

Aesthetic Dimensions of Georgian Grief Rituals: On the Artful Display of Emotions in Lamentation¹

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1. Introduction

The topic of this article is the communication of grief in Georgia, which in this Caucasian country is aestheticized in a variety of ways. Lamentation (xmit naṭirlebi) is the verbal core activity of Georgian grief communication. Everywhere in the world people feel a sense of loss, depression and helplessness when a close person dies. Grief finds expression, e.g., in a hunched posture, crying and sobbing and is displayed externally in this way. People not only mourn in isolation, but rather express their grief in their behavior to other people. Particularly grief for the deceased thereby becomes a 'total social phenomenon'² suffered in community and performed for the community. Most societies have ritualized grief, i.e., predictable complexes of activities with predictable sequences of actions have developed in which the affected persons participate obligatorily and yet voluntarily and competently. In rituals, not only the feeling of grief is staged, but also relationships with the deceased person and the other mourners. Various ritual theorists³ have emphasized that rituals are non-instrumental to the extent that they are not useful for specifically technical purposes. They fulfill social functions instead such as binding the group together, inspiring action and producing consensus. By using expressive means they also alter the state of the world by metaphysical means instead of by physical means⁴. In most societies religion comes into play when someone dies, and in its framework conceptions of the hereafter and images of transition are fictionalized. In this article I point out that these conceptions of the hereafter exist not only in people's minds but are also actively practiced, for example, in addressing the deceased which can often be found in Georgian lamentations.⁵ In rituals symbolic condensation takes place, which is not confined to the verbal level. Sapir⁶ characterized the latter by multiple referents, richness of meaning, "a highly condensed form of substitute behavior for direct expression, allowing for the

¹ This study of Georgian mourning rituals is carried out in connection with the special research area 511 "Literature and Anthropology," financed by the German National Endowment for the Sciences (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft), at the University of Konstanz. We have already taped 50 hours of lamentations in various Georgian regions.

I am grateful to Elza Gabedava and James Brice for help with the Georgian and the English.

² Marcel Mauss, (1978): *Soziologie und Anthropologie*. Band 1 und 2. München 178

³ Jack Goody, Religion and ritual: The definitional problem. *British Journal of Sociology* 12 (1961), 142-164. Marcel Gluckman, Les rites de passage. In: M. Gluckman (ed.): *Essays on the ritual of social relations*, Manchester 1962, 1-52.

⁴ Edward R. Leach, *Culture and communication*, Cambridge 1976.

⁵ See for an overview of research on ritual. Iwar Werlen, *Ritual und Sprache*. Zum Verhältnis von Sprechen und Handeln in Ritualen. Tübingen 1984.

⁶ Edward Sapir, "Speech as a Personality Trait", *American Journal of Sociology* 32 (1927), 892-905.

ready release of emotional tension" (p. 565), with "deeper roots in the unconscious and diffusing its emotional quality to types of behavior or situations apparently far removed from the original meaning of the symbol" (p. 566). I agree with Sapir's claim, that in ritual the entire scenic arrangement is symbolically loaded and becomes the object of aesthetization. But I disagree with the idea of "release of emotional tension" and would rather show that in the aesthetization of expressions of grief not only the feelings of lamenters, but also those of the onlookers are worked out. I regard aesthetization as closely connected with affect management.

This article thus deals with the forms and functions of aesthetization of grief in Georgia. Ethologists and psychologists regard grief as one of the "basic emotions"⁷, which are observable in all human beings and higher animals. But this does not mean that this emotion is self-evident. It is subject to a complex cultural performance process, which within a culture is comprehensible in all its shades. Feelings do not simply emanate from people, rather they are processed and transmitted by means of conventionalized procedures.

But culture-transcending commonalities are also apparent. Crying and a sunken body position are as icons and indices universally integrated into the expression of grief. A few authors⁸ 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 resemblances 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' "⁹

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.

Furthermore, situational standards of appropriateness develop in cultures. For example, the death of a person is everywhere an experience which evokes strong feelings. But historically and interculturally these feelings and their expressions are not the same¹⁰. Thus for example, mourning in Georgia is richer in forms, is practiced for a longer period of time and is more expressively communicated than in Germany or England. Lamentations are performed, a genre, that does not exist in most West European countries. We manipulate our inner feelings in accord with cultural expectations - and we then in fact have them, as Hochschild¹¹ has shown. In contemporary cultural anthropology feelings are no longer regarded as something innate and inward, but rather as a culturally interwoven and shaped mode of experience.¹² Also the external, conventionalized display of emotions is different. How things are said and done is as important in communicating emotions as what is said and done. Particularly in rituals the manner of performance is more important than the content, which is detached from an instrumental means-end-relation. Many rituals are

⁷ Paul Ekman, An Argument for Basic Emotions. *Cognition and Emotion* 6 (1990), 169-200.

⁸ Steven Feld, *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression*. Philadelphia 1982.
Greg Urban, Ritual Wailing in Amerindian Brazil. *American Anthropologist* 90 (1988), 385-400.

⁹ Greg Urban, 386. See footnote 8.

¹⁰ Hannes Stubbe, *Formen der Trauer. Eine kulturanthropologische Untersuchung*, Berlin 1985. Peter Metcalf, Richard Huntington, *Celebrations of Death. The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual*. Cambridge 1979/1991.

¹¹ Arlie Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley 1983.

¹² Catherine Lutz, Emotion, Thought, and Estrangement: Emotion as a Cultural Category. *Cultural Anthropology* 1, 3 (1986), 287-309.

characterized by a great redundancy of symbols, stylistic elaborations, and an emphasis on aesthetic criteria. Even when it is emphasized that as well instrumental activities can be the object of stylization and artistry, rituals cannot be understood without attention to style, symbol, and aesthetics – they are essential to them.

In this article I would like to show that the aesthetization of grief simultaneously presupposes and affects feeling work. In addition, lamentations should be seen as situated religious practice. Artistry also contributes to creating an extra-ordinary space, in which the living can experience contact with the dead. In aesthetization, the emotions of grief are worked out and quasi-therapeutically kept in shape; but this aesthetics is not an end-in-itself here: it is deeply connected to religion. The special language which is used and the ways of speaking contextualize a religious space. Emotionality, art, morality and religiosity are performatively linked.

2. Grieving in Georgia

Georgia is a small country which belonged to the former Soviet Union up until its dissolution. It was Christianized as early as the Fourth Century AD. Today the Orthodox Church plays a major role in public life. Due to the strong influence of Iran and Turkey, the Muslim faith also predominates in some regions.

Institutionalized religious practice was discouraged during the Soviet period. In the case of Georgia, however, this did not mean that people abandoned all religious activities. If, following Luckmann,¹³ we regard communal concern with the great transcendencies, such as this world and the hereafter, as religious, then Georgian everyday life has many more religious moments than for example, the life of most people in Germany.

Georgian grief rituals can be regarded as a staging of religion. In Georgia the lament is assigned the official function of softening the ground for the deceased to make her/his way into the hereafter. People think of it as a form of honoring her/him and the family. In folk religious belief, the choreography of the overall activity complex is related to the life which the departed person can expect in the next world. A dignified parting promises an honorable reception in the afterlife.

When someone dies, people in Georgia still perform joint mourning for many days, including day-long lamentations by women and ritual night wakes held around the coffin by men; neighbors ritually prepare meals for all those sharing in the grief, and there are various large meals held in connection with the funeral and special memorial days later in the year, at which masters of ceremony (called tamada) follow a toast order canonized specially for "sad meals" (čiris supra). The various actions and forms of expression are regarded as related to people's emotional needs, but they always also have religious and moral dimensions¹⁴, which sometimes are made explicit within the ritual of shared grieving.

The dominant form of ritual wailing is called "xmit naçirlebi." "Xmit naçirlebi" means "crying loudly with one's voice." Also called "motkmiti tirili" (spoken weeping or wailing with the voice),

¹³ Thoomas Luckmann, (1991): *Unsichtbare Religion*. Frankfurt 1991.

¹⁴ Morals are viewed here in the sense of Durkheim as community-oriented action and thinking, Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York 1915/1965. On the linkage of feeling and morals see also Geoffrey White, *Moral Discourse and the Rhetoric of Emotions*. In: Lutz, Catherine/Abu-Lughod, Lila (eds.): *Language and the Politics of Emotion*. Cambridge 1990, 46-69.

this genre performs an "aesthetics of pain", as Caraveli¹⁵ put it for Greek ritual wailing. Lamenting is always a polylogue with much turn-taking. Sometimes, a woman laments and others hum the melody with weeping sounds, a stylized background wailing called "zari." The lament performer (moṭirali) orients herself mostly to the dead person, to various addressees or sometimes to the audience in general.

Similar to Africa, Brazil, Russia, Papua New Guinea, the Trobriand Islands, Greece and wherever lamentation is still practiced,¹⁶ in Georgia it consists of improvised, partly sung, partly spoken collaborative polylogues, praising and addressing the deceased person, other deceased and those present, voicing personal memories, thereby situating immediate emotions; the dirges are usually presented in line form, often with a repetitive melody and sobbing sounds at the line's end. Women are the chief wailers in West Georgia; in East Georgia only women lament. This emotional division of labor between the sexes is found in many cultures; there is always an ideology which declares it as "natural": Women supposedly cry better and as givers of life are said to have better access to its end. Crying or sobbing sounds and appeals to the deceased are mostly arranged in the lines often in a similar position at the line's beginning or end; by having conventionized positions they are included into the procedure of aesthetisation. Certain formulae of taking over others' pain to oneself¹⁷ are frequently used. Formulae and stable motifs (such as poetic rhetorical questions to the deceased as to why he had to leave) are combined in the *xmit naṭirlebi* with improvisation as it is typical for oral art.¹⁸ Each lament is partly individually tailored for the deceased person, since it contains biographical dimensions which the lamenter can choose and stylize. Although there are generic standards of lament performance, the lamenter is free in topic choice and development, in imagery, in commenting upon or echoing previous texts. It is also up to her whether she sings or speaks her lines. There are no standards for turn length. Some turns may just consist of a formula, some may contain just some meaningless vowels.

Over and over the moṭiralebi (wailers) tell stories about shared experiences. The close female relatives and acquaintances sit around the coffin. Frequently someone stands up, leans over the open coffin and tells the deceased something, often she makes those who enter the room the subject of her address to the deceased person (e.g., "Look, even Nina from Ikoti came. She comes in honor of you, although she has five children. What a good woman Nina is"). Addressing the deceased is situated religious practice. When I entered the room the moṭirali often told the deceased that people even came from Germany in honor of her. I was always given a role in the ritual process as was

¹⁵ Anna Caraveli, (1986): The bitter wounding: The lament as social protest. In: Jill Dubisch (ed.): *Gender and Power in Rural Greece*. Princeton, N.J. 1986, 189-194.

¹⁶ William L. Burke, Notes on a Rhetoric of Lamentation. *Central States Speech Journal* 29 (1979) 109-121. Anna Caraveli, (1986), see footnote 15. Anna Caraveli-Chaves, (1980): Bridge between worlds. The greek women's lament as communicative event. *Journal of American Folklore* (1980), 129-157. Giorgi Cocaniṭe, Giorgobidan giorgobamde. Tbilisi 1993. Loring M. Danforth, Alexander Tsias, The Death Rituals of Rural Greece. Princeton 1982. Steven Feld, Wept Thoughts: The Voicing of Kaluli Memories. *Oral Tradition* 5/2-3 (1990), 241-266. Ruth Finnegan, (1970): *Oral Literature in Africa*. Nairobi 1970. Ketevan Nakaṣiṭe, Gruzinskie Plači. *Working Paper of the ḡavaxiṣvili Institute*, Tbilisi 1993. Gunter Senft, Trauer auf Trobriand. *Anthropos* 80 (1985), 471-492. Nadia C., Seremetakis, *The Last Word. Women, Death, and Divination in Inner Mani*. Chicago 1991. Yuri Sokolov, *Russian Folklore*. New York 1950. K. M. Tiwary, Tuneful Weeping: A Mode of Communication. *Working Papers in Sociolinguistics*. No. 27. Austin, TX 1975. Greg Urban, Ritual Wailing in Amerindian Brazil. *American Anthropologist* 90 (1988), 385-400.

¹⁷ Winfried Boeder, "Über einige Anredeformen im Kaukasus", *Georgica. Zeitschrift für Kultur, Sprache und Geschichte Georgiens und Kaukasiens* 11 (1988), 11-20.

¹⁸ Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy. The Technologizing of the World*. London/New York 1982. Viv Edwards, and Thomas J. Sienkewicz, *Oral Cultures Past and Present*, London 1990.

everybody else. We can speak of a "split audience" here.¹⁹ The deceased person is often told something very positive about those present, who naturally also hear this. The deceased is again and again embraced and kissed. If someone new enters the room, the lamentation continues reinforced. Women arriving from distant villages climb out of the bus and immediately begin lamenting. This indicates how great the ritual space is. It is most definitely not confined to the deceased person's house. They approach the deceased loudly shouting something like : "Elisa, how could you leave us so soon? Do you want to meet your husband? Oh, Otar, now you have her back.", not greeting anyone. No one smiles.²⁰ Not to smile is an important part of ritual body politics. Men stroll past everyone and say: "viziareb tkvens mcuxarebas" (I share your grief). Then they sit down on benches in front of the keening room (often for hours or even days). They chat about everything imaginable there, but always softly and without laughter.

In West Georgia mourners unbind their hair and tear at it constantly. They also scratch their faces – forms of self-injury which are observed as an expression of grief in many cultures.²¹ This is regarded in West Georgia as a strong expression of pain - in East Georgia it is regarded as completely inappropriate exaggeration. Every region sees its own lamentation style as the most appropriate and also natural.²² In the sociology of emotions it has been assumed since Durkheim that emotions can combine with other feelings and moods; these can become "meta-affects" (as Urban 1988 put it in a study on wailing in Amerindian Brazil). Thus even mourning itself becomes "correct mourning" - with cultural standards of appropriateness for the expressive repertoire. Grief can, e.g., be quickly linked with the wish for support by the group, with the wish to fictionalize the world of the deceased and with the need to master the situation, to let it not overwhelm the mourners.

Not only the days-long dialogical lamentations, but also elaborated drinking toasts during mourning meals are still very popular in Georgia today. Only in the capital of Tbilisi lamentation is no longer practiced among the Tbilissians. In the villages anyone who can lament beautifully or formulate beautiful drinking toasts also shapes the feelings of other persons present. She who laments well is regarded as a good woman and knows what she owes the deceased in the other world and her people in this world. She thereby also manages the linkage of this world and the hereafter in theatrical, art-oriented communication.

On the verbal level of lamentation poetic forms are conspicuous. With Jakobson²³ we assume that poetic forms are by no means limited to canonized art. The poetic function is present when the principle of equivalence is projected from the axis of selection to the axis of combination; equivalence is raised to a constitutive procedure of sequencing. This will later be shown on the basis

¹⁹ See Bauman's article in this book for analytical differentiations of the roles of speaker and hearer. The traditional model of the speaker-hearer dyad is too simple to capture most communicative processes. Very often we have, for example, a hierarchy of addressed persons. In Georgian lamentations we always have a "split audience" in the sense Erving Goffman, introduced the term in *Forms of Talk*, Philadelphia 1981. Some are official targets of the message and others the unofficial.

²⁰ Not to smile requires a control of the body which Georgians manage better at than I. The mourning natives recognized me as foreign by my smiling. I was not even aware that I had smiled slightly. This shows again how much mourning is body politics and how much this must be embodied in order to behave correctly.

²¹ Hannes Stubbe, *Formen der Trauer. Eine kulturanthropologische Untersuchung*, Berlin 1985.

²² Helga Kotthoff, *Affekt-Darbietung in interkulturellen Lamentationen in Georgien*. In: Stefan Rieger et al. (eds.): *Interkulturalität. Zwischen Inszenierung und Archiv*. Tübingen 1999b, 231-251.

²³ Roman Jakobson, *Concluding statement: Linguistics and poetics*. In: Thomas Sebeok (ed.): *Style in Language*. Cambridge, MA. 1960

of a lamentation text. Lamentations are always "staged discourse" in the sense of Iser.²⁴ Staging or performance relates to aestheticized communication in a narrow sense. Georgian dirges demand a theatrical performance to a public employing engagement of the body, gestures, mimicry, the paraverbal and the verbal level. With the concept of performance we attempt to capture the semiotic multi-leveiling of staged communication. Procedures necessary for every form of social activity we capture with Goffman's concept of "framing" instead, as is outlined in the preface to this book. Poetic and emotive functions are always closely linked;²⁵ likewise here. Additionally, the lament provides a service to the deceased, the linkage of this world with the other and the linkage of various "provinces of meaning" in the sense of Schütz.²⁶ I postulate that the stylized practice of ritual grieving creates a non-ordinary experiential and imaginative involvement and a space where the living are seemingly in contact with the dead,²⁷ a magic space. One cannot, however, limit the analysis of grief communication in Georgia to the verbal domain. The experience of death is immediately ritually staged, and this staging makes use of several expressive modalities. Thus the wailing dialogues are always embedded in the context of the whole event. Text and context mutually form each other into a kind of "total artwork". This total artwork makes possible non-ordinary experiences.

3. Aesthetics in the lamentation for Dimiṭri Gabrielašvili

Again and again - from Radcliffe-Brown²⁸ and van Gennep²⁹ to Ariès³⁰ and Meuli³¹ - the literature on transitional rites states that shared grieving creates a community, or at least recreates communities after a loss. Through performance analyses we can show in detail how the social communalization of grief is communicatively acted out. Aesthetic strategies play a role in communalizing the living and also the living and the dead.

I would like to point to five strategies which in my view carry relevant aesthetic dimensions in Georgian lamentation. With Tannen we call the first dimension a "sound strategy" (the vocal, musical and poetical delivery) and the other four "sense strategies" (constructed dialogue, sudden address shift, formulaic self-sacrifice, imagery and detailing). Together they play a major role in creating an extra-ordinary realm of scenaric experience. Mutual participation in scenes that are put on stage is invited. For Georgian grief rituals I underline Tannen's idea that music and evoked scenes trigger emotions and "that scenes are crucial in both thinking and feeling because they are composed of people in relation to each other, doing things that are culturally and personally recognizable and meaningful."³²

²⁴ Wolfgang Iser, *Das Fiktive und das Imaginäre. Perspektiven literarischer Anthropologie*. Frankfurt 1993.

²⁵ Jakobson 1960: 92. See footnote 24.

²⁶ See on the discussion of Schütz's theory of provinces of meaning and their significance for a pragmatic aesthetics Hubert Knoblauch, *Anthropologie der symbolischen Kommunikation. Die Phänomenologie des Alltags und die Fragestellungen der Anthropologie der Literatur. Arbeitspapier Nr. 10 des Sonderforschungsbereichs 511 an der Universität Konstanz* 1996.

²⁷ See for similar functions of the language of magics Tanya M. Luhmann, (1989): *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft*. London 1989.

²⁸ Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown, *The Andaman Islanders*. New York 1964.

²⁹ Arnold van Gennep, *Les rites de passage*. Paris 1909.

³⁰ Phillipe Ariès, *Geschichte des Todes*. München 1981.

³¹ Karl Meuli, *Gesammelte Schriften*. Bd. 1 und Bd. 2. Basel 1975.

³² Deborah Tannen, *Talking voices: Repetition, dialogue, and imagery in conversational discourse*. Cambridge 1989.

Of course, part of the scenaric arrangement is the structure within the room where the coffin stands. Usually the grievors stand or sit beside the coffin. The foto in this book shows, that the wailer stages herself in a dialogue with the deceased as is typically done. I will first deal with verbal staging; then at the end of the article some other (including non-verbal) elements from the ritual domain will also be dealt with.

The sound strategy basically consists of speaking (or singing) in lines and of many forms of parallelisms. Speaking in line form is a sign of poeticity.³³ With all wailers lines are fairly easily recognizable through breathing. Often a line begins with sobbing inhalation. The lines are of different lengths. Crying sounds often mark a line's end. There is melodic delivery throughout. The melody is repeated line by line with some variation. The first syllables of a line are presented in a higher tone register, at the end the tone falls. This intonation pattern basically prevails, but there is always slight variation.

Additionally, we find many epiphora, anaphora, alliterations and anadiplosis which are all based on sound repetition. Poetry scholars have regarded such recurrent patterns of sound as basic to verbal art. Finnegan³⁴ writes that the most marked feature of poetry is surely repetition. I will point to some examples from the first turn.

Epiphora: In the neighbor's turn we find various epiphora: the first two lines end on "a", the next five on "o"; four of them on "tko", also line 12. Lines 10, 11, 16, 18, 20 and 21 end on "genacvale."

Anaphora: As well anaphora are variously used: Lines 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 21 start with "šen(i)" and thereby contribute to the parallelization of sound; 2 and 4 begin with "utxari", 13 and 14 with "da", 16 and 20 with "aba", 32, 34 and 37 with "vaime."

Anadiplosis connects two lines in starting the second line with the finishing formulation of the first, for example 13 and 14, 27 and 28.

Alliterations often organize identical sounds within a line, thus in 13, e.g., "g" dominates, in 14 "d". Sometimes we find lexical repetition within a line, for example, in 3, 4, 15, 23, 25, sometimes in the course of several lines.

Together with the sound strategies sense, strategies heighten involvement, coherence and the emotional experience of connectedness. They send metamessages of rapport between the communicators. Thus all these strategies of aesthetization create and symbolize community.

One important sense strategy is "constructed dialogue." With Tannen³⁵ we see what is called "reported speech," "direct speech," "direct discourse," or "direct quotation" (normally this involves a speaker framing an account of another's words as dialogue - here framing her own words in a dialogue with a nonpresent dead person) should be understood not as report, but as constructed dialogue. Claims to authenticity in reporting messages vary, sometimes not made at all. Especially in the lamentations the singer often calls to a person who has already been dead for a long time. The person in the coffin is asked to deliver her words to the other deceased whom he will soon meet; thereby he can be made the immediate addressee and mediator of the words for another in the hereafter who is the ultimate target of the lamenter's message. By constructing her message directly, the wailer opens a window to a dialogue that is fictionalized to happen in the afterworld.

³³ Dell Hymes, "In vain I tried to tell you". *Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics*, Philadelphia 1981.

³⁴ Ruth Finnegan, *Oral poetry: Its nature, significance, and context*. Cambridge 1977.

³⁵ See footnote 32

A related strategy is multiple address and sudden address shifts: In lamentation there are complex participant roles.³⁶ We often find the phenomenon that the dead person becomes the addressee of some message (often a kind of praise) about a present person who belongs to the audience, but is in a sense a target. Urban writes that many messages uttered in dirges are "intended not to be heard, in the ordinary linguistic sense, but rather to be overheard. Ritual wailing purports overtly not to engage an addressee, but to allow anyone within earshot access to something that would otherwise be private."³⁷ We also agree with Feld³⁸ who comments on Urban's statement and writes about the Kaluli instance that the otherwise privacy of the message is not the issue in ritual wailing:

"wailers are speaking out to the deceaseds, other wailers, and the present collectivity. Their mode of expression places them forcefully in the social domain as performers. Their words are in some sense very much meant to be heard rather than overheard in that they function as an invitation to others to collaboratively enunciate felt thoughts about the death at hand and the social position of the deceased."

A third strategy is expressed by formulaic self-sacrifice. Formulae which communicate the wish to take over another person's burden or even death play a major role in Georgian everyday life, especially in dirges. These formulae presuppose a possibility of transcendence which departs from the realm of realism, imagining supernatural and magic powers. For example, "genacvale" is one of the special sympathy formulae which describe a strong religious wish for self-sacrifice.

Detailing and imagery make a fourth important strategy. A major form of achieving mutual participation in sensemaking is creating images: both by the speaker who suggests an image with her words, and the hearer who creates an image based on that suggestion.³⁹ Lamenters try to evoke scenes with the deceased. Details invite listeners to construct a scene.

We will discuss four successive turns from the lamentation for Dimiṭri (Miṭa) Gabrielašvili in this article. In this sequence a neighbor and three nieces lament. Niece 3 sings. Singing is not obligatory, but in Georgian lamenting it is always possible. The sequence occurred in 1996 on the day before the burial, called *panašvidi* in Muxrani (East Georgia).⁴⁰ The research reported here arises from long and intensive research visits continuing through many years of friendship and contact, especially with people from Muxrani. David Papuḡašvili, who taped this lament for us, specialized in staging the musical background for laments. He possesses a collection of mourning music (Western classical and Georgian folkloristic) and a cassette recorder. He is called to many mournings and acts there as a sort of disk jockey. Such mourning disk jockeys are found in many villages.

We first look at the neighbor's turn. The neighbor instructs the deceased Miṭa, who lies in the room in a coffin, in line 1 that he should take her tears to her brother in the hereafter. Symbolic condensation is explicitly communicated here. Crying is not just crying but takes on other functions: The deceased can take the tears which he receives for the others with him in the hereafter and share them; they should make existence easier for the whole community of the deceased, soften the earth for them. By evoking the image of sharing the tears, a community of the dead is created.

³⁶ Here I draw again on participant roles as outlined in Bauman's article in this volume: participant, speaker, author, source, receiver, addressee, overhearer, target, audience, mediator.

³⁷ See footnote 8

³⁸ See footnote 8

³⁹ See footnote 32

⁴⁰ The transliterated line is here the location of the transcription symbols. Transcription convention: % = sobbing or crying sound, : = vowel lengthening, (H) = audible inhalation, here often sobbingly done. The other conventions are the usual ones in conversation analysis. Punctuation marks are used as intonation signs.

Line 2 also represents an instruction to Miṭa. He is supposed to talk to the neighbor's brother, who is already in the hereafter. She imagines the two men meeting there and talking to each other. In line 3 the neighbor directly addresses her deceased brother in the hereafter, who thereby becomes the target of her message. In line 4 she shifts address and talks again to Miṭa. In line 5 she uses direct speech which is marked as such by the particle "tko" at the end of the line. Not only with reported speech, but also with such instructions to the dead the lament contains direct quotation. It can, along with Tannen,⁴¹ be viewed as an involvement strategy. The neighbor stages the dialogue that is supposed to take place between Mita and her brother theatrically and consequently makes it plastic for her audience. The neighbor goes on directly addressing the brother, but in the post-particle (tko)⁴² in line 7 the imperative orientation in the sense of "tell him" is grammaticalized. The animated speech produces a double-address to both the deceased brother and the neighbor in the coffin. Line 8 is still double direct speech consisting of what Miṭa should say to the brother in the hereafter and what she herself is already directly telling him. Whereas she addresses the brother in line 8, she addresses Miṭa in line 9. It is not absolutely clear to whom line 10 is addressed, but presumably to Miṭa, because of the "also": she compares Miṭa's children with her brother's. All the children are imagined to act positively in their fathers' senses. Since they are present, she confronts them with her expectations concerning the children's behavior. We witness a moralizing function here, that indeed plays an important role in the lamentations.⁴³ In line 11 she explicitly addresses Miṭa, giving him further instructions as to what to do for her brother in the hereafter. He should calm him. Line 15 contains another very frequent formula, whose grammatical form allows many variations. Here, the subject and the object are presented in the third person, perspectivizing herself as "his sister" from Miṭa's point of view. She then continues to talk primarily to Miṭa. She also instructs him as to what he should not tell her brother (about unrest in Abxasia, line 17).

- 1 Neighb.: აი, ჩემი ცრემლები წაუღე იქ იმასა, შენ გენაცვალე, მიტა
 ai:, čemi cremlebi čaure ik imasa, šen genacvale miṭa
 here, take my tears for him, genacvale, Miṭa
- 2 უთხარი ჩემ დაჩაგრულ, საცოდავ, ჭკვიან ძმასა
 utxari čem dačagrul, sacodav, čk'vian žmasa
 tell my oppressed, poor, smart brother
- 3 ძმაო, ძმაო, შენ მოგიკვდეს და, ძმაო
 (H) žmao, žmao:, šen mogikvdes da, žmao:0%%
 brother, brother, your sister should die for you, brother
- 4 უთხარი, უთხარი, მოტყუებულო, საცოდავო, ძმაო-თქო
 (H) utxari, utxari, (H) moṭq'uebulo sacodavo žmao-tko
 tell him, tell him, my deceived poor brother (tell him)
- 5 შენი შვილები შენ ნაკვალევს მისდევენ-თქო
 (H) šeni švilebi šen načvalevs misdeven-tko
 your children are following your traces (tell him)
- 6 შენ შვილებს მოუკვდეთ მამიდა-თქო
 (H) šen švilebs moučvdet mamida%-tko%%
 your children's aunt should die (tell him)
- 7 რაც რო პირიდან ამოგსვლია, ძმაო, ყველაფერს იმას აკეთებენ-თქო
 (H) rac ro piridan amogsvlia, žmao, (H) qvelapers imas ačeteben-tko

⁴¹ See footnote 32

⁴² In Georgian, reported speech is grammaticalized. "tko" stands for "tell her/him" and is simply attached to the utterance: an attached "o" stands, e.g., for the report of a third person's speech.

⁴³ The communication of morals is the focus of Helga Kotthoff, *Die Kommunikation von Moral in georgischen Lamentationen*. In: Jörg Bergmann/Thomas Luckmann (eds.), *Kommunikative Konstruktion von Moral*. Band 2: *Von der Moral zu den Moralen*. Opladen 1999a, 50-80.

- 8 what came out of your mouth, brother, they do everything (tell him)
 შენი სულიკო და სოსოს არავის დარიგება არ უნდა
 (H) šeni suliko da sosos aravis darigeba ar unda
 your Suliko and Soso need lessons from no one
- 9 გენაცვალე, მიტა
 genacvale, miṭa
 genacvale, Miṭa
- 10 შენი ბიჭებიც ეგრე გააკეთებენ, დაგაფასებენ, გენაცვალე
 šeni (-) bičebic egre gaak̄eteben, dagapaseben, genacvale
 your young boys will also do thus, will treasure you, genacvale,
- 11 ჯერ-ჯერობით, მიტა, უთხარი, გენაცვალე
 ჯერ-ჯერობით, მიტა, უთხარი, გენაცვალე
 žer-žerobit, miṭa, utxari, genacvale
 now still, Miṭa, tell him, genacvale
- 12 შენი სახელი არ შეურცხვენიათ-თქო
 šeni saxeli ar šeurcxveniat-tko
 they have not embarrassed your name (tell him)
- 13 და-ძმურად გეუბნები, გენაცვალე, გთხოვ, გეხვეწები, დაამშვიდო
 (H) da-žmurad geubnebi, genacvale, gtxov, gexvečebi daamšvido.
 sisterly I tell you, genacvale, I ask you, plea with you, calm him
- 14 დაამშვიდო, დააწინარო, ის და-დამიწებული, მიტა,
 (H) daamšvido, daačqnarō, is da-damičebuli, miṭa:%%,
 calm him, console him, his sister should become earth for him, Miṭa
- 15 იმას მოუკვდეს და იმას მოუკვდეს და
 (H) imas mouk̄vdes da%%% imas mouk̄vdes da%%%
 his sister should die to him, his sister should die to him
- 16 აბა, კაი ამბები მიუტანე, გენაცვალე,
 aba (H) kai ambebi miuṭane, genacvale,
 please bring him only good news, genacvale
- 17 არ უთხრა, რო ესე არევ-დარევა
 ar utxra, ro ese arev-dareva::
 do not tell him that there is unrest
- 18 თორემ იმის სულს აფხაზეთში გაუხარია, გენაცვალე
 torem imis suls apxazetši gauxaria, genacvale
 for his soul experienced much joy in Abxazia, genacvale
- 19 პირველ რიგში იმას ეძახიან ყველაფერში
 pirvel rigši imas ežaxian qvelapersi
 people always called him as the first⁴⁴
- 20 აბა, მიტა, დალოცე შენი შვილები, გენაცვალე
 (H) aba, miṭa, daloce šeni švilebi, genacvale
 well, Miṭa, bless your children, genacvale
- 21 შენი კატოსთვის ილოცე, ავადმყოფია, გენაცვალე
 (H) šeni kaṭostvis iloce, avadm̄qopia, genacvale
 pray for your kaṭo, who is ill, genacvale
- 22 მთელი ღამე მაგაზე ერთი ოთხ-ხუთჯერ უნდა ვიფიქრო
 mteli ṛame magaze erti otx-xuṭžer unda vipikro
 at least four to five times in the night I must think
- 23 ნეტა როგორ იქნება, ნეტა როგორ იქნება
 neṭa rogor ikneba, neṭa rogor ikneba
 how might things go for you, how might things go for you
- 24 ვაიმე.
 vaime%%
 ((music))
- 25 უიმე უიმე
 uime uime
 oh woe oh woe
 ((0.5))

⁴⁴ Meaning: invited him.

The neighbor modulates her voice for the lament: she speaks with a loud, creaky voice. Modulations of the voices are often used in lamentation as stylization.

I will continue by elaborating the already mentioned phenomena of artistry in lamentation:

3.1. Constructed dialogue

Constructed dialogue can serve as an intertextual link between many events. In Georgian lamentation we very often find a special form of it: in giving instructions to the lamented person as to what he should tell other deceased persons in the hereafter, the lamenter addresses her words to the nonpresent deceased person directly rather than indirectly. Thereby she makes the dead person in the room a mediator. As Bauman⁴⁵ points out in his article in this book, in mediated communication we have discursive practices that transcend the face-to-face speaker-hearer dyad, a relaying of spoken messages through intermediaries. Lamentation can also become a speech routine by a mediator of utterances from a source to an ultimate targeted receiver, a long deceased person. This procedure here symbolically unites the living and the dead.

In lamentation we always have an audience which is the receiver of the whole performance, even though messages are often not addressed to it. Since lamentation only takes place in front of an audience, it is an important factor of that discourse.

In the neighbor's turn she quotes her own words to her dead brother in lines 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12. Mița is supposed to take them along as a message from her. She tells him that his children are following in his traces (line 5), that they do what he told them (line 7), that they need lessons from no one (8), that they have not embarrassed his name (12). The children are present and are meant to hear her praise. They are of course also target addressees of her words.

The voicing used in lamentation performances can generally be understood in terms of Soviet cultural semiotics,⁴⁶ which analyzed the functions of direct and indirect quotation in fiction. Voloshinov⁴⁷ 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 Belyi. 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".⁴⁸

Tannen,⁴⁹ Br nner,⁵⁰ G n thner,⁵¹ and Couper-Kuhlen⁵² have shown that reported dialogue can contain verbal and intonational characterizations through which - on the basis of stereotypes -

⁴⁵ In this volume.

⁴⁶ Michail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed., Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin 1981.

⁴⁷ Valentin N. Voloshinov, "Reported Speech", in: Ladislav Matejka and Kristina Pomorska (eds.), *Readings in Russian Poetics*. Cambridge 1929/1978, 149-175.

⁴⁸ See footnote 47

⁴⁹ See footnote 32

⁵⁰ Gisela Br nner, Redewiedergabe in Gespr chen. *Deutsche Sprache* 1 (1991), 1-16.

⁵¹ G n thner, Susanne, 'The contextualization of affect in reported dialogues', in Susanne Niemeyer and Ren e Dirven (eds.) *The Language of Emotions*. Amsterdam 1997, 247-277.

images of persons, social groups, etc. are transmitted. By the 'polyphonic layering of voices'⁵³ 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.

Brünner⁵⁴ underlines the performative character of directly quoted speech. Goffman⁵⁵ uses the term "animated dialogue" in order not to suggest that it might be realistic reproduction.

Throughout the text the voices of the deceased are intertwined with those of the living. The lamenting neighbor, for example, unites her dead brother and his children as addressees of her messages. Thereby a community of the living with the dead is again and again symbolized. The reality of this community is one of the basic religious convictions of most Georgians. It is conversationally (re)created.

3.2. Multiple address and sudden address shifts

Connected with constructed dialogue is the phenomenon of unannounced address shifting. Multiple address is more the rule than the exception in Georgian laments. Sometimes it is heard to determine who the target addressee is and whose dialogue is being performed. Address shifts are very often not explicitly announced. It has to be inferred whose speech is put on stage. In line 23 the neighbor directly addresses the absent woman *ḡato* by quoting to the public her own nocturnal thoughts about *ḡato*. In line 21 she asks *Miḡa* to pray for the ill woman *ḡato* who is a relative. Since *ḡato*'s other relatives are also present in the audience, they witness how the *moḡirali* cares about her.

In discussing the turns following the already presented one, we will return to this strategy.

3.3. Formulaic Self-Sacrifice

The first line contains the formula "genacvale." Laments are permeated with this formula which often marks the end of a line (such as in lines 10, 16 and 20). It can very well make a line or make a line together with a name, such as in line 9. "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." Boeder⁵⁶ writes that in a certain contextual position one can as well translate the formula as "I die for you."

"First, there are the abundant, often-repeated formulae 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 lamenter wants to symbolically shoulder the suffering person's pain."⁵⁷

However, as is often the case with formulae used to express strong feelings, their semantics is weakened in everyday life. In Georgia one hears this formula so often and in so many contexts that it can be taken as a mere expression of sympathy. There are many other formulae using the

⁵³ Günthner, Susanne, "Poliphony and 'the layering of voices' in reported dialogues: An analysis of the use of prosodic devices in everyday reported speech", *Journal of Pragmatics* 31 (1999), 685-708.
Elizabeth Cooper-Kuhlen, *Coherent Voicing: On Prosody in Conversational Reported Speech*. In: Wolfram Bublitz et al. (eds.), *Coherence in Spoken and Written Discourse*. Amsterdam (1999), 11-35.

⁵³ See footnote 46

⁵⁴ 1991: 7, see footnote 50

⁵⁵ Erving Goffman, *Forms of Talk*, Philadelphia 1981.

⁵⁶ See footnote 17

⁵⁷ Translated by H.K., See footnote 17

semantics of shouldering another person's suffering, for example "your sister should die for you" in line 3 and "your children's aunt should die" in line 6. The most common form is "šen mogiḳvdi" (I should die for you) as uttered by niece 2 in line 50. It is interesting that the neighbor does not say: I should die for you, but perspectivates herself as her brother's sister or his children's aunt.

Perspectivation seems to play an interesting role in the use of formulae. Very generally, all humans' perceiving and acting is done from a specific viewpoint which, together with the scope and other structural characteristics of perspective, determines the space of perception and activity. Every experience is normally present in those aspects that are seen from the spatio-temporal point of view taken by the subject.⁵⁸ In lamentation, however, experience is sometimes explicitly presented from the point of view of a deceased. Normal subjectivity of the experiencer/speaker is thereby symbolically deleted. The same is done in lines 14, in the formula "his sister should become earth for him" and in 15. The perspectives of several dead and living persons are thereby symbolically combined. Formulae of wanting to suffer for another or even exchange places with the dead play an important role in Georgia - as in the Near East in general.⁵⁹ They have various pragmatic functions which for reasons of space cannot be explained in detail here. Line 6 is primarily addressed to Miḳa, but targeted at the brother, and it is perspectivized with even greater complexity than in line 3. The neighbor perspectivizes herself as the aunt of her brother's children; in this role she wishes to perform a ritual self-sacrifice which would make her equal to her brother. We see here various communicative communalizations symbolically brought about, father and children, brother and sister and all (the living children and the sister with the deceased father/brother) together.

Obviously the repeated use of formulae also contributes to sound coherence. As an illustration consider how many lines are connected by variants of "šen mogiḳvdi" (I should die for you) or "šen mogiḳvdes da" (the sister should die for you) or other variations of the same formula: 3, 6, 15, 43, 44, 48, 50, 55, 61.

Turn-taking is also poeticized. Opening up the closing of the wailer's turn often begins with an interjection or formula employment. "Vaime" is similar to the English "woe," an interjection which expresses sorrow and suffering. The neighbor closes her turn by this interjection and crying sounds. Also niece 1 in finishing her turn combines crying, the interjection "vaime" and the rhetorical question "what shall I do." Niece 2 closes her turn by the formula "šen mogiḳvdi" (I should die for you), and niece 3 utters "vai vai ra mçare xar, miḳa zia" which again consists of interjections and a formula of suffering. Besides expressing grief, formulae, interjections and also crying sounds fulfill a function in structuring the lament.

3. 4. Detailing and imagery

A major form of creating conversational involvement in sensemaking 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 the next excerpt from the lament for Miḳa. Like constructed dialogues, details create vivid pictures, and understanding is derived from scenes in which people are placed in relation to each other. Details create mental images and can stand as metonyms for larger experiential chunks. The individual imagination of the wailer invites group imagination. Thus, a collective memory of

⁵⁸ Carl F. Graumann, "Perspective and Horizon: The Individual and the Social Approach in Phenomenology and Sociology", in: Rainer Dietrich and Carl Graumann (eds.), *Language Processing in Social Context*, Amsterdam 1989, 95-122.

⁵⁹ See footnote 17

the time spent together is not only organized but celebrated. Details and imagery play an essential role in making the xmit naṭirlebi easy to memorize. Thus, the lamenting women play a major role in constructing social memory. The particularity and familiarity of details such as those communicated from line 16 onward in the neighbor's turn is very moving.

In line 16 the neighbor starts telling Miṭa to only pass on good news. Again and again we find in the taped laments instructions as to what should not be said in the hereafter. Very often political unrest is mentioned, of which there were various cases in the past few years, e.g., the war with Abxazia. The neighbor gives the detail that her brother was always immediately invited when he went to Abxazia (19); many Georgians had relatives there. The listeners are invited to create the whole scene of such an invitation themselves. In inviting all those present to recall what wonderful times they had spent in Abxazia, political positions are given voice, and a political memory is kept alive. To invite and be invited points to moral values that are highly regarded in Georgian culture. The deceased Miṭa and those present are united in the remembered scenes.

Let's look at the next turn. One of Miṭa's nieces takes the turn:

- 26 Ni 1: მიტა ძია, მიტა ძია არ შემძლია, რო არ გიტურო
 miṭa zia %%%% miṭa zia %%%% ar še%miṭlia%, ro ar giṭiro
 Uncle Miṭa, Uncle Miṭa I cannot manage to not cry about you
- 27 მე ტირილი არ შემძლია,
 (H) me ṭirili ar ṣemiṭlia %%%%,
 I cannot cry (well)⁶⁰
- 28 არ შემძლია და აივსო გული
 (H) ar ṣemiṭlia da ai%vso guli%%%,
 I cannot, but my heart is filled
- 29 შენ ხომ მამაჩემს არ ელაპარაკებოდი
 (H) šen xom mamačems ar elaparakebodi%%%,
 you did not speak with my father⁶¹
- 30 რო შერიგდით, როგორ უხაროდა,
 (H) ro šerigdit, rogor uxaroda%%%,
 as you reconciled, how happy he was
- 31 რად ჩამოსტეხე მხარი
 (H) rad čamoṣṭexe mxari %%%%,
 why did you break his shoulder⁶²
- 32 ვაიმე, რაღა ვქნა, მიტა ძია არ გაგიშვებთ
 (H) vaime, raṛa vkna%%%, (H) miṭa zia, ar gagiṣvebt%%%,
 oh woe, what can I do, Uncle Miṭa, we will not let you go away
- 33 ჩავჭიდებთ დიშვილები და ძმიშვილები ხელს და არსად არ გაგიშვებთ
 (H) čavčidebt dišvilebi da zmišvilebi, xels da arsad ar gagiṣvebt %%%
 hand in hand we place ourselves there, sisterchildren and brotherchildren, and do not let you go
- 34 ვაიმე რაღა ვქნა, ვაიმე რაღა ვქნა,
 (H) vaime raṛa vkna%%%, vaime raṛa vkna %%%%,
 woe, what shall I do, woe, what shall I do
- 35 მამაჩემი როგორ დაღონებული არი
 (H) mamačemi rogor daṛonebuli ari %%%%,
 my father how sad he is
- 36 ერთს არ გვათქმეინებდა, ხალხო, მიტა ძიაზე ცუდსა
 (H) erts ar gvatkmevinebda, xalxo, miṭa ziaze cudsa, %%%%,
 he never let us, people, speak ill of Uncle Miṭa

⁶⁰ Meaning: lament.

⁶¹ There was a conflict between the two.

⁶² Meaning: Why do you leave him alone now?

37 ვაიმე, რათა ვკნა ვქნა, ვაიმე
 vaime, raŋa vkna, vaime% % % % % %
 oh, woe what shall I do, oh
 [% % % % % %]

The starting phrase of the niece, that she cannot cry but simply must, because her heart is so full (28), is in the frame of the genre, stereotypical but nevertheless points to the value of spontaneity. Again and again lamenters claim that they cannot act otherwise does. Then she speaks to Miṭa and thereby also to those present about the disagreement between Miṭa and her father. She gives some details about Miṭa's and her father's behavior and feelings, for example, that her father allowed no one to speak ill of Miṭa. Everyone can hear that the father's valuation of Miṭa was high and still is, despite the disagreement. A reconciliation between them had already occurred during his lifetime; it is regarded as very important in popular religion to reconcile oneself before death. Then the niece fictionalizes images of not letting Miṭa go (line 33). Again she tells of her father. It appears to be morally important to let everyone know that her father and Miṭa parted on good terms. But she does not tell the whole story of their quarrel. The audience can complete the scene from knowledge of similar ones from their own experience.

Niece 2 takes the next turn.

38 Ni 2: [მიტა ძია, ვზივარ და გელოდები, როდის ეტყვი გულო ძალოს
 miṭa zia, vzivar da gelodebi, rodis eṭqvi gulo žalos
 Uncle Miṭa I sit and wait for what you will say to Aunt Gulo
 39 მარინეს დაუძახე, ხელები გამიზილოსო, მიტა ძია
 marines dauṭaxe, xelebi gamiziloso, miṭa zia
 fetch Marina, she should massage my hands,⁶³ Uncle Miṭa
 40 მაგრამ არც შენ ეუბნები და არც ის მეძახის
 (H) magram arc ſen eubnebi da arc is meṭaxis
 yet you say nothing and she also does not call me
 41 როგორც მაშინ არ დამიძახა, მიტა ძია
 (H) rogorc maſin ar damiṭaxa, miṭa zia
 just as then she did not call me, Uncle Miṭa
 42 მეც გამიფრთხილდა, ცუდათ არისო, მაგრამ არ მოვკვდებოდი, არა,
 (H) mec gamifrtxilda, cudat ariso, magram ar movkṭvdebodi, ara% %
 she paid attention to me, she doesn't feel good (she said), but I would not have died, no
 43 ნეტა თუ გაბუტული ხარ ჩემთან, მიტა გატოვე, შენ მოგიკვდი, მიტა ძია,
 (H) neṭa tu gabuṭuli xar čemtan, miṭa, ṭove, ſen mogiṭvdi, miṭa zia
 perhaps you will no longer speak with me, I should die for you, Uncle Miṭa
 44 მაგრამ მეგონა, რო კარგად დაგტოვე, შენ მოგიკვდი, მიტა ძია
 magram megona, ro ṭargad dagṭove, ſen mogiṭvdi, miṭa zia
 but I thought that you were well when I left, I should die for you, Uncle Miṭa
 45 გული ამევსო, აღარ შემიძლია, მიტა ძია
 (H) guli amevso, arar ſemiṭlia, miṭa zia % % %
 my heart is filled, I am at wit's end, Uncle Miṭa
 46 ოცდახუთი წლის ბიძაშვილი მომიკვდა ხალხო
 ocdaxuti ṭlis biṭaſvili momiṭvda, xalxo
 my twenty-five-year-old cousin⁶⁴ died, people
 47 და ჩემ დას ხმა არ ამოუღია არ უტირია მიტა ძია
 da čem das xma ar amouria, ar uṭiria, miṭa zia
 and my sister made no sound,⁶⁵ did not cry, Uncle Miṭa
 48 შენ მოგიკვდი, მიტა ძია
 ſen mogiṭvdi, miṭa zia

⁶³ Literally: rub. The uncle's hands often fell asleep.

⁶⁴ Since Georgian has no gender, the cousin could be either male or female.

⁶⁵ She did not lament.

- 49 I should die for you, Uncle Miṭa
 და როგორ ამოაღებინე ეხლა ხმა, მიტა ძია
 da rogor amoarebine exla xma, miṭa zia
 and how you have forced them to cry, Uncle Miṭa
- 50 შენ მოგიკვდი, მიტა ძია
 šen mogikvdi, miṭa zia%%
 I should die for you, Uncle Miṭa
- 51 ვაიმე, რაღა ვქნა, მიტა ძია,
 vaime, raṭa vkna, miṭa zia %%%
 oh, what shall I do, Uncle Miṭa
 ((murmur))
- 52 მიტა ძია ის მაინც დამარიგე
 miṭa zia, is mainc damarige
 Uncle Miṭa, at least advise me
- 53 ვალიკო რო ჩამოვა და მეტყვის,
 valiḳo ro čamova da metqvis
 when Valiko arrives and says
- 54 ძია რა უყავიო, რა ვუთხრა, მიტა ძია
 zia ra uqavio, ra vutxra, miṭa zia%%
 where do you have your Uncle, what shall I reply, Uncle Miṭa
- 55 ვაიმე, რაღა ვქნა მიტა ძია, ვაიმე, შენ მოგიკვდი, მიტა ძია,
 vaime, raṭa vkna miṭa zia %%%, vaime, šen mogikvdi, miṭa zia%%
 oh, what shall I do, Uncle Miṭa, oh, I should die for you, Uncle Miṭa
- 56 სუ შენი საცოდავი თვალები მელანდება, მიტა ძია,
 su šeni sacodavi tvalebi melandeba, miṭa zia%%
 all the time I see only your poor eyes, Uncle Miṭa
- 57 სუ შენი გადმოხედვა მელანდება, მიტა ძია
 su šeni gadmoxedva melandeba, miṭa zia%%
 all the time I see your look, Uncle Miṭa
- 58 რო გადმომხედავდი ხოლმე და გაგინარებოდა ჩემი შემოსვლა,
 ro gadmomxedavdi xilme da gagixadeboda čemi šemosvla
 you looked at me and were happy that I came
- 59 ხელები დამიზილეო, მიტა ძია
 xelebi damizileo, miṭa zia%%
 massage my hands, (you said) Uncle Miṭa
- 60 ხელები დამიზილე, სულ გამიბუჯდაო
 xelebi damizileo, sul gamibuḟdao
 massage my hands, which are completely asleep (you said)
- 61 შენ მოგიკვდი, მიტა ძია,
 šen mogikvdi, miṭa zia
 I should die for you, Uncle Miṭa

In line 38 niece 2 directly addresses her uncle. She first creates a concrete scene from her memory (I sit and wait for what you will say to Aunt Gulo); then she speaks with her uncle's voice. She offers details from earlier meetings, which she now shares with everyone present in the audience. Again we have a constructed dialogue. Niece 2 in line 40 contrasts her concrete expectations from the living uncle with the reality of the present moment. In line 41 she compares the present situation with the past. The sadness of the present situation culminates in the detail that neither speaks. She then gives details of an incident in which she was likewise not called because she was ill herself. Rhetorical questions are asked (43) which suggest the uncle's inability to speak. Death itself becomes plastic in this concrete detail of not speaking. As is typically done in Georgian wailing niece 2 also reminds the audience of a cousin who died young (line 46). She says that her sister did not cry in that case. In line 49 she turns Miṭa's attention to how everybody cries for him. Contrasts such as this are often constructed by the wailers. They have the following pattern: For X or Y I was

unable to cry, but for you my feelings are too strong. Although the control of feelings is culturally not desired at all (emotional expression is desired), it is often said that one is struggling for self-control but just cannot manage. This strengthens the emotional expression and its authenticity. Formulae follow. The comparison should not be taken literally but has the mere function of reflecting the grief everybody present expresses.

Starting in line 52 she evokes a concrete scene by asking Miṭa what she should say to Valiko, who up to now has not been informed of Miṭa's death. In this way an absent person is drawn into the communalization process. She dramatizes the scene with Valiko, which is of course much more effective in enhancing emotions than generally acknowledging that Miṭa is not among them anymore. Starting in line 56 she focuses on details of Miṭa's appearance. She mentions the contrast between his poor eyes in line 57 and his happy eyes in 58. With these metonyms she compares the happy past and the sad present. Details, such as the massaging of the uncle's hands (59), which had fallen asleep, again visually evoke the scene; they are of course more easily remembered than general information would be. Details represent a sort of zoom effect in the narration. They work with analogy and association.

Niece 2 and niece 3 end most of their lines with the call "miṭa zia" (39, 41, 43, 44, 45, 47, 49, 50, 51, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 67,69).

Niece 2 laments somewhat more melodically. The melody does not correspond to the music heard in the background, which here comes from a cassette recorder,⁶⁶ but sometimes, however, is played live. The music does not accompany the lament, but is rather independent and also is played in another room, e.g., in the courtyard. It can, however, very easily happen that the lamenter orients herself to the music, as does Niece 3 who sings. The melody is quite typical for East Georgia.

((music pause for a few minutes; change of music; tape was briefly turned off and again on))

- 62 Ni 3: რა ვქნა, კიდევ უნდა უსაყვედურო, დედაჩემსა, მიტა ძია,
(H) ra, vkna kidev unda usaqveduro de:::dačema:::, miṭa zia:::%%
what shall I do, shall I also reproach my mother, Uncle Miṭa,
63 ძმარ, ძმარო, როგორ დაგუგურებს თავზე, მიტა ძია
(H) zmao:::, zmaoo:::, rorgor daggu:::rgure:::bs tavze:::%%, miṭa zia:::%%
brother, brother (she calls), how bitterly she bewails you⁶⁷ Uncle Miṭa
64 Tavs iklavda mamaaCemze, mita Zia:::,
(H) tavs i:::klavda::: mama:::čemze:::, miṭa zia:::%%
she killed herself because of my father, Uncle Miṭa
65 სახვეწრებით ვედექით მე და ჩემი და, მიტა ძია,
(H) saxveçre:::bit ve:::dekit me::: da če:::mi da:::%%, miṭa: zia:::%%
I and my sister stood there pleading, Uncle Miṭa
66 იტირე-მეთქი, დედა მამა იტირე-მეთქი ქალო
(H) itire-metki, deda::: mama itire:::metki kalo:::%%,
cry (I said) , mother, cry for the father (I said), woman,
67 ხმა ვერ ამოვალებინეთ, მიტა ძია
xma::: ver amo:varebine:::t, mi:::ṭa zia:::%%
we have not succeeded, that she made sounds, Uncle Miṭa
68 აკი ტირილი არ ვიცო, დედა, აკი ხმით ტირილი არ შემძლიაო,
ქალო
(H) aḱi::: ṭirili ar vicio, deda:::%%, aḱi::: xmit ṭirili ar še:::mizliao:::, kalo:::%%
I could not cry (you said), mother, I could not cry , (you said) woman

⁶⁶ As already said, D. Papuḱašvili taped the lament for us; he specialized in staging the musical background for laments, Western classical or Georgian folkloristic.

⁶⁷ Literally: how bitterly she coos to you.

- 69 როგორ ამოალებინა, მიტა ძია
(H) rogor amoarebina, miṭa zia:::%%
how does her, Uncle Miṭa
- 70 როგორ ამოალებინა ჯიგრის სიმწარემ ხმაა დელაჩემსა
rogor amoarebina ṭigris simčarem xmaa::, dedaçemsa::%%
how does a good man let her cry bitterly, my mother
- 71 ვაი ვაი რა მწარე ხარ, მიტა ძია
vai vai ra mčare xar, miṭa zia
oh alas, oh alas, how bitter you are, Uncle Miṭa

Let's examine the text from line 62 onwards. Niece three asks her uncle what to do and tells him by performing words she herself had uttered in another context how her mother is bewailing him. Niece 3 constructs the words of her mother (63 and 68) and her own words (66). Her mother is present and listens to her daughters performance; again we witness multiple addressee orientation: the dead uncle is the direct addressee, her mother and the audience are indirect addressees. The mother is complimented and the audience is informed about her deep grief. In line 68 Niece 3 animates her mother's voice for the public, but also directly addresses her by calling to her; indirectly she is of course also talking to the audience. As already pointed out, we often find sudden address shifts in Georgian lamentation. In line 67 the uncle is addressed, in 68 the mother and the public, in 69 again the deceased uncle. Line 70 is presumably addressed to Miṭa, the public, and the mother likewise, line 71 is primarily addressed to Miṭa.. Again we witness multiple address and sudden address shifts as a communicative communalization strategy. It combines the realm of the living with that of the dead.

Since niece 3 sings we will take a look at the notes of lines 68-71:

The Georgian ethnomusicologist Prof. ჭუკური ჯოხონელიძე from Tbilisi transcribed the notes of this passage.

These strategies make the discourse vivid and imaginative. Together, the poeticized line structuring, the special vocabulary of the interjections and formulae, constructed dialogue, detailing, imagery, and multiple address have an involving and evocative effect on everybody. They create the sensual experience that is necessary to create a space, in which normal true or false statuses are abandoned, a space in which oral art is combined with magic.

As Finnegan pointed out so convincingly in her work on oral literature⁶⁸ we never have the texts in isolation. They have to be understood in connection to the processes of which they are a part. I would like to add that we also do not have artistry in isolation. In the Georgian grief complex, most

⁶⁸ Ruth Finnegan, (1977), see footnote 34.

Ruth Finnegan, (1990): Introduction; or: Why the Comparativist Should Take Account of the South Pacific. *Oral Tradition* 5/2-3 (1990),159-184.

artistic elaborations play a role in staging religion. Therefore I would like to point to some other dimension of the ritual process.

4. On the external structure of Georgian grief rituals

Ritualization starts as soon as a death is made public.

The family in which someone has died announces the death by crying loudly (*šexadeba*) around the village. This cry is of course seen and experienced as a cry of shock but it also initiates a special period for the whole neighborhood. Now it is the duty of neighbors and relatives to hurry to offer their assistance. The grief family is provided for by neighbors until the burial. Work and festivities all stop at once. Ablutions with ritual provision of wash water begin. In East Georgia the wash water must be dumped far from the house as impure. In some West Georgian regions it is regarded as luck-bringing water for use in irrigating the fields. Regional differences are written into the grief complex in many places.⁶⁹ The recreation of regional culture is one layer of the symbolic in the ritual process. All mirrors are immediately covered with black cloth in order to avoid seeing the deceased's reflection. This would according to folk belief mean death for the affected persons. The deceased is then dressed, in Georgia usually in Sunday clothing.

The grieving family is not permitted to wash themselves. All forms of personal hygiene are stopped.⁷⁰ In the period up to the burial neighbors and male relatives hold night-vigils over the dead. They sit around the fire while doing so. People believe that the deceased, including the one who has just joined them, will also meet around the fire in the afterworld. We can observe a continuing parallelization of earthly ritual action with what is supposed to happen in the hereafter. Thus it is also assumed that wine or vodka and roast sunflower seeds, which all neighbors bring with them, are likewise eaten by the deceased. During the night-watch the visitors must enjoy themselves, in order that the deceased can also enjoy the merriment.

Interesting mixtures of orthodox Christianity and natural-religious elements are observable in all Georgian regions. In former times the church played no role in the grief ritual complex. In the post-communist era, however, it has become customary for a priest to visit a family, bless the deceased and the mourning family, offer prayers and provide advice on the ceremony. As we all know, in the communist period church religious exercises were inopportune. Forms of unofficial religious practice, however, were all the more popular and were also more difficult to persecute, since they were exercised privately. Nowadays, the Orthodox church tries to gain influence everywhere. Although the grief rituals were independent from official religion, and very often act out imaginations of the hereafter which are incompatible with official Christian versions, most Georgians are very willing to integrate a priest into the ritual. The church has a high prestige at the moment.

In folk religion all of ritual mourning is regarded as a sacred duty to the deceased person. Standards of appropriateness, which make it possible to judge the performance, combine religion and art. When ritual activities are forgotten, the community of the deceased may according to religious

⁶⁹ Especially conspicuous is the performance of differences between East and West Georgia. Western and Eastern lamentation styles are regarded as hardly compatible by the Georgians. Kotthoff deals with the distinction of regional identities in joint lamentations: Helga Kotthoff, (1999b): *Affekt-Darbietungen in interkulturellen Lamentationen in Georgien*. In: Stefan Rieger et al. (eds.), *Interkulturalität*. Tuebingen 1999b, 231-251.

⁷⁰ Forms of letting-oneself-go as an expression of grief are found in many cultures; see Stubbe 1985, footnote10.

ethnotheories be offended and revenge itself on the descendants of those who carried out their duties poorly. Concern for the well-being of the deceased in the hereafter is omnipresent in everyday Georgian life, and it is always linked with concern for one's own well-being. Since every family lives in a close social network, which also displays its supportive capacity in a phase of grief, each death is an event of great social significance for the whole community.

Many photos of other deceased persons are arranged on the table behind the open coffin. These deceased persons are believed to receive the just deceased in the hereafter. They are often directly addressed in the lament.

The time order of the ritual is roughly the same everywhere in Georgia. The burial must take place at the latest on the seventh day after death, at the earliest on the third day. During the day people lament until the coffin is lowered into the grave. After the burial kelexi takes place, a large "sad meal".⁷¹ On the seventh and fortieth day people mourn and lament again; again there are meals. In Xevsuretia and Tušetia the lamentation is held over the so-called plasi, a rug on which selected personal possessions and pieces of clothing belonging to the deceased person have been arranged.⁷² These are afterward given by the family to good friends of the deceased. After a year a very large meal in honor of the deceased is held, called *clistavi*. Now "*čëris gaxsna*" must take place, the raising of the roof (the end of grief). The meal ends with cheerful toasts to those present, the living. Now normality is supposed to be reestablished. For example, marriages can be celebrated again.

Many of the named activities can be carried out more or less aesthetically or appropriately. People may dress the deceased elaboratedly, etc. They can arrange many flowers in the room and thereby beautify it. They can lay the table beautifully, decorate the food and much more. Standards of appropriateness always prevail which are prescribed as unwritten law for the purpose of common mourning. The small step to what is seen as "overdone" would be just as fatal as dispensing with aesthetics. Standardization allows minor individual deviations.

⁷¹ One could fill pages with the semiotics of culinaria during kelexi. I limit myself here to a few essential observations. In the last few decades often over a hundred persons have been at kelexi in the village. When the group returns from the cemetery, people first wash their hands (the cemetery and the dead are regarded as unclean). Then they take their places. Arranged pickles, tomatoes, various vegetable pastetes (*pxali*), two-to-three types of cheese, smoked and cooked fish, pickled sour vegetables, a bean dish (*lobio*), potatoes and wheat cooked in honey (*candili*) are on the tables. Then *bozbaši* (a soup made from lamb with vegetables) is served, as well as the following courses, always cooked by men. The women prepare everything, place food on the tables and continuously serve guests. After this there is *xaslama* (cooked beef) and as final course there is *šilaplavi*, a rice dish with meat from joints of lamb and and black pepper. On the fortieth day after the death (*ormoci*) still more is put on the tables, for example, additionally sweet cakes and fruit. According to the testimony of various villagers, the funeral dinners in pre-communist times were much more modest; the communists had begun to expand kelexi, *ormoci* and *clistavi*. It is interesting that the politically motivated limitation of ecclesiastical elements of the mourning ritual presumably caused the quasi-religious elements to increase and thus to stimulate changes in the ritual complex. Today the great mourning meals represent a financial burden for almost all families. However, all those present must contribute some money (called *pativiscema* = honoring a person), whereby the family keeps a record of the contributions, because they must then also pay the same sum at the mourning meals of the other families should the occasion arise. It is interesting that people remember over many years exactly who paid (financial) homage to whom. Presently a renewed change in ideals toward more modest meals can be detected. People also feel a need to distance themselves from the communist influences. *Korkoti*, a wheat porridge, is cooked on religious days in honor of the dead by the family of the deceased and distributed to neighbors. People thereby observe the ritually prescribed odd number of plates. As well here

⁷² These forms are also practiced in reduced and altered forms in other Georgian regions. In Tušetia and Xevsuretia the *plasi*-weeping is strongly ritualized and carried out in public. In other regions they occur in a private frame and at one chosen time.

Concluding remarks:

Lamentation is a ritual of shared grieving which reinforces and intensifies sociality among village people, especially among women. In these ritual dialogues the loss of a person is communalized, and by aestheticization it is quasi-therapeutically worked out. The loss is symbolically shared, whereby the social network of the whole community is reaffirmed. Aestheticized speech, demanding bodily control during the performance of "being beside oneself," makes possible a consensual coming to terms with the loss and the creation of a shared cultural memory. The ceremonial genre of lamentations refers to cultural ties and emotional expression.

Ritualized genres of mourning occupy a broad space in the communicative household of Georgian culture. The simultaneous attention to the deceased and the living demands a high temporal, physical and artistic engagement. As artists of pain, lamenters enjoy a high moral reputation everywhere in Georgia (except Tbilisi). Their art is highly regarded not only in terms of genre criteria, but also in terms of criteria of individual expressive improvisation. A good lament evokes many tears among those present; it is "beautifully sad". Religiosity plays a stronger role in Georgia than it does in the Western world. Thus there is no table where a drinking toast is not offered asking for Uendoba, forgiving the sins of the dead, in order that they can have peace.

Interestingly the lamentation genre of the "unofficial religious"⁷³ survived the Soviet period intact. It was too closely linked to emotional needs and too strongly integrated into normal everyday life for it to have been effectively forbidden.

Durkheim, van Gennep, Radcliffe-Brown, Feld⁷⁴ and many other anthropologists argued that the function of ritual weeping among those left behind is to affirm the existence of a social bond between two or more persons. In the case where the social tissue is threatened by the departure of a person, the social structure is knit together again by a theatrical performance of shared emotions. The Georgian "xmit natirlebi" simultaneously combine several purposes: They allow people to aestheticize feelings of sadness on the occasion of death, they transmit them, organize social memory, and they bind the community together by sharing grief and reaffirming its moral values. For the lamenters aesthetical grieving means to keep control over their feelings. They cannot let themselves go. For some of the listeners the process is the other way round. They are inflicted with their pain.

Georgians, and especially Georgian women, certainly perform "grieving work" (to use this ugly term from German psychoanalysis), but much more, they perform "grieving art" as I hope to have shown.

⁷³ See footnote 12

⁷⁴ See footnotes 14, 29, 28, 8

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