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MUSIC, SPIRITS & SPIRIT IN BASTAR, CENTRAL INDIA

Nicolas Prévôt

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[this is un unformated version without the illustrations]

Introduction

In many cultures ethnographers have underlined the tight link between music and possession[1]. However, they rarely informed us about the status and role of music in rituals and about the nature of the interactions between musicians and possessed[2]. Based on fieldwork conducted in Bastar between 2000 and 2002, this article will discuss the roles of music and liquor in an annual village ritual and examine the local conceptions of sound and possession.[3]

The Gods' Market: A Ritual in Bastar [4]

One of the last princely states of India, Bastar became the largest district of Madhya Pradesh after the independence; it was subsequently subdivided and today it is a much smaller district in the recent state of Chhattisgarh. Although Bastar is known as a 'tribal' area, the *Gonḍ* majority seems to have always mingled with local castes: potters *Kumhār*, weavers *Pankā*, tailors-musicians *Ganḍā*, bronze casters *Ghāṛwā*, smiths *Lohrā*, cow keepers *Rāwat*, alcohol makers *Kallār*, gardeners *Mahār* and so on. In fact, the so-called tribes and castes often live in the same villages, share broadly the same values and representations and sometimes even the same clans and ancestors[5]. They certainly don't share the same mother tongue, but each group knows the language of its neighbour. Halbi[6] is used as a lingua franca and has become a mother tongue for many groups.

The ritual I will focus on concerns all of them, castes or tribes, and puts together their gods and ancestors several times a year during a weekly market when one of the village gods is honoured by a sacrifice; all the gods and spirits of the neighbourhood are invited to join the festival. This *dev bājār,* literally 'gods-market', is very popular in all the villages of Bastar where a weekly market is held[7]. Music is an essential element of the ritual, especially during the 'play of the gods' *(dev khel).* This marks the climax of the ritual. Musicians become central actors of the event as men, possessed by different deities, ask for their corresponding tune to be played so that they can participate in the 'play of the gods'. One after the other, the possessed men shout, gesticulate, dance and hit themselves with all kinds of instruments: wooden sticks, whips, nailed chains or axes (according to their divine identity). While embodied by men, the same gods and ancestors also animate diverse sacred objects (bamboo poles, wooden frames, litters, palanquins, etc.), which, carried by villagers, manifest their power by trembling, rocking, moving in all directions.

The musicians will please and entertain the deities – in the shape of men or in the shape of objects – by playing for each of them his respective tune(s) called *pāṛh*. The result is an unbroken line of melodies played on the shawm with the circular breathing technique and accompanied by specific rhythmic patterns on the kettledrums.

Playing with the Gods: Musicians and Possessed [8]

Considering the complexity of their repertoire, the musicians must be specialists whose musical and ritual knowledge is transmitted orally in the family. They are not paid but receive what is considered as compensation in grain for their 'dharmic' service. As is often the case in India, despite their great knowledge and their essential role, ritual musicians belong exclusively to a very low and despised caste, called *Ganḍā* here. Even if agriculture has become their main source of income, the *Ganḍā* of Bastar are characterized by several traditional occupations found among other comparable castes of India: weaving (now replaced by tailoring), cattle grazing, village watching and music making.

Known as *devtā mohri*, the ensembles playing for such events as *dev bajār*, are composed of two or three Ganḍā musicians: the leader, often the elder, plays a shawm called *mohri* and is accompanied by a pair of kettledrums called *nagoṛā,* and an optional smaller kettledrum called *tuṛbuli*.

The mediums embodying the deities are male specialists called *sirhā*. Unlike the musicians, they might belong to any caste of the village[9]. Their election by one or several gods and their capacity to control their own possession and to lend their voice to these gods, give them their status of specialists and their recognition as *sirhā*. But anybody can be possessed unexpectedly at any moment during the ritual. Indeed, the most common spirits and ancestors can 'climb' (*cāgto*) any villager. Some men are thus regularly possessed – or pretend to be – during the ritual. Yet, whether really possessed or not, they are not acknowledged as specialists, neither are they called *sirhā*, but rather considered as mere villagers (*sādā manuk,* 'mere men'). In fact, the ones who claim almost systematically to be possessed often bear the reputation of daily drunkards (*matwār*) and trouble makers (*diphāltar,* from the English 'defaulter') in the village. For liquor is served abundantly all along the three days of the ritual, except to the *sirhā* who are supposed to keep sober.

Alcohol and Possession: Drunkards or Ghosts

Beyond the social and cosmological stakes it raises, *dev bajār* are long-awaited events for they represent a convivial and exceptional period when everybody can enjoy meat and liquor during several days (what most villagers cannot afford daily or even weekly during the rest of the year). As a Ganḍā friend once confessed, 'when men have not had meat for long, they organize a sacrifice.' 'We organize sacrifices first for us, and only then for the gods', he told me with a smile.

Food and alcohol are two crucial elements of the ritual, both considered as offerings to the ancestors and to the gods whose 'left-overs' are shared as *prasād* among all the participants. But they differ in the way they are consumed. Whereas the meat of the sacrifice offered to the gods is shared equally between

all the families of the village before being cooked and eaten separately by each caste, alcohol is shared less formally at any moment of the ritual: whatever their caste, men squatting in small circles drink *manḍ* in folded leaves which they throw immediately after. Before a sip, a few drops are systematically poured on the floor and offered to the Earth and to the ancestors. For *manḍ* is not just any alcohol, but the liquor made from the flower of the sacred *mohā* tree (*Madhuca Indica*), distilled in great quantity for such occasions.

As a result, the 'play of the gods' (*dev khel*) is regularly disrupted by some men, often completely drunk, who pretend to be possessed or behave as though they were. A bit like children with grownups, they want to take part in the 'play', they want to enter the game. When one of them disturbs the ritual too much, he is thrown bluntly out of the 'circle' where the musicians play and the gods dance. At some point, short fights can break out among the participants. Nevertheless, a *dev bajār* would not be complete without the *matwār* or would simply be disappointing for the assistance composed of men, women and children for whom the ritual is also a show, not to say a 'play'. From the point of view of the ritual specialists (musicians, priests, mediums) on the contrary, a bad ritual is a ritual without gods, a ritual which attracts only drunkards.

Most of the time the drunkard asks (shouts) for an axe[10], sometimes for a stick, in order to scourge himself and thus tries to demonstrate his power and to prove that he is not a mere man. At best a drunkard is often admitted as possessed by some undefined ancestor. He represents, possibly embodies the ancestor *Dumā*, a kind of generic ancestor, at the same time one particular ancestor and everybody's ancestors. Such a character can easily make himself ridiculous, for he is naive enough to believe that he can fool everybody in spite of his grotesque behaviour. His movements with the axe being very cautious and hesitant compared to those of the *sirhā*, the audience is not really convinced by his performance and often rather amused by his clumsy gestures. Noticeably he rarely asks for a nailed chain, a dangerous tool which does not allow much cheating. On the contrary, a *sirhā* never uses an axe but always a chain that he manipulates frankly.

However, if the drunkard is generally tolerated as a legitimate protagonist of the ritual, it is certainly because of the entertainment he provides, but also because the audience is rarely sure that he is only a pretender. In the context of the ritual, a *matwār* is indeed not a mere drunkard. During these extraordinary days, 'drunkard' becomes almost synonymous with 'ghost' (*bhut*) or 'ancestor' (*dumā*) and as such inspires danger and respect. On that particular event, liquor, perhaps when combined with music, thus blurs the limit between men and ancestors. In a way, it makes men and ancestors closer. After all, as it was explained to me, ancestors are themselves *matwār,* always asking men for a drink. Their behaviour is much closer to that of men, drinking and 'defaulting' (making trouble), than to that of gods worthy of the name. Unlike ancestors and minor spirits, important gods don't take alcohol[11]. Therefore their *sirhā* are not supposed to drink in a ritual where everybody does.

Thus, a drunkard entering the play is not so much a man pretending to be possessed by an ancestor-spirit as a drunkard-spirit pretending to be a god. Moreover, we will soon understand that the limit between an ancestor and a god is not less porous, insofar as an ancestor whose identity has been revealed (i.e. more precisely defined) and whose cult has grown can enter a process of individuation and deification. Furthermore, even if the gods have their 'official' *sirhā*, it is always possible for somebody to become unexpectedly possessed by any one of them, especially when a *sirhā* who has died or has been discredited needs to be replaced.

For the musicians as well as for the audience, the interpretation of the 'play' is then very subtle. All the villagers being more or less drunk, it is not so easy to distinguish a mere pretender from someone who is seriously possessed by a spirit or a god. And physically or musically manhandling an ancestor could have dangerous consequences. Therefore, when a *matwār* is thrown out of the game, it is because nobody is totally fooled by his show[12].

For their part, the musicians must evaluate the 'play' on their own, identify the possessed and decide which tune should be played. For instance, they call the tune played for most spirits, *dumā pāṛh*, the 'tune of the ancient'. But

they sometimes call the same tune *matwāṛ pāṛh*, that of the drunkard'. It is striking that the so-called ancestors (*dumā)* and drunkards (*matwāṛ)* share the same tune played in the same circumstances. Nothing surprising in the end, since the recent ancestors, in other words, the ghosts (*bhut*) themselves have the reputation of 'defaulters', wandering in the countryside and entering the village to create problems to the living in order to eat and drink.

In Living Memory

The Earth and the Pantheon

The ritual action of the drinkers pouring *maṇḍ* on the ground is very natural if one considers that the soil is substantially made of all the men buried into it and thus physically contains all the ancestors. As everywhere in South Asia, the villagers fear the recent dead, particularly those who have had an accidental or unnatural death. These ghosts (*bhut*) can be very dangerous and even bring death. Wandering in the countryside, they constantly threaten men in the jungle or near the rivers and ponds, sometimes harassing them inside the village. They are always hungry and especially thirsty. Offering blood and alcohol to them through the soil is therefore the most direct way of satisfying and pacifying them.

The Earth as a divine element is so important in Bastar (see Popoff, 1980) that – like Brahma in Sanskritic Hinduism – it is rarely mentioned or represented. It is the supreme deity encompassing all the others, from the most indistinct ancestors to the most distinguished gods and goddesses. Thus the local pantheon can be viewed as a temporal continuum between ancestors and gods[13] following a slow process of individuation and deification (see the figure below). The dead are buried into the ground and become immediately ghosts for several months before being remembered and worshiped as ancestors by the next generations, some of them emerging as gods by the effectiveness of their cult, the others being simply forgotten.

[dead] → ghosts → ancestors → deified ancestors→ gods & mother goddesses
(malevolent ----------*(time)*----------> benevolent)

‘Small gods’ (*nāni dev*) or ‘big gods’ (*baṛe dev*), all of them come from the Earth or relate to it, even if they are said to live in the Upper World (*upar pur*). At some point it seems that the most important gods carry with them so sophisticated myths that their link with the ancestors is not made any more or has been forgotten. It seems to be the case for the most important local mother goddesses (*mātā*) who slowly integrate the sanskritic pantheon by joining the shaivite *śakti* (and so becoming vegetarian and sober). Thus more than hierarchically, the pantheon seems to be organized according to time and memory, in other words, according to the ‘age’ of the spirits and deities[14].

Conversing with the Gods

Whereas spirits and most ancestors – living and roaming in the wild – can only shout anonymously during the rituals, gods – settled in the village in their own temples – can converse with humans. It is precisely the fact of being possessed by a definite god, who can talk with the villagers, which distinguishes the specialists from the non specialists of possession. Indeed *sirhā* are supposed to have been chosen by one or several specific deities. These deities are definite gods able to tell their name, whereas ancestors remain indefinite.

Nevertheless, anybody regularly possessed may become a *sirhā* if the entity he embodies is clearly identified, if he develops the technical skill to control the process of possession, to contact the invisible world at any moment (even in a private context and without music) and if his possession is considered as true by the villagers. But his title is never permanent and a doubt always remains concerning a *sirhā*'s good faith so that he is constantly observed, evaluated and asked to prove his divine identity, physically and verbally. Of course, in proportion to the rank of the deity, there is a lot at stake in the process of acknowledging a *sirhā*, because of prestige and especially because of power since conversations with the gods raise local and of course political issues.

After the concrete existence of gods and spirits has been verified owing to possession, an essential part of the ritual is the phase of dialogue between the gods and the elders of the village. Yet gods don’t use the language of mortals,

they have their own *dev goṭ* ('gods' language'), a language understandable by men used to dealing with the invisible world: particularly rich in metaphors, it is codified by expressions in couplets and interspersed with meaningless syllables. This dialogue allows men to ask about all kinds of problems concerning the village and to follow the instructions of the gods to solve them.

Music in Interactions

There can be no such ritual without *mohri* music. Music is another means of communication with the gods preceding the verbal dialogue. But it plays several parts at the same time and seems to have different roles and meanings which, at first sight, can seem contradictory: it is together a sound and visual offering to the gods, a representation and even a sonic form of these gods, a divine 'substance' able to influence its environment. Furthermore, ritual music and drinking, seem both to participate in a process of metamorphosis or possession in a comparable manner though at different levels.

Music as an Offering

Like the sacrifices and all the gifts made to the gods, music is first an offering. As the villagers explain, it will 'please the gods' and 'make them dance'. It is a visual as much as a sound offering to the gods: the instruments played for the ritual are decorated with care and are bigger than the ones used for weddings. In some cases, some instruments are even displayed in front of the gods without being played[15].

Market is the best place to make offerings in abundance to the gods. After a halt in front of the temples where they are decorated with garlands of jasmine flowers, all the possessed and the ritual specialists form a procession and go round the market inside the lanes and amid the stalls: vegetables, fruits, pan and tobacco, meat, clothes, jewellery, utensils and so on are thus 'offered' to the gods, at least visually. At the same time, they enjoy the sound of the *mohri* playing the *dev kinjharto pāṛh* ('tune for making the gods go round') reinforced by the more spontaneous gongs and horns, accompanying them all along and

perhaps chasing or covering the inauspicious sounds. The more numerous the sounds and musical sources are, the better and the more auspicious the ritual is. Immediately afterwards comes the 'play of the gods' (*dev khel*) for which several *mohri* ensembles generally play one next to the other. The impression of sound abundance produced by different tunes played simultaneously but independently[16] by different ensembles can be seen as a musical offering to the gods along with the many other kinds of offerings people make.

Music as an Incarnation

As an object, the instrument *mohri* is considered as a god (*dev*) and worshiped like a *murti* ('image'): even if it is not always clear to which god it is dedicated and of which god it is a form – because this can change according to the context –, the shawm is preserved with care and kept at home above the floor. At the time of the ritual it is bathed, anointed and decorated and later given offerings by the priest in the same way as the other deities. Its sound is sometimes said to be the 'voice' (*hawāj*) of the god.

Each deity has a favourite tune (*pāṛh*) which he expects to be played for him by the *mohriyā* (*mohri* and *nagoṛā* players)[17]. As a *mantra* is said to contain the god or as the name of a god is said to be the god himself, similarly the tune coming out of the *mohri* might be perceived as the god himself in a sound form. Sound actualizes the deity and each melody allows the audience to identify him[18]. It evokes and invokes the god or spirit who then responds to it through the body of the possessed by 'playing' (*khelto*) and 'dancing' (*nācto*). In other words, *mohri* music is a form of the deity to which it is offered, which leads to the well known paradox that the offering to the god is also considered as the god himself (especially the victim of the sacrifice; see Mauss, 1899). More than a representation, music can be thought of as a sound substance of the gods. Its ontology and agency give to each tune the status of a "sonic being".[19] As a result, this musical repertoire makes audible the invisible. By presentifying the deities, it gives shape and life to the pantheon.

Alcohol and Music as Contaminating Substances

Stretched in Time, Spread in Space: The Radiance of Music

The sound of the shawm enables to spread the divine in time and space: at the moment of the ritual, it thus becomes a medium for diffusing its *śakti* ('energy'). The positive energy of some particular deities makes time and space positive, auspicious. Hence, before starting any ritual, *Mātā pāṛh,* the tune of Māoli Mātā, the most important and most auspicious goddess, always precedes the others.

One could compare music playing with the diffusion of different substances before the ritual in order to purify space, like emitting incense smoke in the air (also an offering), sprinkling water or spreading cow dung on the floor. In this manner, the combination of different substances and actions renders space pure and auspicious. Among them, music is attributed the power of invading and transforming its environment: space (atmosphere), things (like the divine objects) and humans (like the mediums). This is all logical if one considers the physical properties of the propagation of waves. Light, another essential element of Hindu rituals, works on a comparable principle: radiance. But sound is perhaps ritually more powerful than light because it meets fewer obstacles[20] : when strong enough, it can even penetrate through walls. Furthermore it allows the musicians to play from afar and still reach their 'target'[21]. This explains why the *mohriyā* say that 'as soon as the reed vibrates (i.e. when they blow their instrument), the god immediately touches the body of the medium' who becomes possessed. Exactly like a *mantra, mohri* music is considered efficient[22]. Music is here an agent of transformation, more precisely an agent of transmutation since the element affected by sound is changed in its nature rather than appearance.

As moving in space, *mohri* music is a conveyor of the deity. Therefore sound intensity and continuity become essential criteria for sustaining this sacred music. Shawm and kettledrums are precisely among the most powerful instruments. Their sound can be heard for several kilometres around, so that the neighbouring villages are aware of the public events and so that a large area is covered and benefits from the positive and protective energy of the gods. The

fact that shawm players use the circular breathing technique allows them to obtain a continuous sound and fill the time of the ritual with the same divine energy[23] (comparatively, *mantra* are repeated in a circle). Mobility is another quality of these instruments: not only do they accompany the gods in musical processions, but in such circumstances some specific tunes are played so as to displace one or several gods from one place to another (as sonic beings). The loudness and handiness of shawm and drum ensembles probably explain their success in many cultures from Asia to Europe.

The Influence of Alcohol

As mentioned above, drinking liquor in a ritual context is probably different from getting intoxicated in usual life. Whereas daily drunkards (*matwāṛ*) are often compared with ghosts (*bhut*) because of their disturbing behaviour, during the ritual they seem to be really identified as such. As Bursuram, my *mohri* guru and main informant suggests, *maṇḍ* and *bhut* are closelylinked:'*matwāṛ* people drink so much that *bhut* come to them [they becom e *bhut*]. They are the *bhut*. The *maṇḍ-bhut* ! […] They are the *bhut*. The *matwāṛ-bhut*!' Even though it is not said explicitly, these words and other conversations led me to the idea that ritual liquor could be understood as a substance, an essence of the ancestors. *Manḍ* would then mean more than a common liquor. Its ritual status would rely on the fact that it is almost synonymous with ghosts, hence the analogy and verbal combination of *maṇḍ* and *bhut*. In the extraordinary time of the ritual, drinking would potentially imply transforming oneself into a ghost by absorbing this substance of the ancestors[24]; besides, unlike any liquid, alcohol actually alters one's mind and engenders a process of transformation. Intoxication would thus become a form of possession by the ancestral spirits or, in other words, an intoxication by the spirits (*bhut*) as much as by the spirit (liquor *maṇḍ*).[25]

Surprisingly, the English language may help us grasp this analogy between liquor (*maṇḍ*) and spirits (*bhut*) insofar as the two elements refer to the same Latin root: the English word spirit (like the French *esprit*) comes from the

Latin *spiritus*, 'wind, air, breath', and means 'soul' as well as 'ghost'. It first meant the 'soul of the dead' (from the Anglo-Norman spirit, after *esperit*) and later became synonymous with 'liquor' because of its volatile and subtle principle[26]: in many places around the world one finds the same conception of spirit as breath, as the invisible made visible through the wind, more precisely as made visible by the movements produced by the wind swirling in nature (in the dust, in the trees and so on).

In a more direct way, Bastar people make a link between spirits and liquor.[27] As a result, drunkards 'playing' among the deities become very ambiguous beings, situated somewhere between humans and the ancestors. And indeed, *matwāṛ pāṛ* and *dumā pāṛ* are one single tune: drunkards (*matwāṛ)* and ancestors (*dumā)* are played the same melody. Alcohol *manḍ,* drunkards *matwār,* spirits *bhut* and ancestors *dumā* are thus ontologically, ritually and musically linked.

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[1] In his famous book *La musique et la transe* (1980), Gilbert Rouget gathered and compared lots of data collected by many anthropologists, mostly in Africa, Brazil and Europe, and analysed the relationship between music and different kinds of trance.

[2] See Emoff (2002) about the Eastern coast of Madagascar, Desroches (1996) about Tamil rituals in Martinique.

[3] This research analysed the relationship between music and possession on three levels:

- through the local conceptions of music and possession (vernacular terms, talks, myths, etc.)
- in the actions and interactions of the different ritual protagonists, more precisely in the interactions between musicians and possessed during the ritual
- in the musical structure of the ritual repertoire: this article will not deal with the musical structure; for a comparison between the musical structure and the organisation of the pantheon, see Prévôt, 2005 & 2008.

[4] This part quotes Prévôt, 2008.

[5] The terms *tribe* and *caste,* first used by the British rulers in their attempt to classify and understand the Indian population, are still used by the Indian Government who maintained and carried on with this classification ('Scheduled Castes' and 'Scheduled Tribes') in order to undertake positive actions in favour of the socially and economically disadvantaged groups. Differentiating 'tribes' and 'castes' in India is all but simple, especially in Bastar where the so called 'castes' seem to have emerged from the 'tribal' population by specializing into specific occupations and thus were probably kept in closer contact with other groups. From the second half of the nineteenth century on, some other casts, encouraged by the British to colonize this 'wild' area, migrated from different regions of India and settled in Bastar as merchants, cultivators or administrative workers.

[6] Halbi is an Indo-European language, originally the language of the Halba tribe. In this article, all the vernacular terms are in Halbi.

[7] In the biggest villages, this festival occurs once a year on a larger scale, a kind of large *dev bājār* called *maṛāy* (*melā* in hindi) where the market becomes a fair. It lasts three days and celebrates all the gods of the village and its surroundings.

[8] Since this paper focuses on the process of possession and on the interactions between musicians and mediums, the activities of the priest (*pujāri*) will not be presented here: yet he is a prominent character since he organizes the sacrifice, makes the offerings and takes part in the discussion with the gods. He is always a Gonḍ, probably because he mediates with the Earth (Gonḍs are considered as the founders of most villages of Bastar and as such deal with territory at a ritual level).

[9] Yet it is interesting to underline, as Elwin (1947) did before, that the Ganḍā caste provide a great number of *sirhā*.

[10] The axe is the most common attribute of any male villager, and logically the symbol of the ancestor in a patrilinear system.

[11] Most mother goddesses are even vegetarians whereas ancestors and many male gods are offered blood sacrifices.

[12] It is not sure whether he is thrown out as a drunk man or as a ghost *bhut*. The relationship between men and spirits and even between men and gods is indeed very familiar and it is not rare to see villagers arguing with them or even threatening them.

[13] For this reason, we give the word *god* a very broad meaning, just like the Bastari who use the word *dev* to define sometimes a common malevolent spirit (ghost), sometimes a very respected deity.

[14] I am grateful to Chris Gregory for this suggestion and for the fruitful discussions around this article.

[15] There is an attempt to satisfy the gods through all their senses: touch, when they are bathed and oiled; smell, when they are offered incense (*dhup* which the mediums inhale); taste when they are offered meat or vegetables; hearing, when they are played music and all kinds of sounds; sight, when they are given clothes and ornaments.

[16] This principle can be called polymusic (Zemp (1996: 125), Rappoport (2004: 383), Lortat-Jacob & Rovsing Olsen (2004: 416)).

[17] This principle of identification corresponds to what Rouget (1981) has described as a repertoire made of *devices* (French 'devise') or emblems characterizing many repertoires of possession around the world.

[18] To some extent only since some gods share the same tune; the most important deities have their own specific tune while some others share the same melodies.

[19] I borrow this expression from Victor Stoichita and Bernd Brabec de Mori, convenors of an eponymous panel at the EASA in 2012.

[20] The Vedas give an extreme importance to sound and even endow it with the creation of the world.

[21] This could explain the existence of this kind of ensembles in many Hindu temples in India, since many temple musicians are paradoxically not accepted inside the shrine due to the impurity attributed to their caste.

[22] For example, as it was explained to me, during the collective pond fishing in the village of Barkai, the *pāṛh* of a specific goddess, related to that pond by her myth, allows the villagers to catch the fish very easily, which would not be possible without music.

[23] If ever the shawm player has to stop for any reason, the drums keep on playing. It does not mean that the musicians play during the whole the ritual, but the musical phases link the different tunes together without break.

[24] And daily 'drunkards', often called 'defaulters', by their nature would be more likely to turn into ghosts.

[25] A comparable phenomenon, the invasion of a body by a substance, seems to govern music and alcohol as conceived for the rituals of Bastar. Indeed ritual music and alcohol, two 'contamining' elements affecting the senses, filling and transforming men in their very nature, relate in their own yet comparable ways to the same process of ritual possession. Whereas music allows men to communicate with the Upper World (*upar pur*), the world of the gods, alcohol allows them to communicate with the Lower World (*khale pur*), that of the departed and ancestors. Therefore music and alcohol can be seen as complementary mediums between the society and the invisible world.

[26] The same word led to the concept of « spiritism » (communication between men and spirits) in the 19th C.; after Alain Rey (Ed.), 1999 *Le Robert, Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* (3 vol.).

[27] Another element of comparison between spirits and spirit is their symptomatic effects: whereas fever and headache characterize the invasion of *bhut* into the human body, hangover is a common result of the excessive ingestion of liquor.