

Factors Affecting the Stability/Variability of the Ifugao *hudhud*

Maria V. Stanyukovich

Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg

The traditional *hudhud*, with its amazingly rigid plot structure and abundance of formulas which form about 70% of the text, belongs among the most codified of the world's oral epics. Two main factors have provided for its stability: the mode of performing (i.e., participation of a chorus); and requirements on the soloist, based on the ritual nature of *hudhud* singing.

The soloist (*munhaw'e*) leads the song and "commands" the choristers (*munhudhud*) as to when to come in by raising the tone in the initial word of a formula. The role of the chorus, though essential (a soloist can not perform without a chorus), is totally subordinate. The part of the chorus is composed entirely of formulas, the choice of which is made by the soloist. The soloist is, therefore, the only creative force in a *hudhud* performance. All the variability lies in the part of the soloist, which is very low in formulas. Traditionally, *hudhud* singers were regarded as bearers of sacred knowledge of the ancestors, and required to transmit "inherited" texts without variation.

Modern influences have resulted in two types of changes. Firstly, the part of soloist (i.e., the *hudhud* plot), undergoes radical changes: battles that once formed the core of the plot are omitted, with gaps being filled by novelistic motifs. The part of the chorus, on the other hand, remains much more stable, as the *munhudhud* only use traditional formulas. A considerable number of these formulas are dropped, however, with the abandonment of traditional topics.