

THE VIOLET AND THE ROSE.
A GEORGIAN LULLABY AS SONG OF HEALING AND SOCIO-POLITICAL COMMENTARY.

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I. THE *IAVNANA* IN POST-SOVIET GEORGIA. The theme of this paper was inspired by a song: a song I heard in the summer of 2004 while observing the festival of Tamar and Lashara at Zemo-Art'ani, in the upper Iori Valley in eastern Georgia [see map]. The chief priest (*xervisberi*) P'avle Dzroxelashvili and his three assistants had solemnly taken leave of the sanctuary in honor of Lashara, the divine patron who bears the name of the early-13th-c. King Giorgi IV Lasha. Bearing the banners (*droša*) of the shrine, they crossed a small brook and came to the tiny sanctuary of K'viria, the divine intermediary between God and the subordinate divinities and humans over whom he reigns. After lighting candles and pronouncing a few invocations in honor of K'viria, the four priests continued their way toward the sister shrine dedicated to Tamar, the divine namesake of the Georgian monarch who was Giorgi IV's mother. A group of about twenty women came up the hillside as the priests passed by, singing the following text:

TAMAR SHRINE, Iori Valley, 16 July 2004: sung by women from Shilda and Q'vareli (K'axeti)
Dideba upalo, [...], iavnaninao!
Glory, Lord (...), *iavnaninao!*

gadmoxede, dalocvilo, čven t'anžul sakartvelos, sakartveloši didsa da p'at'aras, upalo, iavnaninao!
Look down, blessed one, upon our tormented Georgia, the great and small in Georgia, Lord, *iavnaninao!*

dagvimšvide, dalocvilo, sakartvelo, omis sašišroeba aaride, sakartvelos gamtlianeba iq'os, (...), mixeil saak'ašvilis mosvliť, dideba imis mosvlas, o-da, iavnaninao!

Bring peace, blessed one, to our Georgia, keep away the threat of war. May Georgia be reunited, (...) by the coming [to power] of Mixeil Saak'ashvili. Glory to his coming, *o-da, iavnaninao!*

dideba, yeles dedopalo, dedo tamari, dedoplis yirsi dagvixade q'vela čveni švilebi da q'vela čveni taoba, o-da iavnaninao!

Glory, Queen of Ghele [site of the Tamar shrine in Pshavi], Mother Tamar, make all of our children and all of our generation worthy of a queen, *o-da, iavnaninao!*

This *Iavnana* was sung by a lead singer, who chanted each line, followed by the refrain (*iavnaninao*) intoned by the other women. The singer of the above text continued for another minute or so. Then another elderly woman took over as lead singer, and performed for over five minutes, in alternation with the chorus. This was not the first time I heard a song with this refrain in Georgia. In early fall 1997, on the night preceding the feast-day of Alaverdoba (at the celebrated medieval cathedral of St. John the Baptist at Alaverdi, near the Alazani River in eastern Georgia), a group of women sang the following words. The melody and refrain were somewhat different, but as with the previous example, one woman sang the primary text, while the others only joined in on the refrain.

ALAVERDOBA (27 September 1997): *Iavnana* sung by women from Mat'ani and Sighnaghi (K'axeti)

Aaa, kveq'anaze mšvidobasay, iavdananina!
Aaa, peace on earth, *iavdananina!*

dideba čven masp'indzelsa, mamasa tavis tanmdgomelsa, iavdananina!
Glory to our host, to the Father with the one who stands beside him, *iavdananina!*

dideba dedasa [.....] tavisi t'k'bili k'alta gadaaparos sakartvelosa, čven ožaxebsa, iavdananina!

Glory to the Mother (...), may she protect Georgia, our families in the sweet folds of her dress,
iavdananina!

[.....]

magram švilebo-o-o! t'k'bili mama, t'k'bili deday, ačar indoms erio, ačar indoms berio, ačar indoms sakartvelo erti-meoresao, nana da nana, mamasa, dedasa, iavdananina!

But children! Sweet father, sweet mother! The people, the clergy, (all of) Georgia no longer show forbearance to each other, *nana da nana*, (nor) to their father, their mother, *iavdananina!*

ayar ari dedašvilobao, ačar ari mamašvilobao, ačar ari dandoba da tmoba, iavdananina, dedasa da mamasa.

There is no longer the bond of child to mother, of child to father, there is no forbearance nor tolerance,
iavdananina, toward mother and father.

[.....]

nu agvic'io'k'debian švilebi, nu agvic'io'k'debian šviltasvilebi, tkveni t'k'bili k'alta gadagvipare!

May our children not be agitated, May our great-grandchildren not be agitated, protect us in the sweet folds of your dress!

The name of this genre of song derives from its refrain: *iavnana* or one of its variant forms (*iavnaninao*, *nana naninao*, *iavnana vardo nana*, etc.). These refrains contain the vocable *nana* — which Bardavelidze (1957: 81-93) surmised was the name of an ancient mother goddess — and the names of the two flowers violet (*ia*) and rose (*vard-*). These latter appear frequently in Georgian folklore and classical literature. When mentioned contrastively, the violet has female associations, while the rose is a masculine symbol.¹ Their function in the songs to be discussed here remains unclear, however.²

The two renderings of the *Iavnana* just described, a third performance I witnessed near the monastery of Nek'resi at the beginning of 2006, and another recorded by the musicologist Hugo Zemp at the same Tamar shine in the Iori Valley in 1991,³ have several features in common:

- (1) They are sung exclusively by women, and in particular, women from lowland east Georgia.
- (2) Whereas some of the words sung by the lead singer are stock phrases, others appear to be improvised on the spot.
- (3) Besides calling down the blessings of God, Tamar and Lashara-St. George upon the Georgian people, the singers react to current issues affecting the nation. In 2004, Lamara Xaxut'ashvili saluted the election of Mixeil Saak'ashvili several months earlier, and expressed her wish that his plan for restoring Georgia's territorial integrity would soon come to pass. The lead singer that followed seemed more concerned with demographic issues, beginning her song with the lines:

ididet, imravlet, genacvalet čemi tavi. sik'ete iq'os sakartveloši, o-da, iavnaninao!

Be glorified, be increased, you dear ones! May there be goodness in Georgia, *o-da, iavnaninao!*

sakorc'iliani dagvikorc'ine, deda, q'velas dedopalo, o-o, gasatxovrebi gagvitxove! eri gaizardes da gamravldes, o, iavnaninao!

¹ Compare, for example, the following remarkable line from the *Vepxist'q'aosani*, containing nonce verb roots which Rustaveli created from the names of the two flowers: *ornive mixvdet c'adilsa, igi vardobdes, šen ie* “May you both attain your desire; may he [Tariel] be a rose and thou [Nestan-Darejan] a violet” [VT 1267, Wardrop's translation].

² Also meriting further investigation is the use of vocative case-forms of the two flower names, as in the refrain *ia-v nana, vard-o nana* (violet-VOC *nana* rose-VOC *nana*), as though the song were addressed to the figures represented by the violet and rose.

³ See the documentary film *La fête de Tamar et Lashari* by Hugo Zemp & Sylvie Bolle Zemp (CNRS Audiovisuel, 1998).

Assure the weddings of those of ours who are yet to be wed, mother, queen of all, o-o, marry those of ours who are marriageable! May the nation grow and increase, o, *iavnanao!*⁴

The singer at Alaverdoba seven years earlier, for her part, gave voice to her dismay at the mistrust and friction between generations she perceived in Shevardnadze-era Georgian society.

But why are these wishes and complaints expressed through a type of song that, according to the dictionaries and folklore manuals, is intended as a lullaby — “*bavšvis dasadzinebeli simyera*”, as defined in the *KEGL* IV:523)? And that is not all: Volume VIII of the Georgian Academy of Sciences’ annotated collection of Georgian folk poetry, in the section entitled “Cradle songs” (*ak’vnis simyerebi*; *KXP’* VIII ## 553-615), lists over sixty “lullabies”, of which sixteen (##600-615) were specifically performed in the presence of children suffering from smallpox, measles, scarlet fever or other infectious diseases. One characteristic feature of the *iavnana* variants sung on such occasions is that they are addressed, not to the sick child, but rather to the spirits, known as “lords” (*bat’onebi*) or “angels” (*angelozebi*), whose indwelling the disease was believed to manifest. Although their “visit” might very well result in the death or permanent disfigurement of their host, these lords were believed to have come down from heaven. The family refrained from outward signs of distress, or indeed from any activity that might irritate the powerful, potentially lethal supernatural beings that had come into their home. For as long as the child remained ill, the household members avoided conflict, loud or angry speech, sexual intercourse, the slaughtering and cooking of food, the lighting of fires (except for candles) and most forms of domestic labor. The patient was fed for the most part bland dairy-based foods, whereas spicy and salty dishes, alcoholic beverages and certain meats were not to be eaten — these dietary restrictions being ostensibly out of solicitude for the spirits, rather than the sick child. Furthermore, the visiting lords were to be entertained by the household during their stay. The sickroom was decorated in bright colors, with red-colored fabrics and foods predominating, candles were lit, sweet-smelling incense was burnt, and treats were laid out. Family members danced, played instruments and sang the *iavnana*. Such practices have been described in the provinces of Mingrelia (Saxok’ia 1956), Imereti (Mashurko 1894: 322-330, Xach’ap’uridze 2000), Guria (Nadaraia 1980), Samcxe-Javaxeti (Chirgadze 2002); Xevi (Virsaladze 1979: 355; Mindadze 1981a: 122-123), Tusheti (Mak’alattia 1983: 198-199) and elsewhere in Georgia (Bardavelidze 1957: 87-90; Mindadze 2000, 2001).⁵ To give the reader a more vivid image of how the disease-bearing lords were received in 19th-century Georgia, here is a description from a story by Anastasia Eristav-Xosht’aria, a native of the central province of Kartli:

⁴ On 7 January 2006, I encountered many of the same singers at Nek’resi, where they had gathered to celebrate [Orthodox] Christmas in the company of the traditional priest Simon Lomouri. Led once again by Lamara, they sang the *iavnana*. Some lines sung by Lamara resembled those recorded in 2004, including nearly identical wishes for weddings, marriages, and children “as numerous as the sand in the sea, the stars in the sky”.

⁵ The treatment of smallpox in Pshavi and Xevsureti is similar in most respects to that practiced elsewhere in Georgia, except that lullabies such as the *iavnana* are explicitly not to be sung (Mindadze 1981a: 122). Prayers in times of a smallpox outbreak are directed not to the “lords”, but rather to the powerful male-gendered deity K’viria, divine mediator between the remote supreme God and human society (“K’viria, whose tent is pitched in God’s court, relieve us from this illness spawned by God [*es xtisagan gamašobili saržielni*]”). Should the disease continue to spread unabated, a special ceremony is performed, called *saymto-sak’viriao* “for God, for K’viria”. Beer is brewed, and meat- and cheese-filled breads (“plague offerings”, *žam-sac’ir*) are baked. A ram is sacrificed to God, whereas a goat (or kid) is offered to K’viria (Mindadze 1979; 2000: 246-252).

“A chair covered with a red cloth was placed before the sick children. On the cloth were little pastries, sweets, cloth scraps in various colors, dolls, flags, red-dyed eggs, and so forth. This was a banquet set for the lords. In a low voice Melana recited the *Iavnana* to the children:

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>O violet, nana, o rose, nana,</i> | <i>iav nana, vardo-nana,</i> |
| <i>O violet, naninao,</i> | <i>iav-naninao,</i> |
| <i>O you lords, o you merciful ones,</i> | <i>bat'onebi mc'q'ablolebo,</i> |
| <i>O violet, naninao,</i> | <i>iav-naninao,</i> |
| <i>I pluck a violet, I spread out a rose,</i> | <i>iasa vk'rep, vardsa vpinao,</i> |
| <i>O violet, naninao,</i> | <i>iav-naninao,</i> |
| <i>Bring relief to our children,</i> | <i>čems bavšvebs ušeyavatet,</i> |
| <i>O violet, naninao!</i> | <i>iav-naninao!</i> |

“Melana rose to her feet and circled around them, dancing and waving her hands:

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>In the garden of the lords,</i> | <i>bat'onebis bayšiao,</i> |
| <i>O violet, naninao,</i> | <i>iav-naninao,</i> |
| <i>A white mulberry is bearing fruit,</i> | <i>tetri tuta asxiao,</i> |
| <i>O violet, naninao,</i> | <i>iav-naninao,</i> |
| <i>I was at the river bank, and there I saw</i> | <i>č'alas viq'av, č'alas vnaxe</i> |
| <i>O violet, naninao,</i> | <i>iav-naninao,</i> |
| <i>An aspen wrapped around an aspen,</i> | <i>verxvi verxzed exveoda,</i> |
| <i>O violet, naninao,</i> | <i>iav-naninao,</i> |
| <i>We came here from the white sea</i> | <i>tetri zyvidgan c'amovedit,</i> |
| <i>O violet, naninao,</i> | <i>iav-naninao,</i> |
| <i>Seven brothers, seven sisters,</i> | <i>švidni dzmani, švidni dani,</i> |
| <i>O violet, naninao!</i> | <i>iav-naninao!</i> |
| <i>We spread out to seven towns,</i> | <i>švid sopels movepinebit,</i> |
| <i>O violet, naninao,</i> | <i>iav-naninao,</i> |
| <i>We pitch our tents in seven towns,</i> | <i>švid sopels davscemt k'aravs,</i> |
| <i>O violet, naninao,</i> | <i>iav-naninao,</i> |
| <i>As your coming made us glad</i> | <i>rogorc mosvilit gagvaxaret,</i> |
| <i>May your leaving do likewise,</i> | <i>ise c'asvlitao,</i> |
| <i>Nana, nana, to the lords,</i> | <i>nana, nana, bat'onebsa,</i> |
| <i>O violet, naninao!</i> | <i>iav-naninao!</i> |

“Melana finished dancing, sat down by the children and said: ‘Lords, may the path before you bring happiness, and in the same measure may you bring relief to my little Ila, Pepa, and Daro, do not deprive them of comfort!’” [excerpt from Eristav-Xosht’aria 1893: 15; my translation].

The visit of the lords, whatever its consequences might be, was interpreted as a form of divine election. Should the patient succumb to the disease, mourning was strictly forbidden, since the victim was thought to have been “taken by angels”. According to an informant from the western district of Lechxumi, a child taken by the *bat’onebi* “goes to paradise, is an angel [*angelozia*], and will be with the angels”. The victim’s coffin was painted red and sprinkled with roses (Mindadze 2000: 230-255).

The practices and symbols mentioned above find parallels elsewhere in the Caucasus and further abroad on the Eurasian continent.⁶ The Abxazians and Ossetes also attributed smallpox to the

⁶ Not discussed here, because of space-time limitations, is the practice of variolation (*acra* in Georgian) — deliberate inoculation with smallpox with the intention of provoking a milder form of the disease — which was known to Georgians since medieval times (Ioseliani 1977, cited by Mindadze 1981a: 115-117; Chirgadze 2002). The less serious illness of measles was likewise passed to healthy children, by intentionally bringing them in contact with a

coming of powerful celestial divinities, whom they addressed deferentially as “golden Zosxan” (*Ax’ə zosħan*; cp. Circassian *ziusxan*, a formula of polite address to nobles; Knobloch 1991: 23; John Colarusso, pers. comm.) and “Alardy” or “Alaurdi” (< Georgian *alaverdi* < Turkish *allah verdi* “God gave”), respectively, and entertained with feasting, entertainment and songs in their honor (Xashba 1987; Kaloev 1971: 254-5; Charachidzé 1987: 48-60; Testen 1997).⁷ The “seven brothers and seven sisters” mentioned in many variants of the *Iavnana* were compared by K’ot’et’ishvili (1961: 327) to the disease- and misfortune-bringing seven-fold divinity invoked by the ancient Babylonians and Hittites alongside the pestilence god Erra/Yarri (Haas 1982: 104-107, 1986: 133-138; Gurney 1977: 27). Erythrotherapy — the treatment of smallpox by wrapping patients in red blankets, confining them to red-colored rooms or bathing them in red light — was practiced in Japan and Europe until well into the 19th century (Hopkins 1983: 295-300). Many aspects of the Georgian *bat’onebi* cult are closely similar to that of the Indian goddess *fāla*, who is treated with extreme respect and deference by those families she deigns to visit. Furthermore, during her stay “family disagreements and quarrels and wailings are forbidden ... mournful ceremonies are avoided; sexual intercourse is forbidden ... no article of food can be fried in a pan or otherwise seasoned” (from a 1901 Government of India report cited by Hopkins 1983: 163; cp. Crooke 1926: 118-122). Even the euphemistic name of smallpox used by Georgian (*q’vavila* “flower”) recalls the Chinese designation of the disease as “heavenly flowers” (Hopkins 1983: 137).

The paradoxical conception of smallpox as dangerous illness and welcome visit by celestial spirits, as tragedy and blessed event, finds a close parallel in the ritual treatment of lightning strike victims in certain regions of the western and central Caucasus, such as Ossetia, Abkhazia and Kabardia. Lightning was believed to be sent by a powerful sky-dwelling deity (equated with the prophet Elijah by Ossetians and Georgians). Humans or animals struck by lightning were regarded as, in essence, sacrificial victims which this deity had appropriated at his own initiative (Tuite 2004). A special dance and song were performed around their bodies. Persons killed by lightning were not mourned, nor were they buried in the communal cemetery. They were believed to have been taken directly to heaven, to remain in the company of the god who slew them. Should the victim recover, he or she became a prophet in the service of that divinity.

A traveller’s account from 19th century Ossetia describes the prophesying of a young man who had survived being hit by a lightning bolt. He “sang and danced in a circle, then fell and began

sick child (Mindadze 1981a: 118). Although one might find it inconsistent that rather sophisticated practical medical knowledge coexisted with the *bat’onebi* cult until modern times, I am inclined to believe that the two types of practice, as conceived by Georgians, shared key features. To undergo variolation is to invite the disease-bringing “lords” into one’s body, in the hopes that by according them a proper welcome, they would spare the patient, and furthermore grant him or her lifelong immunity.

⁷ The Ingush likewise used the epithet “golden” when referring to their smallpox goddess Higiz (Tsarioieva 2004: 208). The cathedral at *Alaverdi*, mentioned at the beginning of this paper, is dedicated to John the Baptist, whose Ossetic counterpart (Oss. *Fydwan*, *Fyd Iwan*) shares many of the functions of Alardy (Kaloev 1971: 254-5; Testen 1997). Alardy can bring protection as well as harm to children, his ambiguous nature consistent with those of other heaven-dwelling deities of the west and central Caucasus (Tuite 2004). Shortly after the tragedy at Beslan, an Ossetian family is reported to have sacrificed a calf to the “sun god” Alardy in thanksgiving for children that survived (Windisch 2004).

beating himself convulsively. Between convulsions he became alert and with open eyes recounted what he had seen in the company of Elijah, and named previous lightning victims who were at Elijah's side" (Abaev 1958: 314-5). The disease-bearing "lords" may make similar use of those whom they possess. According to the medical anthropologist Nunu Mindadze (pers. comm. 7 July 2001), in some parts of Georgia, the utterances of feverish children afflicted by the *bat'onebi* were regarded as prophetic.

III. PROPHECY AND POSSESSION IN SOVIET GEORGIA. It is the last-named manifestation of possession by the smallpox spirits that enables us to bridge the gap between the *Iavnanas* heard recently in eastern Georgia and those sung before sick and dying children a century ago. In mid-July 1939, the ethnographer Vera Bardavelidze and her research team attended the festivities in honor of Tamar and Lashara-St. George at the same two Iori Valley shrines that I visited in 2004 (Bardavelidze 1941: 109-115). People from all around the eastern district of K'axeti came to make offerings at the two holy places, camping out for several days at the site, even as they continue to do now. On Friday 14 July, the principal day of the Tamar festival, a group had gathered before the low wall surrounding the sanctuary. A musician played the accordion. Darik'o, a twenty-three-year-old woman from the K'axetian village Shilda, danced to the music, barefoot. Without warning she fell to the ground, and began howling, shaking and rolling about. She twisted her head back and forth, and cried out:

aba ra gegona, gana šegarčendi dzeli č'ešmarit'is dangrevas, čem sabrdzanebelši dzvlebis šeq'ras, nek'resis daxurvas ... eei, eei, t'anžuloo. (So what did you think, that I would spare you for demolishing the [shrine of the] True Cross, for throwing bones in my sanctuary, for closing [the church at] Nek'resi? Eeh, eeh, suffering one!)

It was as though the spirit tormenting Darik'o were speaking with her voice. A few years earlier Darik'o and some friends had gone to the half-ruined church of the True Cross in Shilda to collect scrap materials. Although the church had been closed by the authorities, the other girls feared to approach it. Darik'o, though, did not believe in religion, and had actively participated in locking up the ancient monastery complex at Nek'resi. To set an example for the others, she entered the church and tossed bones into the sanctuary. A week later she started seeing troubling dreams, and became ill. Since that time, she periodically underwent episodes of possession such as the one witnessed by Bardavelidze.⁸ Darik'o stopped speaking and became still. As she lay motionless, her mother sang the *Iavnana*.

nana da nana, nana da nana! gamaržvebulo čveno lašaro, iavnaniṅao.
nana da nana, nana da nana! Victory to our Lashari, iavnaniṅao.

ia da vardi gašlili hkondes, ia-varđ gašlili gebdzanebodes lašarsa.
May he have violets and roses spread out, may violet and rose be spread out for you, Lashari!

nana da nana, iav nanas get'q'vi, gaumaržos šen sidzrieles, čven sataveši iareo.
nana da nana, iav nana I say to you, victory to your power, go before us.
gaumaržos šen sidzrieles, gadmoxedeq'e. p'at'arebi arian šeni t'anžulebi.
Victory to your power, look down on them. They are small, those whom you make suffer.

⁸ Bardavelidze attributed Darik'o's symptoms to a susceptible personality and "psycho-nervous illness" (*psiko-nervuli sneuleba*; 1941: 121), a diagnosis of convenience adopted by successive generations of ethnographers, from Ochiauri (1954: 38) to Mindadze (1981b).

gexvec'ebit, gevedrebit, iav naninao, gadmohxede, damc'uxrebuli p'at'ara korpebi arian, gaumadzyrebi arian, iav naninao.

We implore you, we pray you, *iav naninao*, look down, the little young ones are downcast, they are insatiable, *iav naninao*.

The song was intended to appease the “angels” (*angelozebi*) responsible for Darik’o’s present state. Whereas the (almost exclusively male) oracles (*kadagebi*) of the highland districts of Pshavi and Xevsureti were regarded as religious specialists chosen to communicate the will of the divine overlord to his human “vassals” (*q'mani*), the (mostly female) prophets of the adjacent lowland regions of Tianeti and K’axeti underwent periodic bouts of delirium and possession as punishment for their sins, or those of their ancestors (Ochiauri 1954: 29-37). Those guilty of minor offenses were tormented by the “angels” for several months or years, and then released. As for Darik’o, “I will never free her” — said a spirit speaking through another possessed woman — “a great sin goes before her” (*didi codo miudzyvis*; Bardavelidze 1941: 115). Like smallpox and lightning strike, possession and prophecy were deemed to be manifestations of the appropriation of an individual by powerful and dangerous divine beings.⁹

In 1946, the ethnographer Tinatin Ochiauri interviewed an elderly woman who described cases of possession among the women of Dzalisi, 20 km northwest of Mcxeta. One of them sang the *Iavnana* herself while in a state of possession:

gaumaržos c'mindanebs, iav naninao. gaumaržos did lomissa, iav naninao.

Victory to the saints, *iav naninao*. Victory to great Lomisa [name of highland shrine], *iav naninao*.

“She continued speaking, and after each utterance she added *iav-nana*” (Ochiauri 1954: 36).

Note the slight shift in the function of the “lullaby” we are examining here. Rather than being performed by others in the presence of the person possessed by the “lords” or “angels”, it is the patient herself who sings the *Iavnana*.

IV. A DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE *IAVNANA*. In order to compare the diverse functions of the Georgian *Iavnana*, I will treat the variants presented here as akin to discourse genres, with formal features, frame markers and a conventionalized distribution of interactional roles. Some formal features have already been presented, notably the stereotypical refrains, and – in the case of some types of *Iavnana*, such as the healing song cited by Eristav-Xosht’aria – division into lines of fixed syllabic quantity. The most salient frame marker is the use of song, rather than ordinary speech. By distribution of roles I mean not only the division of parts between lead singer and chorus, but also – treating the *Iavnana* as a speech act, as it were – the conventional stances of speaker, addressee and beneficiary. By “speaker” I designate both the typical singer’s identity and her relationship to the other two participants in the *Iavnana*’s discursive frame. The addressee is indicated by the 2nd person and the vocative case in the text of the song. The beneficiary is the party for whose benefit the *Iavnana* is ostensibly performed.

⁹ Note that the victims of lightning or smallpox in the west and central Caucasus were believed to go directly to heaven, whereas the Georgians of K’axeti justified the harmful effects of possession as punishment for real or imagined sins.

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|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | LULLABY | HEALING SONG | SPIRIT POSSESSION | SOCIO-POLITICAL |
| <i>speaker</i> | mother, care-giver | female relative, healer | mother, possessed woman herself | female singer(s) |
| <i>addressee</i> | child | “lords”, “angels” | possessing spirit(s) | St. George, Tamar |
| <i>beneficiary</i> | restless child | sick child | possessed woman | Georgian nation & society |

Setting aside, for the time being, the east-Georgian “socio-political” *Iavnanas* presented at the beginning of the paper, significant similarities appear in terms of the speaker-beneficiary relationship. The first three types of *Iavnana* are performed by women in the role of mother, care-giver or healer with respect to the beneficiary. It is important to note that, for all variants of the *Iavnana* known to me either from ethnographic accounts or my own observations, the singer is a woman or group of women. The first type, the *Iavnana* as lullaby, is sung by a woman to a small child, typically her son, daughter or grandchild. The beneficiaries of healing songs, when described, are likewise children – not a surprising fact, since most smallpox sufferers in regions where it was endemic were of young age. The possessed woman Darik’o was 23 years old when the incident witnessed by Bardavelidze occurred, but she was also the daughter of the woman who sang the *Iavnana* on her behalf.

The addressees of the *Iavnana* variants represent, at first glance, a heterogeneous category. Most lullabies are sung directly to the child, as indicated by 2nd-singular verb forms directed to the restless boy or girl (*daidzine, genacvale, iavnanimao* “go to sleep, my dear one, *iavnanimao*” [KXP’ VIII #553]).¹⁰ The healing songs, however, although performed in the presence of the patient, were addressed to the “lords” or “angels” who were believed to have taken possession of the sick child. The same applies to the *Iavnanas* sung by Darik’o’s mother and the possessed woman at Dzalisi. The scenario common to both types of performance involves a female singer, occupying the roles of care-giver and healer – both of which could be considered extensions of the more fundamental maternal stance, in accordance with the prevalent Georgian ideology of gender – ministering to a sick or disturbed child, whose condition is symptomatic of possession by powerful supernatural beings. These “lords”, angels and saints are capable of causing harm or even death to the patient, therefore they must be treated with deference and appeasement in hopes of bringing about a positive outcome.

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>role</i> | SPEAKER | ADDRESSEE | BENEFICIARY |
| <i>participant</i> | singer | “lords”, “angels”, saints | sick, possessed child |
| <i>stance</i> | woman as healer, care-giver, mother, intercessor | dangerous, powerful divine beings, capable of doing harm or good | child, victim of spirit possession, in need of comfort and intercession |

¹⁰ The seemingly anomalous discursive framing of the lullaby *Iavnanas*, which are addressed to the child rather than some sort of supernatural being, brings up once again the curious fact, mentioned in an earlier footnote, that the nouns meaning “violet” and “rose” occur in the vocative case in the refrain. One wonders if these flower names were once euphemistic designations of spirits believed responsible for the child’s sleeplessness, just as smallpox is called “flower” (*q’vavila*) in Georgian.

Regarded from this standpoint, in the east-Georgian variants the Georgian nation and people are situated by the singers in the same participant role as the sick or possessed children in the healing *Iavnanas*. Compare the following lines from two *Iavnanas* recorded sixty-five years apart in the Iori Valley:

July 1939:

gaumaržos šen sidzrieles, gadmoxedeq'e. p'at'arebi arian šeni t'anžulebi.

Victory to your power, look down on them. They are small, those whom you make suffer.

July 2004:

gadmoxede, dalocvilo, čven t'anžul sakartvelos, sakartveloši didsa da p'at'aras, upalo, iavnaninao!

Look down, blessed one, upon our tormented Georgia, the great and small in Georgia, Lord, *iavnaninao!*

The singers in each case call upon a heavenly power to look down on “tormented” (*t'anžul-*) beings. In the *Iavnana* from 1939, Lashara, divine patron of the central shrine of highland Pshavi, is asked to show mercy toward the “little ones” (*p'at'arebi*), whom he possesses and torments in punishment for their sins. In the summer of 2004, the lead singer invokes the Lord God (*upalo*) to look down with compassion upon “our tormented Georgia” and the “great and small” (adults and children) of Georgian society.¹¹ Lamara, the lead singer of the *Iavnana* performed at Nek'resi on Orthodox Christmas morning, 7 January 2006, exhorted her fellow singers to mollify (literally “sweeten”) the divine patrons of local shrines with their song, a treatment similar to that accorded the disease-bringing “lords” through performances of the healing *Iavnanas*:

nanobit dagat'k'bot, dalocvilebo, gmir k'op'ale, deda sanduxt'i, q'vela c'minda giorgebo!

May we sweeten you with our lullaby, blessed ones, Hero K'op'ale, Mother Sanduxt'i, all of the Saint Georges!

Were the parallelism between the healing and “social-commentary” sub-genres of the *Iavnana* to be complete, the torments afflicting Georgia would be attributed to the very deities and saints invoked by the singers. The women I heard at the Tamar shrine last summer and at Alaverdi in 1997 give no indication that they make this link – they blame Georgia’s tormented state on poverty, corruption and geopolitics rather than spirit possession – but their stances as performers of the *Iavnana* are in key respects similar to those adopted by the female singers of lullabies and songs of healing. After they finished the *Iavnana*, and performed a round dance outside the wall surrounding the shrine, some of the women at the Tamar shrine in 2004 spoke to us about their perceptions of life in today’s Georgia, and in particular in the rural areas where they live. They told us of rising costs and decreasing income, the unavailability of affordable medical care, children abandoning the countryside to seek better lives in Tbilisi. At the same time, they seemed optimistic about Georgia’s newly-elected president (Mikheil Saak’ashvili, who came to power a few months earlier), and expressed hope that his administration would bring about the changes they longed for. My friend P’aat’a, who was helping me document this festival, produced a

¹¹ Almost the same words were sung in the January 2006 performance of the *Iavnana* at Nek'resi as well.

photograph of Saak'ashvili and his Dutch wife Sandra. On seeing the picture, Lamara, the lead singer of the *Iavnana*, made a sign of the cross over it, touching the images of the president and his spouse with her fingers, a gesture women make when blessing children about to leave home for an extended absence. It was a very motherly ritual, perfectly consonant with the maternal, care-giving stance adopted by those who sing the *Iavnana*.

V. WOMEN'S GENRES AND WOMEN'S PLACE. Several recent studies of Georgian discursive practices have highlighted their grounding in prevalent beliefs concerning gender (Kotthoff 1995, 1999; Jgerenaia 2000; Mühlfried 2006). The oratorical genres performed at the Georgian banquet (*supra*) are deemed appropriate to men, or rather, as Mühlfried's cognitive-anthropological investigation has revealed, are a venue for the emergence of indigenous concepts of "manliness" (*vak'acoba*). The banquet toast, with its highly conventionalized format, group-cohesive content and epideictic rhetorical framing, is, according to Nodia (2000: 5), the master trope for much public discourse. Not surprisingly, in contemporary Georgian politics, men continue to generate the vast bulk of the talk, especially in the most visible and public fora.

While the men make long-winded toasts, recite poetry and sing at the banquet table, the womenfolk carry on informal conversations, either in the interstices of the "official", toastmaster-directed verbiage of the *supra*, or in the kitchen – where women prepare the food presented at the banquet, and wash the dishes afterward (Kotthoff 1995). Nonetheless, there are speech genres favored by women, or considered specifically appropriate to the female gender, which are enacted outside the confines of the kitchen, and indeed in public spaces. At wakes and funerary observances, women mourn more demonstratively and vocally than men are expected to do, and most traditional genres of lamentation for the dead (e.g. the Xevsur *qmit nat'irali*) are performed exclusively by women (Kotthoff 1993; Tuite 1994: 144). According to the traditional belief system of Xevsureti and neighboring districts of the Northeast Georgian highlands, the newly-deceased were a source of pollution, and as such, were avoided by men, especially male shrine officials, who were obliged to maintain a high state of "purity". After receiving word of the death of a neighbor or relative, women would go inside and mourn next to the body, whereas men paid their respects at the entrance of the house (Baliauri & Mak'alatia 1940). The shrine priest (*xucesi*) did not preside at funeral ceremonies, not even for an immediate member of his family, and was replaced by a so-called "soul priest" (*sulis xucesi*), who only officiated on such occasions.

I will use the example of the Xevsur funeral to illustrate what I believe is also the hierarchical and ritual-spatial configuration of the eastern Georgian festivals where the *Iavnana* is performed. In a recent paper, Manning (2003) described men's and women's behavior at the Georgian *supra* in terms of a hierarchy of participant categories. The focal participant is the toastmaster (*tamada*), whose ritual involvement is the most intense and constraining, and who has privileged access to the central position on the ritual stage. The other men likewise participate in toasting, but their involvement need not be as total, nor do they play the same leading part as the *tamada*. On the margins of the banquet are the women: their participation in focal *supra* activities is minimal – they toast little, and drink less – and, as is the rule in more conservative communities,

they might not sit at the table with the men at all. A similar hierarchy structures the participation of the two sexes at shrine festivals in Pshavi and Xevsureti, with the shrine priest (*xervisberi* or *xucesi*) as master of ceremonies. Here the spatial correlates of ritual involvement are more marked than at an ordinary supra.

| | FOCAL MALE (master of ceremonies) *occupies center stage, directs activities of others *intense involvement in ritual performance | OTHER MEN *less central position in public space *less total participation in ritual activities | WOMEN *on the margins of public space *minimal (or no) participation in ritual |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>banquet</i> | toastmaster (<i>tamada</i>): sits at head of table, directs sequence and themes of toasts | male banqueters: make toasts following lead of <i>tamada</i> | women: prefer informal conversation at table or in kitchen |
| <i>Pshav-Xevsur shrine</i> | priest (<i>xervisberi</i> , <i>xucesi</i>): directs rituals, accepts offerings; has access to shrine precincts | men: bring offerings, participate in rituals, but remain outside restricted spaces | women: must keep distance from shrine; can watch but not participate in rituals |

The Xevsur mourning and funeral ceremonies would appear to reflect an inversion of the habitual hierarchy of ritual participation and access to space. Because of the “impurity” imputed to the recently dead, men – and above all, the shrine priest – keep their distance, whereas women gather about the body and lament under the direction of the *qmit mot’irali*, the chief mourner, a woman recognized for her ability to improvise stylized lamentations based on the identity and accomplishments of the deceased. But, as with the temporary inversion of status relations at carnival time, the inversion of roles at a Xevsur funeral is not total, nor is the gender order challenged in any significant way. The same kind of semi-inversion occurs at the shrine of the divinized Queen Tamar in the Iori Valley, and at the celebrated pilgrimage site of Alaverdi, that is, under circumstances permitting, or requiring, the prominent involvement of women.¹²

| | male master of ceremonies | FOCAL FEMALE (ritual leader) | other women |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Xevsur funeral rites | “soul priest” | chief mourner (<i>qmit mot’irali</i>) | women mourners |
| Tamar shrine, Iori Valley | shrine priests (officiate within shrine precincts) | lead singer of <i>lavnana</i> , remains outside wall of shrine | singers of refrain |
| Alaverdoba | Orthodox priests (at liturgy inside cathedral) | lead singer, who also serves as <i>tamada</i> at women’s banquet | singers of refrain, fellow banqueters |

Although women move from the margins to the foreground, and one of them steps forward to direct the ritual performance, much as a priest or *tamada* would do, the titular master of ceremonies continues to be a man, who presides in focal ritual spaces off-limits to women (e.g., the shrine precincts), or within which women are, yet again, relegated to the margins.

¹² As far as I can tell at present, the semi-inversion described here is limited to eastern Georgia. In the western highland province of Svaneti, women perform rituals within the home, and also at sites outside the village, from which men are totally excluded (Chartolani 1961).



Map of eastern Georgia, showing sites where the *Iavnana* was performed (blue circles).

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