The Rajasthani Epic of Pābūjī:
A Preliminary Ethnopoetic Analysis

Heda Jason

Abstract: A preliminary attempt is made to set the Epic of Pābūjī into classificatory schemes used in ethnopoetic research: (1) the system of genres; (2) the epic biographic tradition; and (3) epic and folktale content types. This preliminary attempt to set the Rajasthani vernacular epic into the classificatory framework of oral literature considers three classificatory frameworks: the genre of the work; the epic biographies of first- and second-generation protagonists; and the correspondence of the content of scenes and episodes to established epic and folktale content types.

This is a first preliminary attempt to set the Rajasthani vernacular Epic of Pābūjī into the classificatory framework of oral literature; a full and detailed analysis would amount to a monograph. Three classificatory frameworks are considered: the genre of the work; the epic biographies of first- and second-generation protagonists; and the correspondence of the content of scenes and episodes to established epic and folktale content types (see Smith 1986, 1991).

In the framework of the system of ethnopoetic genres (see below, Appendix 1), the story of Pābūjī belongs to the genre of martial epic. This genre is set basically in the realistic mode (with elements from the preternatural on a secondary plane) and can be defined thusly:

A narrative in verse, prose or a combination of the two ("prosimetrum"). This narrative describes a conflict between two social units, human

and/or fabulous; the conflict is public and is carried out in a martial confrontation: a physical fight. In some cultures, the physical activity is complemented by preternatural means: acts performed with the help of human magic powers or the inherent fabulous powers of divinities. Epic expresses the central or nearly central values of the culture of which it is a part.

The genre is divided into 15 subgenres (see below, Appendix 2). Of these, the Epic of Pābūjī belongs to subgenre 11, "Biographic-historic category." The work narrates the epic biography of the 14th century Rajpūt Rāthor prince (historically doubtful), with birth and death episodes framing the whole work (Smith 1986, Parts A and B on p. 54, and 9 on p. 57), and Pābūjī being the fighting protagonist. The level of symbolization is low: the characters and events have real proportions, as if they would correspond to historical reality, and that despite the many fabulous elements in the work.

The work has some traits of the centric tradition: the main fighting is done by Dhēbo, who is Pābūjī's retainer, and not by Pābūjī himself. The work has also some features of the communal epic, in which "our" superhuman champion single-handedly fights a whole "enemy" army: Dhēbo single-handedly defeats enemy armies for Pābūjī.

2. Biographic tradition

Pābūjī's biography can be compared to the scheme of "hero's biography" (see below, Appendix 3). The following episodes of the work correspond to points in the biographic scheme (arranged according to the order of the incidents in the epic):

1 Origins

> 1.2 Events in "former lives": The characters are incarnations of Rāmāyana figures and play out the conflicts between these figures (Smith 1986, Part A).

2 Birth

> 2.1 Champion is son of mixed couple: Pābūjī's mother is a nymph (Smith 1986, Part B).

9 Rearing

> Pābūjī is suckled by his mother in the form of a tigress and raised by a stepmother (Smith 1991: p. 269, line 2).

10 Childhood and youth

> 10.3 Hero-child is valiant: Pābūjī becomes exceptionally strong (Smith 1991: p. 269, line 4)

14 Enthronement

Pābūjī is chief of village of Kolu at the age of 12 (Smith 1986, Part B).

11 Heroic attributes

> 11.2 Champion acquires heroic horse: Pābūjī acquires the mare Kesal Kālāmi (his nymph mother in horse-form). (Smith 1986, Part 2).

15 Combats

(1) Pābūjī raids the Khīcī family (Smith 1986, Part 1).

(2) Pābūjī attacks and defeats Mirza Khān (Smith 1986, Part 3).

(3) Pābūjī raids Lanka and plunders Rāvana's she-camels (Smith 1986, Parts 5 and 6).

(4) Pābūjī raids Lakkhū Pāthana and plunders his saffron (Smith 1986, Part 7.1).

(5) In a counter raid, Pābūjī retrieves Deval's cattle, plundered by Jidrāv Khīcī (Smith 1986, Part 8).

13 First exploit

> 13.3 Wooing a bride: Pābūjī is wooed by Phulvantī, fulfills all bridegroom's tasks and the wedding ceremony takes place (Smith 1986, Parts 6, 7, 7.1, 7(cont.)). Ceremony interrupted: Pābūjī as *brahmacharya* (Smith 1986, Part 7(cont.)).

19 Death

> 19.2 Champion is killed in battle: Jidrāv Khīcī slays Pābūjī in a duel (Smith 1986, Part 9).

> 19.3 Immortality: Pābūjī is not killed but taken to heaven (Smith 1986, Part 9).

21 Second generation

> Pābūjī's nephew Rūpnāth avenges his father's and Pābūjī's death: he slays Jidrāv Khīcī.

> Rūpnāth's career in detail

2 Conception

> 2.6 Birth after father's death: Rūpnāth is born after his father's death (Smith 1986, Part 10a).

9 Foster home

Rūpnāth is brought up by his maternal grandmother, at her home (Smith 1986, Part 10b).

10 Childhood

Child with negative qualities: Rūpnāth is wayward (Smith 1986, Part 10b).

12 Warrior career

12.1 The champion's origin: Rūpnāth is appraised of his origins (Smith 1986, Part 10b).

13 Exploits

Revenge: Rūpnāth avenges his father's family's death (Smith 1986, Part 10b).

The work scores 9 plus 5 incidents out of 20 listed incidents; of these, 3 incidents appear twice (see list below, in Appendix 3; comp. the percentages for other "heroes" in Raglan, 1956: 175–185).

3 Content types

Various episodes of the Pābūjī stories correspond to epic and folktale content types: Epic Content Types (ECT); see Jason, n.d., vol. II; AaTh (1961) folktale types, see Aarne and Thompson 1961.

Smith 1986, Part A: A typical Indian curse-and-redemption story: character A displeases character B; B curses A; A appeals for mercy; B (or someone else) sets conditions for A's release from the curse (see Jason 1999).

Smith 1986, Part B: A typical Indian way of protagonists or their spouses being born; consider Draupadi; Sīta; Siri and Sonne (see Honko 1998, Part D), etc.

Smith 1986, Part 1: ECType 5.4.1.Z, "Successful Foray"; incl. ECGroup 2.1.1.Z, "A Single Champion Overcomes a Whole Enemy Troop."

Smith 1986, Part 3: Same as previous.

Smith 1986, Part 4: AaTh (1961) folktale type 425, "Search for Lost Husband"; paragraph I, monster husband; (d) guardian (father, brother) promises maiden to monster in order to (d_3) escape from danger.

Smith 1986, Part 5: AaTh (1961) 610, "The Healing Fruits" (curing of a sick princess). Incl. AaTh (1961)1862B, "The Sham Physician and the Devil in Partnership."

Smith 1986, Part 6: See Part 1.

Smith 1986, Part 6.1: AaTh (1961) 313, "The Girl as Helper in Hero's Flight," paragraph III, "The Flight," (c) raising magic obstacle (mountain) and (d) overcoming the obstacle.

Smith 1986, Part 7: ECType 12.1.1.1, "Heroic Winning of a Bride." Bridegroom's tasks.

Smith 1986, Part 8: ECGroup 5.5.1.Z, "Foray: Successful Counterattack." Incl. ECGroup 2.1.1.Z, "A Single Champion Overcomes a Whole Army"; ECType 5.3.2.7, "Fighting a Preternatural Being, Master of a Well."

Smith 1986, Part 9: ECType 1.1.1.4, "Defeat: 'Enemy' Defeats 'Us'." Incl. ECType 3.1.2.1, "Short Duel with Active Adversary"; ECType 3.1.1.1, "Long Duel without Help."

Smith 1986, Part 10a: ECType 1.1.1.4, Epic Narrative Segment (ENS) 31, "Family Notified of the Results of Battle."

Smith 1986, Part 10b: ECType 5.3.1.1, "First Exploit of Young Champion." Incl.: AaTh (1961) 516A, "The Sign Language of the Princess," paragraph I, "The Friends," (c) breaking of water pots. AaTh (1961) 531, "Ferdinand the True and Ferdinand the False," paragraph III, "Fetching the Princess"; (b) and (c) overcoming of obstacles.

APPENDIX 1

System of ethnopoetic genres

(After Jason 1969; 1975, chpt. II; 1977, chpts. 1–21; 2000, Part D.)

   (1)   Realistic mode; includes genres of novella, epic, historic song, and lyric song.

   (2)   Preternatural mode

         (2.1)   numinous sub-mode; includes genres of myth and belief tale (legend and deimonon);

         (2.2)   marvelous sub-mode; includes the genre of fairytale.

   (3)   Symbolic mode; includes genres of formula tale, tall tale, parable, numskull tale, joke, proverb, and riddle.

APPENDIX 2

Subgenres of the epic genre

(After Jason, n.d., chpt. 6.)

LEVELS OF SYMBOLIZATION

Subgenres of the epic genre on the axis of levels of symbolization, from highest to lowest:

Mythic epic, in which the cosmos and human society are created by way of a fight between divinities. (Example: Devas vs. Asuras; Olympians vs. Titans)

Universal epic, in which humans (or hybrids of human and divine parentage) and friendly divinities cleanse the cosmos of mythic monsters. (Example: Rāmā vs. Rāvana; Hercules' exploits)

Communal epic, in which "our" superhuman champion defeats a whole "enemy" army, which is a typical and not concrete ethnic unit. (Examples: South Indian Tulu warriors Kōṭi and Chennaya, see Poojary 2007; Iranian Shah-name, with the warrior-champion Rustam)

Historic epic, in which all elements have realistic proportions and may even have real historical prototypes. (Examples: Iliad; South Slavic epics)

Romantic epic; this is not an independent subgenre but belongs to the subgenre prevalent in the culture; in this epic a couple struggles against hostile forces for their union or reunion. (Examples: Rāmāyana; Odyssey)

LEVEL OF LITERARY TRADITION

Episodic tradition carries many champions, who are parallel, i.e. all are on the same hierarchic level. Each work is an independent whole narrative (an "episode"). (Example: South Slavic epic tradition)

Biographic tradition: in this tradition the same protagonist always plays throughout. The episodes, which may be ordered as a quasi-biography, are framed with birth/growing up and death episodes. (Examples: Rāmāyana; Tibetan Gesar tradition)

Centric tradition pictures a chief's/ruler's court with paladins; the ruler forms the center, and is basically passive, while the paladins do the fighting. (Examples: Mahābhārata: Yudhishthira in relation to his brothers)

The crosscutting of these two aspects yields 15 groups (subgenres), each with its own qualities.

APPENDIX 3

Hero's biography

> (After Jason n.d., chpt. D.1.1; compiled from Hahn 1876, Rank 1909, Lord Raglan 1956, Nekljudov 1974 and South Slavic texts.)

The biographic scheme fits epic warrior champions as well as saintly figures and leading personages. It is wholly literary and not historic. Its points are:

Incident 1   Meaning and interpretation of protagonist's existence and actions.

Incident 2   Conception of protagonist (future warrior-champion).

Incident 3   Birth of protagonist.

Incident 4   Celebration of protagonist's birth.

Incident 5   Protagonist is given a name.

Incident 6   Baby-protagonist is made invulnerable.

Incident 7   Prophecy.

Incident 8   Baby-protagonist is removed from parental home.

Incident 9   Protagonist is in foster home.

Incident 10 Protagonist's childhood can take place either in parental home or in the home of foster parents.

Incident 11 Protagonist reaches maturity: he acquires champion's attributes.

Incident 12 Protagonist embarks on a warrior-champion's career and sets out for adventure.

Incident 13 First exploit of young champion.

Incident 14 Very young champion, a child, who has not distinguished himself and is a social junior, is unexpectedly chosen by higher forces to be sovereign.

Incident 15 Combats occurring during a champion's adult life.

Incident 16 Measure of champion's physical strength and prowess.

Incident 17 Champion forfeits divine favor and loses his superhuman physical strength.

Incident 18   Abandoning warrior career.

Incident 19   Death of champion.

Incident 20   Burial of dead champion.

Point 21   Second-generation champions and their adventures.

APPENDIX 4

Epic Content Types (ECT)

(See Jason, n.d. vol. II.)

An ECType describes an epic theme; a work is usually composed of more than one type. The ECTypes have been developed for the episodic epic tradition of the South Slavic historical epic. The concept of ECType is based on A. Aarne's concept of folktale type (see AaTh), and the assumption that epic themes are international in the same measure as folktales are. The list of ECTypes consists of 247 types, grouped into 14 divisions:

I	Forms of combat:	Division 1. "Battle of Armies"
		Division 2. "Combat of One Champion vs. Many Warriors"
		Division 3. "Duel"
		Division 4. "Raids and Forays"
II	Conflicts:	Division 5. "Knighthood and Brigandage"
		Division 6. "Crime and Punishment Revenge"
		Division 7. "Enemy Captures Champion"
		Division 8. "Delivery of Captive Champion"
III	Tasks and Tests:	Division 9. "Tasks and Tests"
		Division 10. "Contests"
		Division 11. "Bets"
IV	Matrimonial conflicts	Division 12. "Married Life Commenced: Heroic Marriage"
		Division 13. "Married Life Interrupted and Restored"
		Division 14. "Married Life Ended"

Abbreviations and References

AaTh—Aarne, Antti and Stith Thompson, 1961. *The Types of the Folktale*. Second revision. FF Communications 184. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.

Hahn, J.G. von, 1876. *Sagwissenschaftliche Studien* [Legend-scholarly studies]. Jena: Friedrich Mauke.

Honko, Lauri, 1998. *Textualising the Siri Epic*. FF Communications 264. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.

Jason, Heda, 1969. A Multidimensional Approach to Oral Literature. *Current Anthropology* (Chicago) 10: 413–426.

———, 1975 *Ethnopoetics. A Multilingual Terminology*. Jerusalem: Israel Ethnographic Society.

———, 1977 *Ethnopoetry: Form, Content, Function*. Bonn: Linguistica Biblica.

———, 1999 "God Bless You!" The Legend of Curse and Redemption. In: *Europäische Ethnologie und Folklore im internationalen Kontext. Festschrift für Leander Petzoldt*, ed. by I. Schneider, pp. 129–144. Frankfurt/M./Berlin/Bern/Bruxelles/New York/Wien: Peter Lang.

———, 2000 *Motif, Type and Genre*. Manual for the Compilation of Indices for Folk Literature and Bibliography of Indices and Indexing. FF Communications 273. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.

n.d. *Epic. Єnnoiĩa. Vira-Kavya*. Oral Martial Poetry. Models and Categories 3 vols. Vol. I: The Epic and Its Combat. Vol. II: Index of Epic Content Types. Vol. III: The Corpus. Analysis. Ms

Nekljudov, Sergej Ju. 1974. "Geroičeskoe detstvo" v eposah vostoka i zapada ["Heroic childhood" in epics of East and West]. In: *Istoriko-filologičeskie issledovanija*. Sbornik statjej pamjati akademika N.I. Konrada, ed. by B.G. Gafurov et al., pp. 129–140. Moscow: Nauka.

Raglan, F.R. Somerset, 4th Baron (Lord), 1956. *The Hero. A Study in Tradition, Myth and Drama*. New York: Vintage. Ed. pr. 1936.

Rank, Otto, 1909. Der Mythus von der Geburt des Helden [The Myth of the birth of the hero]. *Schriften zur angewandten Seelenkunde*, vol. 5. Leipzig/ Vienna: Deuticke. Engl. transl.: *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, ed. by Ph. Freund. New York: Vintage, 1959.

Smith, John D. 1986, Where the Plot Thickens: Epic Moments in Pābūjī. *South Asian Studies* (London) 2: 53–64.

———, 1991 (ed. and transl.) *The Epic of* Pābūjī. *A Study, Transcription and Translation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

HEDA JASON
PO Box 7328
Jerusalem 91072
Israel