heidrun Brückner (1987) identifies *paddanas* as myths: "He (the performer) performs ecstatic

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[3] The people use the terms *paddana* and *sandi* many times as synonyms, and there seems to be no specific distinction between them. The generic terms used by the people vary from place to place, context to context, and also person to person.

dances which sometimes reflect or enact events referred to in the myth. These myths are called *paddanas* in Tulu." She further observes that "the *paddanas* make up a mythological, linguistic and poetic corpus which strengthens the cultural identity of major sections of the non-brahmin Tulu speaking population." In his paper on "Folk Poem as Epic" (1986), D. Rao studies the folk epic model with reference to the Tulu *paddana*. According to him,

> Most of the Tulu *paddanas* have a geo-historical, legendary, or mythical base. In turn, they animate the landscape, history, legend or myth that sustains the folk tradition. . . . The *paddanas* call for a modified aesthetic, a different creative critical model which might facilitate a more precise understanding of the creative factors at work in the Tulu folk imagination.

A large number of *paddanas* deal with the origin and dissemination of *bhutas*. Such *paddanas* are normally recited in the context of *bhuta* performances like *kola* and *nema*. The performers of a particular *bhuta* recite the lines mostly while putting on make-up. Usually a woman from the performer's family joins in reciting the alternate lines, and her recitation is accompanied by rhythmic beating of a drum (*tembare*). Considering this context of recitation, the preliminary one for the *bhuta* performance, one must not simply conclude that *paddanas* can be defined as a genre in terms of that context only. The question that should be posed here is whether this is the only natural context of *paddana* recitation, and the answer may be a complex one. In the *bhuta* performance, only portions of the *paddana* text are recited, and often the recitation or performance cannot be explained in relation to the text. There are some occasions when no *paddana* recitation takes place, yet the participants do not consider the performance incomplete. A small portion of the text, even when it does have a context, is not useful for identifying the epic as a genre.

Paddanas (or *sandis*) are also sung in the paddy fields while plucking seedlings. The work songs sung in the context of planting the seedlings are called *kabitas*, which I have discussed above. The very fact that the *sandis* or *paddanas* are performed as work songs, normally by women, indicates that there is no prohibition against singing them outside the *bhuta* performance context. The female performers may be two or three in number, and the singing goes along with their labor. Even in such cases the whole text of the *paddana* is many times not recited, and the duration of the recitation as a whole will depend on the magnitude of work to be done in the paddy field.

One major subgenre of oral epic is the ballad-cycle type. The compilation and proper edition of different variants of *paddanas* dealing with a particular deity or *bhuta* reveals the existence of such a cycle. These include combinations of tales depicting the origin and dissemination of *bhutas*, such as Panjurli, Jumadi, and Guliga. These are not variants of a single *paddana*, but are different episodes in the life of a particular *bhuta*. Whether such composite edited versions can be termed true epics is a point for discussion.

This process of compilation leading to ballad-cycle and folk epic can be illustrated by taking the Panjurli *paddana* as a model. More than fifteen *paddanas* have already been collected, all of them dealing with the Panjurli *bhuta*. Some of them concern genesis, and the remaining ones relate to diffusion in different parts of the Tuluva region. Those relating to origins vary in content and also in length. More than five variants agree as far as the core of the *paddana* is concerned; the Panjurli *bhuta* is the transformation of a wild boar's offspring that were cursed for their evil deeds, mainly for destroying crops, and subsequently transformed into the *bhuta*. Interestingly, in one version, the narrative about the genesis of Panjurli is made to include even the Vedic gods, as Vishnu's sweat is transformed into Panjurli. Likewise, Shiva has been depicted as a character possessing the qualities of both the deity and a village farmer.

More than ten *paddanas* exist that give an account of the adventures of Panjurli *bhuta* and thereby its dissemination in the Tuluva region. All of the episodes substantiate the supremacy of Panjurli *bhuta* and the reasons for its worship in different places. With its magical power Panjurli causes buffaloes tethered to a jackfruit tree to vanish, momentarily blinds the priest who carried the god in procession at Dharmasthala, makes the elephant of the Kepaadi temple fall sick, does the same to the cattle at Kalle beedu, kills the two wives of Hebri Ballala, and so on.

Thus it is that Panjurli *bhuta* exhibits its supreme power through an array of magical deeds. The people who are affected approach the soothsayer, who with the help of magical objects discovers the reason for the disaster, namely, Panjurli's miracle. The remedy for the calamity is also provided by the soothsayer: he suggests that a shrine should be built for Panjurli and a festival performed. The people act accordingly and are saved from the disaster. These same incidents, with some variation in the manifestation of the calamity, are repeated in neighboring places. Thus Panjurli is worshipped in different places for different reasons, all concerned with untoward events involving the people, their crops, and their cattle. This is the formulaic framework for the geographical diffusion of Panjurli. The same framework can be applied to many other *bhutas* as

well. In every locale a *bhuta* like Panjurli is worshipped and a shrine is built in order to release social and religious tensions created at a critical juncture.[4]

Like any genre of folklore, *paddanas* also have to do with forming and attempting to resolve oppositions. The oppositions here include life/death, good/evil, truth/falsehood, love/hate, innocence/guilt, male/female, man/god, and so forth. The concept of *bhuta* itself is the result of the blending of oppositions, since synchronization of god and man, or of god and animal, is achieved in the individual characters of *bhutas*. Such characters embody the opposition of hero/villain as individuals, and this contrast constitutes a major pattern of epic composition.

Long Epic

Another type of oral narrative in Tulu is the long epic, the two major members of the genre being the *Siri* epic and *Koti-Chennaya*. These epics are unique in their length, content, performance tradition, and relationship to cultural identity. The *Siri* epic, which Lauri and Anneli Honko, Chinnappa Gowda, and I have documented, runs to about 25 hours, while the *Koti-Chennaya*, also the object of study by our research group, is about 14 hours long. The *Siri* epic, which Gopala Naika sang for our project, had never before been performed by him in its entirety. In fact, this is the case with most of the oral epics in Tulunadu, since there were no opportunities or inducements for the singers to perform the epics as wholes or conglomerates. Portions of the *Siri* epic are sung at the Siri festival and also in the associated ritual, the *paliyo daliyo*. In this respect it can be inferred that the complete *Siri* epic was the "mental text" of Gopala Naika, the master version that informed all smaller performances, and it was only for documentation purposes that he sang the epic from beginning to end.

The normal contexts for singing the *Siri* epic are the Siri festival and ritual. The portions performed during these events are mainly the introductory parts of the epic, including salutations to different gods, the installation of idols, and references to the performing centers of the Siri festival and their distribution. Actually, these ancillary sections are not found in the performed epic text of *Siri*. Gopala Naika, who organizes the whole troupe of women for possession, sings these portions at the Siri

[4] The seasonal changes that occur at a particular transition period, for example Sankranthi or Sankramana, are of great significance because of their close relationship with *bhuta* worship in Tuluva culture.

festival to prepare the women for their assumption of group identity. In a sense this is the beginning of the ritualization of the epic at the festival. The birth of Siri, some important events in the epic, and the episode of playing *chenne,* a board game, are also narrated in a dramatic style at the Siri festival.[5]

The content of the *Siri* epic is mythic in character, and this quality makes the epic more relevant to *Siri* performance, which is also mythic in nature. Though there is no complete dramatization of the *Siri* epic text in the performance context, the characters of the epic are actualized in the form of men (Kumaras) and women (Siris). In this respect, the *Siri* epic takes the shape of a mythical drama in a general sense. But such dramatization is restricted only to the dialogues between the main characters of the epic texts, that is, between Siri and her children. There is a unique moment in the Siri festival at which the epic characters, the twin sisters Abbaya and Daraya, play the *chenne*. Here again the epic text takes the form of a sequence of dialogues dramatizing the performance context of the game.

This narrative of Siri and the members of her next two generations has been accepted by local women as a symbol of their social identity, and with their approval and enthusiasm the narrative has taken the shape of an epic. The increased frequency and currency of singing the *Siri* epic stems mainly from the increasing popularity of Siri festivals, which is in turn dependent on the social structure of the family in Tulunadu. In this respect, the survival and revival of oral epics is driven by the necessity of a group of people to communicate in response to pressure that derives from different familial and social factors. Though the Siri festivals are not occasions for performance of the complete text of the *Siri* epic, they have supported its continuation and accelerated its distribution in Tulunadu. Both women and men who participate in these festivals are induced to learn and use the *Siri* epic.

Koti-Chennaya is another epic very popular in Tulunadu. It concerns the twin heroes Koti and Chennaya, their heroic deeds, and finally their deification as *daivas* (local gods). Selected portions of *Koti-Chennaya* are sung in different contexts:

1. while performing *Agelu seve* in the shrines (*garadi*) of Koti-Chennaya,

[5] The *Siri* epic is sung outside the ritualistic context as well, chiefly while plucking the paddy seedlings. This context is the one that cuts across the form and content of all types of Tulu epic.

2. during ritual performance, specifically the annual festival in front of the shrines (*Baidarle nema*),
3. while tapping toddy from palm trees,
4. while plucking paddy seedlings in the paddy fields,
5. in the marriage ceremony during the traditional decoration with colors (*madarangi*),
6. in a satirical theatrical performance called the Purusha dance,
7. during a marriage or funeral ceremony,
8. while peeling dry areca nuts, and
9. during leisure time for the purpose of relaxation.

These various contexts for singing the epic indicate how portions of the epic are used for different purposes.

Portions of the *Koti-Chennaya* epic, sung in different situations, sometimes demonstrate definite relations between an epic text and a performance context. Consider, for example, the women singing particular portions of the epic while plucking the seedlings in the paddy fields; an example is the episode of the meeting of Koti and Chennaya with their elder sister Kinnidaru, with the enthusiasm of Kinnidaru and the jubilant way she receives the younger brothers. Since these working women are known for their hospitality in real life, they find expression for their inner feelings by singing this episode in the paddy fields. Or consider the ritual of decorating the palms and feet with colors, a practice connected with the marriage ceremony (*madarangi*). This ritual is performed for both the bride and the bridegroom on the day before their marriage. The portions sung on this occasion describe the bringing up of the children, Koti and Chennaya, by the Ballala and their auspicious shaving ceremony.

The major portions of the epic are performed during the Baidarle kola, the ritual performance with Koti and Chennaya as mythical heroes. The twin heroes belong to the Baidya or Biruva community whose traditional profession is toddy tapping. These heroes protest against the Ballalas, the feudal kings, and at the end of the epic they succumb to death in a heroic war, after which they are deified as *daivas*. Since Koti and Chennaya happen to belong to the Biruva toddy-tapping community, the people of that community have identified themselves with Baidarle nema, the festival of Koti and Chennaya, and they consider the *Koti-Chennaya* epic and its performance as an expression of their cultural identity. In modern times, more and more shrines are being built by these communities. The *Koti-Chennaya* epic has been used in different media like drama, *yakshagana* folk theatre, and cinema. These media are employed to

popularize the epic, and the Biruva community is organizing itself as a strong cultural unit with this epic at the center.

The *Koti-Chennaya* narrative is also sung during Purusha vesha, a folk theatre that is not as religious as that of *kola* or *nema,* the *bhuta* performances. It has been collected by Mr. Vamana Nandavara, a researcher working with me, from two informants (Monta and Erappa Gowda), who perform the roles of Koti and Chennaya in a version that runs to about 24 hours. These two Gowda men participate as Koti and Chennaya in the Purusha dance, a performance that ridicules the traditional folk religion, including *bhuta* performances. Though they do not recite the entire *Koti-Chennaya paddana* in this satirical theatrical performance, the portion that they do perform jointly (with alternative lines in succession) is a product of such theatrical performance. Here the message of the *paddana* is relaxation and not ritual effectiveness.

In short, the oral epics of Tulunadu have different origins, contents, forms, styles, structures, contexts, functions, frequencies, and distributions. The large number of epics, used in different living contexts, presents a challenge for scholars because the multiplicity of themes and performance situations engenders a variety of definitions and explanations. Each oral epic in the Tuluva tradition poses problems, rather than convenient generalizations, in fixing the given epic within the traditional genre system. The *paddanas* are shorter in length if the individual performance-texts are considered separately, as compared to the *Siri* and *Koti-Chennaya* epics, and it remains an open question whether these *paddanas* can be included under the epic rubric. As regards the establishment of a link between the various *paddanas* focusing on a particular *bhuta*, does the concept of ballad-cycle hold or not? Is the mythic milieu the basic structure of oral epics? At least for Tulu oral epics, it is a necessary dimension. The epics of Tulunadu lead us to a world of revelation, not only in their form and content but also in their generic complexity.

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