In praise of death : history and poetry in medieval Marwar (South Asia)

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5 Fierce Virtues

The summary of the narrative content and prosodic form of the *chamd*s, *duha*s, *parvaro* and *git*s in the previous chapters illustrates which story-lines, themes, episodes, plots and protagonists are commonly part of the Pabuji tradition. Here, I will ask how all the selected verses dedicated to Pabuji can best be classed. May all verses indeed be thought of, as I have been doing thus far, as part of the most widespread and oldest known narrative heritage, the global tradition of heroic and epic poetry? To answer this question, I will first review some of the problems of genre classification, in particular the problems that arise when studying scholarly definitions of heroic, epic and devotional poetry and their bearing on poetry dedicated to Pabuji. Subsequently, aspects of the narrative content, descriptive conventions and symbolic meaning of the poems dedicated to Pabuji are discussed, including the prosodic form of the poems and the martial purpose ascribed to the forceful rhythm and rhyme schemes used by medieval Charan poets. To conclude this chapter, I will make a first attempt at genre classification by asking to what extent Rajasthani and other scholarly definitions of heroic-epic genres assist in categorizing the poets' portrayal of Pabuji and his companions. The main argument of this chapter is that the classification of the poems under review as "heroic" and/or "epic" presents several problems given that this heritage includes genres that have been described in rather incongruent ways by scholars of Asian and European heroic-epic traditions.

Working definitions

Short and long poetry dedicated to Pabuji is most often classified as *vir* (heroic) *kāvy* (poetry) by referring to its subject matter: the versification of the heroism and martial ethos of medieval warriors.[231] Longer poems, like *duha* I, can also be classified as *prabaṃdh kāvy*, or lengthy, narrative poetry which defines the poem according to its form and narrative content. The poems are also classified according to their metre. Thus, short praise poetry with a heroic content are listed as Dimgal *gīt*. In addition, short and long praise poems, and poems with a more "epic" length are all classified according to their metric structure as well (Dimgal *dūhā* and *chaṃd*). The *parvaro* is classed according to its heroic and devotional content, comprising heroic battle deeds and divine miracle tales, while I have not yet been

[231] My understanding of Rajasthani classifications of poetry is based on (*passim*): N.S. Bhati (1973, 1983, 1989a), Deval (2000), Gahalot (1979), Kaviya (1997, 2000), Kharair (1999), Lalas (1988, 1960), Maheshwari (1989), Menariya (1968, 2000), Samaur (1999), Shekhavat (1968, 1979).

able to class it according to its metrical structure. Heroic-epic poetry dedicated to Pabuji, whether long or short, and whether it has a heroic and/or devotional theme, is also classed *Charan kāvy* or Charan poetry, in a reference to the poets with whom the tradition is thought to have originated and ignoring the fact that Rajput, Dhadhi, Bhat, Motisar, Bhil Bhopa and Brahmin poets are also known to have contributed to heroic-epic Dimgal poetry. The catalogues of Rajasthan's research institutes also document a rather open-ended approach to genres and the poems narrative and prosodic characteristics, given that the *git*s, *duha*s, *chamd*s and *parvaro*s dedicated to Pabuji have been catalogued under various headings, including "historical poetry", "heroic poetry", "epic poetry", or "devotional song".[232]

Traditional European definitions of epic genres centre on their length (long), content (heroic) and form (poetry). Such definitions commonly exclude shorter compositions like heroic poems that are commonly defined as an initial phase in the development of epic. Heroic poetry, praise poetry, eulogy and/or "pre-epic panegyric" all qualify as short poems with little narrative progression created in praise of the war deeds and deaths of (semi) historical protagonists. This literature of songs of praise, satire, laments for the dead and war-songs is at times described as a primary genre in which narrative is implicit and epic is "embrionically present" (De Vries 1963: 250). Especially heroic songs, eulogy and panegyric are seen as the sources from which truly long, narrative epic compositions sprang (Hatto 1980: 272).[233] Thus, if one would take length as the main characteristic of epic poetry then most of the shorter *virakāvy* compositions do not fall into the category "epic" but are better thought of as heroic poetry, eulogy, war-songs and/or pre-epic panegyric. Blackburn (1986: 3f), on the other hand, holds that South Asian epic has less affiliation with praise-poems and poetic metres than with song traditions and song-rhythms. As noted in chapter 1, he tentatively traces the narrative development of wideranging regional single-story traditions to pre-epic multi-story traditions with a limited geographical and social range that are restricted in length and thematic interests (Blackburn 1989: 1-32).

To explain how local, multi-story traditions become supra-regional single-story traditions of epic proportions, Blackburn (1989: 1-32) connects narrative changes to a story's geographical and social spread. He suggests a direct relation between, on the one hand, the expansion of story telling traditions to sub-regional, regional and supra-regional audiences, and changes in the narrative structure as well as socio-political or ritual purpose of a genre, on the other. Variant versions of a story, argues Blackburn, should be explained in terms of a "narrative building"

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[232] See, for instance, the RRI catalogue *Marvar-Maratha etihasik patravali* and their 8-volume *Jodhpur ke hastalikhit granthom ki suci* (N.S. N.S. Bhati 1974-1999), and the *Rajasthani etihasik granthom ka vivaranatmak suci patra* (*kaviraja samgraha*) published by the *Shri Natnagar Shodh Samsthan* (Sitamau: 1991).

[233] Hatto (1980: 17) further notes (paraphrasing Maurice Bowra [1951]) that there may be a resemblance between panegyric, lament and heroic poetry; "with 'historical priority' probably belonging to the panegyric". Voorwinden (1989: 63) suggests that epic evolves from heroic songs.

process that evolves by means of "cumulative sequences of motifs". In other words, a story, crossing local and regional borders thus expands to epic proportions by accumulating themes, imagery and episodes. However, as already noted in the introduction to this study, the study of the medieval Pabuji tradition clarifies that it is difficult to imagine a transition from supposedly pre-epic poetry to today's vernacular epics. This transition will be discussed in chapter 10, when I detail how my study of the Pabuji tradition illustrates the problems involved in defining heroic poetry as an initial phase in the development of epic and the idea that South Asian epic has no affiliation with praise poetry.

Traditional definitions of epic are as problematic as above attempts to classify heroic poetry. The question is, as Finnegan (1992: 137f, 150f) argues, whether the attempt to arrive at unambiguous, standardized genre typologies is a valid undertaking (cf. Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi 2002: *passim*). Contemporary studies highlight the limitations of the definition of "epic" as long narrative poetry with a heroic content.[234] Questions have been raised about all three aspects of the above genre classification: the length, form and content of epic. How long should an epic narrative be? Does it contain several ten-thousands of lines, like the Tibetan Ge Sar epic (cf. Samuel 1992 711f) or can a few thousand lines also be termed "long", as can be gauged from Smith's (1991: *passim*) description of the extant *paṛ* epic of Pabuji? Can shorter narrative poems with a heroic content and episodic structuring be described as epic? As far as I know, there exists no consensus about answers to these questions. The same can be said about the question whether epic is always transmitted in the form of narrative poetry. Studies of South Asian epic traditions by Blackburn (1986, 1989) and Smith (1991) document that not all epic is poetry and that present-day Rajasthani performers use poetry and prose to tell their epic tales. Likewise subject to debate are definitions of the form of epic narrative.[235] Is epic one unified poem that integrates episodes about one hero into epic cycles or is it a multi-story tradition that narrates the tale of several heroes?

As is illustrated by relatively recent attempts to offer a wide-ranging definition of epic, limited definitions of epic continue to inspire contemporary studies. An example is Beissinger's (1999: 10f) working definition of epic as a *"poetic narrative of length and complexity that centres around deeds of significance to the community*", which serves to transcend the divide between oral an written epic

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[234] Like, for instance: Finnegan (1992: *passim*), Kelly (1994: *passim*), Nagy (1999: 1-21), Oberhelman (1994: *passim*), Mayaram (2004), Ong (1999: 18-27), Smith (1989b: 29-41, 1991: passim, 1999: 267-305) and Reynolds (1999: 155-168).

[235] Definitions of narrative itself have also come to encompass wide-ranging verbal and non-verbal forms, particularly in anthropological studies of the narrative aspect of contemporary heroic-epic poetry, prose and performance traditions. Narrative and narration are understood in a rather wide sense to connote all verbal and non-verbal forms where temporal sequence is implied, including visual and plastic art narratives. Scholars of performance traditions, moreover, highlight that narrative is not just the outcome of oral or written narration but can also be studied as an act or process, which may result in verbal and non-verbal forms of expression (Finnegan 1992: 41-45, 154).

and thus aims to provide a more complex sense of epic as a "larger genre" that can include various forms, genres and historical backgrounds. This definition nevertheless continues to be based on ambiguous nomenclature like "length", "complexity" and "significance" and leaves out prose genres or genres which contain poetry intermixed with prose tales. In addition, such a definition of epic excludes divine and/or magical content and ritual characteristics of heroic and epic genres the world over. Beissinger's (1999: 2) working definition of epic appears to exclude tales that depend largely on magical episodes. She ignores the religious and devotional content of South Asian epics by restricting epic content to "deeds of significance" and "deeds of grandeur or heroism", but she does not further define "significance", "grandeur" or "heroism". Thus the question arises whether some deeds are to be seen as less "heroic" or "epic" than others because they were achieved with magical, divine or other superhuman aid? The garb of epic hero would clearly not fit Pabuji if "great deeds" can only be done by epic heroes who fight their battles alone, without the help of gods or semi-divine creatures. Nor does he fit the description of an epic hero who is never defeated in battle but always vanquishes his enemy. Some poets of his tradition do ascribe magical and/or semi-divine qualities to Pabuji. And he does die in battle in many versions of his tale. It is, however, precisely his battle-death portrayed as a realization of the martial ideal of self-sacrifice in battle by the poets, which renders Pabuji a truly outstanding warrior-hero and hero-god in Marwar.

Clearly, in discussing South Asian oral and classic, written epic, the divide between mythical, magical and/or semi-historical heroic content of epic is contrived. In South Asian heroic-epic traditions, including the Rajasthani Pabuji tradition, divine intervention and magic are common story-elements. Classic and contemporary heroic-epic poetry tells the tale of gods and other celestial beings who regularly get involved with human heroes and their adventures not only to alleviate their troubles but also to aggravate them (cf. Smith 1989a: 190f). Divine intervention, miracle-stories, supernatural occurrences and so forth are as much part of heroic and epic poetry as they are of myth. The protagonists of heroic-epic traditions may be historical men and women, or human actors with semi-divine qualities or magical talents and gods who are in some way related to human protagonists, for example through marriage. Besides, South-Asian epic heroes are commonly identified as incarnations of the divine and/or part or whole embodiments of aspects of gods and goddesses and other mythological figures. It is not clear to me whether or not the latter feature is perhaps a specific South-Asian element of epic, as Blackburn (1989: 1-32) argues when comparing Indian oral epics to African epic traditions. However, Miller's (2000: 2-5, 31f) more recent study of epic heroes across cultures and

through time suggests that heroic-epic traditions the world over incorporate all types of heroes, including those who use magic and/or die in battle.[236]

South Asian oral and written epics do, as far as I am able to judge, seem to have one distinguishing characteristic: the ritual setting and function of epic, in particular epic traditions with primarily martial and/or sacrificial themes. What is clear, as remarked before, is that the selected poems dedicated to Pabuji all have a devotional stance, for most of the poets saw their work as a way to invoke the blessings of gods and goddesses in general or of Pabuji in particular.[237] Thus the traditional definition of the subject matter of epic as centred on the semi-historical deeds of human heroes also needs to be questioned. But then how should one define narratives which are epic in length and form, and which centre on magical and divine deeds and also on heroic war deeds with a semi-historical bearing? The main issue involved in the classification of Dimgal heroic and/or epic genres is, I feel, that heroic and epic genres have a primarily "multifarious nature" and by and large cut across traditional genre distinctions. As Hatto (1980: 290f) proposes, in discussing the above and other questions, the themes and underlying heroic ideology of any epic can be realized in other genres too, for example, through hero-tales, myths or plays. This point is furthered below, when I take into account the symbolic meaning underlying the narrative content of the selected poems, their historical function and oral characteristics, and conclude that all these aspects of the Pabuji tradition give reason to think of the selected poems as part of one tradition of heroic-epic poetry with devotional as well as heroic characteristics.

Oral culture

Another scholarly issue which needs to be discussed when one tries to define heroic-epic genres is the oral and/or written transmission of these traditions and the manner in which they relate to each other. Since the themes and underlying heroic ideology of any epic can be "realized" in other genres too, Hatto (1980: 290f) proposes that we seek "epicality" in the "epic manner", or oral characteristics of texts and the delivery style, diction and song of poets and bards. Like the above examination of definitions of heroic and epic genres, the discussion of the "orality-literacy continuum" which characterizes these genres, has many more theoretical implications than I could adequately consider here. For the purpose of this study, the discussion of orality-literacy theories has been limited to the way in which oral composition is thought to

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[236] Moreover, gods and divine or miraculous occurrences are also part of quite a few epic traditions, including some European traditions, termed "mythic-historic" epic by Miller (2000: 2-5) and include the portrayal of epic heroes as demi-gods and/or human beings who are related to or comparable to gods.

[237] Comparable to devotional feelings expressed through "bhakti" (religious devotion, loving faith), the mainstay of heterodox devotional traditions in South Asia. However, the medieval and contemporary poetry and devotional practices of the Pabuji tradition are not commonly referred to with *bhakti*, nor do the poets of the tradition refer to devotion as *bhakti*, and for this reason I do not employ this phrase in this study either.

shape the narrative of heroic-epic genres, in so far these theories further an understanding of the form of the medieval manuscript poems dedicated to Pabuji. As can be appreciated from the contradictory opinions about the literary status of the Dimgal heritage described earlier, this subject continues to inform contemporary studies on the Pabuji tradition, in particular the traditional division between oral and written compositions that is often made to coincide with non-literate and "therefore" unsophisticated folk genres as opposed to the literate and "therefore" refined poetry of court poets. To my mind, it is this opposition between oral and written traditions which is at the root of past and present ambiguous classifications of Dimgal heroic-epic poetry.

The history of Dimgal heroic-epic poetry written by poet-scholar Kaviya from Jodhpur (1997: *passim*) illustrates the strong opposition provoked by the suggestion that Dimgal heroic-epic poetry may have oral origins. The text-bound bias demonstrated by Kaviya (1997: 29-31) leads to an appraisal of Dimgal poetry as a purely literary and written genre, and has given rise to the idea that similarities in the form and content of oral and written Dimgal genres were brought about by "folk poets" who copied original written material.[238] As a result Kaviya holds that Dimgal poetry was first created in writing and later recited to a public, and is the exclusive vocation of high-caste Charan poet-kings who composed it under the dignified patronage of Rajput royalty. In this view, oral folk traditions transmitted by illiterate often low-caste poets, singers and performers who sing for their upkeep can not be compared with the Dimgal heroic-epic tradition.[239]

It is the definition of the manuscript tradition of Dimgal poetry as a written "Great Tradition", a heritage of literary texts which elaborates elite court culture that disconcerts scholars who hold that literary, written works and oral compositions are each other's direct opposites and therefore seem to find it difficult to fathom the oral characteristics of written Dimgal poetry. However, the world over, heroic-epic traditions are thought to have their roots in "primary oral cultures" or societies or communities with no knowledge of writing. This is evident from, for example, research on the oral qualities of Sanskrit epic, the early Greek Homeric tradition and from enquiries into the oral substratum that underlies the biblical tradition.[240] From Ong's study of primary epic it appears that this kind of genre commonly has it roots in oral cultures (societies with no knowledge of writing), and thus he defines primary epic as the "oral verbalisations of history" by non-literate cultures or communities, as

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[238] A distinction, which, as Ong (1999: 24) notes, has been challenged comparatively recently in European literary history with Milman Parry's description of the oral noetics of Homeric texts adding nuance to idealized interpretations of Greek antiquity and its purported written culture of literary "high art".

[239] This distinction appears to derive mainly from contemporary caste restrictions, which are now attached to various ways of performing, for example, the distinction between the epic heritage of Pabuji's scheduled caste Bhopa performers and heroic-epic poetry dedicated to Pabuji composed by high-caste Charan literati.

[240] See Innis (1972: 53-84), Oberhelman et.al. (1994: *passim*), Ong (1999: 169, 1981: 123f), Smith (1980: 70f), Staal (1986: *passim*).

opposed to the "written verbalisation" of history by chirographic, i.e. manuscript cultures (Ong 1999: 11-12). This definition is not, as one might expect, meant to highlight the traditional divide between oral and written texts, implying that oral traditions are the product of an earlier stage of human development, which was supplanted by later written culture.[241] On the contrary, oral traditions continue to exist side by side with chirographic and typographic cultures. All "modelling systems of human thought", as Ong (*ibid.*) coins oral, chirographic and typographic cultures, retain a mind-set of primary orality, while "secondary orality" applies to contemporary oral culture as sustained by high-technology media.[242]

Scholars who contest conventional portrayals of oral and literary cultures as opposed categories propose various classifications of oral genres comprising verbal expression from traditional oral songs performed by non-literate singers to "oral-cum-post-oral texts", which are part of the heritage of literate poets, writers and performers in chirographic societies (cf. Beissinger 1999: 10, Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi 2001: 105-118, Graziosi 2006: *passim*). The latter genres embrace orally-derived chirographic texts, written versions of orally composed texts that serve as a memory aid for oral performances, written compositions that are orally recited for an audience or transmitted from one generation of poets to another and, lastly, "fixed" or memorized forms of oral transmission as opposed to flexible or recomposed oral forms. For the purpose of this study, it is important to note that post-oral, "secondary" heroic-epic poetry (also defined as "written verbalisation" of chirographic cultures) continues to reveal the results of oral transmission techniques, in particular, in the narrative and prosodic structuring of their form and content.[243] Even after heroic-epic traditions are wholly or partly fixed in writing in chirographic cultures, their "oral residue" remains in evidence, particularly in its episodic structuring, i.e. the fact that heroic-epic narrative is recollected through episodes or "informational cores" clustered around themes and formulaic expressions.

Ong's studies (1999, 1982) make evident that the limited capacity of human memory requires the mnemonic structuring of oral memorization to enable a poet to effectively remember a narrative during its oral performance. Episodic structuring makes it possible for a poet to remember epic narratives in parts and in a non-linear fashion, instead of having to perform a lengthy epic verbatim and in a linear way. As

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[241] Following Vansina (1997: 27), I use the term "oral tradition" to refer to the process of handing down knowledge through oral transmission and to indicate the outcome of this transmission, including oral and written epic, song, poetry, performance and so forth. Oral traditions are thought to include all kinds of verbal communication, including non-verbal communications like artifacts, archaeological relics, monuments or landmarks. Following Finnegan (1992: 7) and Zarilli (1992: 91), I think of "tradition" as a "dynamic system of human actions in an ongoing process of generation and degeneration", which results in ideas, believes, knowledge, feelings and practices that are part of a local, regional or national culture.

[242] For a further discussion of this premise, see Goody (1968) and Finnegan (1977, 1988, 1991, 1992).

[243] My review of the mnemonic structuring of epic narrative is primarily based on (*passim*): Beck (1989), Den Boer (1986), Downing (1992), Easthope (1983), (Finnegan (1977, 1988, 1991, 1992), J.M. Foley (1990), Obeyesekere (1997), Oberhelman et. al. (1994), Ong (1999, 1982), Parry (1985); Peabody (1975), Reynolds (1999) and Rubin (1995).

a result, redundancy and reiteration are common features of oral or orally-derived heroic-epic genres (Ong 1999: 38f). By transmitting his story in episodes, an oral poets can recall epic narratives that may run in to thousands of verses, as is illustrated by the oral rendition of the epic of Pabuji by contemporary Bhopas noted down by Smith (1991: *passim*). This contemporary performance generally contains more than 4000 lines, comprising thirteen episodes and takes about 36 hours to perform. Smith's study of the oral performance of Pabuji's contemporary epic makes clear that the Bhopas have a vast repertoire of episodes at hand from which they choose according to circumstances and audience demand. The episodes of Pabuji's epic are therefore not performed in a way that is necessarily chronological, given that one episode may be more popular than others and specific occasions may call for the performance of different episodes.

The performance setting of epic may render an oral narrative redundant, since redundancy gives a poet some breathing space while he searches for the next line or episode in his mind, and also helps an audience in keeping track of the events during long performances. Traditional poets and performers aim at a "conventional realization" of traditional stories for an audience that usually knows the beginning and the end of an epic tale just as well as the poet does (cf. Peabody 1975: 176). Thus epic tales should not be judged according to whether or not they are told in a chronological manner, as redundancy does not affect a performance in a negative way for "there is a gap between the notional totality of epic as oral tradition and the practical limitations of epic in actual performance" (Nagy 1999: 28). The success of a performance and the status ascribed to a poet depend on the way in which he knows to tell a story, his ability to deliver a poem as beautifully embellished as possible through his choice of words, metaphors, digressions and his prosodic brilliance. In telling and re-telling Pabuji's story again and again, it is not so much its story-line or plot as it is the poet's rendition or "artistic enactment" (Nagy) of parts of the story that will hold the attention of an audience.

A traditional poet's mnemonic devices also include formulaic structuring which help him remember long narratives by "thinking memorable thoughts", formed through metrical and thematic memory aids and stereotyped expressions or formulas: a group of words which is habitually employed to express a basic thought under similar metrical conditions (Peabody 1975: 179).[244] Smith (1981: 57-28) reports that the oral performance of the contemporary Pabuji *paṛ* epic is formulaic and is transmitted near-verbatim in each singing, not because the performers learned the long composition by heart, but because the performers know how to recall, almost verbatim, the major occurrences of Pabuji's story as they know it, and they are able to augment these occurrences by recalling the conventional formulae through which these occurrences are customarily told. In the process, "the meaning structure" of an epic poem does not always coincide with its metrical structure

[244] A definition, which was first phrased by Parry and elaborated upon by, amongst others, Ong (1999: 21-25 and 1982: 92-120) and Smith (1991: 20).

(Rubin 1995: 205). In other words, prosodic needs often receive priority over a composition's meaning. The submission of meaning to mnemonic requirements in the existing oral epic tradition of Pabuji has been demonstrated by Smith (1991: 14-16), who records how the Bhopa performers of the Pabuji epic add spoken prose sections to the verse narrative in order to explain the meaning of the poetic fragments to their audience, since the poetic language and archaic word use render part of the contemporary tradition incomprehensible to their audiences.

Third, oral memorisation techniques are also thought to have a bearing on the content of epic traditions, in particular on the portrayal of epic heroes and their deeds. Pabuji and his fellow protagonist are typological heroes, who conduct themselves according to patterns within a set frame of reference, namely the worldview of the epic community that transmits his story.[245] This kind of hero is the literal embodiment of the warrior ethos of fighting classes for his heroism is like his "armour and other outward trappings: its source is located outside himself, in a set of values and goals prescribed for him, then upheld and defended by him" (Cigman 1994: 165). As the embodiment of the martial ethos of medieval warriors of Marwar, the Rathaur and Bhil heroes are portrayed as courageous warriors who are ever ready to fight, willingly sacrificing their lives in battle. These antagonistic virtues can be recognized as near-universal heroic conventions which reportedly developed across cultures and were time and again defined as ideals including physical courage, physical and emotional strength, martial skills and honourable conduct (Goldstein 2001: *passim*). The "epic love of war" which from a historical angle can be understood as resulting from clan conflicts, and warrior ethos may, from the point of view of orality-literacy studies, be seen as yet another example of the oral noetics or the "agonistic dynamics of oral thought processes" (Ong), rendering battle and death generic to epic. The "flat" characterisation of the virtuous and accomplished hero can also be appraised as the result of mnemonic needs; the conventional depiction of brave heroes, glorious battle and violent death further a poet's ability to summon up his story.[246]

In conclusion, I feel that heroic, epic, praise and panegyric poetic and/or prose genres are probably best thought of, like Ong (1999: 44f) proposes, as oral and written genres which are shaped by the "oral noetics" prevalent in agonistic societies or communities of warriors, a highly polarized world where good and evil, virtue

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[245] See Miller (2000: 162) and Cigman (1994: 169).

[246] This is so because, as Ong (1999: 70) puts it: "Oral memory works effectively with 'heavy' characters, persons whose deeds are monumental, memorable and commonly public. Thus the noetic economy of its nature generates outsize figures, that is heroic figures, not for romantic reasons or reflectively didactic reasons but for much more basic reasons: to organize experience in some sort of permanently memorable form. Colourless personalities cannot survive oral mnemonics. To assure weight and memorability, heroic figures tend to be type figures: wise Nestor, furious Achilles (…) All this is not to deny that other forces besides mere mnemonic serviceability produce heroic figures and groupings. Psychoanalytic theory can explain a great many of these forces. But in an oral noetic economy, mnemonic serviceability is a sine qua non, and, no matter what the other forces, without proper mnemonic shaping of verbalization the figures will not survive".

and vice, villains and heroes, are defined according to contemporary martial ideologies that (in South Asia) include religiously inspired agonistic ethos. Such an approach also allows us to see these genres, following Kelly (1994: 1-19), as part of epic traditions which include or allude to many other contemporary and historical genres that are also part of an epic community's oral and written heritage and which redefine epic while at the same time: "allowing [epic] to stay clearly attached, despite the passage of time, to earlier exemplars of the genre, yet allowing the genre to change and revitalize the aesthetic pleasures and social debates it affords" (Kelly 1994: 4)". For, to quote Kelly (1994: 18) once more, "The epic is a range, or changing set of borderlines, between the lyric and the novel (...) If epic is a "marked" genre, it is not marked into a binary relationship, but into one with several terms. The epic entertains shifting relationships with more sharply-focused genres such as the drama, the chronicle, the document, the memoir, the autobiography, but especially the lyric". And, as I shall argue in this chapter and in the chapters ahead, the Rajasthani tradition of Pabuji documents that epic can also maintain "shifting relationships" with heroic poetry, eulogy, prose tales, songs and devotional poetry.

Descriptive conventions

Is "heroic-epic poetry" indeed a suitable term for the selected poems? In describing the poems' narrative content and structuring below, I aim to further document why I have chosen to refer to the studied poems as part of a "heroic-epic" tradition of Dimgal poetry. To begin with I will examine which descriptive conventions and heroic typologies were employed by the poets of medieval Marwar and which historical and/or symbolic meaning may be attributed to the ensuing portrayal of Pabuji and his companions. As could be read in chapter 3, all the compositions one way or another evoke the moods, and at times also the sounds, of war, thus giving voice to medieval ideals concerning battle death, sacrifice, protection, honour and revenge. In addition, every poem centres upon the glorification of Pabuji, who is portrayed as an exemplary Rathaur warrior; a brave wielder of spear and sword and a man of honour, someone who can be trusted to keep his word and who offers protection to his retainers and devotees. This conventional portrayal of Marwar's warrior-heroes is for the most part subject to heroic ideals and poetic imagery and moods which almost universally delimit the protagonists of heroic and epic genres (cf. Goldstein 2001: *passim*, Miller 2000: *passim*).

Despite their clear differences in narrative content, all compositions were written in praise of war and the warrior by versifying the violent particulars of combat that resulted in a forceful "poetry of war". By glorifying the medieval warriors' heroism, the poets of medieval Marwar aimed to give voice to the warrior ethos of antagonistic Rajput and Bhil warrior communities. At the heart of the poets' renditions of heroism is the spectacle of battle: the manner in which the adversaries get ready for combat, accounts of their mounting anger, burning enmity and

verbatim renditions of battle cries. In the opening verses of both *chamd*s, for instance, the poets introduce both Pabuji and Jimda as steadfast fighters and prodigies at weapon play who excel in verbal and bodily aggression.[247] The martial dexterity of the heroes can also be understood from the poets' evocation of the gory details of war, particularly thorough in the *chamd*s. By describing how blood gushes in battle, lives are taken, warriors are beheaded but their torsos continue to fight, attention is called to the fact that Pabuji, Jimda and their warriors do not fear death but, on the contrary, seek it out eagerly.[248] While the poets of the *chamd*s evoke both Pabuji, Jimda and (in *chamd* II) the Bhil warriors by describing their martial qualities, Ladhraj also defines Pabuji's heroic role in terms of kinship and guardian relations throughout *duha* I. Pabuji is time and again defined in relation to others; he is the grandson of Asthan, the son of Dhamdhal, the half-brother of Buro and Pema, husband of the Sodhi Rajputni, brother-in-law and enemy of Jimda, uncle of Jhararo and, as an example of guardianship, the lord and protector of his Bhil and Charan retainers. These kinship and guardian ties are important since they are essential for the narrative of *duha* I in view of the fact that they govern the plot and several sub-plots of the episodes; for instance, when marriage negotiations lead to the first conflict between Pabuji and Jimda, Pabuji confronts Jimda for a second time in order to revenge Buro's demise or when Pabuji forestalls Jimda's death to protect his half-sister from widowhood and as a result is vanquished by Jimda himself.

The *git*s and *duha* II highlight yet other aspects of medieval heroism (which can also be read from *duha* I), including Pabuji's valour as an outstanding protector of cattle, a young warrior who rights wrongs, a daring camel thief and a tamer of horses. In *git* IV and *duha* II, the hero's divine qualities are also brought to the fore and are equated with (respectively) those of Shiva and the heroes of the *Mahābhārat*. At the heart of the *parvaro* are the miraculous deeds of the hero-god Pabuji, who protects his devotees from heaven, just like he protected the Charan's cattle when he still dwelled on earth). And, lastly, in *git* V, the poet illustrates his protagonist's heroism by equating war-zeal, valour and heroism with amorous passions. Bamkidas portrays Pabuji as a bridegroom at war who is full of impatience to embrace the enemy (his bride), thus suggesting the hot-blooded quality of his

[247] The depiction of Pabuji foe's Jimda as an equally staunch hero as Pabuji, probably, served to portray Jimda as a skilled warrior and formidable opponent to thus underscore the bravery of Pabuji. For the latter, by taking on not just any enemy but a fearsome hero thus proves himself to be an outstanding warrior (cf. Miller 2000: 217).

[248] The recurring image of headless warriors may, of course, connote Heesterman's (1985: 47) view of the ritual, largely symbolic severing of heads in sacrifice to obtain "a treasure or secret that is the essence of the universe", a possession for which the gods have to contend with demons. The decapitation of Pabuji and fellow warriors is indeed presented as part of the warriors' sacrificial death in battle. However, it seems to me that the poetic portrayal of decapitation in the Pabuji tradition (and particularly in the *chamd*s and *duha* I) first and foremost connotes regional Jhumjhari tales, second, sacrificial myths representing the ritual dismemberment of the first human being by the gods and, third, myths about the demon Rahu who is believed to bring about eclipses, compared to the beheading of enemies by the poet of *chamd* II, by capturing the sun and the moon in his mouth (see chapter 3).

martial emotions. This dual use of romantic and heroic imagery is at times thought to be a distinctive aspect of Dimgal poetry, setting it apart from other heroic-epic genres (N.S. Bhati 1989: 131, Maheshwari 1980: 40). The poets' versification of battle are thought to have been inspired by conventional poetic moods which aim to express and evoke feelings of heroism (*vīr ras*) and corresponding emotions of the human psyche (*bhāv*) like *raudr* (anger), *utsāh* (war-zeal), or *bhayaṃkar* (terror).[249] N.S. Bhati (1989: 131f) argues that the evocation of *vīr ras* in Dimgal heroic-epic poetry often depends on a combination of heroic and amatory moods or feelings. Be that as it may, the passionate or amatory quality of Dimgal "war poetry" appears to be a rather common, perhaps universal, heroic-epic simile that likens battle to a wedding ritual, or marriage to a war arena in other poetic traditions like, for example, Sanskrit epic, ancient Tamil martial genres, Homer's *Odyssey* and the work of lyric poets like Sappho.[250] This poetic usage will be documented in some more detail below.

Another noteworthy aspect of poems dedicated to Pabuji (which yet again relates this tradition to heroic-epic compositions of traditional poets the world-over) is the fact that the poets ascribed heroism to their protagonists by delineating the warriors' "outer surface" (cf. Cigman 1994: 165, Goldstein 2001: 251-301, Miller 2000: 230). Dimgal typological conventions include detailed descriptions of the heroes' attitude, martial skills and deeds, physical strength, bellicose emotions and facial expressions as, for example, in the customary depiction of antagonistic feelings in the *chamd*s like in *chamd* I, where the poet describes Pabuji's martial stance by evoking his blood-red eyes, his anger and his terrifying scowl when he frowns and the ends of his moustache meet his eyebrows (v. 16-17): "On getting angry, the brave rose, such (was) (the anger of) the protector: the king('s) (anger) was lighted like a fire (with) ghee. (With) very red eyes (due to) anger, he fights the fearful (enemy), the ends (of his) moustache move (upwards) (and) meet (his) eyebrows".[251] And in the subsequent verse-line (*chamd* I, v. 18), Pabuji's physical strength is revealed with a description of how his outstretched arms touch the sky and by comparing the hero to Vishnu's dwarf-incarnation Tikama.

The attention which the poets give to the particulars of the warrior's armour, weaponry, war cries and the swiftness of their steeds further delineate the warriors' heroic and impressive qualities, like in the *chamd*s, *duha* I and *git* IV, where one

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[249] The two, *ras* and *bhāv*, are mutually dependent for their manifestation (Iglehart 1980: 34-35). The definition of *ras* and *bhāv* as enumerated by Kharair (1999: 64-74) and expounded upon by N.S. Bhati (1989: 132-142), does not seem to amount to an unvarying taxonomy of moods and their constituent emotions. For N.S. Bhati (*ibid*.) details altogether eleven moods: *vīr*, *sṛngār*, *raudr*, *vibhats*, *adbhūt*, *bhakti*, *karūṇ*, *vatsalyā*, *shānt*, *hāsy* and *bhayaṃk ras*. However, Kharair (*ibid*.) lists *sṛngār*, *raudr*, *vibhach*, *adbhūt*, *karūṇ*, *shānt*, *hāsy* and *bhayaṃk ras* as the eigth moods of *vīr ras*. See also Menariya (2000: 31-35) who lists: *vīr*, *sṛngār*, *raudr*, *vibhats*, *karūṇ*, *shānt* and *hāsy ras*.

[250] See Goff (1990: *passim*), Gold (1987: 319), Goldstein (2001: 55), Harman (1989: 1-20, 139), Hart (1975: *passim*), Miller (2000: 129), O'Regan (1992: *passim*), Rissman (1983:103f) and Spies (1930: 28f).

[251] *Chamd* I (v.16-17): "uṭhīyo dhikhi paurasa pāla āso, joi ātasa rālīya ghrata jīso. bhita cola cakhīya ata rosa bhile, mukha mūṃcha aṇīṃ [jāya] mūṃha mile".

reads about the way in which the warriors and their horses are adorned for battle and the formidable sound of weapons clashing. To underline their agility and speed, the poets compare the warriors' steeds to birds of prey, monkeys and Kali's discus. The verbatim rendition of the warriors' war cries, at times, can also be understood as an illustration of the warriors' external "attributes" as they in the first place reflect conventional Rajput ethos, not an inner self, and are cited to highlight the protagonist's eagerness for war and his martial dexterity. As Miller (2000: 230f) notes, and the *chamd*s illustrate, battle cries represent a limited selection of challenges and threats or "vocal themes" asserting a warrior's presence and intentions.[252]

The heroic typology made use of by the poets of medieval Marwar can also be examined by looking at the wide range of epithets accorded to Pabuji and his fellow protagonists.[253] The Rathaur hero is, for example, hailed as the son of King Dhamdhal (*dhāṃdhala rāva-uta*) and the grandson of Asthan (*asthānanotra*) and descendant of Siha (*sihā harai*) or Kamadha (*kamaṃdha*, *kamadhaja*), Kheṛecai and Rāṭhavaṛa, titles used for Rathaur warriors. The appellations *pāla*, *shrīphala* and *govāhara* bring to mind Pabuji's role as the protector of cattle and the honour of his lineage. *Bhut*, *jodhāra*, *sobhaṭa*, *bhaṛa*, *nara*, *narasūra*, *varadāi*, *aṇabhaṃgo*, *vairaharaṇa*, *jagajeṭhī*, *sūra*, *vīra*, *sākaita* and *neta* identify Pabuji and his fellow-combatants as warrior-heroes. In addition, the poets also speak of the Rathaur hero as *bhupala*, *chataradhara*, *chātrapati*, *nripata*, *rāja*, *rāva*, *rāvata*, denoting a kingly status. Pabuji's other epithets were inspired by his martial qualities or physical appearance: for instance, *dhanuvana* (archer), *bhālālau* (wielder of spears) and *bhūjāḷa* (long-armed hero). [254]

The poet of the *parvaro*, instead of elaborating on the exterior characteristics and martial qualities of Pabuji, elaborates upon the godly qualities of the hero. Heroic feats of protection are described in terms of divine protection illustrated with tales about the hero-god Pabuji who comes to the rescue of his Bhil priests and other devotees when they are troubled by ill-famed Rajput warriors. In this composition,

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[252] War cries are at times defined as part of a hero's armament: when the awesome voice of the combatant becomes a weapon in itself, powerful enough to put enemies to flight. Miller (2000: 230) describes such "verbal aggression" as a retrograde act through which warriors move back into animality or even into the inanimate, as when a heroes voice is compared to the roaring of a lion or the sound of thunder.

[253] Heroic typologies have been limited to four hero types by N.S. Bhati (1989: 132f), including the warrior-hero (*yuddhavīr*), the munificent patron or "hero-in-giving" (*dānavīr*), the compassionate hero (*dayāvīr*) and the righteous hero (*dharmavīr)*.

[254] The same can be said of the other protagonists. Jimda is alternately referred to as: *jiṃdarāva*, *saṃbharī jīṃda*, *sārāṃgasutī*, *jāyalavāla*, *khīcī*, *khīciyāṃ-nātha* and *neta*. The Charan woman Deval has been accorded appelations like: *cāraṇī*, *goharī*, *devalade*, *sakati*. And Pabuji's Bhil companions most commonly feature as "140" (*sāta vīsī*, *sātavīsīya*) and also as warriors and heroes (bhaṛa, sāṃvaḷā, ruṛrāla, sūra, suhaṛa, narasūra, sākaita, haṭhīyāla, laṃkāla) or with titles like *āheṛī* ("forestdwellers") or military titles like *pāika* and *pāradhī*. Lastly, a summary of the names used for Pabuji's nephew Jhararo who is described as a boy (*bālaka*), son (*beṭau*, *būṛā ro beṭo*), a Rathaur warrior from Marwar (*mārāṛu kamaṃdha*) and Nath guru or ascetic (*āyasa*, *jogī*).

Pabuji is primarily portrayed through a description of his deeds whereas his appearance and attributes remain unspecified even though the hero-god Pabuji is addressed with many of the above-listed epithets, including titles for warrior-hero and protector (*jodhāra*, *pāla*, *vīra*) and with regal titles (*rāvata*) and with titles that refer to him as a god (*devā*), a deified forefather (*jūṃjhāra*) and lord, master (*khāviṃda*). The devotional purpose of the *paravaro* is clear since its poet explicitly states that he aims to worship Pabuji, who is depicted as a warrior with divine origins, a deified forefather, folk-god, a manifestation of God and as historical warrior and righteous hero. The religious and/or devotional content of the other poems can best be gauged from the extent to which Pabuji has been ascribed magical and/or divine qualities, like in *chamd* II, the *duha*s and *git* III, where Pabuji is presented in more or less implicit ways as a warrior with divine qualities, a deified warrior or forefather and as a manifestation of God, an aspect of God or a god.

Sacrificial heroism

The heroic roles described above may at first glance appear rather different. It seems, however, that Pabuji and (at times) his fellow protagonists all embody one hero type. They all strive for one and the same heroic ideal, i.e. the ideal of sacrificial heroism. This ideal presents battle death, preferably in the course of protecting cattle, land or women, as the purpose of a warrior's life. Clearly, the portrayal of combat and glorious battle death can be appraised as "generic" to heroic-epic Dimgal poetry and the result of the "agonistically toned past" and martial ethos of Marwar's warrior communities (cf. Ong's above-discussed theorem). However, as we have also seen, in Marwar, the ideal of sacrificial heroism was not only delimited by martial values but also by religiously inspired ideals, in particular the notion of battle death as a sacrifice. The battle-death of a warrior or *tyagi-vīr* (ascetic hero), who is thought to give up his life in battle selflessly, in order to serve others, is commonly presented in terms of the ascetic renunciation of life.[255] Both a warrior and renouncer were thought to relinquish life. The warrior's renunciation comes about by dying in battle while a renouncer is believed to die to the world in a spiritual sense. A warrior's asceticism rather differs from what is thought of as "standard" Brahminical views rendering ascetic renunciation a final choice upon which one cannot go back. Martial ideals of ascetic warriorhood were part of pastoral-nomadic survival strategies, which is to say that warrior-ascetics generally survived by combining settled family life, agricultural subsistence and cattle herding (or raiding) with military service (cf. Kolff 1990: 80-84).[256]

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[255] For a discussion of the symbolism of sacrifice in other South Asian traditions, see Hart (1975: 33-36), D.S. Khan (1994: *passim*) and Srivastava (1997: *passim*), and for Rajput ethos: Kolff (1990: 79-84), Kothari (1989: 102-117), Scharfe (1989: 175-86) and Stern (1991: *passim*).

[256] In the desert regions of western Rajasthan, people depend primarily upon cattle for their survival and follow different strategies, including pastoral and nomadic strategies, and transhumance. Transhumance is

A medieval warrior did not necessarily think of renunciation as an irreversible choice but instead choose to become a warrior ascetic to earn a living, share in the spoils of war, and in time if he survived the vagaries of war, return home wealthy enough to get married and live a householder's life. By leaving behind his family and adhering to the ideal of death in battle, a warrior did renounce "the world" (family life) but he did so for worldly reasons, i.e. to return to his family in due course, granted of course that he was victorious in battle. The Dimgal poets, predictably, offer a decidedly less worldly view of ascetic heroism. They stress the other-worldly aspect of a hero's martial deeds. Though Pabuji's wars, fought over the retrieval of cows and/or the ownership of a horse, have a clearly material aim (the possession of cattle), his tradition's poets do not straightforwardly mention worldly aims as a Rajput ideal.[257] Whether or not Pabuji fought to realize worldly goals was clearly not a major concern of the poets. They defined martial ideals chiefly in spiritual terms by presenting battle death as a form of ascetic self-sacrifice, bringing to mind a warrior's intention to relinquish his life in battle by fighting till victory or death.

Charan poets employed martial, religious and marital imagery to equate the warriors' death with renunciation, whereby battle comes to symbolize a sacrificial rite while, at the same time, the battlefield emerges as the altar upon which warriors offer their lives. The traditional hero's role as sacrificer, presenting a death-offering at the altar manifested as a battlefield, is of course a forceful theme of heroic-epic traditions the world over (Miller 2000: 338). As Feller Jatavallabhula (1999: 96-97) argues in her study of bloodshed in the *Mahābhārat*, these kind of religiously inspired, martial metaphors for war symbolize human sacrifice: the ultimate oblation to the gods.[258] The sacrificial nature of Pabuji's heroism can be understood from all selected poems. First, in *chamd* II, the ascetic nature of the heroism displayed by the Rajput and Bhil becomes apparent from the death wish and enthusiasm for war

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generally defined as seasonal migrations of cattle herding communities which have a permanent or semi-permanent place of abode the rest of the year. Pastoral-nomadism generally refers to people who migrate throughout the year along routes that are chosen according to prevalent climatic conditions and the resulting availability of grazing land and fodder. A combination of transhumance and pastoral-nomadic strategies can be employed by herding communities who live in drought-prone areas like the Thar Desert and are dependent on multi-enterprise, multi-resource and eco-niche based strategies for their survival (Gupta 1991: 332). It is in the latter sense that the phrase "pastoral-nomadic" and "mobile" peoples has been used throughout this study. For discussions of transhumance, pastoralism and nomadism in western Rajasthan, see (*passim*): Barth (1962), Bharara (1994), Gupta (1991), Kavoori (1991), Lodrick (2005), Prasad (1994), Robbins (1998) and Srivastava (1997).

[257] Arguably, the poets' glorification of Pabuji's battle as a warrior's chance to add "fame to his sword" does not stand for an ascetic ideal either unless one wants to read "fame" as a spiritual triumph, a reading which (bearing in mind the martial and material purpose that I attribute to the selected compositions) is not the way I would be inclined to interpret such a simile.

[258] Ziegler's (1998: 283, n.83) study clarifies that acts of self mutilation by Rajput warriors also stood for the sacrifice of (parts of) one's body to the gods, a sacrifice which was presumably thought of as a way to extract a boon. See also (Heesterman 1998: 16) on a Hindu king's role as sacrificer, victim and divine recipient of Vedic sacrificial rites.

displayed by them and from imagery that compares Pabuji and his warriors to Shiva by describing how their bodies, like his, are covered in ashes. The selfless aspect of their heroism is also clear. Though the reason for the battle is not specified in these compositions, even so, the references to "a woman" (*chamd* I) and to Jimda as a "(cattle) thief" (*chamd* II) indicate that the protagonists fight to protect Deval's cows. And the battle and fall of the "great warrior" Pabuji is unambiguously phrased as a libation and an ascetic renunciation of the world in this composition. The imagery of *chamd* I also gets across the notion that a warrior is a sacrificer *and* a sacrificial offering, for it is he who offers his own life to appease the gods. This notion is particularly explicit in the religious imagery of *chamd* I, in particular the bellicose role attributed to gods and goddesses, and the way in which they partake in the bloodshed. We have read how Shakti and Khecaris feast on the blood, flesh and bones of the fallen warriors, while Shiva goes round collecting skulls. Thus the warriors, by dying in battle, nourish Shakti, the Khecaris and, at the same time, appease Shiva. By describing the blood thirst of Shakti and her Khecaris, the poets may, in addition, have meant to evoke sacrificial myths associated with the Puranic goddess and her battle with the buffalo-demon Mahisha. This I read from the symbolism of blood employed by the medieval poets, rendering blood a "celestial wine" drunk by the goddess.[259]

In the *chamd*s, the blood sodden battlefield, soaked by the blood gushing forth from the warriors' wounds and littered with their corpses and skulls, represents the altar upon which the warriors surrender their life to Earth, the primeval mother goddess who is watered or fertilized by the blood spilled in battle and by the warriors' corpses. Such imagery evokes myths which render a warrior's flesh and blood the homologic alloform of earth, a belief inspired by the thought that earth was once formed of the body of a primal sacrificial man.[260] The "blood bond" between a warrior and mother earth also inspires conventional political idiom underlining the strong emotive bond between a warrior and his realm by defining this relation in terms of a symbolic marriage (cf. Inden 1998: 61f, Heesterman 1985: 145, Tambs-Lyche 1997: 61, 270, Ziegler 1998: 255).[261] Late-medieval warriors and/or kings were commonly represented as the rulers, masters, gods or husbands of the earth and were thought to be "wedded" to their territory.[262] Along these lines, a king and/or warrior became a "husband of the earth" and a "giver of life" to his (female)

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[259] Compare Doniger O'Flaherty's (1975: 248f) study of Devi-myths as told and retold in the *Skanda Purāṇa* and *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*.

[260] For related interpretations of sacrificial myths representing the ritual dismemberment of the first human being by the gods as the beginning of the world, creating it from his different body parts see: Feller Jatavallabhula (1999: 85f), Inden (1998: 41-91) and Lincoln (1981: 75).

[261] Kinship metaphors also extended to patron-client relations, for example when a Rajput patron or ruler was portrayed as the parent of his military retainers or as the father *and* mother (*mātā-pītā*) of non-Rajput communities (cf. Gold 1987: 305-327, Ziegler 1998: 267).

[262] For instance: *sām* or *sāmī*, *dhanī* and *dātār*, titles that connote meanings ranging from ruler, master, god, husband to "giver of life" (*dātār*).

realm or land, *dharatī*, a word traced to Sanskrit *dharitrī* ("female bearer") by Ziegler (1998: 267).[263]

Poetic equations of a warrior's body with an oblation (*piṃd*) in *chamd* II call further attention to the religious sacrifice a warrior was believed to make to the mother goddess. *Piṃd* has been described by Ziegler (1998: 254) as a ball of food representing the yield of one's fields and as balls of clay signifying an offering of the land itself. The poet of *chamd* II describes the heroes' dead bodies as "juicy meatballs" (*gudāla rasāla*) or *maṃsapiṃd*, an oblation which was meant for the hungry vultures swarming the battlefield in verse-lines 43, 62, 90 and 99 of *chamd* II:

43. varīyāma sa(ṃ)grāma jhihā(ṃ)ma va(ṃ)pe, kīyā tili kaṃdīla su cīla kape
43. '*There*', *near the bodies* (*of*) *the glorious* (*warriors*), *vultures* '*pecked*' *with* (*their*) *beaks at the pupils (of)* (*the warriors'*) *eyes*.

62. nīsāṃṇa dahuṃ dali(ṃ) nīdhasīyaṃ, harakhe pala cāra mane hasīyaṃ
62. (*The sound of*) *the Nagaras* (*of*) *both armies* '*filled the air*' (*and*) *the vulture*(*s*) *looked forward* (*to a feast*) (*and*) *smiled in* (*their*) *hearts*.

90. maṃsāla bhukhāla paṃkhāla milai, gudāla rasāla ḍalāla gilai
90. *The* '*hunger'* (*of*) *the carnivorous birds is* '*satiated*';[264] *they eat* (*and*) *gulp down juicy meatballs*.

99. pūri āsa palacarāṃ, līyā āmakhi dhau lādhai
99. *The 'hunger'* (*of*) *the vultures is satiated* (*for*) *meat* '*became available*' (*on*) *earth* (*and*) '*was eaten*'.

The sacrificial implication of the above-quoted verse-lines becomes clear when one remembers that vultures and other carrion-eaters are customarily seen as the creatures of "mother nature" or "mother earth" and as theriomorphic forms of the goddess (Feller Jatavallabhula 1999: 85). Put differently, the warriors sacrifice their lives to the mother goddess by dying in battle and thus satiating her vultures' hunger.

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[263] Tambs-Lyche (1997: 107f) notes that a similar (but woman-oriented) way of looking at land can be read from Rajputnis' important role in the management of Rajput etsates, suggesting that Rajputnis were in the first place married to the land and not to their Rajput husband.

[264] If *maṃsāla* is read as *māṃsāla* or "maternal uncle's house", this verse-line could also be interpreted as: "Hungry vultures 'visit' (their) maternal uncle's house'": that is to say, the battleground, which is littered with corpses, is equated with the welcoming atmosphere of a maternal uncle's house, where male relatives traditionally recieve a warm welcome. Personal communication Subh Karan Deval (2000). See *chamd* I (v. 45): *māṃsāla bhukhāla paṃkhāla miḷe* ("Vultures meet (their) impoverished maternal family").

The sacrificial quality of Pabuji's heroism in Ladhraj's *duha* can be understood from the selfless way in which the hero comes to the rescue of people in need; he battles primarily to protect the interests of others, for example, to return Deval's cows to her or to revenge his half-brother Buro's death at the hands of Jimda. The fact that Ladhraj identifies Deval as a goddess, even if it remains unclear what class of goddesses she belongs to, suggests that the hero of *duha* I, like in the *chamd*s, battled to placate the goddess since Pabuji sacrificed his life to protect her cattle. In *duha* I, the hero's final sacrifice comes about when he holds back Camda and thus spares the life of his brother-in-law Jimda to protect his half-sister against widowhood. In addition, the earlier-quoted exhortation of the Bhil hero Camda by Pabuji also furthers the idea that Ladhraj saw dying in battle an eminent ideal, equating warriors with ascetics. And Ladhraj's portrayal of Pabuji's war skills, especially his image of the hero fighting with sticks as if playing Holi, draws attention to the fact that he not only willingly parts with life in battle but also demonstrates "war-enthusiasm" in preparing to do so. This kind of imagery renders war a festive occasion, an event to rejoice in like Holi or, like in *git* V, a marriage ritual. To my mind, these similes employed by Ladhraj effectively stress Pabuji's devotion to war and his heroic renunciation of life.

Altruistic self-sacrifice is not a manifest theme of the *parvaro*. Combat is wholly absent from it except for very concise references to fights between Rajput brotherhoods and the help Pabuji extended to them. In this composition, Pabuji chiefly wields his power through supernatural means and Pabuji's divine persona is at the centre of this poem, in particular his incarnation as a hero-god who always comes to the rescue of his devotees. Pabuji's ascetic qualities are brought to the fore through the epithetical identification of the hero as a Jumjhar, a deified forefather who died in the course of the service to others, in this case the protection of cattle. Keeping in mind that Pabuji died to retrieve Charani Deval's cattle, I imagine that the poet of the *paravaro* may have also thought of the hero's death as a sacrifice to the goddess even though Deval and her identification as a goddess cannot be read from this poem. Deval is, nevertheless, part of the preceding *duha* I and it does therefore not appear unlikely that the poet of the *paravaro* may have also thought of Pabuji's sacrifice as a way to serve the goddess.

Similar sacrificial overtones can be read from the *git*s and *duha* II. In, for example, *git* IV, the ascetic nature of Pabuji's heroism is called to mind with descriptions of the hero's death in a fight over cattle. In *git* V, Pabuji's sacrifice is evoked by bringing to mind how the warrior "romanced" death. At first reading, the fact that Pabuji abandons his bride at the wedding *maṃḍap* (pavilion) in Bamkidas's *git* seems to advance the conventional ascetic ideal of celibacy. Pabuji, by leaving his bride to rush to Deval's rescue, renounces married life. Perhaps the poet thus meant to portray Pabuji as an unmarried warrior-ascetic who, through sexual

abstention, is thought to attain physical, mental and spiritual vigour.[265] On second reading, however, it appears that Bamkidas's ascetic ideal did not inevitably include celibacy. By evoking Pabuji as a bridegroom-warrior, and comparing the rites of battle to wedding rituals, Bamkidas relates his hot-blooded feelings during battle to amorous passions. By comparing the hero's longing for battle and the way in which he passionately "embraces" his enemy, on the one hand, to the union between a bridegroom and his bride on the other, the poet, as I shall argue in more detail below, appears to celebrate the erotic and procreative aspect ascribed to war. Pabuji's death is portrayed in similar terms since Bamkidas concludes by describing how Pabuji falls asleep on the battlefield "like in a bed", seemingly comparing the battlefield to the hero's nuptial bed and, conceivably, battle-death to post-coïtal sleep.[266] Battle-death is also compared to a wedding in *chamd* (II), given that a warrior's death delivers him to the arms of heavenly nymphs who, dressed as brides, have been impatiently awaiting his demise while stringing flower wreaths to garland him with and thus elect him as their husband.[267] From Bamkidas's tribute to Pabuji's wholehearted and passionate willingness to fight and surrender his life in battle and from the zeal with which protagonists are shown to have readied themselves for war, seeking out death eagerly like bridegrooms longing for their brides, the warrior's realization of the ascetic ideal of "dying to the world" attains a festive and passionate quality.

Procreation

By relating war and violence, on the one hand, to religiously inspired self-sacrifice in battle and wedding festivities, on the other, the poets highlighted the martial and religious ideals embodied by medieval warriors. The "erotic" tenor of the above-quoted similes also points towards the fecund results ascribed to battle deaths, for by comparing the forces released in battle to sacrifice to earth goddesses, marital passions and sexual union, the poets evoked the potential of violence to "give birth" to new life, thus rendering war a means to sustain life, and its violence a procreative force (cf. Hart 1975: 35). As noted just now, battle can be seen as a form of religious sacrifice by and of men who give up their lives and offer their bodies to "feed"

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[265] An ideal motivated by the concept of *bhramacāryā* which advocates the sublimation of sexual feelings through spirituality and celibacy. See also Kakar (1989: 118f), Smith (1991: 93).

[266] "Pauḍhiyau seja raṇa bhoma pābū" (N.S. Bhati 1973: 85). The comparison of making love to battle can also be read from a Rathaur genealogical account translated by Tessitori (1919a: 45) in which it is said of a warrior that he chose to lie down "on the field of battle of his zenana" (that is to say: he died in battle).

[267] Yet other similes mirror a warrior's love for his dagger (*kripan*) during battle with his amorous feelings while sharing a bed with a woman, thus comparing the battlefield to a warrior's nuptial bed and the warrior's love for war with amorous passions (cf. N.S. Bhati 1989: 131). The warrior's love for his dagger has obvious phallic connotations comparable to Goldstein's (2001: 349-50) interpretation to the phallic character of traditional portrayals of the thrust of weapons like, for example, spears.

mother earth and nourish another aspect of the goddess, referred to as Shakti. Scholars of the Freudian tradition, like Sudhir Kakar (1989: 118f), interpret such images, connected to warlike, "man-eating" goddesses, as an expression of men's fear or apprehension of women as sexual beings, especially in their role of mothers.[268] According to Kakar, it is the perceived male preoccupation with the devastating power of uncontrolled female sexuality that inspires the image of fierce goddesses in heroic-epic genres, commonly understood as symbolic of female reproductive capacities and sexuality as arcane, menacing forces.[269] However, the linking of the forces released in battle, on the one hand, with marital relations, on the other, could also be evaluated as an image which served to evoke a confirmatory appraisal of reproductive processes, and was not first and foremost inspired by men's misgivings about women. In reading Tamil marital metaphors for war, Hart (1975: 35), for example, proposes that the comparison of the forces released in battle to sexual union denote the potential of violence to "give birth" to new life. Thus war is rendered a means to sustain life, and its violence a procreative force. The above-mentioned political metaphors that render a Rajput the husband of the earth looked upon as his wife, connoting agricultural fertility and human procreation, further underline a fertility-oriented interpretation of the metaphors.

The poetic connections between a ruler and his land, and the equation of women with (agricultural) land, or mother earth with the goddess, bring to mind a common set of images which all focus on the perceived active male principle of creation as opposed to the passive female principle. Such imagery is also contained in, for instance, myths that render heaven and earth the archetypal parents of the world (Dange 1971: 34). The union between heaven and earth, by producing abundant harvests, also ensures human life and prosperity. In this way, the blood spilled by warriors on the battlefield, "watering" the earth-mother is suggestive of agricultural fertility and human procreation, granted that male "blood" can be understood as a symbol of fertility, comparable to rain or semen, ensuring the earth's fecundity.[270] Hence, I would suggest that an added meaning underlies the

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[268] Cf. Damsteegt's (1997a: 20-26) discussion of Kakar's psychology of marital relations .

[269] See, for example, Doniger O'Flaherty (1980: 247) who holds that ambivalent feelings towards eroticism and fertility in the Upanisadic period resulted in the portrayal of women as the enemy of ascetic men. A similar notion apparently inspired an interpretation of the mare as a negative symbol in Vedic and Upanishadic literature, which came to be associated with demons, demonic destruction and the male-devouring goddess. Doniger O'Flaherty (1980: 261) does, however, also note that the mare was a positive symbol in Rajasthan considering the positive, powerful role she has been accorded in Rajput warfare in which she came to present a "secular symbol" and a "royal equestrian image". It remains to be seen whether this kind of interpretation helps in judging the role attributed to Pabuji's steed Kalmi, who is at times identified as a part-incarnation of the Goddess, an incarnation of nymphs (like Pabuji's mother) or equated with "Kali's discuss".

[270] For a study of the conventional use of "seed and field" metaphors connoting agricultural and human fertility as well as "spiritual fertility" in medieval and contemporary Rajasthan, see Gold (1987: 305-327) and Harlan (2003: 187f). Reeves Sanday's (1981: 19, 96) study offers further examples of the way in which the shedding of blood in war can be read as symbolic of fertility.

earlier-discussed metaphors of *chamd* (I) portraying, for example, the goddess's water vessel filled with the warriors' blood that can also be thought of as symbolic of fertility.

I take metaphors that imply the life-enhancing outcome of battle death as evocative of agricultural productivity as well as human procreation to be celebrations of fertility-centred understandings of sexuality that portray men as the "givers of life" to the earth and to women. This male-oriented way of looking at procreation is characteristic of European and South-Asian traditions which render female fertility an inert principle, and women's bodies a passive receptacle for semen, the latter of which represents the active, life-giving masculine principle. This view is, moreover, redolent of long-established notions of human conception as a process whereby a man plants his seed, basically a homunculus, in a woman's nourishing "soil" or "womb".[271] Put differently, the celebration of fertility construed as men's primary role in procreation and their ability to control women and their fertility can be seen as the "master-metaphor" of the studied compositions. A gender-based evaluation of the discussed imagery allows us to see the discussed similes as an expression of a male fertility-centred worldview articulated through metaphors that construe war and a warrior's role and his battle deeds and battle death as live-enhancing undertakings.

At the heart of this kind of imagery is the primacy accorded to the active male principle over the passive female principle, a finding which to my mind helps position the discussed poems in a worldwide epic-heroic tradition of martial and military cultures. The poets of such cultures came to define masculine, martial strength as the control of all that is feminine by (for example) feminizing the opponent and presenting war as the rape of an effeminate enemy.[272] Such a perception furthers my interpretation of Bamkidas's marital and martial metaphors, in particular his comparison of war deeds to a wedding. By positioning masculine heroes (the warrior-bridegrooms) opposite female or effeminate adversaries (their brides), Bamkidas (knowingly or unknowingly) feminized the enemy and his poem seems indicative of the above described gender constructs that value the control of femininity as a show of masculine strength. Bamkidas's chosen imagery underscores the idea that brides, like enemies (and vice versa), need to be conquered and subjugated. This interpretation is historically valid as well. Research into women's role in Rajput society, and the Pabuji tradition itself, unambiguously documents how marital relations between Rajput brotherhoods commonly served to ensure the

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[271] As Friedland (2002: 412) puts it: "Man's capacity to make life, while mediated by his ability to produce the means of reproduction, rests primordially on his own reproductive force, his capacity to produce children (…) Children mean workers, warriors, and wombs. Their absence spells collective death". See also Reeves Sanday (1981: 4, 60) and Teskey (1996: 15f).

[272] The aims of war are defined correspondingly. Military objectives, like defeating or subjecting the enemy by gaining power over him, killing him or invading his territory, are till today equated with sexual intercourse, most commonly in terms of rape while the (defeated) opponent is thought of as female (Goldstein 2001: 349, Goff 1990: 63 and Haste 1993: 75).

survival of a lineage, preferably through male offspring, and was thought of as a way to settle feuds, establish political alliances, or to economically advance one self.[273] In societies where marriage amounts to a patriarchal exchange system in which women are the main currency, there is an evident need to control women by "domesticating" them for the role of subservient wives and mothers. Especially male concerns about the survival of their lineage are commonly quoted to explain the wish to dominate women and control their fertility; thus men hope to ensure that they can call themselves the father of their wives' progeny with some confidence (Goff 1990: 46, Kakar 1989: 66, 118f).

The above interpretations do evidently not rule out that the poets' images of the sacrifice of men to ferocious (earth) goddesses stood for male misgivings about the procreative power of women expressed through images of a blood-thirsty goddess or Pabuji's death in battle as the result of embracing his bride. They do, on the other hand, suggest that the poets were more concerned with the procreative than with the destructive force attributed to sexual union. The poets appear to have been particularly interested in what may be understood as men's vital contribution to the continuation of life. In sum, the portrayal of war in Dimgal poetry as a form of religious sacrifice by and of men who sacrifice themselves to "feed mother earth" may, in this specific context, be interpreted as symbolic for procreativity. This is suggested by imagery that presents the sacrifice of warriors in battle as a way to ensure the continued existence of cosmic and, presumably, societal order by nourishing mother earth and the goddess Shakti. The same can be said of metaphors that represent a warrior's corpse as an oblation offered to the goddess's creatures, the vultures. The procreative symbolism of similes that present a Rajput as a "husband of the earth" and "giver of life", wedded to his female realm ("mother earth"), is of course rather obvious. By battling to protect his realm and retainers, giving his life in battle, a warrior is thought to ensure the fecundity of his land and the survival of his lineage. Even more obvious is the celebration of fertility and procreation through marital imagery, as when the poets equate war with marriage to connote sexual union and the continuation of life, probably in particular the continuity of Rajput lineages through male offspring (cf. Tambs-Lyche 1997: 271).

Mnemonic patterning

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the manuscript versions of heroic-epic poetry continue to show the results of oral transmission techniques, in particular in the narrative and prosodic structuring of their form and content. The "oral residue" of written heroic-epic poetry may be gauged from its episodic structuring and

[273] Compare Tambs-Lyche (1997: 61): "The queen's role in traditional Kathiawar shows the fundamental importance of marriage alliance in Rajput polity. This role changes too, but the idea of patriliny is certainly as fundamental to the marriage alliance as the latter is to the constitution of the clan. The idea of Rajputhood, as it emerges, involves a complementarity of male and female, of brotherhood and alliance".

occurrences of redundancy and reiteration. Here, I will look at these features more closely by giving attention to the selected poems' structuring, narrative sequence, the poets' explicit reference to oral composition or performance. As a final point, let me briefly reiterate the historical function that can be understood from the compositions' prosodic and metrical structuring (cf. chapter 4).

The clearest examples of mnemonic patterning are found in *duha* I and the *chamd*s. *Duha* I, as noted before, is told in five distinct episodes, dealing with Pabuji's parentage, marriage negotiations between the Rathaur and Khici families, the theft of Charani Deval's cows, etcetera. The poem's narrative progression is relatively unbroken, for the episodes have been noted down chronologically starting with the episode of Pabuji's birth and ending with the hero's death and, in the last episode, the revenge on Jimda Khici by Jhararo. However, the narrative sequences of the episodes themselves break down several times. In the episode about the theft of Charani Deval's cows, for example, Ladhraj recapitulates the cow-theft in detail before moving on to the next episode, describing once again (verse-lines 199-237) how Jimda stole the cattle, the Charani went to Buro for help, Buro turned her away and Pabuji subsequently came to the Charani's rescue. This kind of digression at the end of one episode and before beginning the next episode seems a clear example of "a breather" for the poet, allowing him and his audience to keep track of events and link one episode to another.

Another example of chronological confusion crops up in episode 4, the narrative sequence of which is lost from verse-line 297 onwards, where Pabuji's heroic death is portrayed, after which previous events are again repeated in a rather random way. In verse-line 305, the narrative sequence is picked up again and the account of Buro's assault on Jimda continued. After the description of Pabuji's defeat by Jimda in verse-lines 362-63, the narrative becomes redundant when the poet reiterates how Pabuji fought for the protection of Deval's cows and returns the cows to her (v. 375). In the last episode, the poet once more reiterates events when he, after announcing Jhararo's journey to and arrival in Jayal, does not continue this tale but reverts to an account of Jhararo's earlier initiation in the Nath sect and describes how (v. 445-453) Jhararo has something, probably his ears, pierced by Gorakhnath. Then the poet summarizes imminent events, telling us how the Yogi Jhararo confronts his enemy, threatening to behead him. From verse-line 454 onwards, the poet resumes his prior account of Jhararo's journey to Jayal.

The oral mode of the medieval transmission of *duha* I can also be understood from the words used by Ladhraj to introduce himself and his narrative. The poet clearly states that he recollects Pabuji's story by *singing*, *reciting* and *telling* it.

2. devī de varadāṃna, muṇato ima ladhamālīyau
2. pābū suraparadhāṃna, gāuṃ to tūṭhai guṃṇe

3. "*Devi*! *Give* (*your*) *blessing*(*s*), *thus* '*requests*' *Ladhmal.*

3. *Pabu* (*is*) *paramount* (*among*) *gods*, *I sing* (*his*) *praise* (*and*) *you will be pleased* (*with*) (*his*) '*merit*(*s*)'".

5. bhala pābū bhūpāla, mala kahai kīrata muṇūṃ
5. "*Pabu* (*is*) '*dutiful*', (*he*) (*is*) *the protector* (*of*) *all*", *says Mala*, "*let me sing* (*his*) '*praise*'".

Verse-lines 14 and 383 (*duha* I) contain rather unambiguous references to the process of oral recollection since Ladhraj refers to his art as the recollection of an earlier tale heard by him. Verse-line 378 could be understood (though such an interpretation may seem somewhat far-fetched) as a reference to the repetitive or recurrent aspect of oral transmission:

14. to jāyāṃ rī katha, bhālālā mai sāṃbhalī
14. "*Spearwielder! Now (follows) the sons' story (as) (it) has been heard (by) me*".

383. suṇi āgai suratāha, kamadhaja tāharī kahu
383. "*Let me speak (about) you (and) (about) the recollection (of) the Rathaur warrior (as) I heard (it) before*".

378. de devī āsīsa, kamadhaja rā suṇi suṇi kaghaṃna
378. *"Devi! Give your blessings after hearing the warrior's story time and again"*.

As already noted in chapter 2, in verse-line 83 of the *parvaro*, the poet refers to this poem as a recitation which, as described in verse-line 85, was eventually written down (*likhatu*) by Pamdit Khusyal:

83. suṇi lokāyai soī, kahyā ladhai devī hukama
84. iti pābūjī rā dūhā sampuraṇaṃ
85. saṃ 1827 vi sai rā vaisākha vada 10 dine likhatu paṃ khusyala carī āsarāmadhye

The above-listed standard expressions also convey that reciting, reading, or hearing poetry devoted to Pabuji is beneficial for a poet or his audience, a way to gain insight into the world, obtain merit or become virtuous. The *paravaro*'s poet, for instance, states (c.32): "Upon that [man] [who] 'reads out' [and] hears [this poem], I will immediately 'bestow' virtuous [qualities]". And in *duha* I (c. 29), the poet states that he praises Pabuji's glory "with [his] tongue" (*duha* I: 29).

Compared with *duha* I and the *parvaro*, the *chamd*s contain fewer examples of mnemonic patterning through redundancy. In *chamd* I (v. 15), the reference to "a

woman's request" (probably Deval's request) to attack Jimda, after the battle between Pabuji and Jimda has already commenced, could be taken as an example of redundancy. However, it is also possible to interpret this verse-line as a portrayal of a woman, perhaps Deval, who urges Pabuji on during, and not before, the battle.[274] Examples of digression are more clear in *chamd* II (v. 10-48) when, for example, the poet departs from his chronological account of Pabuji's preparations for battle, including the decoration and saddling of his horse and a description of the subsequent battle proceedings (v. 10-37). After this, the poet digresses from his sequential account of the battle proceedings and once again describes how Pabuji's horse is decorated and the saddle straps tightened and so forth (v. 38-40) before he continues his battle narrative. A more evident example of mnemonic patterning in *chamd* II is presented by the fact that the already very slow narrative progression regularly gives way, from verse-lines 68 to 81, to detailed descriptions of the warriors' moods and the clamour of battle.

To evoke battle, the poet not only employs poetic descriptions of the clash of arms but also (as has been discussed in chapter 4) onomatopoeia and forceful rhyme schemes. In doing so, prominence was given to the evocation of the images, sounds and moods of war over a chronological account of battle or an explicit portrayal of which of the protagonists does what. It is therefore not always easy to tell which of the protagonists or armies is manoeuvring and who attacks, wounds or kills whom. In verse-lines 60 to 67, it is still apparent that the poet meant to give an account of Pabuji's army but in the next verse-lines (68-80) confusion arises when unspecified armies retreat in terror, unnamed warriors brandish weapons, clash and stagger, and so on. But in verse-lines 79 to 80, it is not very clear to whom the poet refers when he talks about a "great army" and "great heroes".

79. nīya chaṭa pahaṭa nihaṭa nare, sara sāra saṃbāra samāra sa(ṃ)re
80. khalakaṭa vikaṭa āvaṭa khisai, vīya chaṭa sobhaṭa maṃsaṭa vasai

79. *They bring (the) warriors to a halt (with) (an) attack, (they) hurl weapons, they sharpen swords and arrows (and) inflict wounds.*
80. *They drive back the great army (during) the carnage, and the great heroe(s) (are) 'beleaguered' (and) brought to a standstill.*

Though epic convention suggests that the poet talks about the army and heroes of Pabuji, the main protagonist and hero of this composition, it is also possible that he meant to describe Jimda and his warriors since both Pabuji and Jimda were introduced as equal heroes. In view of the fact that in most versions of Pabuji's story it is not he who wins the battle, but Jimda, it seems most likely that Jimda also

[274] *Chamd* I (v. 15): *pāla trīya āyi puṃṇai praghaṛā, jiṃdarāva upāṛiya desa jaṛā* ("The woman, arriving (near) the protector, says: "Heroic (lord)! If (you are) strong, (then) "attack" Jimdarava!").

conquers Pabuji in the above-quoted lines. On the other hand, Pabuji has also been portrayed as Jimda's vanquisher, though vaguely so, in *chamd* I (v. 58).

Two more aspects of the *chamd*s could be understood as illustrations of the oral nature of their transmission and/or composition or of the fact that they were part of, or based on, an oral heroic-epic tradition in medieval times. Firstly, the reference to recitation in the full titles of both *chamd*s, where it has been stated that the poems were "recited" by Meha Vithu.[275] Secondly, some of the *chamd*'s story elements bring to mind themes and imagery from episodes as contained by *duha* I and the *git*s. Though neither of the *chamd*s offers evidence for episodic structuring, since the narrative progression of the poems is very slow and mainly centres on the versification of battle, their content does, on the other hand, bring to mind elements of Pabuji's story, in particular as told in *duha* I. Indeed, if one did not know the different episodes of Pabuji's story beforehand, it would be difficult to make sense of some of the more ambiguous references like those in *chamd* I, where the cause of the battle between Pabuji and Jimda is not mentioned, and it is entirely unclear who the "woman" is who exhorts Pabuji to attack Jimda or why she urges him to do so. Read together with Pabuji's portrayal as a "protector", probably of cattle, and the description of Jimda as a "thief", again probably referring to cattle, these allusions gain meaning if they are interpreted as suggestive of Jimda's theft of Deval's cattle, and Pabuji's rescue of that cattle. Such allusion can only be understood if one knows other versions of Pabuji's tale, as the poets' medieval audiences most probably did. Consequently, it is not inconceivable that the *chamd*s were in one way or another part of a wider tradition. I imagine that the *chamd*s were part of the same tradition as *duha* I, either as autonomous works, inspired by Pabuji's story but performed or written down independently, or as episodes, part of a longer heroic-epic performance, but came to be transmitted independently. In other words, I see the described narrative correspondences as an example of what Kelly, as quoted just now, describes as the "shifting relationships" of heroic, epic and other genres.

To conclude this section on mnemonic patterning, I shall discuss the shorter compositions selected for this study. The *git*s and *duha* II are, at first sight, heroic praise poems, or heroic poems, while the *parvaro* appears to be a heroic and devotional genre, a "devotional praise poem". As described in chapter 2, the narrative content of all these shorter works centres on Pabuji's glorification as a warrior and/or divine being, though each poem highlights a different aspect of Pabuji's story, at times connoting tales elaborated upon in the episodes of *duha* I, in particular narratives about Pabuji's battle and marriage. While this description clearly gives reason to think of this composition as a panegyric or a "heroic praise poem", I would suggest that these compositions, like the *chamd*s and *duha* I, also form part of a broader heroic-epic tradition. The praise awarded to Pabuji by the *git*s and *duha* II, and the different narrative themes, no matter how limited their content

[275] *Chamd* I: *atha mehā viṭhū rā kahīyā shrī pābujī rā chaṃda* and *chamd* II: *Atha pābujhī ro chaṃda mehaijhī rā kahyā.*

is, have little meaning if they cannot be understood in the light of Pabuji's battle deeds (*git* I, *duha* II, *parvaro*), his confrontations with Jimda (*git* I, II, *git* III, IV, *duha* II), the way he comes to the rescue of Charani Deval's cows (*git* II, IV, *duha* II), his marriage to a Sodhi princess and the way he leaves her at the wedding pavilion (*git* II, IV, V), the sacrifice made in battle by Pabuji (*git* I, II, IV, V, *parvaro*), or the belief that he was a deified forefather (*jūṃjhāra*) or god (*git* IV). The *chamd*s' imagery is also brought to mind, in particular in the evocation of battle and the way Yoginis partake in the bloodshed, like the presence of Yoginis in *git* II.

With the above remarks I do not mean to imply that there was a direct relation between the different poems suggestive of a linear development in time. Nor do I want to propose that Pabuji's epic is "embrionically present" in the *gits* or that the *gits* should be thought of as earlier strands of Pabuji's story elaborated upon in *duha* I and/or the *chamd*s (or vice versa). But I do think that the broader narrative of Pabuji's story is implicit in the shorter *git*s, *duha* II and the *parvaro*, since the latter (like *duha* I and the *chamd*s) all display similar characteristics, including praise, heroic ideology, devotional strands, themes and imagery which connote diverse episodes from Pabuji's adventures. Though the latter episodes are only fully narrated in *duha* I, it does, even so, seem to me that they are implicitly referred to by the poets of the *chamd*s, the *git*s and *duha* II, for example when they hint at the cause for battle between Pabuji and Jimda, his hasty departure from the marriage ceremony, his battle death, etcetera. Though these references are no longer instantly recognizable, they must, even so, have been known to the poet and, as remarked just now, apparent to medieval audiences.

One characteristic of the *parvaro* makes it stand out from the other selected works: this poem does not share many common themes or protagonists with the other poems. Its primarily devotional character sets it apart from the more martially inspired compositions. However, the devotional feelings expressed in the *parvaro* are not altogether absent from the other poems (except perhaps *git* I and V). Devotion to Pabuji and other gods or goddesses does figure as a major or minor concern in *duha* I, the *chamd*s and *git* II and, like in the *parvaro*, illustrates the narrative link between the veneration of Pabuji and Goddess worship. I therefore feel that the *parvaro* highlights devotional themes which are part and parcel of the Pabuji tradition, just like martial themes are. And I would suggest that the *parvaro*, though primarily devotional, can also be thought of as a heroic-epic poem, for the poem does highlight the martial as well as divine "protective functions" of the warrior-hero and hero-god. The *parvaro*, moreover, deals with Pabuji's miraculous and martial deeds through distinct, unconnected tales, a manner that to some extent resembles the episodic structuring of epic. This notion can be further documented by the fact that tales similar to the medieval *parvaro*'s tales structure the ritual performance of present-day episodes which together constitute the oral *mātā* epic of Pabuji (cf. chapter 10).

Family of texts

The limited length, narrative content and structuring and the devotional meaning of most poems proves it difficult to relate them to traditional classifications of heroic and epic poetry. If length (long), content (heroic, not miraculous deeds) or form (narrative poetry) should be considered as the defining features of epic then most poems clearly do not qualify as heroic and/or epic. All poems use devotional and/or religious imagery. *Chamd* I, *git*s I-IV, *duha* II are too short and do not know episodic structuring. The narrative progression of the relatively longer *chamd* II is too slow and ambiguous and does not document episodic structuring either. As noted before, the only truly epic composition, according to the traditional view, is *duha* I, a relatively long poem, containing 5 episodes. However, *duha* I also has a devotional, not just heroic, content. Can *duha* I indeed be compared with epics that contain thousands of lines? What to think of the idea that shorter poems can be thought of as part of an earlier tradition of heroic or praise poetry from which longer "truly epic" genres developed? And are the studied structural features of the *chamd*s, *duha*s, *parvaro* and *git*s indeed the result of mnemonic patterning?

I have argued that it is likely that the redundant narrative sequence of *chamd* I and II and *duha* I resulted from oral transmission and composition techniques. The same is probably true of the episodic structure of *duha* I, the allusions to acts of speaking, reciting and/or listening in the *chamd*s, *duha* I and *parvaro*. One could, however, also argue that the listed structural features of the poems and the allusions to acts of reciting etcetera should be understood as part of traditional literary composition techniques and stock phrases which served to express a poet's intentions in a conventional way, but do not necessarily have a bearing on the historical performance context of the compositions. But, if one were to appraise the above evidence for the poems' oral substratum together with the martial use ascribed to the distinct poetic vocabulary that emphasizes the warlike mood of the compositions, and to the intricate rules for alliteration and metrical patterning, to the use of onomatopoeia and words suggestive of sound and, lastly, to the recitative rules developed by Charan poets, all this does, I feel, give reason to imagine that the selected poems resulted from oral transmission and composition and, last but not least, oral recitation techniques. Or, as John D. Smith (1979: 356) remarks about contemporary Rajasthani heroic-epic genres: "[W]e are dealing with a textual reservoir, a "pool" of textual material into which any poet is entitled to dip at any appropriate moment", a procedure which also helps account for the narrative "overlaps" and "variations" that abound in the Pabuji tradition.

I feel that the selected poems are best seen as part of a medieval heritage of Dimgal poetry that can be defined as the sum of past and present poems, prose stories and performances. Included in these categories are "possible" versions of written and oral poems dedicated to Pabuji, orally composed texts never recorded in writing and no longer orally transmitted, and possible manuscript versions of texts that have never been (or are no longer) preserved in government or private archives.

The problems of classification arising from the poems' evident similarities and differences are best solved, I think, by considering the variety of story-lines, themes, protagonists, symbolic meanings, narrative forms, oral and written characteristics as part of a multi-layered tradition. The fact that the poems dedicated to Pabuji have several narrative and stylistic features in common, and the direct or indirect references to narrative themes and episodes connote a wider context, suggesting that they were informed by a diversity of oral and written tellings of Pabuji's story, including older and/or contemporary heroic-epic genres. Following Ramanujan (1991: 44), I feel that these kinds of poems are best thought of as a "series of translations clustering around one another in a family of texts". From this angle, the heroic-epic genres of the Pabuji tradition can be thought of as a multiform tradition inspired by common, aggregated sets of sources or "pools of signifiers".[276] This common bank of story elements includes plots, characters, names, geography, and incidents that inspire each poem dedicated to Pabuji. Put differently, each poem is a "realization", in time and content, of aspects of common codes shared with other poems of the tradition.

By seeing the poems as part of a multifaceted tradition that contained heroic, epic and devotional poetry, I feel that I can list the genres that are part of the Pabuji tradition as "heroic-epic poetry". This phrase enables us to take account of the idea that longer and shorter poems, despite the clear differences in length, narrative content and prosodic structuring, existed side by side and were (and still are) composed as part of one "multi-story heroic-epic tradition", and independently of each other. The phrase "heroic-epic poetry" moreover serves to account for the fact that elements of Pabuji's story may function as narrative "building blocks" for short heroic and longer epic compositions. This includes the possibility that such building blocks take the form of separate compositions in the course of an epic performance or during other occasions, when just one or two episodes are performed. This definition also includes the notion that shorter heroic poetry may be part of an epic performance, as a way to embellish an episode, for instance, and the notion that an epic episode itself may inspire heroic poetry, which then is recited in a different context like, for example, the tale about Pabuji's wedding ceremony that is part of *duha* I, *git* V and, as shall become apparent in chapter 10, also of contemporary epic performances dedicated to Pabuji, and of poetry and prose-tales and songs sung during weddings.[277]

The above-proposed definition also allows me to include structural similarities. By applying Ramanujan's idea of a common imaginative pool to the concept of genre, the many genres that are part of the Pabuji tradition can be evaluated as part of one "multi-layered" and collective narrative, the poets of which

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[276] The concept of a distinct, homogeneous communal or social pool of thought from which all myths derive was first put forward in structuralist studies of culture. Here, not a uniform "pool of thought" is imagined but a corpus that encompasses the whole of the inherited culture or common knowledge of a community, including a diversity of oral and written traditions in different periods, circumstances and regions (Ramanujan's 1997: 22-46).

[277] For example, the wedding-song *Arāj mhārī sāmhalau* in J. Singh Rathaur (1998:11-12).

continuously refashion story-elements, plots, episodes, chronologies and prosodic forms, rendering Pabuji's story through distinct tellings and various, mostly overlapping, oral and written heroic-epic genres. The continuous refashioning of story-elements results in distinct versions rendered through various genres. Though the "texture" and context of a text may be distinctive, both are nevertheless crystallizations of common codes shared with other texts (Ramanujan 1997: 5f). Along these lines, I imagine the existence of a common pool of "structuring devices" shaping the ongoing diffusion of both oral and written versions of poems dedicated to Pabuji.

Devotional picture of Pabuji, Dhembo and Camda as sold during Navratri at the Kolu temple (unknown artist).