

Aluda is even better than Luda: Selling Beer ‘traditionally’ in post-socialist Georgia

Paul Manning and Ann Uplisashvili

simperingpollyanna@yahoo.com

Talk presented at Anthropology Department,

Universite de Montreal (January 25 2007)

Working Draft

Georgia is the land of wine. In fact, many Georgians believe, and it is not an outlandish claim, that viniculture may have originated on Georgian soil. But today I want to talk not about Georgian wines, but about Georgian beers. My first question today is that if Georgian is known most of all for its wines, why, under post-socialism, are Georgian beer brand names more salient in public discourse and public consumption? Why, in general, has the marketing of Georgian Beers, and not wines, become the central emblem of resurgent Georgian national industries after socialism? The second question I will ask builds on the first, which is how have Georgian marketers linked their brands of beer to ethnographic images of the Georgian nation inherited from socialist and pre-socialist ethnographic, using ethnographic images of Georgian tradition to build national brands. What I want to show is that there are two ways of representing masculinity linked to beer consumption, one linked to idealized ethnographic images of Georgian highland mountaineers, the other linked to actual Georgian practices of masculine sociability in the plains. The former represent a more sublime view of Georgian masculinity and tradition, the latter a more vulgar, even plebeian one. If Georgian brands names, logos and

trademarks tend to foreground the former, advertisements more ambivalently draw from both kinds of images.

Cultures of drink, and overview

First of all, why beer, and not wine? Part of the answer here lies in consumption practices and as well as distribution. First of all, consumption. Wine, for Georgians, is tied up with specific ritual contexts of consumption, called *supras*. I might have said a great deal about these rituals, and I believe that paper is posted on Kevin's website. Briefly, Georgian consumption, and, indeed, notions of space and kinds of sociability, is organized into distinct symbolic spheres which are differentiated in the main by the kind of drink: wine, beer, soft drinks, etc.. Among all these drinks, **wine** is the central organizing node, and all other drinks, especially beer, can be identified by opposition to the ritual drink par excellence, wine. Wine is a drink inextricably linked to ritual contexts of consumption, *supra*. *Supras* are obligatory, usually are private events, and typically function to ritually constitute and reinforce private social relationships, through the coupling of ritualized acts of drinking wine with acts of speaking toasts. The *supra* is the paradigmatic form of private ritual, which can be used to express a broad range of ritual functions. The 'private' world of socialism and post-socialism, opposed to public life, can be viewed as being ritually demarcated by a series of *supras*.

Virtually all other forms of consumption can be organized in opposition to the *supra*, as long as one remembers that the *supra* is an intrusive form, aggressively colonizing the other domains of consumption by various means. Part of my other work, for example, deals with soft drink consumption under socialism, in particular native soft drinks called 'Laghidze's waters'. Laghidze's store in Tbilisi was one of those few

places, alongside the House of Tea across from the university and a few coffee shops in Old Tbilisi, where one could meet friends and engage in a kind of sociability Habermas might have approved of, that is, places that were places one could sit and eat and drink and talk and have no one pester you with wine and toasts. If the Georgian supra expresses an image of Georgian traditional private life, then Laghidze's is surely the image of Georgian modern public life. Unlike the supra, a form of constructive drinking that ritually creates and reinforces social relationships and durable status attributes, drinking a soft-drink stands at most for pure sociability, interaction for its own sake, independence from durable status attributes. Soft drink consumption expresses abstract equality in public, drink consumed for no other purpose than to drink, talk pursued for no other purpose than to talk. Places like Laghidze's represented places where status differences were effaced, places in particular where women and children were quite at home. They were very much unlike restaurants, which were the homes of male camaraderie expressed in the form of toasting rituals, or private supras, where, once again, women and children are at best peripheral participants.

For me, these places were refuges from the iron law of hospitality. One of my problems in my early fieldwork was finding such places where I could meet a friend and not become encompassed by the demands of the law of hospitality, places where I could eat and drink for their own sake, and talk merely to talk. Indeed, one of my host families saw my practice of lunching at Laghidze's an affront to their hospitality! By simple experimentation I discovered that some coffee shops or soft drink shops were immune to the law of hospitality expressed by the supra, expressing a rather different set of norms of cultured public comportment expressed by the soviet concept of 'culturedness' or

‘cultured comportment’. Such places, too, have from the beginning been those public places in Georgia in which it was possible for literally anyone to hang out and chat without being disturbed.

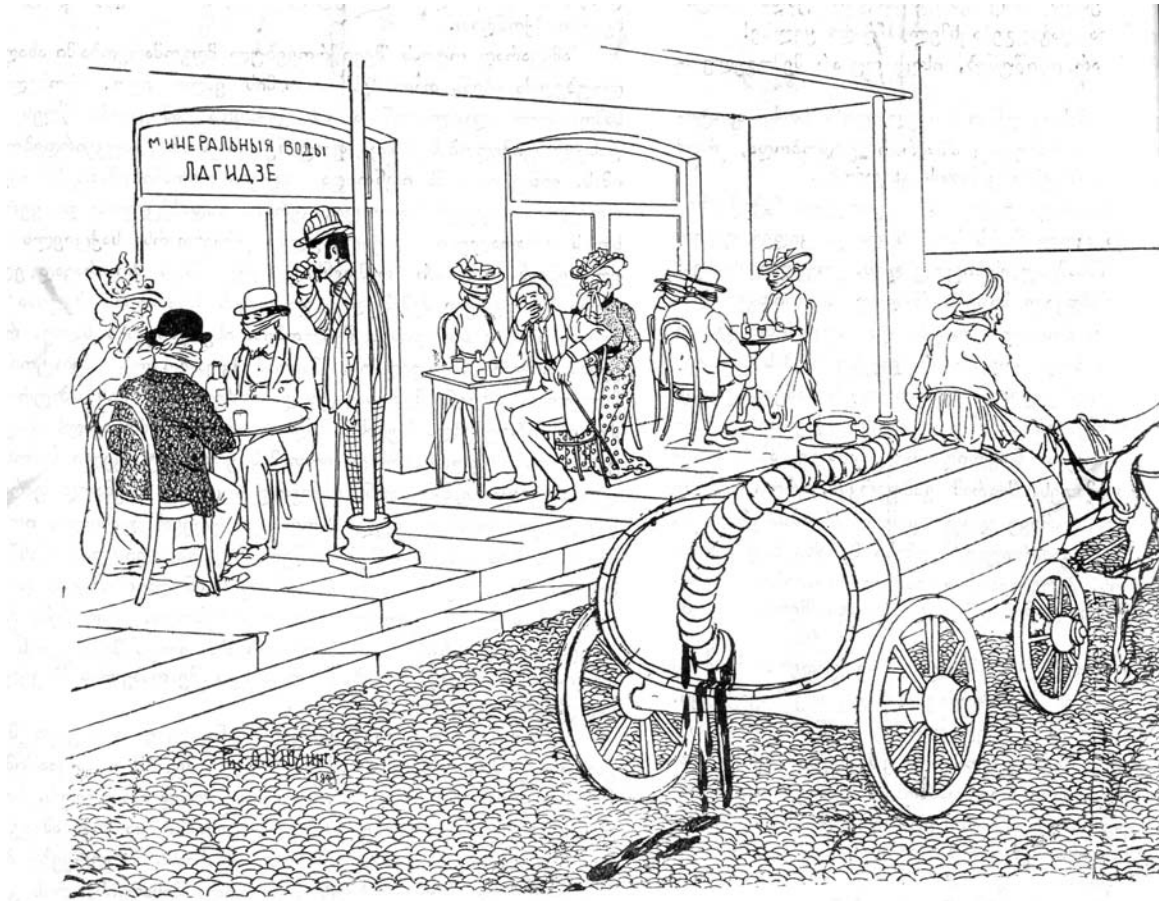
There was a pragmatic dimension, too. There were places where it was possible to eat alone there, in silence, unlike a restaurant. At one point in my early field work I attempted to enter a restaurant alone, I hadn’t eaten for a long time because of the general crisis that was Georgia at that time. I hoped to order a small dish of red beans, eat it, and go on my way. The waitress ordered me to leave, saying that it would be shameful to serve me, I was alone, eating alone was shameful in a restaurant. But at Laghidze’s one not only could eat alone, but it was normal to do so. The fact that there was only one thing to eat, cheese-bread called khachapuri, was not a problem, the khachapuri was the best I’ve ever had, and Laghidze’s soft drinks are certainly the best, truly unique beverages.

That soft drinks like Laghidze’s express pure sociability in Georgia is not some universal property of soft drinks, of course. In fact, this association of Laghidze’s soft drinks with public urban modernity was achieved historically. The pre-revolutionary Laghidze’s was from the very beginning defined as a place specifically open for women (of the aristocracy) to engage in public sociability. Yet the boundaries of this sphere were from the start in friction with other aspects of the disorder of the colonial public sphere. In fact, some men from the period record trips to Laghidze’s as a tiresome tribute paid to feminine fashions, and also report that Laghidze’s after hours was constantly assailed by drunken rowdy men who would come and demand beer.

Public and Private Urban Spaces: Laghidze’s Waters (Kutaisi 1902) and a Supra at a Private Tbilisi gentry home (1902). Note how both are

spaces (public and private) defined by a kind of drink (soft drinks: public, wine: private) and in which urban orderliness are threatened by incursions of the rural.

(Sign reads “Laghidze Mineral Waters”)

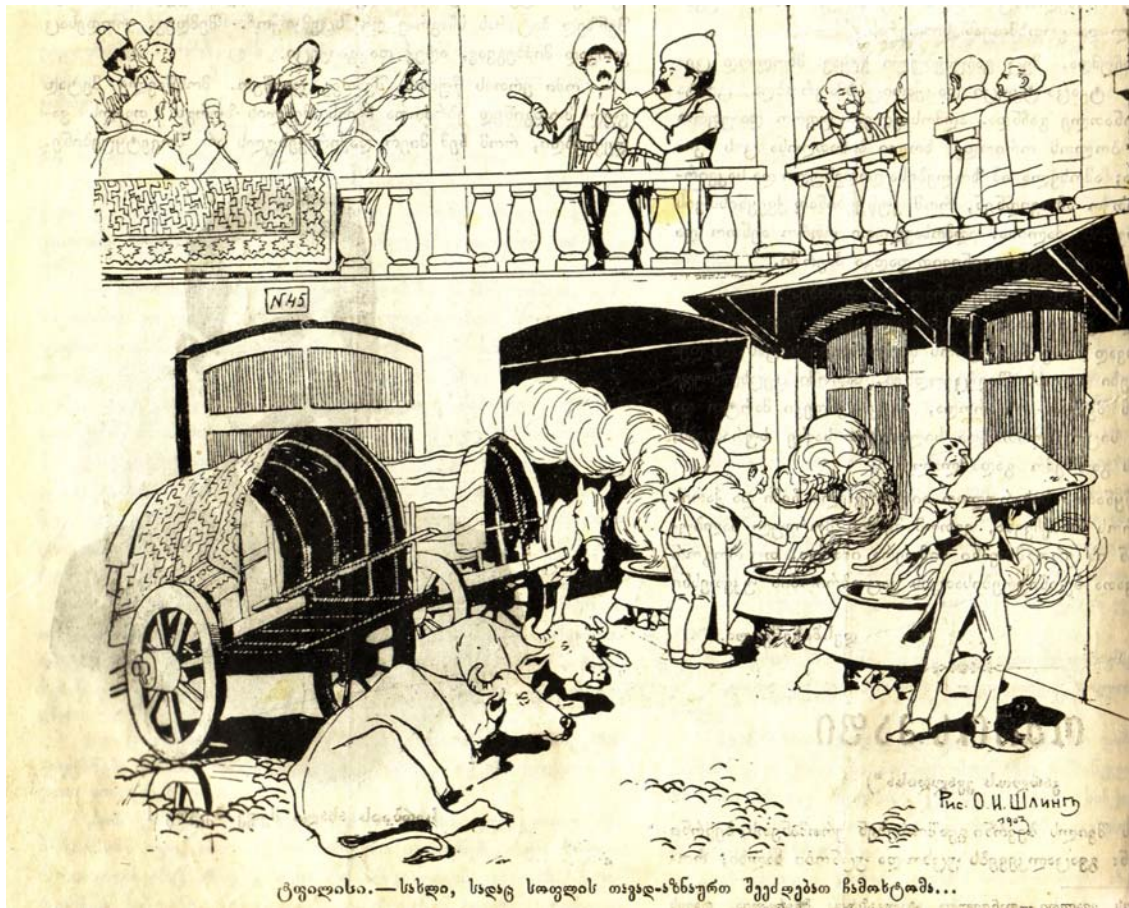


ქუთაისის ვასკოტობი.

“Kutaisi entertainment”

The first image we have of Laghidze’s, from 1902, represents it as a genteel Europeanized oasis where men and women are engaged in sociable interaction in public, but their attempts to civilize Kutaisi urban public space run up against the rural disorder represented by rural sanitation. In the cartoon, the genteel Europeanized Georgian aristocrats frequenting their little oasis of European urban modernity, Laghidze’s, are

reminded of the proximity of village backwardness by the leaky, smelly sanitation cart that shares rthis same public space with them.



“Tbilisi—a house where village gentry can drop in”

If even as early as 1902 the newly opened Laghidze’s store, and by extension, soft drink consumption, could stand for Georgian urban public modernity threatened by rural chaos, then the private supra (now in Tbilisi) was used in a cartoon displaying a private scene from Tbilisi from the same period, again with an incursion of village life in the city. The point that these cartoons inadvertently make is the way that wine and soft drinks, the supra aand the laghidze’s store, seem to be used by the cartoonist to delineate

visually two opposed spheres of urban modernity, public and private, and their problematic separation from the backwardness of rural life in the Russian colony.

Alongside this 'cultured' sphere of socialist fast food, the tea, coffee and flavoured waters establishments like Laghidze's, open to women and children, there developed under socialism a much more plebeian, uncultured, masculine version of fast food establishment, serving various kinds of food, ranging from relatively good, such as meat dumplings called Khinkali, to indifferent socialist fare such as sausages. These establishments were also watering holes, defined by the fact that they served beer. If the ritual sphere is defined by wine and associated festive foods in proliferation, and the cultured fast food sphere defined by indigenous soft drinks and cheese-bread, this plebeian masculine sphere was defined by extraordinarily horrid beer and somewhat indifferent fast-foods. All these fast foods seemed to involve meat, unlike Laghidze's or coffee shops, in which the offering was either cheese-breads or some sort of pastry item. One is tempted here to engage in a structuralist reading, and I think one would be appropriate.

Not only do these two forms of public consumption, soft drinks and beer, stand in opposition to the private form typified by the *supra*, but also to each other, standing as feminized images of cultured consumption to masculine images of plebeian consumption: sweet to savoury, meat to cheese or pastry, sweet soft drink to quasi-alcoholic putrid nastiness. If Laghidze's expresses in ideal form the desirable feminine personal property of being 'cultured', *kulturuli*, then beer expresses the desirable masculine property of being *ubralo*, Russian *prosta*, 'simple, without airs'. Both express a kind of egalitarian social ideology, but they stand opposed as overt prestige to covert prestige in forming a

distinct set of ways of expressing a public self, only one of which is open to women, of course. Beer drinking then, was under socialism, and remains to a certain extent under post-socialism, stereotypically linked to plebeian expressions of masculine sociability. Beer is linked to certain kinds of food, especially fish, which can be served in fast food format, or, most importantly, can be prepared and served easily without female labor.

Whereas as the paired cartoons show, Laghidze's soft drinks and wine drunk at a supra make paired opposed images of public and private spheres of consumption, beer is a strangely medial drink, sharing borders with both the others, delineating a 'third' sphere of consumption and sociability, external to the home, and yet informal, intimate. Like soft-drinks, beer represents a kind of relatively informal gendered sociability, but unlike soft-drinks, beer drinking has ambiguous relations to the supra. First of all, in some parts of Georgia, beer is a ritual drink at the supra, mostly in the mountains of Georgia. Many plains Georgians find this incomprehensible. For plains Georgians, beer is often simply an unmarked drink with respect to the supra, one could serve beer as one would serve a soft drink, and if one wishes to toast one another while drinking beer, one need only buy a bottle of vodka to serve as a liquid powerful enough to carry the weighty sentiments of the toasting. In fact, most Georgian beer drinkers will eventually do this, because the sociability of beer, talk for its own sake, seems somehow empty and hollow without toasting. But if beer drinking can always be brought into the fold of the supra by using vodka, beer is also the opposite of wine in toasting, beer can express an 'anti-supra'. By urban custom, toasts said to beer are 'anti-toasts', usually humorous, joking toasts that are always insincere, usually the opposite of what is said is meant if the toast is drunk to

beer. Beer, then, seems to index a world of familiarity and camaraderie, traditional ‘joking relations’, opposed to the more formal relationships of the supra.

Turning now to distribution, under post-socialism the phenomenon of brand and consumption of brands has developed highly unevenly in Georgia with respect to these beverages. In the field of soft drinks, the pairing of indigenous fast foods like khachapuri with Laghidzes like soft drinks, or coca-cola, continues, but there has been a general disappearance of all locales which might have been described as domains expressing socialist norms of ‘cultured consumption’, which could be paired with a general devaluation of socialist senses of publicness in general. My own sense, stated hastily, is that one of the great changes with the end of socialism has been the re-masculinizing of public consumption. It’s worth asking whether that is the case, anyway. There is no question, however, that beer consumption in branded form has proliferated everywhere, beer gardens with ostentatious marketing of local brands are everywhere, and almost all beer that is consumed is consumed under the aegis of some brand name. In one of the few economic miracles of post-socialism, in the last 7 years or so Georgian companies have cornered the market on beer consumption almost entirely. The opposite is true of wine. Wine brands suffer not only from rampant falsification and Russian embargos, but they also suffer from the fact that most wine that is consumed at supras is peasant production, brandless wine sold in jugs, and not European style table wine. There is no comparable phenomenon of brandless beer, at least in urban markets, though I add parenthetically that when we talk of brands in post-socialist Georgia, we are talking about urban consumption practices. When I asked a rural Georgian man who was an avid consumer of beer what his favourite kind was, he became uncomfortable, and replied

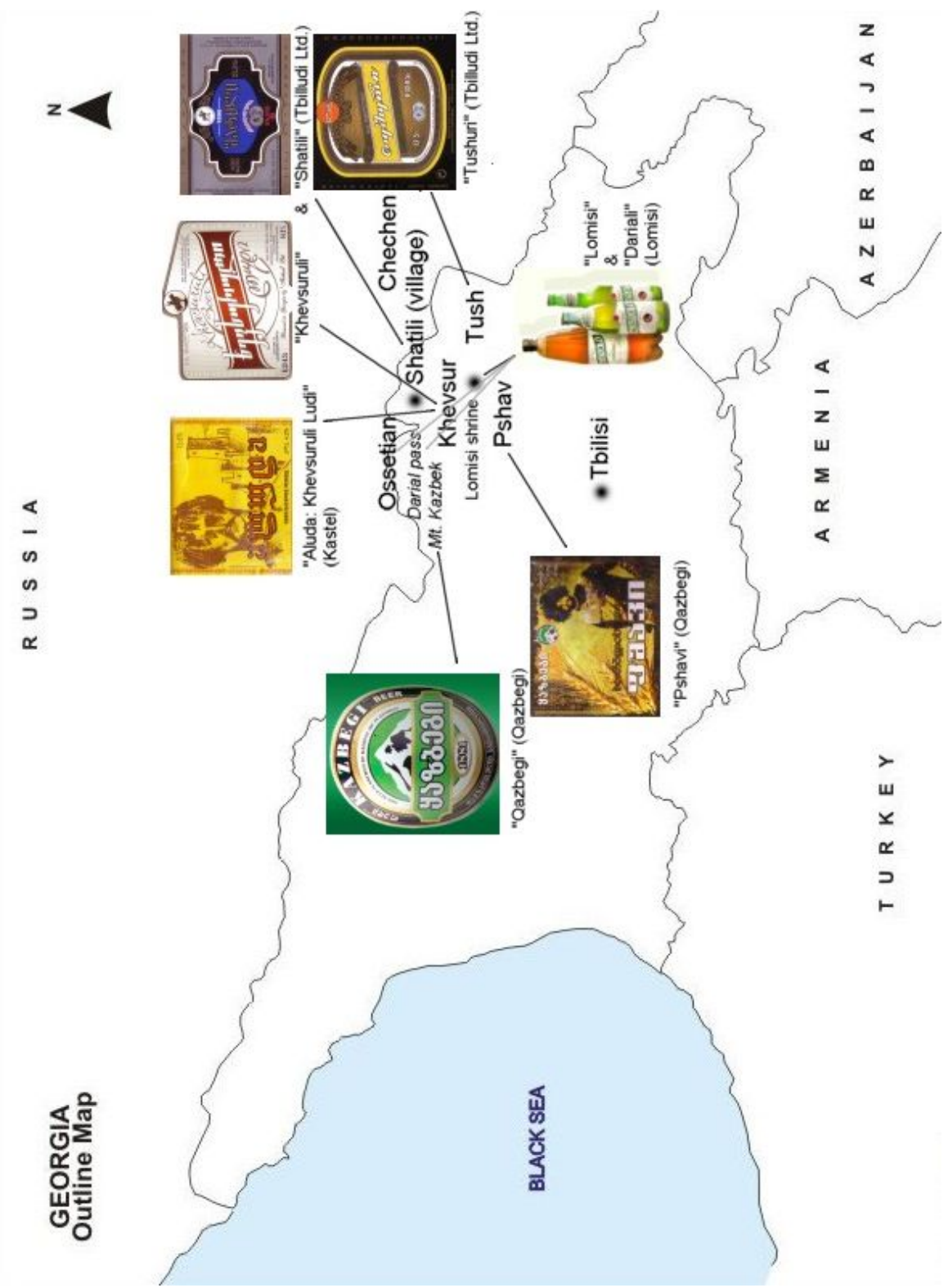
that since he was just a simple (ubralo/prosto) man, he did not pay attention to such things. While beer brands are for domestic consumption, wine brands are for the export market, by and large. Partly this is because of price, taste, but also because wine consumption in Georgia is driven first and foremost by a quantitative principle based on ritual practice and not a qualitative set of discourses of distinction. At a supra, one needs a minimum of one liter of wine for each man present. Whether the wine is good or not is strictly speaking, secondary, though certainly important. People seldom talk about wine brands, viewing money spent on bottled branded wine as money thrown away in an inscrutable fashion, though I have heard women discourse on such wines, but most urban men I know are quite avidly able to discourse about beer brands, and seem to enjoy talking about brands in this way.

The important point to take away, then is that beer is centrally linked to expression of masculine solidarity in contexts that are not strictly speaking domestic. Beer is a domain of **plebeian, informal, non-ritual, non-domestic masculine sociability**. Opposed at every point to wine in consumption, Georgians nevertheless do not see the proliferation of beer consumption as representing a novel phenomenon, but an extension of indigenous traditions. It follows that Georgian beer manufacturers will want to portray their products as being consumed in recognizably Georgian traditional fashion. This will involve ethnographic appeals to Georgian traditions, especially of consumption, and also appeals to Georgian models of masculinity. But as I want to show, this grounding of Georgian beers in Georgian notions of ethnographic tradition and notions of masculinity takes two different forms, sometimes commingled. This whole constellation of features of Georgian beer marketing, in which national brands are founded utilizing

fundamentally ethnographic images from the national imagination, I have called, in general, ethnographic branding. What I am interested in today is the way that images of masculine sociability involving beer are projected, some of which are based on idealized ethnographic images of macho Georgian highland mountain peoples, others of which are based on rather vulgar plebeian images of everyday contexts of beer consumption, sometimes both in tandem.

Ethnographic branding. After the fall of socialism, in the Republic of Georgia, virtually all industrial production of food commodities disappeared. Now unemployed urban and rural Georgians have retreated to ‘peasant’ subsistence strategies and petty commodity production and transaction. Many foodstuffs consumed in Georgia are now produced ‘traditionally,’ that is, on private peasant plots. The withdrawal of the state from production has left ‘The Nation’ as the only alternative model in which the disassociated moments of production and consumption can be reunited within a comprehensive social imaginary. In this context, new Georgian industrial firms seek to ground their own lines of consumer products, primarily beers and soft drinks, in ‘the Nation,’ catering not only to distinctive Georgian consumer tastes (for example, the ever-popular tarragon-flavored soft drinks), but also making reference in marketing to the use of ‘traditional Georgian methods’ in production. As I have noted, although Georgia is known for its wines, wine consumption occurs in ritual contexts where ‘new wine’, typically purchased from peasant producers, is preferred; bottled aged wines are primarily for exports. Beer and soft drinks, in contrast, are a key area in which industrial production for indigenous consumers has been elaborated, and it is in this area of the economy where branding has been most successfully elaborated.

As a semiotic phenomenon, brands are potentially Janus-faced, now indexing a figure of the producer, now a figure of the consumer. Georgian trademarks and brands do not so much directly reconnect distant producers and consumers, rather they substitute 'surrogate identities' for absent producers and consumers. In Georgia, these figures that are used to organize commodities in a market as distinct brands are drawn from the ethnographic discourse of the nation. In effect, the beer brands of Georgia today look just a little bit like the contents of the Georgian ethnographic museum, in bottled form. This general process I will call *ethnographic branding*.



Map Ethnic brands

In recent years Georgia beer and soft drink producers have aggressively carved out a dominant national market share for their products, including indigenous companies like Qazbegi, Lomisi and Tbilludi, as well as the local branch of the French industrial giant Kastell. In order to ground this new range of beer products in the 'nation', Georgian marketers for these companies have created an explosion of brands that harkened to Georgia's imagined traditional exemplars: various groups of ethnic Georgians who inhabit the mountains of Georgia adjacent to Chechnya, mountain groups like the Khevsurs, the Pshavs, and the Tush who have, since the nineteenth century, been sacralized as being the true bearers of the authentic Georgian way of life. These fierce and free, hospital and brave mountaineers, spouting poetry and avenging blood for blood, are felt to embody all that is best about Georgians in general. Georgian advertisers have turned to this ready-made iconography of the 'nation' to articulate their claims to a national market, turning idealized figures of ethnographic and folkloric Others into images that could be used to organize an array of industrial products for a national market. By 2005 the tendency to use different ethnographic groups, the Khevsurs, the Pshavs, the Tush, from a small region of the Caucasus mountains bordering Chechnya, to categorize and differentiate what were essentially all the same Lagers had reached a high point.

DISCUSS MAP

Just as the plains dwellers of Georgia traditionally drink wine, for these mountain dwellers the traditional ritual drink is beer, allowing Beer to be identified as a traditional Georgian beverage alongside wine, a beverage associated with the timeless ethnographic traditions, rituals and general masculinity of the Georgian highlanders. The labels of the Kastell company's Khevsurian Beer Aluda and the Qazbegi beer Pshavi both reproduce familiar ethnographic images of the typical Khevsur or typical Pshav man in traditional dress in a suggestive traditional landscape.



Aluda: A Khevsur Beer (Kastell)



Pshavi: a wheat beer (Qazbegi JSC)

This level of brand iconography, then, identifies beer brands with respect to significant portions of the social imaginary of the nation, what I am calling ‘ethnographic branding’. Within this general process, I am concerned two different ways that masculinity and tradition are represented, one in which masculinity and tradition is an idealized, nostalgic item located firmly in the past and in the mountains, the other in which Georgian masculinity and tradition is seen in terms that are more contemporary, and realistic. Next to an approach to masculinity and tradition we could call *mountaineer ethnographic sublime*, is one which we could call *contemporary urban grotesque*. I will begin looking at specific ads by first looking at one that seems to best encapsulate an kind of ‘ethnographic sublime’, followed by one which, at first glance, defines an end point in vulgarity. The first is a commercial for Qazbegi’s wheat beer Pshavi, which displays the entire traditional contexts of production and consumption of beer in an idyllic scene of traditional mountain life in the mountains of Pshavi.

Pshavi Commercial (Qazbegi JSC, 2005)



roca k'i gazapxuldeba, gamoighvidzebs kveqana,
When spring comes, the world awakens,



silaghe simxiarule, daseirnoben qvelgana.
Freedom, happiness, are found everywhere,

'Certified'



sasvi pshavuri – et'qvian, xorblis ludia sviani,
Fully Pshavian, they say, is a wheat beer with hops



gvitxari rame ghvtis madlsa, erti kartuli gziani.
Tell us something, by the grace of God, having a Georgian way.



ludi pshavi – kartuli mtis istoria.

Pshavi Beer—the history of the Georgian mountains

The ad narrative takes the form of a traditional Pshavian poem. The Pshavians are also noted as being poets, their poetic cycles are the focus of Georgian folklore. What he is saying is, making allowances for my translationese, is:

When spring comes, the world awakens,
Freedom, happiness, are everywhere,
Fully Pshavian, they say, is a wheat beer with hops
Tell us something, by the grace of God, having a Georgian way.
Pshavi Beer—the history of the Georgian mountains

Qazbegi commercials are always clever, always tasteful, and Qazbegi is certainly the corporation that began this process of ethnographic branding. This particular commercial by Qazbegi is perhaps the most complete grounding of a beer in idyllic scenes of traditional beer production and consumption, appropriate for the Qazbegi product which is most directly linked to this project of ethnographic branding.

Having looked at a relatively tasteful ad, I want to look at an apparently extremely Vulgar ad that is secretly fairly clever. This second beer commercial I want to look at is a notorious, even shocking, commercial for the company Lomisi. The beer company Lomisi is one of the underdogs of the Georgian beer market, carving out a small share of the market. Most people now believe that their beer is fortified, so one might think of them as the ‘malt liquor’ of beers. Their ads are best known for their spokesman, an

older man with a gravelly voice who pronounces their slogan “Kai Ludia—Lomisi” (It’s a good beer—Lomisi) who appears at the end of this commercial as well. Like all beer producers in the last few years, following the lead in general of the branding strategy of the Qazbegi company, they have occasionally put out ads that have ethnographic elements in them. One of these ads caused quite an uproar, an ad in which a man is portrayed flirting with a barmaid, ostensibly discussing the properties of the beer, Lomisi, in a thinly veiled sexual double entendre. On one viewing, without the text, the ad is brutally simple, and I think what transpires is quite obvious.

Lomisi (2003)



Man: *Ise lamazad kapdeba, veghar movtsovite tvalio*
So beautifully does it foam, I could no longer tear my eyes away

Woman: *magas keba ar unda, Lomisi unda dalio!*

It does need such praise, You must drink Lomisi!

Men's Chorus: *Lomisi unda dalio! You must drink Lomisi!*



Man: *tsqurvili maklavs mitxari dzudzus kvesh tu gak xalio*

A thirst is killing me, tell me, whether you have a mole under your breasts

Woman: *tsqurvilma rom ar dagkhrchos, lomisi unda dalio*

So that your thirst doesn't strangle you, you must drink Lomisi!

Men's Chorus: *Lomisi unda dalio! You must drink Lomisi!*



Woman: *Lomisis madlma kargi(...) gavgrildi kalio*

Thanks to Lomisi, (...) I, a woman, got all cooled off!



Man: *(.....) Lomisi unda dalio*

Men's Chorus: *Lomisi unda dalio! You must drink Lomisi!*

Official Spokesman: *Kai ludia, Lomisi It's good beer, Lomisi.*

The most straightforward grotesque reading of this commercial needs no comment, surely, and contrasts rather obviously with the more tasteful Qazbegi commercial. The most obvious aspect of this commercial, then, is that it connects Lomisi beer with a kind of plebeian form of masculine sociability, involving fantastic worlds in which frankly very ugly men get to have sex with exceptionally well-endowed barmaids in the back of the store. There are plenty of other commercials like this, forming the first set of intertexts for this ad, which I will discuss later. But one aspect of this commercial might escape notice, and it is this: that the lecherous man and the busty barmaid are engaging in a *poetic duel*, one in which joking, flirtation and double entendre play an important role. This aspect of the commercial connects the verbal exchange in this commercial with a rather different set of intertexts, in particular a specific folkloric genre called *kapia/kapioba* associated with Georgian mountain groups, particularly the Pshavs. Obviously Qazbegi commercial for the beer Pshavi and this commercial both link beer consumption to Pshavian folk poetry.

So, let us go over the script of the commercial so we can attend to the largely overshadowed poetics of the commercial. In the first scene we are shown men eating a traditional food item, meat dumplings called khinkali, with beer, which immediately establishes the locale as being a Sakhinkle, a specific kind of restaurant catering largely to men, with a somewhat restricted menu. This is a restaurant for informal gatherings of men, not for ritual gatherings.

The man in the first scene goes up to the bar, with a lecherous grin addresses the busty bar maid with a line that is ostensibly about how the beer's foam caught his eye,

but clearly, something else did. We know the line is poetry because of the way he declaims it, because it will rhyme with the next line, and because it ends in a meaningless rhyming vowel –o which marks the line as being a kind of folk poetry.

‘So beautifully does it foam, I could no longer tear my eyes away’

Her snappy comeback, that with respect to beer, words of praise are not needed, but rather deeds of drinking, too rhymes with the first line, and provides the men behind them with a choral refrain, which turns out to be ‘You must drink Lomisi!’. His next sally is more forthright, announcing that “A thirst is killing me, tell me, whether you have a mole under your breasts?” to which her taunting reply is “So that your thirst doesn’t strangle you, you must drink Lomisi!” And so on. Their joking contrapuntal exchanges are clearly marked as a kind of Pshavian poetry, *Kapia/kapioba*, so this ad, like the *Qazbegi* ad, is also linking this beer to a sublime ethnographic image, by referencing traditional poetry.

Clearly, there are two very different visions of ‘tradition’ that are brought together in this ad. One is clearly recognizable to any Georgian man, it is a scene from a kind of Georgian restaurant that almost anyone who had been to Georgia would be familiar with, it involves places where one drinks beer and eats *khinkali* and other semi-informal foods with male friends. The addition of casual sex with barmaids is, probably, more a matter of beer-fueled fantasy than ethnographic reality. The other dimension, the accordion music in the background, the verbal duels in poetic meter, and the male chorus, this is all

a kind of idealization of mountain traditions that few Georgians will have ever witnessed in person. Where does it come from?

I would first suggest that the intertext for this commercial is not directly ethnographic, but comes from a romanticized vision of mountain life constructed by Georgian cinema in the sixties. The relevant film is a famous 1965 film called ‘ballad of the Khevsurs’, and the commercial here is, I believe, basically based on a feast scene from the movie, showing a traditional Khevsur feast. Before I show the scene, I want to do a walk through to show what we should be attending to when we watch it.

A Khevsur Feast (supra): Khevsuruli Balada (1965): visual intertexts With Lomisi commercial

Khevsur Ballad



Lomisi



Food: Khinkali



Men seated



**Pictured: women (standing)
playing accordion**

**Accordion music present;
Women are absent (other
than one)**



Men (seated) serving as a chorus



A man and a woman dance

???



**A Man and a woman exchange flirtatious poetry (*kapia*) and... **

As in the commercial, the feast scene begins by paying attention first and foremost to the food, a tray of Khinkali, which is a form of food traditionally associated with mountain dweller feasts, just as beer is a ritual drink in the Georgian mountains. We are further shown a convivial scene, a supra. The men are seated, women are standing, some of them playing instruments. A man and a woman are shown dancing in a traditional style. Next, we are shown a scene in which a traditional toast is drunk. It is unclear, to me at least, whether they are supposed to be drinking beer or vodka, either of which would be acceptable as a ritual drink. However, what is clear is that in the Georgian mountains, where beer is an indigenous drink, it is drunk in the ritual context of a supra, and not in semi informal contexts of beer gardens and beer halls. The toast is simple:



A traditional supra toast

Host: *Smena iqos xalxo! am sasmsit chemi dzma xvtiso minda movixsenio*
Give me your ear, people! With this drink I want to remember my brother Xvtiso

k'argi vazhk'aci iqo imedav c'q'onebuli mamasheni
He was a good man, Imeda, your deceased father

p'uradi, guladi m'ters m'trulad damtxuri! mok'etes mok'etrada,
Hospitable, Valiant He met his enemy as an enemy! His kinsman as a kinsman,

shenc egeti iq'o, shvilo, ghmertma k'etil sakmeshi xeli mogvmartos
May you also be like that, child, May God direct our hands in good things.

After the 'serious' work of toasting is done, associated with elder men and drinking beer, the rather more playful aspects of a traditional mountain ritual can be attended to, specifically, we move from serious ritual acts of commemorating the communal dead with toasting to unserious and playful interpersonal sociability, expressed in poetic duels called *kapioba*. The man who was represented marveling at the cigarette lighter, Aparek, demands the traditional guitar, the *panduri*, and begins to sing. What follows is an extemporaneous exchange of joking/flirting poetry between a man and a woman, and is specifically labeled as 'Kapia' poetry. This exchange manages to offend the first man, Torghva, who was dancing with this woman, leading to him to challenge Aparek to a dueling competition. Let's watch the whole clip, and I will explain parts of the text. The man Aparek begins his poem with a traditional invocation, making the *Panduri* 'sing' a specific genre of poem, which he calls a *shair-kapia*, that is, a poem we expect to be joking and flirtatious (*shairi*) but also one which is extemporaneous and dialogic (*kapia*). He begins by praising her beauty.



Aparek:

xma amaighe panduro,

amomavali mzistvina,

shair-kapia amovt'go,

pirimze lamazistvina.

Oh Panduri, raise your voice

For the rising sun,

That I might compose a poem (*shair-kapia*)

For the sun-faced beautiful one.

Men's chorus :

Pirimze, pirimze

pirimze lamazistvina.

Sun-faced, Sun-faced

For the sun-faced beautiful one.

Apareka throws the panduri to the woman, Mzekala, who criticizes both his singing and his skill at playing the panduri:



Mzekala

vis rad ch'irdeba net'avi,

e mag panduris zhghriali,

k'lde-ch'iuxebshi jixvebsa,

daaprtxob sheni ghriali.

Who would want I wonder, and why,

The clatter of that panduri of yours

Your roaring is frightening

The ibexes on the cliffs and craigs.

Men's chorus: he he he, he he he he he he

Note that the chorus does not repeat her words, only gives a series of meaningless syllables to measure the beat, they only repeat Apareka's words. Undeterred, Apareka wants to know whether she has a soft spot in her heart for him:



Aparek :

tvali mich'iras shenzeda,

I have my eye on you

rogorc miminos mts'qerzeda,

Like a hawk on a quail,

net'avi gamagebina,

I wish you would let me know

shen ra guli gaqvs chemzeda.

What do you feel about me.

Men's chorus:

Chemzeda, chemzeda.

About me, about me

shen ra guli gaqvs chemzeda.

What do you feel about me.

Mzekala indicates is not going to flirt any longer, in her report she notes that she indeed likes someone, just not him, *he* can go pound sand:



Mzekala

<i>am mk'erdshi ori gul midevs,</i>	In this breast I have two hearts
<i>ertshi ts'vims ertshi daria,</i>	In one it rains, in the other it is fair weather,
<i>shentvisa shavqri ghrublebsa,</i>	For you I have gathered clouds,
<i>sxvas gavughimeb daria.</i>	For another I make fair weather smile.

Men's chorus: he he he, he he he, he he he he

Aparek responds by upping the ante with praise, the last two lines of this stanza I found in an ethnographic report from the turn of the century, they are authentic:



Aparek:

<i>kalav sul tvalts'in midgexar,</i>	Woman, you always stand before my eyes
<i>ghvidzilshia da dzilshia,</i>	When I am awake or in my sleep,
<i>daimaleba xoxobi</i>	A quail could hide
<i>sheni tval-ts'arbis chrdilshia.</i>	In the shadows of your eyes and eyebrows

Men's Chorus : *chrdilshia, chrdilshia.* In the shadows, In the shadows
sheni tval-ts'arbis chrdilshia. In the shadows of your eyes and eyebrows

Mzekala refuses the guitar, Aparek throws it to Torghva, the man who was dancing, who throws it back angrily, Aparek continues by announcing his frustration with her obstinancy.



(Mzekala refuses guitar, Aparek throws it to Torghva, who throws it back angrily, Aparek continues)

*Net'ai ristvis gakebdi,
ristvis davxarje dzalao,
egeti enis p'at'ronsa,
ra gagatxovebs kalao.*

I wonder why I praised you
Why I wasted the effort,
The owner of such a tongue,
What will make you marry, woman.

Men's Chorus :

kalao, kalao, ra gagatxovebs kalao.

Woman, woman, what will make you marry, woman.

There is, then, a strong parallelism between the two commercials I have shown, a traditional mountain drink, beer, is linked to Georgian ethnographic traditions, and the vehicle chosen to do this is poetry. The main difference between the Lomisi ad and the scene from Khevsur Ballad is, of course, that the sublime traditional element, flirtation, poetry, dueling, is coupled with a grotesque contemporary element, sex in the back and zipping up his fly upon his return. The commercial brings together two very different visions of Georgian tradition and Georgian masculinity, one sublime, one grotesque.

I'd like to conclude by taking a look at two ads by a third company, Aluda, which is a French industrial giant that is trying to ground its products in traditional Georgian imaginaries of the nation. As pointed out above, certainly the name and trademark are versions of the ethnographic branding strategy. Both of the commercials seek to ground beer consumption in a specific milieu of masculine sociability. While I noted above, the brand name and label design for Aluda references a specific Georgian traditional image of the masculine highlander, in this case the Khevsur hero Aluda, whose name rhymes with the word for beer (*ludi*). But in terms of concrete images of consumption in ads, Kastell, decided to advertise its Khevsur beer Aluda by referencing not images of lost Georgian mountain traditions, but referencing the easy-going urban traditions of male sociability in a traditional Tbilisi courtyard. The urban courtyard, like the traditional balcony, has a particular significance, as a space outside the domestic sphere of the family, but yet interior, away from the public space of the street, it is a medial 'third space' between the domestic sphere and the public sphere. It expresses therefore, an idealized kind of masculine solidarity, that of companionate but elective friendship

between neighbours. In the ad, two older men in the courtyard are completing a game of backgammon, and they recruit from their neighbors on the surrounding balconies the means for an informal beer drinking session. Particularly emblematic here is fish, which is a food traditionally consumed with beer and many ads accompany images of beer being consumed in tandem with seafood.

Aluda Ads First Ad: Traditional Tbilisi Courtyard.

A man appears above on a balcony:



First Man: *besos gaumarjos!*
Hey Beso!

2nd Man: *bich'o, ro gamogipenia, eg tevzi, erti-ori chamokseni da chamodi!*
Hey man, the fish that you have hanging there, cut down one or two and come on down!

Another man appears in his window:



2nd Man: *Garcho! Garcho, ager tevzi gvak....*
Garcho! Garcho, we have fish....

Garcho: *Gasagebia.*
Understood.





(they begin to sing a traditional Georgian song)

Aluda, Chveni Ludi
Aluda, Our Beer.

The second Aluda ad is this ad highlights the informal occasions of exclusively male sociability that might also be taken as the referent of tradition, with a certain sideward glance at some of the more unsavoury aspects of these actual masculine traditions in bath-houses. The Russian Guest mistakes the word *Aluda*-- the name of the product-- for *Luda*, a Russian proper name, which he assumes is the name of the prostitute he is briefly shown imagining in a cartoon bubble.



Unlike the Lomisi commercial, these unsavoury elements are effectively displaced onto an ethnic surrogate, the filthy filthy mind of the Russian guest Evgenii.

Second Ad: two Georgian men are entertaining a Russian man in a bath-house
 Aluda Sjobs Ludas (Kastell, 2005)



In Georgian:

rit vasiamovnot st'umars?

t'radiciulad!

“How will we entertain our guest? “The traditional way!”



Russian:

Evgenii, Luda budish?

Evgenii, Do you want Luda (a Russian woman's name)

Georgian subtitles:

Evgeni, aluda ginda?

Evgenii, Do you want Aluda (A Georgian beer brand)

“LUDA”



Russian:

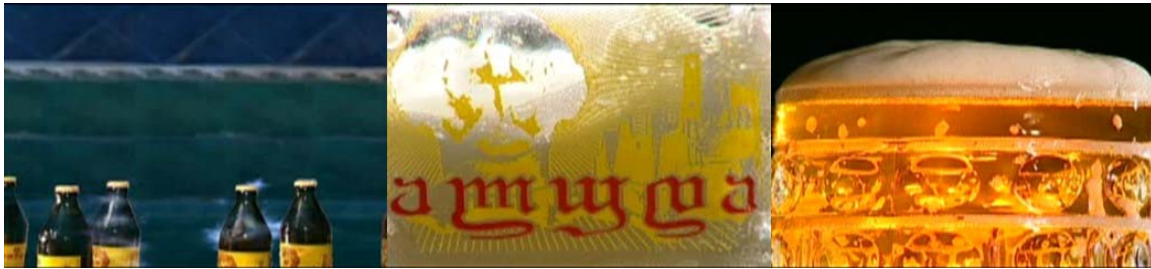
Ludu budu!

Georgian subtitles:

Luda? minda!

I want Luda!

(“Luda” is a Russian woman’s name, he is imagining that this “Luda” will be a beautiful prostitute)



Beer magically appears, close up of Aluda logo on glass, frothing beer



Russian:

Luda gde ti?

Georgian subtitles:

Luda sadghaa?

“Where in the world is Luda?”



Russian: *vot aluda*

Georgian: *-ai-*

Aluda ludasac sjobs

ALUDA SJOBS...

“Here is Aluda”

“Aluda is better than even Luda”

“Aluda is Better than...”

This commercial, vulgar though it is, succeeds where the Lomisi commercial we started with fails.

Why? One thing about the Lomisi commercial is that it links together two strands of imagining

Georgian masculinity, one I have called the ‘ethnographic sublime’ based in the idealized view of

the Georgian mountains, with another low, plebeian, even grotesque imagining of masculinity.

The resulting hybrid of opposed, even opposite, imaginings, could surely please no one. This

commercial succeeds by instead splitting the concept of ‘masculine tradition’ playfully into two parts, one Georgian and one Russian. When the Georgian host in the bath-house says we will entertain our guest ‘traditionally’, there are two understandings that might arise. One is that they are Georgian men with a foreign guest, hence they will treat him to food and drink. The other is the fact that they are in a bath house, and therefore they will treat him to a Russian prostitute. The bilingual confusion leads them to offer him food and drink (ALUDA), which he understands as the name of a blonde Russian prostitute named LUDA. When the misunderstanding is cleared up, Evgenii provides them both with their alibi and their alter ego, it was him, after all, who suggested they pick up a prostitute named Luda, they just wanted to drink Aluda beer. Just as masculine desire in its unsavoury variety is figured as a Russian desire for a prostitute named Luda rather than a Georgian desire for beer, so too, feminine objects of purely sexual desire here are figured in traditional terms as blond Russian women named Luda, and not poetry spouting dark-haired Georgian barmaids. Where the Lomisi commercial confused these two kinds of ‘tradition’, directly connecting the Georgian Beer Lomisi with sex with Georgian barmaids, the Aluda commercial divides Georgian men into an innocent desire for a Georgian beer (Aluda), typical of Georgian men, and a less innocent desire for a Russian prostitute (Luda), which is projected onto the Russian guest as a Russian thing, A whole register of masculine behaviors that Georgian men engage in, ranging from swearing to sleeping with prostitutes who are also supposedly Russian women with names like Luda, are enregistered by association with Evgenii as being ‘Russian traditions’, while Georgian masculine traditions are more innocent ones of drinking beer. It turns out, however, that Evgenii is not disappointed, the Georgian tradition is better, Aluda is better than Luda.

