Pauline H. Walker's life was suffused with art and literature, and her aesthetic response to the beauty of Southeast Asian culture was profound. As editor and collaborator, she played a vital role in Anthony's academic career for decades, from the early 1970's until her tragic death last year. This paper is affectionately dedicated to the memory of this lovely woman.

1.0 Introduction

A member of the Lolo-Burmese branch of the Tibeto-Burman (TB) phylum of the Sino-Tibetan family, Lahu is spoken by well over half a million hillfolk in China's Yunnan Province, Burma's Shan State, and scattered areas of Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. Like the other Central Loloish languages, Lahu is highly tonal and monosyllabic; like almost all TB languages, it is verb-final, with relatively free order of noun phrases in the clause.

Partly as a compensation for the homophony problem caused by the monosyllabic nature of its morphemes, Lahu makes extensive use of *compounding*, adding phonological bulk to words by hitching extra syllables onto their roots. Particularly interesting are the hundreds of special 4-element compounds I call *elaborate expressions* (*Elab's*),\(^1\) where either the first and third, or the second and fourth, syllables are identical, yielding structures of the form A-B-A-C or A-B-C-B:

\[
\text{fâ?-5-ŋâ?-5} \quad \text{"rodent-rice-bird-rice": 'rat food and bird food' (epithet for harvested paddy left out in the fields too long)}
\]

\(^1\)See Matisoff 1973:81-6 and 297-301). The term "elaborate expression" was first used by Haas (1964:xvii-xviii), to characterize analogous expressions in Thai. Similar quadrisyllables are in fact a Southeast Asian areal feature (Matisoff 1983:76-7): for Chinese, see Ching (1964); for Vietnamese, see Liem (1970); for Hmong-Mien (Miao-Yao) see Pan and Cao (1958). Unlike the situation in Lahu, however, where two of the four syllables are almost always identical, such repetition is merely optional in these other languages.
Usually the non-repeated syllables of an *Elab* are closely related semantically, often being synonymous, antonymous, or otherwise "correlative", e.g. *foot...hand, silver...gold, male...female, high...low, beg...beseech*. The more productive of these "elaborate couplets" may combine with a variety of other repeated syllables to form families of related *Elab's*, e.g. *fâ? 'rodent' and ญâ? 'bird' recur in such expressions as *faf?-thæ-ญâ?-thæ* 'zoo' ("rodent-jail-bird-jail"), *faf?-é-ญâ?-é* 'little animals; the small fauna of the forest' ("rodent-small-bird-small"), *faf?-hu-ญâ?-hu* 'nourish the rats and birds' (by giving them a chance to eat the crops). As in these examples, each syllable of an *Elab* often has a clearcut individual meaning. At the other extreme are syllables whose independent meanings can only be guessed at -- *hapax legomena* which occur only in a single *Elab* but nowhere else in the language, like the *-qa* in *ha-lè-ha-qa*. Somewhere in the middle of this continuum are cases where a syllable means one thing in *Elab’s* but another in ordinary language, like the second member of the common couplet *dó...gâ* 'think...feel', as in *dó-pó-gâ-pó* 'think penetrating thoughts' (*pó* 'pierce'), *dó-yè-gâ-yè* 'be broadminded, imperturbable' (*yè* 'be long'). Although *dó* is the ordinary verb 'think', *gâ* no longer occurs as a free verb in colloquial Lahu, functioning rather as a desiderative verb-particle, e.g. *pó gâ* 'want to pierce', *qay gâ* 'want to go'.

Elaborate expressions are freely sprinkled into ordinary Lahu conversation, but they are especially characteristic of the archaic ritual language used in animist prayers, where they come thick and fast, often twice in the same clause, once in a noun-phrase (NP) and once in the verb-phrase (VP). Among the beauties of this liturgical style is a syntactic analogue or expansion of the morphological process of elaboration that I would like to call *syntactic parallelism*. This involves the juxtaposition of entire clauses whose grammatical structures are identical, and where some of the lexical items filling the corresponding grammatical slots are also the same, while others are different but semantically correlative.

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2The criterion for verbhood in Lahu is negatability by direct preposing of the adverb *mâ* 'not'. Thus 'not want to go' is *mâ qay gâ*, not *qay mâ gâ*.
Lest this seem overly abstract, we should now examine a particular Lahu religious text, and see how its intricate poetic fabric is created by the interplay of these analogous devices: *morphological elaboration* and *syntactic parallelism*.

### 2.0 The text of "Praying for Game"

This ritual language is now endangered in most Lahu communities, at least in Thailand.³ In villages that have been converted to Christianity, religious poetry has been stamped out along with all other vestiges of animism. Even in villages where the traditional belief systems are more or less intact, fewer and fewer boys and young men are learning the prayers from the elderly "ritual specialists" or "spirit doctors" who can still remember them. These reciters of prayers enjoy no particular prestige in their villages, and in fact are often opium addicts. They are compensated for their services (e.g. for praying to the Whirlwind Spirit for someone to be cured of severe headache) by small payments in kind, like a chicken or a pack of store-bought cigarettes from a Thai town. This is not much incentive for a young person to apprentice himself to an opium addict for several years in order to memorize hundreds of verses by rote.

Since these prayers have been transmitted orally for generations, it is not surprising that some passages are no longer fully understood even by those who recite them, and that some garbling has occurred. The same officiant will never say a given prayer exactly the same way twice, and there is even greater variation among different individuals. It does not help comprehension that the prayers are delivered at high speed in a rhythmic monotone. Frequent interjections at the beginnings of verses, besides serving to attract the spirits' attention, also seem to provide chances for the reciter to catch his breath.

Yet this poetry, humble as it might appear, has a beauty all its own. We are indeed fortunate that Anthony R. Walker has collected a voluminous corpus of these religious texts, mostly during his 4-year study of Red Lahu animist communities in Thailand (1966-70). These

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³Little is known about contemporary village life in Burma and Yunnan, where the largest Lahu communities are still to be found. Presumably the most conservative villages are those of Burma, where there is no strong centralized government to impinge on local customs.
have since been published in a series of some 50 articles scattered in journals throughout the world, a body of material unmatched for any other tribal Southeast Asian language.\(^4\)

The text we shall look at in detail is a prayer to the Hill Spirit for success in the hunt.\(^5\) As the custodian of the habitat of wild animals, the Hill Spirit (qhø-nê) must be propitiated before any of "his" animals are killed.

\[\text{šā lò ve} \]
\text{Praying for Game}^6

(1) \(\text{o, o! yà?-ni chò kà? thī-ŋå-thī-khâ}^7 \text{ tê? lē}\)

O, o! today in this place we have brought forth silver and gold altars\(^8\)

(2a) \(\text{và?-pā-và?-ma} \{\text{là?-ša cè hín hu ŝē-phâ}\} /\)

for him [the Hill Spirit] who reareth 7000 pigs, male and female, on his right hand

(2b) \(\{\text{là?-mē cè lân hu ŝē-phâ}\}^9\)

for him who nourisheth seven millions on his left hand

(3) \(\text{chò kà? hō} \{\text{cāw-mō-cāw-tû}\}/\{\text{cāw-t-cāw-yô}\}\)

\(^4\)These prayers have recently been put brilliantly into areal perspective in Walker (2003). The publication of this monumental study of Lahu religion owed much to the collaboration of Pauline, who generated many of the plates, maps, photos, and drawings which grace the volume. See the review by Matisoff (2004).

\(^5\)See Walker 1976. The translation is my own. I have tried to stay as close to the original as possible, while maintaining an elevated tone, though the vast linguistic differences between Lahu and English "information-packaging strategies" make this something of a hopeless task.

\(^6\)The Lahu do not recognize any particular subunits for these texts, so that the transcription into "verses" is rather arbitrary. Walker divides this text into 12 verses, but I am cutting it up into smaller chunks for easier analysis.

\(^7\)Elaborate expressions are given in boldface.

\(^8\)This is an example of "lying to the spirits" (nê hē ve). The "altar" in question is actually a humble affair of bamboo. The spirits are conceived of as powerful, but rather stupid, easily cajoled and misled by flowery language.

\(^9\)Contiguous expressions that are syntactically parallel are enclosed in curly brackets \{\}, with the two halves separated from each other by a slash: \{A\}/\{B\}. Repeated but non-contiguous clauses are not indicated diagrammatically, but are listed in a separate section, below 5.0.
[and for all ye rulers of] this place, Lord Maw, Lord Tu, Great Lord, Lord Yaw [Shan deities]

(4a) á! \{và?-pà-và?-ma lò-câ-qhâ-câ ve m ē\} /

ah! for male and female pigs we beg and beseech thee

(4b) \{ch+ pà-ch+ ma lò-câ-qhâ-câ ve\}

for barking-deer male and female we beg and beseech thee

(5) yà?-ni khó-lú-khó-tân tē? lē

today bringing forth gifts and offerings

(6) nò khâ-hó-là?-hó gà ve

we reach under thy feet and under thy hands

(7) á! hâ-ĝa-ĝô-ĝa tâ yù khâ

ah! do not block us up with hardship and distress

(8) bô?-ĝa-ŝa-ĝa

may they be easy to shoot and fell

(9) ŝô-câ?-kî-câ? phe lē

binding them up in [thy] chains of iron and brass

(10a) nà \{qhô-ú cô ŝa qo yù lē qhô-ú tâ lâ\} /

when I circle round the hilltops put them on the hilltops for me

(10b) \{qhô-mē cô ŝa qo yù lē qhô-mē tâ lâ\}

when I circle round the foothills put them at the foothills for me
(11) ṭọ-phaʔ-ma-phàʔ qō le

covering [their eyes] with the leaves of trees and plants

(12a) á! {tè kō qo {chō-mô-chō-hô

phâ-kû-ma-kû tō? gâ} / {phâ-lî-ma-lî fî gâ}} /

one half for the elders' sake I wish to bring forth for apportionment
amongst the men and women, I wish to divide according to our men's and women's customs

(12b) {tè kō qo {mî-hu-yâ-hu gâ} / {a-vî-a-nî mî-hu-yâ-hu gâ} le}

with the other half I wish to nourish my wife and children, my kinsmen's wives and children

(13) nò thâ? lò ve

I pray to thee

(14) tâ-hâ-tâ-ghô pè? lâ

do not give us hardship or distress

(15) a-cî mà?-câ lâ

please help sustain us

(16) yà?-ni {pō tâ qè} / {ha tâ qè} pè? lâ

today grant us that the evening-star may not set, that the moon may not set [before we have caught our quarry]

(17a) {qhô-ú cō ġa qo yù le qhô-ú tê lâ} /

when I circle round the hilltops set them on the hilltops for me

(17b) {qhô-mê cō ġa qo yù le qhô-mê tê lâ}
when I circle round the foothills set them at the foothills for me

(18) chɔ-yà {hó-tì? mâ cò} / {ta-tì? mâ cò}
we humans have no power in our ears, no power in our eyes

(19) nò khɔ-qhɔ-là?-qhɔ  lɔ-câ-qhâ-câ ve
from inside thy feet and thy hands we beg and entreat thee for food

(20) tâ-hã-tâ-ğô pè? lâ
do not give us hardship or distress

(21) yà?-ni {pɔ tâ qè} / {ha tâ qè} pè? lâ
today grant that neither the evening-star nor the moon may set /before we catch our quarry/

(22) a-cî mà?-câ lâ mĕ
please grant us help and sustenance

(23) á! nò qhɔ-ú tâ qo, qhɔ-ú ɔ
ah! when [you] put them up there atop the hills, on the hilltops

(24) {sɔ-phà?-ma-phà? qõ ŋ le, qhɔ-ú tâ là mĕ} /
covering [their eyes] with leaves of trees and plants, please place them atop the hill for me

(25) {sɔ-câ?-kî-câ? phè le, ɲà ɡû chî šî-šî tâ là mĕ} /
binding them in thy chains of iron and brass, please place them right there in front of me

(26) {sɔ-mɔ?-kî-mɔ? qô-thâ? qɔ? ŋ e, tâ là mĕ}
leading them to my big gun of iron and brass, please place them there for me
(27a) {nò hó-tìʔ-ta-tìʔ cɔ} šë-phâ /  
O thou who hast power in thine ears and in thine eyes

(27b) {nà tí qo hó-tìʔ-ta-tìʔ mà cɔ} lɛ  
since I have no power in my ears or in my eyes

(28) nò khî-hô-làʔ-hô lô-câ-qhâ-câ ve  
under thy feet and thy hands I beg and beseech thee for food

(29a) á! yàʔ-ni {thî-ŋô-thî-khâ tɔʔ lɛ} /  
ah! today bringing thee a silver and gold altar

(29b) {šwè-ŋô-šwè-khâ tɔʔ lɛ} /  
bringing thee silver and gold streamers

(29c) {câ-ú-dô-ú tɔʔ lɛ}  
bringing thee the very best of food and drink

(30) nò khî-hô-làʔ-hô lô-câ-qhâ-câ ve  
under thy feet and thy hands I beg and beseech thee for food

(31) a-cí màʔ-cã lâ më  
please grant us help and sustenance

(32a) {tè kɔ qo mî-hu-yâ-hu} /  
with one half nourishing my wife and children

(32b) {tè kɔ qo {chɔ-mɔ phâ-ƚi-ma-ƚî fî gâ cè} /
the other half I wish to divide according to the customs of our male and female ancestors, as I have said

\{ phâ-kû-ma-kû tê? gâ le cê \}

offering it to \{all the\} men and women \{of the village\}, as I have said

(33) nê khî-hô-lâ?-hô lê câ ve

under thy feet and thy hands we beg for food

(34) vâ?-pâ-vâ?-ma, chî-pâ-chî-ma pê-lô?-thî-lô? ve

male and female pigs, male and female barking-deer, plenty to share and feast upon

(35) mà?-cå lâ

help and sustain us

(36) yâ?-ni \{pê tâ qê\} / \{ha tâ qê\} pê? lâ mê

today grant that the evening-star not set, that the moon not set
\{before we achieve success\}

(37) ó, ó! hà? lâ ô mê

o, o! please accept \{our prayer\} !

3.0 Analysis of elaborate expressions in the text

In this section we give a morpheme-by-morpheme analysis of the Elab's that occur in this text. They are not arranged in strict order of occurrence, but rather in groups or "families", so that Elab's containing the same couplet (i.e. the same pair of non-repeating, semantically correlative syllables) appear together.¹¹

¹⁰"As I have said" translates the quotative clause-particle cê.
¹¹The following points are to be noted about Lahu Elab's.
3.1 Nominal elaborate expressions in the text

**silver/gold**

\(\text{thī-ŋə-thī-khā}\) 'silver and gold altar' ("place-silver-place-gold");
- *twice* (1, 29a); all elements < Shan (cf. Thai thīi 'place', ŋən 'silver', kham 'gold')

\(\text{šwē-ŋə-šwē-khā}\) 'silver and gold streamers' ("streamer-silver-streamer-gold");
- *once* (29b); etym. of šwē unknown

**male/female**

\(\text{vâ?-pā-vâ?-ma}\) 'male and female pigs' ("pig-male-pig-female");
- *thrice* (2, 4a, 34); all elements native Lahu (cf. Proto-Lolo-Burmese (PLB) *wak* 'pig')

\(\text{chī-pā-chī-ma}\) 'male and female barking-deer';
- *twice* (4b, 34); all elements native Lahu (cf. PLB *kyiy* 'barking-deer' [Cervulus muntjac], known as the best eating in the jungle

**foot/hand**

\(\text{khī-hō-lâ?-hō}\) 'under (thy) feet and hands' ("foot-under-hand-under");
- *4 times* (6, 28, 30, 33); all elements native Lahu (cf. PLB *kray* 'foot', *lak* 'hand', *?ok lower place')

\(\text{khī-qhō-lâ?-qhō}\) 'within (thy) feet and hands';
- *once* (19); qhō 'inside; interior' is native Lahu

**man/woman**

\(\text{phā-kū-ma-kū}\) 'men's and women's shares';

---

1. The order of the morphemes in an elaborate couplet may be the same as in corresponding English expressions (e.g. phā...ma 'man/woman' [not *woman/man]; ...pā...ma 'male/female (animals)' [not *female/male]), but at least as often it is the opposite (e.g. ...njā...khā 'silver/gold' [not *gold/silver]; khī...lā?... 'foot/hand' [not *hand/foot]).
1. The two members of a couplet may be etymologically diverse. Both may be native Lahu; or one may be native and one borrowed; or both may be borrowed (perhaps from two different sources).
1. Elab's are important historically, in that they tend to be archaic, and may preserve morphemes which have disappeared from colloquial style.
1. Elab's may be "asyntactic", i.e. may violate the norms of morpheme combination (see bō?-gā-ša-gā, below).

12After translating each Elab as a whole, the literal morpheme-by-morpheme gloss is given in parentheses, enclosed in double quotes; then in italics the total number of occurrences of the Elab in the text and (in parentheses) the exact verses in which it does occur; finally miscellaneous remarks, including etymologies of the constituents.
twice (12a, 32b); all elements apparently native Lahu; **phâ...ma** 'men...women' is a common elaborate couplet; **kû** (V) means 'guess; gamble; cast lots; get one's share'

**phâ-li-ma-lî**  
'men's and women's customs';

twice (12a, 32b); **lî** 'custom' is an old loan from Chinese (cf. Mand. **lî**)

**iron/brass**

**šo-câ?-kî-câ?**  
'chains of iron and brass';

twice (9, 25); all elements native Lahu; **šo** 'iron' < PLB *šam; kî 'copper; brass; bronze; yellow metal' < PLB *gray; câ? 'string; cord; elongated object' < PLB *?kyak

**šo-mô?-kî-mô?**  
'big guns of iron and brass';

once (26); the origin of **mô?** 'big gun; cannon' is obscure, but the etymon appears both in Tai (cf. Shan **?amyok** and elsewhere in Tibeto-Burman (Written Burmese **?amrokk**, Pho Karen **mlô?**)

**god/god**

**câw-mô-câw-tû**  
'Lord Maw and Lord Tu';

once (3); all elements from Shan (cf. Thai **câ(a)w** 'lord, prince; holy being, deity'); for 2nd syllable cf. perhaps Thai **môm** 'prince in the grandchild generation of royal descent'; morphemic identity of **tû** is obscure

**câw-î-câw-yô**  
'Great Lord and Lord Yaw';

once (3); **î** 'be big; be great' is native Lahu; morphemic identity of **yô** is obscure

**offering/offering**

**khô-lû-khô-tân**  
'offerings';

once (5); all elements borrowed; **khô** < Shan (cf. Thai **khôo** 'beg'); **lû** (Elab) < Burmese **hlu** (V) 'give for a religious purpose', **ôhlu** (N) 'an offering'13; **tân** (V) 'make an offering' < Shan **tan** < Bs. **ôhlu-ôtân** (N) 'an offering'; **ôtân** does not occur as a free word in Bs., but is perhaps derived from **tân** (V) 'have the mind extended to or fixed on'

**tree/bamboo (?)**

**šô-phâ?-ma-phâ?**  
'leaves of trees and plants';

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13**lû** is an example of what I call a Belab, (i.e. a bound morpheme that occurs only in an Elab), like the **-qa** in **ha-lè-ha-qa** (above 1.0).
twice (11, 24); all elements apparently native Lahu, though the tone of šš is aberrant; ššma is an elaborate couplet meaning 'trees'. Comparative evidence indicates that ma might originally have meant 'bamboo'; the usual colloquial words for 'tree' and 'bamboo', šš? and vâ, can also form an elaborate couplet with each other, e.g. šš?-bâ-vâ-bâ 'planks of wood and slats of bamboo'; phâ? 'leaf' < PLB *C-pak

elder/leader
cho-mô-cho-hô 'elders and leaders' ("person-old-person-head");
once (12a); cho < PLB *tsan person'; mô 'old' < PLB *mañ; hô < Shan (cf. Thai hûa 'head; leader')

elder sibling/younger sibling
a-ví-a-ní 'kinsmen; brethren' ("elder and younger siblings");
once (12b); native Lahu; a- is a kinship prefix (either vocative or referential); ví 'elder sibling' < PLB *?wyik; ní 'younger sibling' < PLB *?ñey

ear/eye
hô-tî?-ta-tî? 'all-hearing ear and all-seeing eye';
thrice (18, 27a, 27b); all elements < Shan; hô 'ear' and ta 'eye' form an elaborate couplet (cf. Thai náam-hûu-náam-taa 'tears' ("water-ear-water-eye"); note that the Tai etyma for 'ear' and 'head' (Thai hûu and hûua, respectively) both come out as hô in Lahu (cf. cho-mô-cho-hô, above); tî? 'eternal abundance; something everlasting and supernatural' ult. < Skt. divya, via Shan thip

food/drink
câ-ú-dô-ú 'the best of food and drink' ("eat-head-drink-head");
once (29c); all elements native Lahu; câ 'eat' < PLB *dzya<sup>2</sup>; dô 'drink' < PLB *n-dañ<sup>1</sup>; ú 'head; best part' < PLB *?u<sup>2</sup> < PTB *d-bu

3.2 Verbal elaborate expressions in the text

beg/beseech
lô-câ-qhâ-câ 'beg and beseech [for food] to eat' ("beg-eat-groan-eat");
5 times (4a, 4b, 19, 28, 30); qhâ(n) 'cry out; groan; beseech' < Shan khan; appropriately enough, since this is a prayer for sustenance, this is the Elab that occurs the most frequently in the text

have hardship/suffer
hâ-ğâ-ğô-ğâ 'meet hardship and distress' ("difficult-get-suffer-get");

once (7, 14, 20); all elements are native Lahu; hâ...ğô 'suffer; be wretched' is an elaborate couplet; ğô is perhaps cognate to Burmese rôn 'very dry; tending to decay'; ğâ 'get; obtain' < PLB *ra; this expression functions here as an antonymous parallel to bô-ğâ-şâ-ğâ [q.v.]

tâ-hâ-tâ-ğô 'do not inflict distress!';
twice (14, 20); tô 'negative imperative < PLB *da < PTB *-ta-

shoot/easy  (instead of shoot/get)
bô?-ğâ-şâ-ğâ 'easy to shoot and get' ("shoot-get-easy-get");

once (8); antonymously parallel to hâ-ğâ-ğô-ğâ [q.v.]; this expression is syntactically anomalous: in ordinary language it would be bô-şâ-ğâ-şâ ("shoot-easy-get-easy")14; bô?
'shoot' < PLB *m-pôk

wife/children
mî-hu-yâ-hu 'support one's wife and children';
thrice (12b, 12b, 32a; all elements native Lahu; mî 'wife' < PLB *mi; yâ 'child' < PLB *za; hu 'rear; raise; nourish' < PLB *hu

share/feast
pê-lô?-thi-lô? 'plenty to share and feast upon' ("share-enough-feast-enough");

once (34); all elements native Lahu; lô? 'enough' < PLB *lok

4.0  Basic Lahu clause structure

14The strange impression created by this Elab is due to the fact that bô? 'shoot' and ša 'easy' do not semantically constitute an elaborate couplet, even though they occur in couplet-position (1st and 3rd syllables). The semantic couplet of 'shoot' is 'get', but that is the repeated (i.e. non-coupled) syllable.
This is not the place to go into detail about Lahu syntax, though we need a rough idea of basic clause structure in order to discuss parallelism as a poetic device. As mentioned above, Lahu (like all TB languages except Karen and Bai) has the verbal nucleus in clause-final position, with the noun-phrases of the clause preceding in a relatively free order. Deictic (e.g. time and place) NP's tend to come before NP's referring to participants in the verbal event. Interjections frequently occur clause-initially in the poetic style. The verbal nucleus, which may consist of as many as 5 verbs in direct juxtaposition, may be preceded by adverbs. A clause typically ends in a string of particles of various types, conveying abstract notions like aspect, affectivity, evidentiality, inter-clause propositional relations, etc. Especially frequent in prayers is the post-verbal benefactive particle lâ (it occurs 17 times in our text), which indicates 'action performed for the benefit of a non-3rd person'. This is not surprising, since prayers are the way the spirits are asked to do things for us/for our benefit.

5.0 Verbatim clause-repetition

The intricate poetic texture of this prayer is achieved by repetitions of various sorts. At the syntactic level of the clause, the simplest type of repetition is verbatim, where the clause as a whole is repeated with no significant variation in separate parts of the text. It stands to reason that verbatim repetition should be a striking feature of orally transmitted texts, which tend to be modular, i.e. built up of ready-made bits that can recur and be combined in various ways.

Clauses repeated verbatim in our text include the following:

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16I object to the term "SOV language", since there is no reason to single out the "object" as being especially important in the nominal part of the clause, nor is there a well-defined role category of "subject" in Sino-Tibetan languages. See LaPolla 1990.
17There is much skillful use of repetition on the lexical level as well. We have already noted that many elaborate expressions occur more than once in the text (section 3.0, above). Even more subtle is the recurrence of individual monosyllabic morphemes at widely separated intervals: e.g. the verb hu 'rear; nourish' is predicated of the Hill Spirit in verse (2a,b), which lends an added resonance to its use in the expression mî-hu-yâ-hu 'nourish wife and children', predicated of the suppliant villagers in verses (12b) and (32a).
18By "no significant variation" I mean no difference in major constituents like nouns or verbs. Minor differences like the presence or absence of a particle or adverb are not considered enough to violate this loose criterion of verbatimity.
19The numbers on the left refer to the verses where the repeated clauses occur. Minor constituents that are omitted in one of the occurrences are parenthesized.
(A) 1/29a: ยะ?-

(chò
d) thã-thã-
khá ตำบล
le
today (in this place) we have brought forth silver and gold altars

On its second occurrence (29), this clause is put in parallel with two others, yielding a tripartite structure "29a-c"; see below 6.0.

(B) 11/24: 嗦-

(ma-
phá? qô le
covering [their eyes] with the leaves of trees and plants

(C) 15,22,31,35: (a-cí) mà?-cã là (mã)
please help sustain us

In its last occurrence (35), this clause appears in minimal form, as mà?-cã là, without the softening adverb a-cí 'a little; please', or the pleading particle mã. This bareness serves to make the clause all the more insistent, direct, and moving, as the prayer approaches its end.

(D) 16,21,36: ยะ?

(pô tâ qè ha tâ qè pè? là (mã)
today grant us that the evening-star may not set, that the moon may
not set [before we have caught our quarry]

This utterance, repeated three times in the text, is itself composed of two subparts in parallel, pô tâ qè / ha tâ qè, that can be regarded as an extended elaborate expression (below 7.0).

6.0  Repetition with variation: syntactic parallelism

Syntactic parallelism is also a stylistic device that is common to traditional oral poetry the world over, as in David's celebrated lament for Saul and Jonathan:

Al tagidu bê-Gath,

al tóvaru bê-xutsoth Ashkelon;
Pen tismaxna bônoth Pphishtim,
pen tá?aložna bônoth ho?-areylim!
Tell it not in Gath,

publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon;
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,  
lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph!

Samuel II:1.20

Syntactic parallelism is clearly a more complex poetic device than mere verbatim repetition, since it simultaneously involves both repetition (a syntactic framework which is held constant) and variation (different fillers of the corresponding syntactic slots). These pairs of fillers stand in close semantic relationship to each other, as in the above example: tell/publish; Gath / Ashkelon\(^\text{20}\); Philistines / uncircumcised; rejoice / triumph.\(^\text{21}\)

Clauses that are repeated verbatim are always non-contiguous in Lahu prayers, since to repeat the same clause twice in a row would be boring and puerile. Syntactically parallel clauses, on the other hand, are most often contiguous, since they depend for their effect on the tension between sameness and difference, and this can best be appreciated when the variants occur in quick succession.\(^\text{22}\)

Examples of contiguous parallel clauses in the text include the following:

\[(A) \quad \{và?-pà?-và?-ma \ lò-câ-qhâ-câ ve mē\} /\]
\[
ah! \text{ for male and female pigs we beg and beseech thee} \]

\[(4b) \quad \{cht-pà-cht-ma \ lò-câ-qhâ-câ ve\} \]
\[
\text{for barking-deer male and female we beg and beseech thee} \]

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\(^{20}\)Both cities of the Philistines.

\(^{21}\)An especially effective rhetorical subtype of parallelism involves permutation of the members of the same pair of fillers in the syntactically parallel clauses: *Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.*

\(^{22}\)Non-contiguous parallel clauses do also occur in our text, however, notably the triad (1), (5), (29a,b,c), where the Hill Spirit is apprised of all the good things that the spirit-doctor has brought for him: 'a silver and gold altar' (1, 29a), 'gifts and offerings' (5), 'silver and gold streamers' (29b), 'the very best of food and drink' (29c).

Another example is the pair of closely related nominal Elab's that occur as the objects of the same verbal Elab in verses (19) and (30):

\[(19) \quad \{khî-qhô-là?-qhô \ lò-câ-qhâ-câ ve\} \]
\[
\text{from inside thy feet and thy hands we beg and entreat thee for food} \]

\[(30) \quad \{khî-hô-là?-hô \ lò-câ-qhâ-câ ve\} \]
\[
\text{under thy feet and thy hands I beg and beseech thee for food} \]
This is similar to the last example in note 22, since here too we find closely related nominal Elab's appearing as the objects of the same verbal Elab; but in (4a)/(4b) the two structures are contiguous.

(B)  (27a)  {nò hó-tì?-ta-tì? cò} śē-phâ /
O thou who hast power in thine ears and in thine eyes

(27b)  {njà tí qo hó-tì?-ta-tì? mâ cò} le
since I have no power in my ears or in my eyes

In this instance, there are two pairs of opposed constituents in the parallel clauses: the pronouns nò 'thou' and njà 'I', and the positive vs. negative verbs cò 'have' and mâ cò 'not have'.

(C)  (24)  {śū-phâ?-ma-phâ? qō le, qhô-ú tâ lâ mē} /
covering [their eyes] with leaves of trees and plants, please place them atop the hill for me

(25)  {so-câ?-kî-câ? phe le, njà ĝû chî št-sî tâ lâ mē} /
binding them in thy chains of iron and brass, please place them right there in front of me

(26)  {so-mô?-kî-mô? qô-thâ? qô? śē le, tâ lâ mē}
leading them to my big gun of iron and brass, please place them there for me

Here 3 compound sentences, each containing 2 clauses, are set in parallel. The first clause of each ends in the suspensive particle le, translated by the English participial -ing (qō le 'covering', phe le 'binding', śē le 'leading'). The object of each of these verbs is an Elab (śū-phâ?-ma-phâ? 'leaves of trees and plants'; so-câ?-kî-câ? 'chains of iron and brass'; so-mô?-kî-mô? 'big gun of iron and brass'), the last two of which contain the same couplet. The second clause of each parallel verse ends in the same VP, tâ lâ mē 'please place for me'.

(D)  The most complex example is an interrelated pair of parallel verses, (12a,b) and (32a,b):

(12a)  á! {tê kô qo {cho-mô-cho-hô phâ-kû-ma-kû tô? gâ} /
{phâ-lî-ma-lî źô gâ}} /
one half for the elders' sake I wish to bring forth for apportionment amongst the men and women, I wish to divide according to our men's and women's customs
(12b) \{tê kô qo \{mî-hu-yâ-hu gâ\} / \{a-vî-a-ni mî-hu-yâ-hu gâ\} le\} 

with the other half I wish to nourish my wife and children, my kinsmen's wives and children

The parallel structures (12a) and (12b) each contain the identical topic-NP tê kô qo 'as for one half', which are then each followed by two parallel clauses containing the desiderative particle gâ. The same topic-NP later introduces the two parallel portions of (32):

(32a) \{tê kô qo mî-hu-yâ-hu\} / 
with one half nourishing my wife and children

(32b) \{tê kô qo \{chô-mô phâ-lî-ma-lî ftê gâ cê\} / 
the other half I wish to divide according to the customs of our male and female ancestors, as I have said

\{phâ-kû-ma-kû tê? gâ le cê\} 
offering it to [all the] men and women [of the village], as I have said

Here the first member (32a) has a relatively simple VP consisting only of the Elab mî-hu-yâ-hu, but the topic-NP of the second member (32b) is followed by a pair of clauses which are themselves parallel, each consisting of a desiderative VP preceded by an object which is a nominal Elab containing the same couplet, phâ...ma 'men...women'.

7.0 Syntactic parallelism as extended elaboration

Finally, there is an especially interesting subtype of syntactic parallelism that demonstrates its close relationship with the morphological process of elaboration. In these cases, the individual fillers of the parallel syntactic slots can themselves cooccur as the two halves of elaborate expressions. Consider the following four examples:

(A) (2a) vâ?-pā-vâ?-ma \{lâ?-ša cê hîn hu šê-phâ\} / 
for him [the Hill Spirit] who reareth 7000 pigs, male and female, on his right hand
(2b) \{làʔ-mè cè làn hu śè-phâ\}
for him who nourisheth seven millions on his left hand

Here the parallel clauses each contain two dissyllabic collocations that can combine elaborately with each other's corresponding constituents, to yield the expressions \làʔ-śa-làʔ-mè 'right hand and left hand' and \cè-hín-cè-làn 'seven thousand and seven million'.

(B) (18) cho-yâ \{hó-tì? mà cɔ\} / \{ta-tì? mà cɔ\}
we humans have no power in our ears, no power in our eyes

The NP's in these parallel clauses are usually found combined in the Elab hó-tì?-ta-tì? 'supernatural powers; all-hearing ears and all-seeing eyes'.

(C) (16) yâʔ-ni \{pɔ tà qè\} / \{ha tà qè\} pèʔ là
today grant us that the evening-star may not set, that the moon may not set [before we have caught our quarry]

The evening-star (pɔ) and the moon (ha) stand in one of the fundamental paired relationships in Lahu cosmology,23 and the two morphemes cooccur in a number of Elab's like pɔ-khâʔ-ha-khâʔ 'crossbow of the stars and moon' pɔ-câʔ-ha-câʔ 'occult connection with the stars and moon'.24

(D): (10a) ñà \{qhɔ-ú cɔ ġa qo yù lè qhɔ-ú tà là\} /
when I circle round the hilltops put them on the hilltops for me

(10b) \{qhɔ-mè cɔ ġa qo yù lè qhɔ-mè tà là\}
when I circle round the foothills put them at the foothills for me

Here the parallel constituents may combine to form the Elab qhɔ-ú-qhɔ-mè 'hilltops and foothills; a whole mountain from top to bottom.' The couplet ...ú...mè (lit. "head...tail") recurs in

23The evening- and morning-stars are also a cosmic pair, referred to by the elaborate expression pɔ-ʔʒʔ-pɔ-ʔqè (ʔʒʔ 'emerge', qè 'set, go down'). The word for 'moon; month' is always disyllabic in modern colloquial Lahu, ha-pa (with the meaningless bulk-providing suffix -pa).

24See Matisoff 1988:875-6).
a large number of other Elab's, e.g., qhâ?-ú-qhâ?-mê 'upper and lower part of a village'; he-ú-he-mê 'top and bottom of a swidden', và?-ú-và?-mê 'a whole pig'.

These cases show that syntactic parallelism and morphological elaboration are analogous stylistic devices. They both involve keeping certain elements constant while varying others. We may look at the relationship between them from either of two perspectives, depending on which phenomenon we take to be more basic: either parallelism is a syntactic expansion of the morphological device of elaboration; or conversely, elaboration is a morphological compression of the syntactic device of parallelism. I tend to the latter view. Cross-linguistically, syntactic parallelism is the more general device, while elaboration -- parallelism in morphologic microcosm -- seems to be restricted to the monosyllabic languages of the East and Southeast Asian linguistic area.

The formidable research team of Anthony and Pauline Walker has played a vital role in the survival of traditional Lahu religious poetry. Comparative studies of Loloish religious discourse are now possible on a grand scale (cf. Ma 1948, Hansson 1979). These texts, fascinating both for their form and their content, deserve wider dissemination among linguists, anthropologists, and students of "oral literature".

Pauline's literary training and poetic sensitivity, as well as her deep familiarity with the Lahu world, make me venture to hope that she would have enjoyed this paper that I have dedicated to her memory.

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25 The whole parallel structure of (10a,b) is later repeated in virtually identical form in verse (17a,b), but the verbs of the 2nd clauses are te 'put' instead of the closely synonymous tâ 'place':

(17a) {qhô-ú cô ãâ qo yû le qhô-ú te là} / when I circle round the hilltops set them on the hilltops for me
(17b) {qhô-mê cô ãâ qo yû le qhô-mê te là} when I circle round the foothills set them at the foothills for me

Yet despite the intimate semantic relationship between these two verbs of putting, there is no elaborate expression in which they cooccur, e.g. *tâ-ve-te-ve. Thus the relationship between (10a,b) and (17a,b) is "non-contiguous parallelism", but not the "elaborational parallelism" that obtains within each pair (10a)/(10b), (17a)/(17b).

26 A similar relationship between Hmong verb serialization and elaborate expressions has just been pointed out in Riddle 1990. My thanks to Annie Jaisser for calling my attention to Riddle's article, after the present paper was written.
REFERENCES


