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Gender, emotion, and poeticity in Georgian mourning rituals

Helga Kotthoff

Introduction

This article deals with the relationship between gender, emotion, and culture in Georgian mourning rituals, especially in lamentations. In many parts of the world laments are performed by women, as well in Georgia. The emotion of grief is thereby indexically feminized. My article focuses on the poetic performance of grief and pain, consisting of various conversational involvement strategies, and the social meaning of this affective genre as gendered activity. In the role of lamenters, women enjoy high respect. However, this social role contains tension for them. On the one hand, wailing reconstructs the feminine gender ascription of being vulnerable and over-emotional; on the other hand, it permits women to act as oral artists, and their talents are admired by the whole community. Instead of regarding ritual wailing as a form of losing control of oneself, the high standard of verbal art clearly indicates that wailers must be in good control of their affects. The aestheticized speech demands bodily control of the mourners during the performance of “being beside oneself.” They are admired as well as artists of pain and as persons having deep feelings. By involving others with their moving words the loss is symbolically shared and the wailers reaffirm the social network. Pointing out good deeds of the deceased and his/her dan allows them to communicate their moral standards and their views on what good social relationships look like. They also take the chance to praise each other in their laments. Another positive aspect of wailing for the women consists in allowing them to play a public part in practicing religion. Since within the official Orthodox church women have only low positions, they enjoy their important role as mediators between the living and the dead put on stage in the folk religious wailings. Lamentation is believed to intensify relations to the deceased in the hereafter.
Laments also represent an accepted form of complaint about all forms of sorrow and pain in the lamenters' own life. Women use the genre to publicize their sorrows.

Lamenting is interwoven in the Georgian system of gaining and paying respect and honor (Kotthoff 1999). The lament represents her clan in honoring the deceased (and thereby his or her clan).

In recent years it has been becoming more and more evident in cultural studies that emotion politics is central in the construction of a gendered world and has a lot to do with the organization of social hierarchies and solidarities. In taking a close look at gender and emotion politics in ritual wailing we hope to get a differentiated picture of the arrangements between the sexes in one culture (the Georgian).

I present transcripts from a lamentation and analyze the form and function of the genre drawing on concepts of emotion work and involvement strategies, thereby linking gender with body politics, power, and social structure. The article focuses on specific strategies of indexing commmunalization of the living and the dead, on interrelated affective dimensions, and on the tension the genre contains for women's social position.

1. Xmit natirlebi

The region this article deals with is the eastern part of the former Soviet Republic of Georgia, nowadays an independent country in the Caucasus. Lament performances still play an important role as part of death rituals in rural Georgia. When someone dies in a Georgian rural area, the "motiralebi" assemble to bewail the deceased loudly in an improvised and partly formulaic lament which is rhythmically and intonationally structured in lines. The "motiralebi" are usually close female relatives and neighbors. Women display different ways of emotion management and performance from the very beginning of the death event, thereby reproducing cultural gender norms. Laments constitute a body of women's expressive genres, and a socially acknowledged female way of reaffirming social bonds and moral standards. In the eastern parts of Georgia only women are lamenters. Interestingly, men play the most important role in ending the mourning phase and managing the ritual transition back to everyday life. At the mourning meal, "kelexi," they formulate a series of toasts, first to the deceased person, then to other dead persons and finally to the living.

Grieving is a public act in Georgia. For an entire year a picture of the deceased is hung before that person's house. The transparency of village life entails that lamenters will be well-informed about the life of the deceased. They are able to intersperse their dirges with many anecdotes from the deceased's and his/her clan's live.

There is a certain order in who bewails whom and how much. For example, on the occasion of a child's death, its mother will be the principal wailer. Should she lack the requisite skills, however, another woman will assume this role. In every case the women take turns in lamenting, since they grieve all day during daylight hours for three to five consecutive days. Usually several women alternate in lamenting. The family of the deceased is not left alone with its grief. The loss is borne by all, thus affirming the social network of the entire grieving community. The women continue to lament at the cemetery until the coffin is lowered into the grave. On the seventh and fortieth days after death, and once more a year later, they lament again.

The dominant form of ritual wailing is called "xmit natirlebi." "Xmit natirlebi" means "crying loudly with one's voice". Also called "motkirmi tiril" (spoken weeping or wailing with the voice), this genre belongs to a special form of ritual communication. Sometimes, a woman laments and others hum the melody with weeping sounds, a stylized background wailing called "zari". The lament performer orients herself to the deceased, to other deceased, and to various present and absent addresses or the audience in general. There are many formulaic phrases which appear again and again. Every lament, however, is created individually for the deceased person and present persons, and large parts of each lament normally consist of improvisations. An "aesthetics of pain" (Caraveli 1986) is placed on stage.

I became acquainted with women's laments only after having lived in Georgia for many months. The "xmit natirlebi" are still widespread in rural areas, and in many regions (particularly in the Eastern mountain regions of Piavi, Mtianetia, Xvevareti and Tusitia) only women lament. In Svanetia and Samegrelo, West Georgian areas, men also practice special parts in ritual wailing (Bolle-Zemp 1997). In the mountain villages the dirges are sung and are accompanied by forms of self-aggression like pulling one's hair out. Grief styles differ regionally within Georgia. In the valley they are today often performed without a song melody; the lament has completely died out only among the Tbilisians in the capital of Tbilisi (not among immigrants). However, even among Tbilisians the deceased is mourned for three to five days by a circle of women who gather daily around the coffin. In contrast to Northern or Western
Young men watched the young wailers in order to choose a wife. To have a
good wailer as a wife meant to have someone who would involve herself into
making his transition into the hereafter easier. It is considered a terrible
malodiction for a man to insinuate that no woman will bewail him. Those who
are seen as criminals are not (necessarily) granted the honor of a lament. In the
village of Muxrani, near Mcxeta, people told us of a man who allegedly did not
work, who drank and beat his wife and children. When he died, neither his
family nor his (female) neighbors wanted to "soften the earth" for him, which
indicates the religious function that is ascribed to lamentations in Georgia. Shortly
before burial, an old woman staged a lament in which she set forth that she did
not want to have a bad conscience before the mother of the deceased in heaven
because she had not softened the earth with tears of grief for her son. A lament
is never only dedicated to the actual deceased but to her/his whole clan as well.

The length of mourning, the frequency of commemorative celebrations, the
abundance of the funeral meal, the beauty and intensity of the lamentations, the
number of guests and many other details indicate what place the deceased and
his or her family is assigned in the social hierarchy of the community.

There are many oral rituals in Georgia which also embody the secrets of
social order.11 Most of these genres,12 such as drinking toasts and forms of
verbal duelling, are gender-related activities. They help people to exercise
control over affective processes in a gendered way. Men, for example, must
display self-control during the performance of drinking toasts, which are
usually offered under the strong influence of alcohol (Kotthoff 1995b). Women,
by contrast, tend to give expression to suffering in performing dirges, but they
must at the same time conform the expression of their feelings to demanding
conventionalized forms (as will be shown). The gender difference is not that
men control their emotions and women let them take their course, but that
both sexes practice emotion work in a specific way.

Men are largely obligated to maintain silence in the situation of death. As a
visual display of grief, they are allowed to tear scraps of cloth from their shirts
and to beat themselves on the chest.13 In addition, the men of a village will often
refrain from shaving for many months following their loss. Bearded men were
once assumed to have lost a loved one, usually their wife. Symbols of "letting
oneself go" as a sign of mourning have been found in many societies.

In this context expressive sadness is not only permitted for women, but is
considered their duty. Women assume this role in the emotional division of
labor in many societies (Finnegan 1970, Caraveli-Chaves 1980, Stubbe 1985,
Seremetakis 1991).14 By commenting on the life of the deceased and those who

European cultures, this activity indicates that grieving in Georgia is a very
expressive and time consuming undertaking. The lamenting women demonstra-
tively put their grief and attachment on stage, falling on their knees before
the dead, crying, kissing and hugging him/her.

In Eastern Georgia, only women are present in the room where the
deceased lies, while the men stand silently in the doorway or in the yard. Women
address their sorrow to other women; but men acknowledge it as well.

A few regional elements of the mourning ritual are exclusively performed
for men, which expresses the patriarchal orientation of the culture. In the
Eastern Georgian mountain regions widows cut off their hair and place it in the
grave with their husband as a symbol that they continue to be their wives. It is
regarded as morally bad if a widow remarries, since she still belongs at least in
part to her deceased husband. A husband, in contrast, belongs to his deceased
wife only for a short period of time; then he normally begins a new life with
another woman.

The intensity and duration of a lamentation signifies the social value the
deceased is ascribed. Various Georgian informants have explained to me that "a
man who had provided great benefits to the village would be grieved longer and
in many more forms than an insignificant person". Likewise, people who die at
an early age are more profusely lamented than very old people. In former times
a woman's wailing talent was seen as an important criterion for a good wife.
are present they also serve important functions for the production and reproduction of societal morality. This is one reason why lamentation is not just a discourse of powerlessness. In any case, laments symbolize a kind of final summing up for a member of society. Cultural gender politics is carried out in that respective feelings are devoted on women as the principal mourners; they must be expressed during the rite of transition. As lamenters women gain high respect.

In addition, as an institutionalized form of expressive speech activity, lamentations offer a framework for expressions of many sorts of overpowering grief and pain in the lamenters' own lives which can also be channeled in this fashion.

In the countryside women play only a minor role in the community life outside the home. Only in a state of grief do women become public figures who are allowed to speak for the community. Private space then becomes public space.

Lamentation thus also plays an important role as a form of folk religious ritual. Religious practice is not limited to churches (Luckmann 1991); the genre of lamentation is extremely important for the constitution and manifestation of folk religion in everyday life. One reason for the survival of the genre could be that it fulfilled functions of cultural resistance in Soviet times. Through mourning the Georgian local communities recreated their own values against those of the dominant Soviet (Russian) regime. Ritual mourning allowed people to show each other that their religious (and thereby national Georgian) identity was still alive.

Another reason is, of course, that oral genres of morality and religion require a close-knit society because they depend on social knowledge; the Georgian villages fulfill these survival conditions even today.

In the post-Soviet era the Orthodox Church has regained power. Women play only minor roles within the official Georgian Orthodox Church. A significant aspect of the lament still is its religious dimension, because it constitutes metaphysical communication outside the official church. Within the unofficial religious life of their villages women still act as mediators between the realm of the living and that of the dead. In Georgian folk religion attachment to the deceased is extraordinarily marked. One assumes that the deceased can influence life on earth and that one must remain in continual contact with them in order to positively influence them. Throughout Georgia, even today people are still strongly convinced that the soul of the deceased person continues to live on for a while after death. We see in the transcripts that the deceased person is directly addressed and appealed to, for example, as the addressee of stories. One reason for the extensive mourning and memorial work lies in the conviction that the deceased person should feel good in the afterlife, and that it will be better for those left behind if the deceased are content. The fictionalization of life in the hereafter is parallelized to life in this world. The mourning meal following the burial must, for example, be very abundant so that the deceased will be greeted with an equally generous meal in the hereafter. The lamentations which we have collected are full of messages for other deceased persons, for example, in the form: "Tell my mother that we have finally moved into our new house. But please do not tell her that we have lost our house in Abkhazia." The deceased must be kept in good spirits.

Women also reproduce emotional womanhood in this genre. Deeply felt grief is regarded as a sign of being a good woman. The mourners display behavior that is considered feminine by society. The general ascription of emotional expressiveness, especially suffering, constitutes femininity in many cultures (Grima 1991, Mills 1991). Conventions of feeling demand that women's grief and sadness be especially deep and long-lasting. In Georgia the ability to express grief is definitely part of female body politics. In contrast to Western body politics, whose essence nowadays consists in making the traces of experienced life, of fear, suffering, aging and despair as invisible as possible (women attempt to continuously display the same flawless freshness and youthfulness), in Georgia the chief concern is, to the contrary, to iconically embody suffering and to portray expressive forms of suffering and grief through the body. Wailers sit bent over, with stooped shoulders, arms and head. They sob and often rest their heads in their hands. Movements become heavy and slow. Older women in general move more ponderously in Georgia than in the West. But we can observe changes nowadays. Young women have started orienting themselves to Western values. They also refrain from wailing. Further research must answer the question of how contact with Western ways of living influences grief rituals and gender politics.

Grief rituals represent special ties among women. Women not only lament the loss of the deceased, but also praise and support each other in their dirges. Their joint suffering and support constitute a social tie among them.

In principle, every woman can lament; however, some women are seen as outstanding because they have developed special skills. We were often told that only women who have experienced social tragedies are able to lament beautifully and move others. These lamenters are well-known and venerated throughout their village. When someone passes away, the lamenters hurry to the house in
which the deceased lived. They honor the dead and her/his family by lamenting for her/him. The family announces the death of a person by crying loudly.

As lamenters, women fulfill important anthropological functions which interpenetrate one another, including the dramatization of a basic human experience, the communication of that experience, aestheticization and handing down memory to the next generation.

The intensity of the presented and aroused empathy is the primary evaluative criterion for the lament's performance. The lament performer should transfer her pain to others. The value of formal beauty consists in its ability to create and support strong feelings of empathy in the audience. Laments represent a mixed form between formulaic and improvised texts, as is typical for most oral ritual performances (Finnegan 1970, Edwards/Sienkiewicz 1990).

1.1 Women praise each other

As I already said, the wailers also use the genre to praise other women present. I present a short segment taken from a lament for the 86 year old woman Mariam performed in the village of Muxrani in 1994 (40 km from Tbilisi) on "panavidi" — the last day before the burial. The full text is presented in the appendix.

Methodologically I prefer a data-centered ethnography, that means to take a close look at textual details of the wailing. I do not, however, claim that the text itself tells us everything; I do believe, though, that we ought to take people's actual modes of behavior and dialogues as the starting point for theories of their social organization and relevance structures. We, Elza Gabasava and me, also talked about ritual wailing with many practicing lamenters in Georgia and will integrate their views on that practice into our discussion.

When the sequence presented below took place, visitors one by one entered the room where the deceased, the 86-year-old Mariam, lied. The female relatives and neighbors are seated around the coffin. The chief lamenters are the daughters, Eziko (L) and Ciala (C). By the head of the deceased stands a small table, on which candles and photos of persons who had died previously are arranged. Tamara (T), a neighbor and cousin, enters. I did not transcribe all the soft background wailing of the onlookers. She then becomes the addressee of praise for her care.

We will pay attention to the content that is communicated here and to an interesting formal feature of Georgian dirges: the constant crossing and shifting of address. I see it as an index of social unification.

Sequence 1

1 Tamara: rogo gamzadebulkar, maro deida, genacvale
  how beautifully you have prepared yourself, "Aunt Mari, genacvale
2 Ciala: verari, tamara deida, arar i ci rakka kala; no, Aunt Tamari, you don’t know what you are doing, woman,
3 amdeni palvissema, arar i ci rakka kala, mi, so much deference, I don’t know what we could do, Aunt Tamara, oh my
4 T: [T]
5 C: swan dre, swan karamos, swan dilas everyday, every evening, every morning
6 T: maa gaandabulhar, genacvale;
but you have prepared yourself, genacvale
7 C: arar ra ganamorno, genacvale
I do not know what pleasure I could give you, genacvale.
8 T: dadi gvaris xalii xari
you come from a large clan
9 "He: ek qavilibi quellas kana, agre megenovle, sena there you will meet our cousins, all the good are there.
10 share these flowers with everyone there, I implore you, you
11 "He: ek qavilibi quellas kana, agre megenovle, sena share these flowers with everyone there, I implore you, you
12 roberam guli misre, rem am kai boleba stebaw but my heart aches that you are leaving your dear children
13 stebaw da midour
14 you are leaving them and going away from them
15 C: amat: ekha risi ent ramaedd
it means so much to look at them,
16 T: you should have joy, you,
or the end of a line. "Genacvale" expresses the process of immersing oneself in a person's sorrow and can be translated as "I take your place". "Genacvalos deda" accordingly means "I take mother's place". Boeder (1988) writes that in a certain contextual position one can as well translate the formula as "I die for you". "Genacvale" is one of the special sympathy formulae which describe a strong religious wish for self-sacrifice.

Formulæ which communicate the wish to take over another person's burden or even death play a major role in Georgian everyday life, not only in dirges. These formulæ presuppose a possibility of transcendence which leave the realm of realism, imagining supernatural and magic powers.

First, there are the abundant, often-repeated formulæ whose fundamental semantic pattern states, at least etymologically, the following: the speaker wishes to shoulder the burden of pain (the illness, misfortune...) which the person addressed suffers. The addressee's misfortune should be conveyed to the speaker; the lamentant wants to symbolically shoulder the suffering person's pain. (Boeder 1988: 12; translated by H.K.)

In line 17 we find the formula "seni čirime" ("your pain over me" or "let me bear your suffering") which even more strongly expresses that the speaker would like to assume the addressee's misfortune, suffering, travail and even death. Despite its high level of conventionalization, the formula "seni čirime" has a strong claim to authenticity. As well the lines 18 (into what water should I throw myself) and 21 (God give you joy) are highly conventionalized. The repetition of formulæ communicates iconically; we will be united in our suffering.

The unification in suffering is also indicated by continuous address shifting. Ciała directs her words in line 2 to Aunt Tamara and thanks her for having done so much for her mother. Tamara directs her words to the deceased Mariam. Sudden address shifts are typical in Georgian lamentation. Line 2 means that Tamara is always trying to find things she could do for her neighbors. In line 3 we find the word "pativašcena" (deference, honor), a central concept in Georgian everyday life, not only in the ritual of wailing. Many activities are integrated into a system of giving and receiving respect and honor (Kothoff 1999).

Ciała underlines Tamara's involvement (5) in a three-part list. Hyperbole in praising and thanking is among the characteristics of the lament-performance. In line 6 Aunt Tamara addresses the deceased again. The metaphor of travelling is important in representing death and highly frequent in dirges (not only in Georgia). In line 7 Ciała refers again to how she could return the honor and support she received from Tamara. Tamara, who is also Mariam's cousin.

Tamara directly addresses the deceased Aunt Maro (a diminutive of Mariam) with a compliment on her way of dressing. She pretends that Maro had dressed herself to be ready for the journey into the hereafter. To portray the deceased as active is typical in dirges. The line ends with the formula "genacvale". Laments are permeated with this formula which often marks the beginning
imagines that grandmother Mariam will meet members of her clan in the hereafter; they are said to be good. Typically, in dirges the deceased are imagined as being better than the living. Among others, Mariam will meet her mother, to whom good nature is attributed (10). She again directly addresses Mariam. In line 11 she suggests to Mariam to bring the flowers to those in the hereafter. A religious conception holds sway that the deceased, at least as long she has not yet been buried, takes note of all the messages presented to her and upon arriving in the hereafter passes them on to the relevant persons. In most lamentations those deceased persons are named with whom the deceased will later be reunited in the kingdom of the dead.

In lines 12 ff. Tamara recalls the children with kind words. In telling Mariam that it means much to look at her children, she indirectly compliments the present children. I call this strategy address-crossing. The deceased often becomes the official addressee, others present the unofficial ones. She is told praise stories about those present, who can be the praise objects or just the listeners. In any case, good deeds and characteristics are made public that way. In line 13 Tamara repeats that Mariam is leaving her good children now. This is of course an indirect way of complimenting Ciaia and Liziko, the main walkers. Ciala returns the indirect compliments in line 15. Tamara addresses the deceased again in line 16. In line 17 we find the formula "iseni irime" (your suffering should be mine) we already discussed. In other segments presented in the article we will discover many formulae which communicate that a person wants to carry all the sorrow and suffering for another person. These formulae show a high degree of involvement and sympathy. The phrases in 18 and 19 are also formulaic. In line 20, Ciala takes the turn again and appeals to God to assist Tamara and her family. From line 22 on Ciala again tells her mother how much Aunt Tamara had done for all of them, another case of address-crossing. She talks to the deceased Mariam as though she were alive. This is one of the feature that characterize the discourse as religious. In these scenes Ciala gives her mother everything that present and absent people (mostly women) have done for each other. Thereby they indirectly praise and thank each other. They celebrate their readiness to help, their friendship, and their support. By constantly changing addressees, a community which still includes the deceased is indexically associated. In very concrete scenes Ciala continues showing everybody how helpful Tamara was. She presents herself unwilling to accept so much help and as not knowing how to pay back such a great support. We will return to these strategies of community formation later. It is evident that lamentations represent a genre of women's care for the bond of friendship.

1.2 Women form family relationships

Lamentations also (re)construct images of good relationships within the family, for example, between wife, wife's mother and husband:

The topic was already shifted to other deceased family members some lines before. Now Ciala's deceased husband is brought into the center of attention. Starting in line 58 she asks her mother a rhetorical question of whether her husband gave her too little respect (pašivi). This is only the start of praising him for paying so much attention to her mother's well-being, thereby staging him as a man of high morals. In lines 60 and 61 she constructs a dialogue with her husband. He is presented as urging her to please her mother. In line 61 she quotes her own words. In line 62 she again cites her husband's words and then talks about him and her mother in the third person. The cited formulation "pašivi cci" — (pay her respect/do something good for her) runs through the lines now. It is not easy to translate "pašivi" because it designates the Georgian concept of interactional honor (Kothhoff 1999). From line 65 on, she again speaks with her mother and tells her all the things her husband would have done for her. She also reminds her mother in line 67 how much she had pitied her when her husband died. The mother now becomes the addressee of her griefing for her lost husband. Indecisively, Ciala also creates ties among the deceased. She refers to her own long state of grief (wearing black costume for the past twelve years), which in Georgia symbolizes good womanhood.

In line 70 she tells her mother, thereby including all the others present, that people think she should finally put aside the mourning dress. She lets everyone know that she is still unhappy about her husband's death, thereby overfulfilling all cultural mourning norms for wives. In line 73 the focus is again shifted to the death of her mother. Now she has a new reason for mourning.

We do not know much about the truthfulness of Ciala's narrative. At least we do not know how representative the narrated dialogue is for her husband's behavior. But it is evident that this is the behavior she favors and portrays as ideal. Lamenting women form social relationships (and especially the ideals of those relationships) in praising certain ways of acting. Lamenting thereby becomes a form of public discourse that sets moral standards in the interest of women. Women in this genre tell their social world what they like and what they don't like, what kind of behavior impresses them and what not.
1.3 Reported dialogue as indexing communality

Durkheim (1915), Van Gennep (1924), Radcliffe-Brown (1964), Feld (1982) and many other anthropologists argued that the function of ritual weeping by those left behind is to affirm the existence of social bonds between the living. In the case where the social structure is weakened by the departure of a person, the social structure is knit together again by sharing emotion and common culture. The Georgian “xmit natirilebi” also simultaneously combine several purposes. They allow people to overtly express feelings of sadness on the occasion of death, they reaffirm strong expressions of sorrow as a woman’s activity — and they bind the community together by sharing grief and reaffirming its moral values. They not only claim social bonding but stage it as a drama of different voices in interaction with one another. A community of the living and the dead is animated in lamentation (to use Goffman’s term 1981). Let’s again have a look at some lines which show animated dialogue in sequence 1.

Tamar’s speech is quoted by Ciaia in line 25. In lines 27 and 28 Ciaia directly quotes her own speech. Directly reported dialogue is an involvement strategy (Tannen 1989). To be exact, we should say “constructed dialogue” or “quoted dialogue”; there is no claim and no evidence that real dialogues are being accurately reported. Constructing dialogues is an effective strategy for animating the imagined speakers in a specific way.

The voicing used in lamentation performances can be understood in terms of Soviet cultural semiotics (Bakhtin 1981, Voloshinov 1978), which analyzed the functions of direct and indirect quotation in fiction. Voloshinov (1978:153) distinguished two types of reported speech in fiction. The type which works with indirect quotation is said to be concerned with the stylistic homogeneity of a text. The other type individualizes the language of characters and also the language of the teller. He refers to this as relativistic individualism and finds examples in the works of Fedor Dostoevski and Andrej Belki. Characters are identified through their own quoted speech, through direct citation. Direct citation permits ellipses, omissions and a variety of other emotive tendencies.
which would be lost in indirect quotation. He demonstrates this, among other examples, by the exclamation, "What an achievement", which in indirect quotation one would have to transform into the clumsy phrase, "She said that it was a real achievement...". Direct quotation evokes "manner of speech", not only individually, but also typologically. It is "speech about speech, utterance about utterance" (Voloshinov 1973:115).

Tannen (1989), Brünnner (1991), Günther (1997, 1999) and Couper-Kuhlen (1999) have shown that reported dialogue can contain verbal and intonational characterizations through which — on the basis of stereotypes — images of persons, social groups, etc. are transmitted. By the 'polyphonic layering of voices' (Bakhtin 1981) protagonists are implicitly stylized and evaluated. The speaker anchors the voices in a storyworld and animates them in a way that corresponds to her current intention.

As a specificity, lamentations contain quotations of deceased persons as we saw in sequence 2. For example, in lines 60, 62, 63 Cila animates her husband's voice in a dialogue with herself. This way, lamenters dramatize again and again aspects of their life with the deceased. In a sense they dramatize their memory. Throughout the text the voices of the deceased are intertwined with those of the living. Thereby a community of the living with the dead is indexicalized. The existence of this community is one of the basic religious convictions of most Georgians. It is conversationally (re)created.

The lamentation sequences discussed so far show how much community members mutually reinforce one another in lamentation dialogues. The death of a person is taken as an occasion to praise each other, to remind each other of good times spent together, to strengthen the common bonds. Ritual wailing imports collective reassurance of the group into the disrupted domestic sphere. This function, which is frequently conjured up by anthropologists like van Gennep and many others, is activated by concrete performance strategies. Repetition, reported dialogue and imagery are among the most important involvement strategies of lamentation.

2. Communicating emotions

The language and communication of emotions have seldom been focused on in modern linguistics. They have been declared a psychological question about which we linguists have little to say. Only recently has the dogma that emotions are internal, irrational and spontaneous been exposed and questioned (e.g.,

Irvine 1982, Wierzbicka 1986, 1987, Lutz/Abu-Lughod 1990, Ochs/Schieffelin 1989, Günther 1997, Niemeyer/Dirven 1997). As Irvine (1990) points out, two of linguistics' most stellar figures, Jakobson (1960) and Sapir (1921, 1927), thought otherwise: Affect, or emotion, according to them, was a fundamental dimension of human life and a factor cross-cutting all levels of linguistic organization (1900:126). Anthropological linguists, such as Irvine (1982, 1990), Ochs and Schieffelin (1989), Besnier (1990), Fiehler (1990), Caffi and Janney (1994) and the contributors to Niemeyer and Dirven (1997), have begun trying to find a new place for emotional discourse within linguistics. They consider themselves well-placed in a solid linguistic tradition. For Sapir, an important question was how much the communication of emotions is culturally constructed and culturally variable. He thought that the communication of personality and emotional states is culturally organized in a speech community.

By studying the emotion work25 carried out in mourning rituals we obtain a perspective from which to view the individual (female-male), interaction, societal norms, and social structure. It allows us to inspect the relation among emotive experience, emotion management, feeling rules, actual behavior and ideology (Hochschild 1979:551). Such an interactive perspective on emotion work and emotion performance in Georgian mourning rituals also provides a way to observe the reproduction of societal arrangements between the sexes.

The death of a human being has always been an event which arouses strong feelings. But historically and cross-culturally these feelings have not been the same (Stutte 1985). The internal states of the persons left behind are diverse, and so are the external, conventionalized ways of expressing grief (the latter are the central point of interest in anthropological linguistics). The study of oral genres and of registers is a convenient way to look at emotional performance and the way it is gendered. With Ochs and Schieffelin (1989:7) we take affect to be a broader term than emotion, to include feelings, moods, dispositions, and attitudes associated with persons and/or situations. Sadness is an emotion which combines with other affects. Our particular concern as anthropological linguists is to study the conventional display of emotion and affect through semiotic means and by understanding its social meaning; we are not concerned with the 'truth' of feelings. We are very concerned with how cultural masculinity or femininity is made accountable by performing certain affects.

A few authors (e.g., Feld 1982, Urban 1988) point out that while the vocal and verbal styles of ritual keening and lamenting are interculturally different, they display common semiotic features and share in common certain resem-
blances with what we call “wailing” and “crying”, and there are many icons and indices associated with bowing and being lowered into the ground:

As a semiotic device, wailing is linked to affect, just as at the core one assumes ‘crying’ as a formal device is linked to ‘sadness’ (Urban 1988:386).

As well in Georgia, cries of grief and appeals to the deceased occur. They are spoken or sung in lines (pulse units), using crying sounds, voice changes, drawn-out sighs, slowly falling intonation contours with integrated peaks, bowed bodily postures and an expressive lexicon. In comparison to the examples discussed in the literature (e.g., by Urban on Amerindian Brazilian ritual wailing 1991: 148 ff) Georgian laments are much richer in their poetics. They contrast in detail a desolate present with an idyllic past, praise the deceased person and those present, giving detailed descriptions of pain and also of scenes from the shared former life, showing a complex management of address and intertextuality by reporting numerous dialogues in which either the deceased, other deceased friends and relatives or those present are involved. They implore the deceased to deliver several messages from them to the dead persons whom she/he will soon meet. Lamenting women involve themselves in a moving and line-structured dialogue about life on earth and in the hereafter.

Ritual wailing fulfills many functions simultaneously. First of all, it helps to commumalize and structure feelings evoked by the death of a person. Death, with its finality and inexplicability, is one of the strongest emotional experiences of mankind (Aries 1988), one which, however, differently externalized and worked out in each culture. Societies create “feeling rules” (Hochschild 1979, 1983) as the aspect of ideology that deals with emotion. If a close person dies, “feeling rules” demand sadness; there are cultural appropriateness standards for this. In Georgia (as well as in many other cultures) sadness is practiced in a symbolically stronger way by women than by men. It is women who stay with the sick during their transition from life to death. It is obligatory that a woman sit at the bedside of a dying person. Society uses this “liminal” phase (van Gennep 1960, Turner 1969: 94–130) to reproduce its gender order. In Georgia being-a-woman is not only associated with the liminal phase of giving life but also with accompanying it to the end. Rituals of transition (and other rituals), however, fulfill no instrumental functions, but have many-layered social functions. These interconnected functions likewise combine with affects. We see these affects as social indexicals. Along with Hochschild (1979, 1983), Urban (1988, 1991) and many other anthropologists and linguists (e.g., Fehler 1990:96), we assume that the ritualization of affect touches many levels simultaneously.

Also Heller (1980) criticizes naturalistic emotion- and need theories which view human emotional life in terms of a few organically-anchored, substantively fixed strivings. In agreement with ethology, she argues that mankind has only residual traces of an organically anchored instinct system. Human drive- and emotion potentials are, to the contrary, formable: They have embodied very different forms of action historically. In human beings, emotions, needs and embodied symbols are transmitted together in comprehensible interpretive patterns. As well grief is not simply a biophysical reaction, but rather transmitted through the social-psychological orientational patterns of the culture and includes specific linkages which we will call, following Urban, “meta-affects”.

Urban described one (and only this one) meta-affect for wailing in Amerindian Brazil as follows:

That is to say, one emotion (sadness) points to or 'comments upon' another emotion (the desire for social acceptance). Seen in the context of social action, ritual wailing involves the signaling by one actor of a feeling of grief. But the signal is emitted in a way that other actors consider appropriate. Hence the sadness itself is rendered socially intelligible, and it is through this intelligible sadness that the basic intelligibility and acceptability of the social actor emerges. Thus, an actor’s own affect must be controlled as a means of signaling who one is. In short, affect becomes meta-affect. (1988:386)

I assume a higher degree of complexity and greater diversity of meta-affects in the case of ritual mourning. I conceptualize such dispositions as meta-affects, which in the case of ritual coming to terms with a death are also of affective significance for the community. With the term “meta-affect” I emphasize the affective dimension of the aspects of gender, religion, regional identity, morality, social hierarchy, and communality, which are important in the ritual process. I would like here to focus on the affective perspective; obviously each of the named phenomenal domains could also be viewed from a different perspective, e.g., purely text analytically or functionally. Functions suggest an instrumental perspective. Affects suggest the perspective of embodied performance. Meta-affects have indexical values which are all linked.

The indexical associations we already discussed influence the affect management and performance in the complex of mourning. One affect comments on another: they are all interconnected. Gender politics, e.g., takes on the Gestalt of a specific affect management and performance. It has an influence on the production of empathy, religion, social hierarchy, community and regional identity, and conversely as well.
White (1990) points to the fact that there are prototype schemata for emotive discourse which give an indication of the types of inferential paths that make emotional speech a moral idiom. Specific emotions, such as grief, designate interactive scenarios with known evaluative and behavioral implications. The formalized emotional discourse of lamentation promotes social harmony with all its implications of recreating tradition.

3. The Dialectic of distance and involvement

Georgian lamentations meet a high standard of oral poetry, combining verbal art and social purposes. To meet such a high standard of poetic performance demands emotion work. We would be mistaken in regarding lamentation as a form of letting oneself go. There is a dialectic between a certain degree of distancing that is necessary to perform the ritual and the involvement it creates for the audience present.

Emotion work in Georgian ways of managing grief starts with ritualization. Beginning at the first moment after recognizing the death of a person, feelings begin to be formed in accord with cultural conventions. According to Leach (1968, 1976) and many other anthropologists, a form of behavior is considered ritual if it is stereotypical and, within the framework of cultural conventions, in itself powerful, however ineffective in a rational, technical sense. In rituals a second symbolic layer succeeds denotative meanings. The way a ritual is performed carries the most significant social and emotional meaning. A ritual becomes empty if the linkage to the corresponding emotions is lost, as was already established by Durkheim (1915/1965).

Before we look again at a lamentation sequence, we take into consideration what lamenters tell us about their art. In 1998, a couple of women aged from 50 to 70 in Muxrani 1998 told us that they performed xmit natarié frightened were hearts burned very much (guli salian dañuco). One of the women, ženia, put it like this:

My nephew, he was 12 years old when he died. To put it simply, I cried and cried. Nobody could make me silent. Nobody, no, everybody wanted to lament, but I let no one. I wanted to lament alone. And I wanted all the time to keep standing on my feet. All the time crying and lamenting and shedding tears. All the time my tears were running. People tried to stop me, but I couldn’t.

Lamentation is presented as a physical need. She cannot but lament. All the women we talked with told us that it must “come from heart”. They strongly entertained the ideology of the naturalness of behaviour thereby implicitly confirming Durkheim’s thesis. Performance aspects are also taken into consideration. Standing on one’s feet while lamenting is more highly estimated than sitting or even lying. She refers to physical reactions (tears were running) but also to her efforts.

3.1 Poetic strategies

Although (and because) the lamenters’ “heart burns” she struggles with wording. Georgian dirges are not only rituals, they also have a strong artistic dimension, which consists in specific “sound and sense strategies”. In her book Talking Voices Deborah Tannen writes that conversational involvement is created by the simultaneous forces of music (sound and rhythm), on the one hand, and of mutual participation in sensemaking, on the other (1989: 135).

Poeticity is an important sound strategy. It is by no means only found in the canonical, written text, but rather everywhere where a conspicuous artistic/stylistic orientation becomes evident. Syntactical, semantic and intonational parallelisms, recurrences of formulae, assonances, specific rhythms and melodies, line structures and expressive metaphors above all characterize the performance of dirges as poetic in Georgia. Here a concept of poetry is fundamental which goes back to Roman Jakobson (1960). The latter presented in various articles his basic thesis that poeticity consists in a focus on wording and a principle of equivalence of formal structures. The recognition of the same evokes a sense of aesthetic pleasure. Poeticity varies in intensity.

It is quite easy to identify a line structure in the dirges because of the special exclamation intonation. With Hymes (1981), I view speaking in lines as characteristic of a poetic structure. It points to the prosodic similarity of the lines, to a patterned intonational contour.

Lamentations demand this specific style of presentation, which is found in no other genre. Stylization is in this case a form of body politics. As a lamentor a woman enters into the suffering and at the same time acts it out for the community in a beautiful style.

The special style of the lamentation consists in clusters of icons, which are firmly associated with grief in the discourse history:

In fact, the relationships among styles within the broader configuration of culture are grounded in similarity as well as difference. Ritual wailing and
origin myth telling are constructed from features that occur elsewhere, features
that have indexical values in those other styles. Ritual wailing and origin myth
telling, so to speak, import those features in order simultaneously to sneak in
their associated values. In this way, they become, in effect, clusters of icons
through which one looks out at the larger history of discourse and draws the
indexically relevant meanings into the present (Urban 1991:120).

Not only in dirges, but in the everyday codes, drawn-out syllables, faltering
voices, ring-sing lines with downward tonal slopes, repeated callings, formulae
and crying breaks are associated with intense grief. This potential is exploited in
dirges.

The downward melody stylizes grief and mourning, on the one hand, and
scares, on the other, a line structure; repetition facilitates text creation and
guarantees a certain automatism for both the performer and her public. The
melody makes the text easier to memorize.

Every Georgian region has its own lament melody, although there are
strong similarities among them. People have told me that listening to the
melody of their own region awakens much stronger feelings of sadness than
listening to an unfamiliar wailing melody. There are also other differences in
singing style. Our data from Megrelian mourning chants, for example, show an
extensive use of a creaky voice which the other laments do not: show.

I will not go into every detail of the poetic structure of the text, but I would
like to point to the many alliterations and sound parallelisms, as, e.g., the ar-/a-
group (verara, arat ici, rara, arat ici and ar vic) in 2, 3, 7, the anapidiose in 12
und 13 (stoveb), and in 15–16, 52–53, 55–56, 56–57, 67–68 etc., the epiphora,
e.g., with genacvale in 1, 6, 7 etc., with (viqivi(t) in 45, 47, 50, and the line
endings with deda/mother in 22, 28, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, etc. It is evident that
the wording has a value in itself.

There are also many double- and triple structures, as, e.g., in lines 5, 16, 25
or in 31, 36, 43, 44, 50, 55, 56, etc. Reduplications and three-part structures
dramatize what is being said and give it a rhythmic effect.

The orientation of the performer to the community is preserved especially
through the aesthetics of the text. No mourner can simply draw back within
herself. Her social attention always remains dominant through the demands of
the form.

The fact that people later discuss the performances in other contexts can be
seen as a further device for its artistic dimension. When a death is spoken about,
Georgian people necessarily also talk about the excellence of the oral lament
performances presented on that occasion. Excellence is judged by the perfect
fulfillment of the generic norms, and originality is judged by the creativity used
within the given presentation. Both should be optimally matched. Relatives
thank the performers of the best and saddest laments.

3.2 Literary strategies: Detailing and imagery

Lamentations are not only poetical, but also literary. The ethnomusicologist Bright
(1982) holds that the term "literature" should be reserved for texts which are
regarded as possessing value in a society, which are preserved, repeated and
handed down in similar forms. Not only stories from the life of the deceased,
but also conceptions of the afterworld are continually celebrated in a consistent
form in Georgian mourning rituals.

A major form of creating conversational involvement in sense-making is
organized by imagery: the power of images to communicate meanings and
emotions resides in their ability to evoke scenes, as we will see in an excerpt
from a lament. Also details, like reported dialogues, create vivid pictures, and
understanding is derived from scenes in which people are placed in relation to
each other. Individual imagination thereby becomes group imagination. Thus,
a collective memory of the time spent together is not only organized but
celebrated. The lamenting women play a big role in creating and celebrating
social memory. The particularity and familiarity of details such as those
communicated in the dialogue with Eliko (starting in line 80) is very moving.

We will look at conversational detailing and imagery as strategies of giving
the text a literary quality. The lamenting women describe the life of the deceased
in vivid images. Details and imagery play an essential role in making the
xmit natribile easy to memorize.

Ciała praises her mother Mariam for doing everything for her children. In
line 77 she uses a conventional, but powerful metaphor to communicate her
mother's engagement for her children. The commentary in line 78 does not
belong to the wailing. In line 80 the dialogue with Eliko starts which we will
examine closely.

In line 80 Ciała suddenly addresses Eliko, who is in the audience. She opens
up a special dialogue with her. She first speaks about her in the third person and
then addresses her directly. Ciała talks about her life with Eliko, about their
school days. Now the speech is presumably directed at the entire group. She tells
that they shared a room (82), Eliko says something which could not be made out.
Ciała tells that Eliko came from a rich family, hers was poor (84, 86). The
contrast is also iconized on the level of wording: She uses three adjectives to
categorize Eliko's situation and only two (one adjective and one inflected
Sequence 3

76:C:  she wanted us to lack nothing, with her limited strength

77:  She used to tell a few stories about her childhood, in society.

78.:  She would have cut off her own flesh for us so that we would not go

hungry,

79:?:  how much did they tell us? we should bring back a lot of (beer), and

80:?:  we learned together, lived together, me and Eliko

81:  we lived in one room

82:  I came from a well-to-do family, pampered, from a rich family

83:E:  oh, that,

84:C:  I came from a poor family, it was hard for us

85:?:  oh, kargi eru...

86:C:  I came from a poor family, it was hard for us

87:E:  oh, kargi eru...

88:C:  oh, kargi eru...

89:E:  let me take on the burden of your suffering

90:C:  you should have been in the capital,

91:  her mother and my mother always came to visit us together

92:  once they sent us out to get beer, me and Eliko

93:  we were once sent out for beer (92) and to asking about the street where they lived;

94:E:  you deserved that your bellies will burst, I said, if you drink so much beer.

95:C:  I found in the formulae of mourning, in the ceremonies, a need for

96:  in the formulae of mourning, in the ceremonies, a need for

97:E:  you always liked to laugh. I must people laugh

98:C:  Eliko's mother, you always liked to laugh. I must people laugh

99:  she laughed and giggled so, those were times, mother, we walked along

100?:  HE HE HE

verb) to characterize her. In line 89 Eliko utters one of the central formulae in
dirges. We do not only take semantics into account (the wish to suffer for the
other person) but also the role the utterance plays in context. Here it is import-
antly that Eliko gets actively involved in lamenting.

In line 90 Ciala points out that Eliko's mother and her own came together
to visit them. After stating differences, she now focuses their togetherness. This
again contains the implicit message: Eliko's mother didn't bother about
differences in wealth. Money didn't play an important role. Eliko's short
objection in line 87 can be understood in the sense that it is not worth mention-
ing their not paying attention to the wealth difference. In line 91 Ciala evokes
the shared joy of the past.

The detailing leads up to telling her mother (and the audience) that they
were once sent out for beer (92) and to asking about the street where they lived;
Eliko answers that question (Semmel street, 94). The question in line 93 goes
along with a shift in address. Again and again in the recollections images of her
mother and their social life are evoked. In line 98 Ciala cites her own words.
Then she informs the audience about her mother's laughing and giggling. In the
middle of the line she shifts address again, reminding her mother of the
wonderful times they had together. Here, laughter occurs in the middle of a lamentation. For a moment the past good times win over the sad present moment.

Especially the details give the narrative a touch of intimacy that everybody present is allowed to share. Going into details enables Ciala, Eliko and the audience to refer to their memories and construct images of scenes: people in relation to one another and engaged in recognizable activities. Detailing evidently belongs to the strategies of creating involvement. It is implicitly evaluative. Ciala states explicitly that Eliko's family made no distinctions based on wealth. But she also implicitly shows the way Eliko's family ignored differences which are considered important by many people, not only in Georgia. In lamentation we find both implicit and explicit evaluations of persons, activities and situations. Tannen (1989) suggests that images are more convincing and easier to memorize than abstract propositions. Internal evaluation by images, details and reported dialogues is more persuasive than external evaluation. The dialogue with Eliko is especially rich in details.

In line 101 Eliko adds concrete details to the remembering. Ciala continues the evoked image of walking in the streets of Tbilisi. Now there is a lot of turn taking. In line 105 Ciala addresses her mother again. Tamara joins in the joy of memorizing. Lines 107 to 110 in particular show how naturally the deceased aunt Maro is integrated into the dialogue just by talking to her. Religious bonds to the departed are not merely asserted in Georgian dirges, but rather created in speech. The story of what they experienced together with Eliko and her mother continues as a dialogue in which many concrete scenes are evoked. In line 117 the evocation of memories shifts again to cries of grief addressed to her mother. Ciala thanks her mother, and Eliko as well, for everything they have done for her. The relational work which mourners perform is evident here. Ciala repeats the memory of wearing Eliko's dress and coat as a question to her mother. Eliko's crying shows her being moved by the memories she contributed to herself.

From line 123 onwards Ciala sums up what she already made clear: Her mother did everything for her. Tamara adds under which difficult conditions Mariam's activities took place.

As can be seen, laments play an important role for women's social life in Georgia. They act out their attachment to the deceased and to those living, create moving dramas to make everybody share similar feelings, thereby shaping morals and memory.
The gravity of the loss to the community is worked out in laments. The social hierarchy of a village is thereby reproduced in a lament's performance. However, as we saw, social hierarchy has not only to do with authority and power, but also with social popularity. Lamentation does not just reproduce the socioeconomical order of a community. To the contrary, it reflects much more the social influence of the deceased person. In a sense it can be seen as a counter discourse. For example, in praising qualities of a dead husband women communicate what they see as a good husband's acting. In lauding a mother's deeds they make them visible for everybody. The lamenters' moral standards are mostly in line with common Georgian value orders. Insofar the dirges are far from being revolutionary. They just allow forms of renegotiating or correcting these values. For example, male alcoholism is practically quite accepted in everyday life. By praising men who did not drink wailers can take their chance to implicitly criticize certain behaviors.

I have presented an approach which combines text analysis and ethnography of communication. Understanding a culture depends on using all the data which the natives dispose of.

I would like to finish my article by citing the words of Dell Hymes (1981) about native American ethnopoetics, which I consider also true for my kind of work (especially in Germany, where linguistic anthropology is not an established academic field):

There is linguistics in this [book], and that will put some people off. 'Too technical', they will say. Perhaps such people would be amused to know that many linguists will not regard the work as linguistics. 'Not theoretical', they will say, meaning not part of a certain school of grammar. And many folklorists and anthropologists are likely to say, 'too linguistic' and 'too literary' both, whereas professors of literature are likely to say, 'anthropological' or 'folkloric', not 'literature' at all. But there is no help for it. As with Beowulf and The tale of Genji, the material requires some understanding of the way of life. Within that way of life, it has in part a role that in English can only be called that of 'literature'. Within that way of life, and now, I hope, within others, it offers some of the rewards and joys of literature. And if linguistics is the study of language, not grammar alone, then the study of these materials adds to what is known about language. (1981:5)
Gender, emotion, and pocticity in Georgian mourning rituals

Appendix

Lamentation for Grandmother Mariam (Maro), Mutsoani (Karli) 1984

Aunt Tamari, relatives and neighbors of the deceased enter bringing flowers.

1 Tamari: rogor gamaezebalxar, maro deida, genacvale

how beautifully you have prepared yourself, Aunt Maro, genacvale

2 Ciali: verara, tamara deida, ar are rafa ka, kalo.

no, Aunt Tamari, you don't know what you are doing, woman,

so much deference, I don't know what we could do. Aunt Tamara, oh my.

4 T: [?]

5 C: govel dre, govel saramos, govel dilas
everyday, every evening, morning

6 T: mame gamaezebalxar, genacvale,

but you have prepared yourself, genacvale,

7 C: ar are rafa samovno, genacvale

I do not know what pleasure I could give you, genacvale,

8 T: dadi yani xalxi xart

you come from a large clan

9

tik taktik dadi xalxi xart, xart, dadi xalxi xart,

there you will meet our cousins, all the good are there.

10

tik taktik dadi xalxi xart, xart, dadi xalxi xart,

everyone will be there, you know how good natured she was

11

tik taktik dadi xalxi xart, xart, dadi xalxi xart,

everyone was there, you will also meet my mother there, you know how good natured she was

12

tik taktik dadi xalxi xart, xart, dadi xalxi xart,

share these flowers with everyone there, I implore you, you

13

tik taktik dadi xalxi xart, xart, dadi xalxi xart,

but my heart aches that you are leaving your dear children

stoveb do midixa

you are leaving them and going away from them
Gender, emotion, and poetics in Georgian mourning rituals

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(Gender, emotion, and poetics in Georgian mourning rituals

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(presented as a hard-coded text)
48 თბილი ქურთი, თენჯი,

49 ცდილობით მე მეტ ახლა ვიყო, თენჯი.

50 თბილი, ქურთს თქვენმა ეყროლათ.

51 თბილი, თქვენმა, თენჯი, თქვენმა.

52 თბილი, თქვენმა, თენჯი, თქვენმა.

53 თბილი, თქვენმა, თენჯი, თქვენმა.

54 თბილი, თქვენმა.

55 თბილი, თქვენმა.

56 თბილი, თქვენმა.

57 თბილი, თქვენმა.

58 თბილი, თქვენმა.

59 თბილი, თქვენმა.

60 თბილი, თქვენმა.

61 თბილი, თქვენმა.

62 თბილი, თქვე

63 თბილი, თქვე

64 თბილი, თქვე

65 თბილი, თქვე

66 თბილი, თქვე

67 თბილი, თქვე

68 თბილი, თქვე

69 თბილი, თქვე

70 თბილი, თქვე

71 თბილი, თქვე

72 თბილი, თქვე

73 თბილი, თქვე

74 თბილი, თქვე

75 თბილი, თქვე

76 თბილი, თქვე

77 თბილი, თქვე

65 C: თხით ფიჭო ჯიშთ ჯოხო, თხით ფიჭო ჯიშთ ჯოხო, თხით ფიჭო ჯიშთ ჯოხო.

66 ნაბჯო, თელი თხით ფიჭო ჯიშთ ჯოხო.

67 თქვენმა იხერხულ რომ ჯიშთ ჯოხო.

68 თქვენმა იხერხულ რომ ჯიშთ ჯოხო.

69 თქვენმა იხერხულ რომ ჯიშთ ჯოხო.

70 თქვენმა იხერხულ რომ ჯიშთ ჯოხო.

71 თქვენმა იხერხულ რომ ჯიშთ ჯოხო.

72 თქვე ისულ ვოლე თქვე ისულ ვოლე.

73 თქვე ისულ ვოლ ოჯახ თქვე ისულ ვოლ.

74 თქვე ისულ ვოლ.

75 თქვე ისულ ვოლ.

76 თქვე ისულ ვოლ.

77 თქვე ისულ ვოლ.

66 თქვე ისულ ვოლ.

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72 თქვე ისულ ვოლ.

73 თქვე ისულ ვოლ.

74 თქვე ისულ ვოლ.

75 თქვე ისულ ვოლ.

76 თქვე ისულ ვოლ.

77 თქვე ისულ ვოლ.

66 თქვე ისულ ვოლ.
Hey, my dear. 

70: one can certainly get through here, there is enough space, you can get through.

71: Eliko also knows that well, isn't that so, Eliko?

72: Eliko came from a well-to-do family, pampered, from a rich family.

73: I came from a poor family, it was hard for us.

74: let me take on the burden of your suffering.

75: her mother and my mother always came to visit us together.

76: Eliko, those were times, those were times when they sent us out (to get this and that).

77: once they sent us out to get beer, me and Eliko.

78: where did we live then, Eliko, in Saburtalo?

79: on Semmel Street, on Semmel Street.

80: how much did they tell us? we should bring back a lot of (beer), and

81: on the evening, deda, I went to see a sick child, and had a drink. 

82: I don't know if you always liked to laugh, I must make people laugh.

83: you deserved that your bellies will burst. I said, if you drink so much beer.

84: we went to Lenin Square on foot wearing house slippers.

85: all the way along Rustaveli we held hands, and you were also happy.

86: we lived together all our lives, mother.

87: how wonderful youth is, how many memories we have.

88: main upo 3ebda, maro deida, axalgazrda iqvit it was better then. Aunt Mary, you were young then.

89: you did not feel the difficulties.

90: and you were children.

91: they came, if they had something, brought it to us.

92: they left us money for the rent.

93: they wrote, do this and that in the evening, go out and get aperitifs.

2. See Kyratzis and Cahill in this volume.

3. “Motirali” means female wailer, “motiralebi” is plural.

4. Drinking toasts also demand emotion work and emotional performance by men, as is described in Kothoff (1995b), but wailing is not a component of this work. Toasts are often delivered in a pathetic keying.

5. This functional ascription is found throughout the rich literature on mourning rituals (Malinowski 1922, van Genep 1960, Feld 1982, Stubb 1985).

6. In order to maintain contact with the dead, food is placed on graves. The people of Georgia bring food and drink to their dead on all religious holidays; in Eastern regions they bring xashla, a porridge made from cooked meal and mutton. The dead receive forty days’ provisions for their journey into the afterlife, that is, they are customarily brought: a plate of food on the second, seventh, and fortieth days, and also a year after death. Wine is poured over the grave. In addition, mourners carry a burning candle. Later, there is at least one commemorative day per year.

7. I taught German language and linguistics for six semesters as a lecturer of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) at a university in Tbilisi (1988–1991). I first did not go to Georgia with the intention of researching ritual communication. The unusually rich variety of oral poetic rituals became accessible to me only gradually (Kothoff 1993, 1995a,b). Later, I integrated my interests into research projects.

8. Every region in the Caucasus has its own ritual peculiarities (Cocagne 1991, Nakașği 1993, Kothoff 2000a). Thus, e.g., in Xevsretia horses are integrated into the burial ritual. A horse is decorated (equipped for the journey) and carries all the food that the deceased person is given in the grave (for use on the coming journey in the afterlife). The deceased is supposed to use the horse in the hereafter. After the burial the horse is given to a close relative. The latter may only use the horse for religious purposes and give it dignified treatment, since it is in the religious belief already serving in the hereafter. Lamenters also cry over a carpet which holds the clothes of the deceased.

Nakașği (1993) differentiates four forms of lamentation for Xevsretia: three forms of lamentation with words and one without words. The forms with words are classified as xazliı tırili (wailing with shouting), davatiı tırili (wailing with reason) and xamı tırili (wailing with voice). Xamı tırili is the most widespread form, the one dealt with in this article. Davatiı tırili consists mainly of reproaches to the deceased for having left their relatives. They are sung especially in the first hours after the death. Xazliı tırili is only expressed by the sisters of the deceased.

Each region has its own norms for dressing the deceased and its own semiotics of culinaria. Meat is forbidden during the period of mourning in many regions and is likewise not offered in the “keleki,” the mourning meal. Each region is, on the one hand, convinced that its way of treating the dead is superior to the customary forms of other regions, on the other, multicultural Georgia practices great tolerance in accepting others’ customs.

Notes

* I am grateful to Elza Gachedava for help with the Georgian language and her continuing co-work.
Regional identity is extremely strong in Georgia. Even in Tbilisi a person who already belongs to the second generation living there is still introduced as a Mingrelian or a Kachetian. In laments the deceased person's region of origin is constantly referred to.

It is beyond the scope of this article to go into the many peculiarities of the Georgian regions. It will only be maintained that mourning rituals are viewed as a central element of regional identity, which is thereby confirmed.

9. See, e.g., Kotthoff (1995 a, b) for other Georgian ethno poetic genres which communicate moral values.

10. Bergmann/Luckmann (1994) and Günther/Knoblauch (1995) define genres as communicative forms with a high degree of stability. Members of societies develop recurrent orientations to communicative patterns which can lead to speech genres. Stabilized communicative genres which contain evaluative judgements about people and human activities are considered genres of moral communication. Morals are understood in Durkheim's sense (1915) as what people do for the community and have a community-oriented meaning which can be evaluated according to the criteria of good and evil.

11. According to Stubbe these forms of selfflagellation are found in many cultures. The practice of savagely lacerating one's face, likewise mentioned in Stubbe's study, is also found in Georgia.

12. In November 1995 a symposium was held at the University of Paderborn on the topic of "The Gender of Gestures — Grief" (the articles are edited by Gisela Ecker 1999). The symposium also confirmed that there is a gender-specific division of labor in rites, images, symbols and art representations of grief (= female).

13. Caraveli (1986) describes a similar function for Greek lamentations.

14. She alludes to the common metaphors of travelling. She means: prepared for the long journey into the afterlife.

15. "Utme" or "vaima" is an interjection of pain.

16. She means that she will stay in contact with her children.

17. In Georgian it is possible, by adding an "a" to the last word in a phrase, to indicate that speech is being quoted. Quoting in the second or third person is marked by this morpheme.

18. Quotations in the first person are marked with "melki".

19. What is meant is that they should both watch over Mariani at night during her illness.

20. Literally the phrase means "pay honor to mother," in practice it means that she should do something for her mother.

21. "By emotion work" refers to the act of trying to change in degree or quality an emotion or feeling. To 'work on' an emotion or feeling is, for our purposes, the same as 'to manage' an emotion or to do 'deep acting' (Hochschild 1979:561). Hochschild (1979:558) speaks of "deep acting" and "surface acting" in regard to "emotion work." Both are subject to socio-cultural rules and gender. 'Surface acting' and 'deep acting' are combined in lamentation.

22. See also van Gennep (1960), Turner (1969), Werlen (1984) and Senft (1987) on rituality. There are, of course, many different positions on what constitutes rituality; a discussion of this would exceed the scope of this article.

23. We also taped some cross-cultural lamentations. See for the management of regional style differences in Georgian wailing Kotthoff (1990a).

24. Werner (1971) discusses excellence and originality as general evaluative criteria for poetic texts.

25. Recorded by Nina Maxarašvili who kindly provided us with the cassette.

26. Important metaphor for crying.

27. She means herself; formula.

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