THE SEMIOTICS AND POETICS OF SOUTH CAUCASIAN NONSENSE VOCABULARY.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE: The major part of this text was written about 15 years ago. I intended at the time to work it into either a lengthy article or a monograph, but other projects intervened. Over the years I have shared it with a handful of colleagues, mostly musicologists, some of whom have made use of it in their own work, or even quoted from it. For this open-access version I have done a minimal bit of tidying-up, but no significant additions. For the record, some topics touched upon here are also addressed in my 2011 paper "Xevsur shrine invocations: iconicity, intertextuality and agonism" in *Folia Caucasica: Festschrift für Jost Gippert.* (Manana Tandaschwili & Zakaria Pourtskhvanidze (eds), Logos Publishing, Frankfurt/Tbilisi; 197-221).

OUTLINE

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(DRAFT)

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If nonsense is an art, it must have its own laws of construction.
Elizabeth Sewell

§1. Introduction.

§1.1. Nonsense syllables, glossolalia and other types of infralanguage.

In the musical traditions of numerous cultures, song texts can include phonological material which is conventional (i.e. it is shared by a speech community, rather than being purely idiosyncratic) but not semantically interpretable in the ordinary sense. This material — the "hey, diddle-diddle"s and "fa-la-la-la-la"s of familiar folksongs, and their kin — is variously referred to as 'nonsense syllables,' 'meaningless syllables', 'meaningless vocalizations', 'nonwords' or 'vocables' [Bloomfield 1935/1980 §9.11; Densmore 1943; Sachs 1962: 69-70; Bursill-Hall 1964; Shimkin 1964; Hymes 1981; Hinton 1980, 1982]. Other speech genres have been described which consist partly or entirely of uninterpretable linguistic material, for example spells and incantations [Malinowski 1935: 218-223; Jakobson 1966: 639-648; Jakobson & Waugh 1987: 217], and glossolalia or "speaking in tongues" [Samarin 1969, 1971, 1972a, 1972b; Goodman 1972]. Although giving the appearance of randomness, the sequences of nonsense syllables in these and similar "infra-linguistic" [Samarin 1972b: 149] genres manifest formal similarities which appear to be universal, as well as regionally-distributed features which point to a degree of conventionality.

My goals in this paper are, first, to analyze the iconic component of several varieties of nonsense syllables from Kartvelian (South Caucasian) oral literature, and, second, to argue that the types of nonwords to be discussed here can be included in an expanded model of the lexicon, one which seeks to accommodate the contribution of iconicity, of one sort or another, to all categories of linguistic form. I will first examine the distribution of vocables in South Caucasian [SC] songs, and the correlation between their phonetic characteristics and the music to which they are sung. This will be followed by the presentation of two further types of nonsense vocabulary: suffix-like filler vowels used in folk poetry and nicknames, and the forms I call "lexoids", which are particularly frequent in charms and spells. I will endeavor to situate nonwords within the periphery of the lexicon, rather than outside of it, through a comparison of their formal features with those of expressives, bound morphemes and other types of lexemes in the SC languages.

§1.2. Symbolism and iconicity.

I develop the concepts of core and peripheral lexicon along lines laid down by linguists working within the Saussurean tradition, notably Henri Frei [1929], whose distinction between *le signe arbitraire* and *le signe expressif* is similar in many respects to the one will I develop here. Core vs. peripheral lexicon is a gradiant distinction in my usage. The position of vocabulary items closer or further away from the center of the lexical core reflects the interplay of factors

operating within two semiotic planes: the SYMBOLIC and the ICONIC. My usage of these two terms is consistent with Peirce's semiotic theory, as well as with Eco's [1979: 191-217] demonstration of the conventional component of iconicity. Consider the typical linguistic sign, which, as formulated by Saussure, consists in the union of form (*signifier*) and meaning (*signified*) for a community of speakers. Such a sign is a type of symbol, according to Peirce's definition. What I wish to emphasize here is that each token of a linguistic symbol — indeed, ANY symbol — is, by the mere fact of its instantiation as utterance or artefact, simultaneously an index of the circumstances of its production (and thereby of the speaker who produced it), and — as linguistic form — partially the outcome of iconic factors as well. Iconicity influences form at any level of structure: the individual speech sound (as a cluster of phonetic features), the syntagmatic group, or the entire utterance or speech act.

Fig. 1. Semiotic modalities of sign production.

LEVELS OF SIGN	NORMS	SEMIOTIC MODALITY
intension (signifié)	semantics	— — —
form (signifiant)	phonology, morphology	SYMBOLISM: *arbitrary relation of form to intension* ICONICITY: *influence on form of kinaesthetic, phonetic and diagrammatic templates; mapping of formal features onto social or semantic plane*
utterance (énoncé)	pragmatics	INDEXICALITY: *each sign, and utterance as a whole, linked to producer and circumstances of production*

Symbolism, as the word is employed here, is more closely equated with Saussurean arbitrariness, than with Peirce's concept of Thirdness. As defined by Peirce [1955: 112], a symbol is "a Representamen whose Representative character consists in its being a rule that will determine its Interpretant". A defining role is thereby accorded to the convention ('law' or 'rule') specific to a community of users, whereby a representamen (sign), for example, the sound sequence /ænt/, evokes a particular interpretant or mental representation (the idea of an ant). Since my discussion will only touch upon language and its non-intensional penumbra, rather than all types of phenomena that signify (or "which can be used in order to lie" [Eco 1979: 9]), the iconic and indexical components of the signs to be analyzed here are likewise mediated by convention, that is, they reflect norms specific to a given speech community.

The symbolic component of the lexeme /ænt/ 'ant', as used and interpreted by English speakers, can be further broken down into the paradigmatic and syntagmatic structure of the word. The English phonological inventory comprises three dozen distinctive speech sounds (give or take a few), of which only three are selected to compose the word in question. The order of the phonemes is likewise signficant. The meanings of /ænt/ 'ant', /ækt/ 'act' and /æpt/ 'apt' are different, as are those of /ænt/, /tæn/ 'tan' and /næt/ 'gnat'. Furthermore, these meanings cannot be reduced to either the particular phonemes used, nor their order. Nonetheless, in any given language, the form of lexemes, even those that appear at first glance to be model examples of Saussure's *arbitraire du signe*, are influenced, indeed, constrained, by iconic factors.

Iconicity in speech and language structure has attracted the attention of numerous linguists, especially those working within the broad framework of functionalist theories of grammar. Drawing upon Peirce's rich semiotic nomenclature [Peirce 1955: 105], Haiman [1980] and Dressler [1995] distinguish between *imagistic* and *diagrammatic* iconicity in language (a third type, metaphoric iconicity, will not be discussed here). The first of these is most commonly

exemplified by sound symbolism or onomatopoeia, which, although often highly conventionalized and as susceptible to the effects of sound change as other segments of the lexicon, is rooted in the imitation of naturally-occuring sounds or in widespread (universal?) associations between phonetic features and non-linguistic characteristics such as size, positive or negative evaluation, or even "stubborn resistance" [Ultan 1978; Nichols 1971; Malkiel 1990a]. Phenomena attributed to diagrammatic iconicity are quite common in language, according to Haiman [1980]. Among them are the tendency of narrative structure to conform to the sequence of 'real-world' events (e.g. *Veni, vidi, vici,* in that order); and reduplication as a favored morphophonological mark of nominal and verbal plurality (numerosity, iterativity, intensification, etc.) [Dressler 1968; Moravcsik 1978].

Corresponding to the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes of expression, I will distinguish modes of iconic influence on linguistic form. Operating on the syntagmatic plane are what I will call TEMPLATES, these being more or less abstract suprasegmental icons which constrain the freely arbitrary selection of phonemes or other units, depending on the level at which the template applies. The other type of iconicity is paradigmatic, consisting in a mapping from formal features onto a distinct plane of meaning, geographic origin, social parameters, etc.

Fig 2. Symbolic and iconic constraints on form.

axis	SYMBOLISM	ICONICITY
paradigmatic	selection of phonemes, morphemes, lexemes	sociolinguistic variables consonant and vowel phonosymbolism hierarchies of languages, codes
syntagmatic	sequence of phonemes, morphemes, lexemes	KINAESTHETIC: phonotactic templates PHONETIC: templates of foreign speech or expressions DIAGRAMMATIC: poetic templates

Phonotactic constraints on word or morpheme shape are, in fact, articulatory templates underlying the linguistic forms of a given language, even those that come the closest to the Saussurean ideal of arbitrariness [cp. Vennemann 1988]. If we assume, as an approximation, that English has 36 phonemes, then 36^3 = 46656 three-phoneme lexemes could be generated, in principle. As it turns out, the vast majority of these do not appear in the lexicon, and most of them are instantly perceived as not only nonexistant but impossible for English speakers. There is no */tnæ/ or */ntæ/, to say nothing of */ðpg/ or */ʃŋh/, although all of these are formed from the phonemes of English. Constraining the possible sequences of phonemes for any language are kinaesthetically-grounded representations of articulatory habits, feature sequences and syllable contours which determine the permissible shapes of words for a given speech community. A phonotactic template is a kinesic, gestural icon comparable to those that underlie certain types of speech-synchronized gesticulation: body-centered representations based on habits of movement. Many languages have, alongside the phonotactic template for the core vocabulary, specialized templates for expressives, bound morphology, or other lexical subgroups.

The poetic function, in Jakobson's celebrated formulation, "projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination" [1960/1981: 27]. "In the most highly developed poetry … the aesthetic form generally consists of multiply overlaid, hence both cyclic and hierarchy-generating, measurements, frequently at several different structural planes of propositional linguistic form simultaneously, e.g. several phonological

measures concurrent with morphosyntactic and lexical ones" [Silverstein 1984: 183]. In other words, the poetic text, or indeed any text the form of which is regimented by what Silverstein calls "poetic pragmatics", overlies a diagrammatic pattern comprising temporally (metrically) spaced equivalent units, which may be deployed at more than one level of organization (see the example below). The poetic foot, line and stanza can be thought of, therefore, as text-structuring diagrammatic icons.

One familiar type of template, albeit one that has received but little attention from linguists, is that used to generate impressions of foreign speech by those who do not in fact know the language being imitated, typically deployed for expressive or humoristic effect. Examples from Anglo-American culture range from the strings of nonsense syllables ending in nasal stops with exaggerated tonal contours, intended to simulate Chinese or other East Asian languages, to fake Yiddish shm-reduplication ('fancy shmancy') [Nevins and Vaux 2003], or "Mock Spanish" confections formed by adding the article 'el' or the masculine-gender suffix –o to English expressions ('el cheapo', 'no problemo', 'el figuro trimmo' [a low calorie dish on the menu of a Tucson restaurant]) [Hill 1995]. The iconic templates underlying productions such as the above are fullyor partially analog representations of foreign speech, rather than the largely 'digitalized' representations that a competent speaker would have. Templates can take the form of word-shape features into which familiar lexical content is inserted (such as Mock Spanish /el __-o/), more-or-less recognizable phonetic approximations (e.g. fake-Latin *hocus-pocus*), or completely impressionistic analog imitations of selected phonetic features of foreign speech. Many such templates — although ultimately derived from isolated features of the source language — are acquired and interpreted as components of the linguistic competence of at least a subset of the speech community. Foreign-speech templates of this type appear to underlie some varieties of SC nonwords, to be presented later on in this text.

With regard to iconicity operating on the paradigmatic axis, I can point to the important work of Silverstein [1996], who has forged the notion of iconicity into a powerful tool for the analysis of the complex and reflexive relationship between speech and its (micro- and macro-) social contexts; indeed, he sees it as pervading all language use. Every time we open our mouths, we emit indices pointing to aspects of our identities, those of our interlocutors, and the context of speaking. Many regularities of verbal behavior presuppose shared valorizations of ritual-like paradigms of socially-significant usage, interpreted, through essentialization, as canonical productions of types of language users ("refined", "cultivated", "working-class", etc.). These standard-setting rituals — for example, the teaching of pronunciation at school, or the manipulation of deference-marking vocabulary by high-ranking Javanese or Japanese speakers — function as iconic grounds against which the usage of ordinary mortals is juxtaposed and compared. Work in variationist sociolinguistics has repeatedly demonstrated how, in a given speech community, subtle differences in linguistic form can both mirror and contribute to the constitution of culturally-significant parameters (class, sex, group-identity). Here as well, one discovers a type of icon influencing linguistic form. The pronunciation of the variable <er> (the vowel, with or without offglide, in "ear", "here") by English speakers in Norwich, for example, has been shown to correlate, in a diagrammatic fashion, with formality of style, and also class and gender identity [Trudgill 1983].

Fig 3. Examples of iconicity in language.

(i.) SOUND-SYMBOLIC [three-way shift in place of articulation of fricatives in Dakota; Nichols 1971: 845 (glosses simplified)]

	-suza	-šuža	-xuɣa
	"slight, single bruise"	"a bad bruise"	"to fracture a hard, round shell (e.g. skull)"
tonality:	alveolar sibilants: ACUTE	post-alveolars: MIDDLE	velar fricatives: GRAVE
degree:	small, slight	intermediate	large, severe

(ii.) SOCIOLINGUISTIC [pronunciation of <er> ("ear", "here") in Norwich; Trudgill 1983]

	[ɪᵊ]	[ɛ̄]
vowel height, trajectory:	mid-high, schwa offglide	mid-low, long
social indices:	standard, middle-class; refinement, femininity	nonstandard, working-class; coarseness, masculinity

(iii.) POETIC [children's jump-rope chant; Sanches & Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1976: 102]

okka,	***bokka***	soda **crokka**,	[[[[[x́ᵃ y̆] [x́ᵇ y̆]] ¯́ ¯̆ [x́ᶜ y̆]]
okka,	***bokka***	boo.	[[[x́ᵃ y̆] [x́ᵇ y̆]] ő^d]]
In	comes	Uncle Sam, and	[[¯́ ¯́ ¯́ ¯̆ ¯́ ¯̆]]
out	goes	**YOU!**	[¯́ ¯́ ő^e]]]

Iconicity, by its very nature, favors suprasegmental expression in language. The examples just given illustrate the different ways in which this tendency toward less localized influence manifests itself. The expressive deployment of phonetic features, as in (i), typically spreads over a root, lexeme or even phrase denotationally linked to the object of description. Sociolinguistic variables likewise surface at numerous points within an utterance; indeed, it is this very fact that enables linguists to recognize them as variables. The poetic function, of course, is reflected in patterns, such as that in (iii), which establish equivalences on the syntagmatic plane. Where the paradigmatic axis is concerned, the distinction I make between the symbolic and iconic semiotic planes largely overlaps one between localized and suprasegmental expression of contrasts.

Summarizing work in the fields of folklore studies and the ethnography of speaking, Hymes asserted that "from the standpoint of structure, all levels of language show means based on stylistic (socio-expressive), as well as referential, function. … It follows that the study of verbal means, as stylistic and as organized in genres, addresses universal properties of language; it may be said to be grounded in the nature of language as structure" [Hymes 1975: 348]. Nonetheless most mainstream linguists continue to filter socio-expressive (i.e. iconic) phenomena, no matter how conventional, from the data used for the construction of models of grammatical competence. Zwicky and Pullum [1987: 338], for example, argue that "not every regularity in the use of language is a matter of grammar"; in particular, they attribute such phenomena as sociolinguistic variation, poetic form, and expressive morphology to a domain "that is not within the province of the theory of grammar as ordinarily understood, though it is certainly within the broader sphere of human linguistic abilities" (see also Zwicky [1986]). Stonham [1994: 88] employs a broader

concept of grammar that accommodates expressive morphology; nonetheless the latter is generated by "a separate but parallel module within the grammar that allows limited interchange between … regular grammar and that which is expressive". These separate linguistic modules are postulated to account for precisely those aspects of word formation which I attribute to iconicity, except for the phonotactic constraints on the core lexicon, which avoid the marginal status accorded to other manifestations of iconicity in language. It is specifically their suprasegmental mode of expression which renders them problematic for most theories of grammar. Poetic patterning groups units of comparable length (isochronic, isosyllabic, isoaccentual), regardless of their internal morphosyntactic structure. Sociolinguistic variation, language games (such as Pig Latin or Georgian "demonic language" [kaǯuri ena], which requires the insertion of the sequence -c'a- after each syllable of an utterance), and many other types of expressive formation likewise show little or no respect for morphological or syntactic segmentation. The model I propose here, although it is intended to be descriptive of the semiotic modalities of various word types in the lexicon, rather than the mechanisms that produce them, likewise discriminates between symbolic and iconic aspects of word forms. Where I fundamentally differ from Zwicky and the others is in my methodological choice of a richer — and socially more realistic — model of language as the primary object of linguistic description.[1] The variation-less language spoken in a uniform speech community composed of "ideal speaker-hearers" may be a convenient fiction for those types of linguistic description which purport to account for the nonsocial aspects of language competence, but it is a fiction nonetheless. There is no known case of a speech community which is absolutely homogenous in terms of the formal characteristics of its speech production. Silverstein [1999: 104] draws upon the Bakhtinian term "heteroglossia" to characterize "the basic centrifugal property of every language community, sociolinguistic variability, in the face of the abstract (or, "Saussurean") norms that underlie the sociological fact of community-hood". Even in small-scale language communities numbering a few hundred individuals, such as the single village where the Papuan language Imonda was spoken until recently [Seiler 1985], variables have been noted which are correlated with the age or sex of the speaker [Thurston 1987; Brainard 1994]. In view of the ubiquity of expressive language use and of socially-indexical variation, even at the level of individual speakers, I believe a model of linguistic competence should accommodate these facts, unless there are compelling methodologically-driven reasons for a more restrictive definition of competence.

If iconicity is so pervasive in language that all forms of meaningful speech (in the everyday sense of 'meaningful') reflect its influence, does all hell break loose when nonsense vocabulary is produced? I will attempt to demonstrate here that, as the late Jim McCawley would say, a limited amount of hell does break loose, but by no means all of it. Although a nonword by definition lacks an INTENSION, that is, that component of the signified which underlies acts of reference and predication (i.e. EXTENSION; cp. Lyons [1977: 158-160]), their phonological forms do signify, in that they evoke meaningful associations in an arbitrary (and therefore symbolic) manner. The categories of SC nonwords to be discussed in the following sections are specific to particular regions, particular genres, and often to particular textual traditions within a genre. When deployed in their appropriate contexts, SC nonwords fulfill specific functions, which may be as simple as supporting a melodic line or as complex as the efficacy attributed to magical

[1] The model proposed here resembles the "social-semiological" conception of *langue* Thibault [1997] believes Saussure had in mind, which likewise includes language-use conventions beyond the narrowly grammatical, such as "the typical ways in which the lexicogrammatical resources of langue are assembled and deployed in the formation of the typical semantic registers, discourse genres and text types of some community" [1997: 69].

formulas.[2]

Fig 4. Symbolic and iconic components of words and nonwords.

	WORDS	NONWORDS
1. INTENSION	X	— —
2. FORM		
symbolic component of form	dominant	minor
iconic components of form	phonotactic template of core vocabulary	marked or restricted phonotactics (based on sonority or expressivity) for some types of nonwords
	sociolinguistic mapping	(less evident?)
	(depends on genre)	poetic structure and other iconic templates (e.g. music; contours and formulas of prestige language)
3. UTTERANCE (speech-act)	co-textual, contextual presuppositions and entailments	strongly linked to genre

One of my goals in this paper is to demonstrate that the seemingly marginal, non-intensional SC forms to be discussed further on are on the periphery of the lexicon, rather than outside of it. What distinguishes the core from the periphery is the relative importance of symbolic and iconic determinants of form.[3]

Fig 5. Core and periphery of the lexicon.

lexical core — *(bound morphemes or closed lexical classes marked by special phonotactics)* — *phonosymbolic lexemes, expressives* — *nonwords*

\+ relative contribution of SYMBOLISM to phonological representation —
— relative contribution of ICONICITY to phonological representation +

[2]When employed in speech or song, nonwords, like words, have the two functions identified by Silverstein: the strategic, goal-directed function$_1$ of language use in accordance with the speech community's ideology of appropriateness and efficacy; and the indexical function$_2$, since "by characteristic distribution of particular forms in certain contexts of use, these forms (or rather, tokens of them) serve as specifically linguistic indicators (or indices) differentially pointing to (indexing) configurations of contextual features" [Silverstein 1979: 206].

[3] A somewhat similar distinction is made by Kristeva with respect to the "semiotic" and "symbolic" phases of communicative competence, and the role of the former in poetic language (*La révolution du langage poétique* 1974).

§1.3. Sources of Kartvelian (South Caucasian) nonwords.

Non-intensional vocabulary might give the initial impression of being an extremely marginal subject of study, but when I am staying in Georgia, scarcely a day goes by during which I do not hear nonwords at least once. The primary vehicle of non-intensional vocabulary is song, but they are occur in other genres of oral literature, as will be shown below.

Traditional Georgian musical styles vary significantly among the two dozen or so historical provinces. There are also distinct genres of songs, and important differences between women's and men's singing. Georgia is well known for its polyphonic a-capella songs for men, but there are aalso song genres for a single voice, or solo voice accompanied by an instrument such as the three-stringed pandur. Among the numerous activities where singing may take place, special mention should be made of banquets (Geo. *supra*), and religious festivals. In Georgia to the present day, any gathering of even a small group of individuals where wine or hard liquor is drunk is regulated by the norms of the supra. A toastmaster (*tamada*) is chosen, and each participant only drinks after pronouncing a toast on a theme selected by the tamada. Despite its convivial atmosphere, the traditional supra is a highly agonistic affair: The (male) participants seek to outdo each other in eloquence, drinking capacity and, in general, their ability to perform flawlessly despite the consumption of a half-gallon or more of wine in the course on an evening. Singing, and sometimes dancing, punctuate the intervals between toasts. The most popular type of banquet song (so designated in Georgian: *supruli*) can be imagined as a microcosm of the supra — which is itself a microcosm of a certain idealization of the Georgian socio-political order [Manning 2003] — in that its polyphonic structure necessitates coordinated collective participation, even as the florid solo sections offer occasions for the individual singer to excel before the group. The refrains and secondary voice parts of banquet songs are typically composed of nonwords (vocables), but, as will be shown, these non-intensional segments are as much a component of regional song styles as the musical structure itself. On the occasion of religious festivals, both the relatively Orthodox feastdays in lowland Georgia, and the syncretic 'pagan' shrine feasts in the highlands, singing occurs both within the ceremony proper, and in the course of the banqueting afterwards. During the mid-summer festival of Seroba in the traditional communes of the northeast province of Pshavi, major segments of the ceremony are marked by round-dancing and the singing of particular songs by the menfolk. Sung poetic duels, where each competitor seeks to outdo his adversary in improvised octosyllabic verse, are increasingly rare, but still take place on the occasion of shrine festivals in some mountain districts.

The other principal textual genres in which nonwords can occur are charms and certain types of invocation chanted, at an uncommonly rapid tempo, by shrine priests in the highland province of Xevsureti.

For this study I will draw upon published materials, archival collections, my own field recordings, and interviews with folklorists and performers. My principal sources will be indicated by a capital letter (see the table on the following page), followed by the number of the song, charm or text. (If these are numbered in the collection, this number will be given. Otherwise, I will give the page number, or date of recording).

SONG AND POETRY COLLECTIONS (songs indexed by letter followed by number)

B Bat'onishvili, Ioane. 1936 [written c. 1820]. *K'almasoba, I.* ed. K'ek'elidze, K. & Baramidze, Al. T'pilisi: Saxelgami.

C Canava, Ap'olon. 1990. *Kartuli polk'loris sak'itxebi megruli masalis mixedvit*. (Issues in Georgian folklore according to Mingrelian materials). Tbilisi: Tbilisi State University Press.

Č Čikovani, Mixail. ed. 1972. *Kartuli xalxuri p'oezia, 1: mitologiuri leksebi* (Georgian folk poetry, vol 1: Mythological poems). Tbilisi: Metsniereba.

Čx Čxik'vadze, Grigol. 1940. xevsuruli xmit nat'iralebi ([Musical transcriptions of] Xevsur women's laments). Masalebi sakartvelos etnograpiisatvis 3: Tab. XI-XVI.

G Gagulašvili, Ilia. 1986. *kartuli magiuri p'oezia*. (Georgian magical poetry). Tbilisi: Tbilisi State University Press.

Ǯ Ǯanašia, Simon. 1949. abxazuri t'eskst'ebi (Abkhaz texts). šromebi IV. Tbilisi: Metsniereba.

K K'ok'eladze, Grigol. ed. 1984. *Asi kartuli xalxuri simɣera*. (One hundred Georgian folk songs). Tbilisi: Xelovneba.

L Lach, Robert. ed. 1935. Gesänge russischer Kriegsgefangener, I. Sitzungsberichte der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Phil.-hist. Klasse) Band 204, Abh 4: 23-81.

LL Lach, Robert. ed. 1935-36. Gesänge russischer Kriegsgefangener, II. Sitzungsberichte der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Phil.-hist. Klasse) Band 205, Abh 1: 19-29.

M Maɣradze, Valerian. ed. 1987. *Mesxuri xalxuri simɣera*. (Meskhetian folk songs). Tbilisi: Xelovneba.

MM Mak'alatia, Sergi. 1941. *Samegrelos ist'oria da etnograpia*. (History and ethnography of [the Georgian province of] Mingrelia). Tbilisi: Sakartvelos mxaretmcodneobis sazogadoeba.

MT Mak'alatia, Sergi. 1983. *Tušeti*. ([The Georgian province of] Tusheti). Tbilisi: Nak'aduli.

MX Mak'alatia, Sergi. 1935. *Xevsureti*. ([The Georgian province of] Xevsureti). Tbilisi: Sakartvelos geograpiuli sazogadoeba.

OB Očiauri, Aleksi, and Baliauri, Lado. 1940. xmit nat'iralis nimušebi (Examples of 'voice-weeping' [121 Xevsur women's laments]). Masalebi sakartvelos etnograpiisatvis 3: 91-157.

OZ Okrošidze, Tamar and Zanduk'eli, Pikria. eds. 1983 *Kartuli xalxuri p'oezia, 10: šromis leksebi*. (Georgian folk poetry, vol 10: Work poems.) Tbilisi: Metsniereba

S Šanidze, A., V. Topuria and M. Gujejiani. eds. 1939. *Svanuri p'oezia*. (Svan poetry). Tbilisi: Metsniereba.

T Taq'aišvili, E. S. 1902. *Opisanie rukopisej biblioteki Obšestva rasprostranenija gramotnosti sredi gruzinskago naselenija*. (Description of manuscripts in the library of the Society for the propagation of literacy among the Georgian population). Sbornik materialov dlja opisanija mestnostej i plemën Kavkaza vol 31, Otdel 1.

Tu Tuite, K. 1994a. *Anthology of Georgian folk poetry*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson U. Press.

X Šanidze, Ak'ak'i. 1931. *Kartuli xalxuri p'oezia, I. xevsuruli*. (Georgian folk poetry, I. Xevsurian). Tbilisi: Saxelmc'ipo gamomcemloba.

F **AUTHOR'S FIELD RECORDINGS**, by province:

FG Guria (June 2000)

FK Kist'i (Chechen) folksongs recorded in the P'ank'isi Valley, 1997.

FP Pshavi (1996-2001)

FS Svaneti (1988, 1991, 1995-2000)

FTb Tbilisi

FX Xevsureti (1996-2001)

§2. Vocables in SC songs. The term vocable, which I have taken from Hinton [1980], will be applied to nonwords of relatively simple phonological structure, occurring in the texts of songs. Both the variety of sounds used and the form of the syllable are far more restricted than in the case of ordinary words. The typical vocable is formed of open syllables ([C]V) of which the consonants are resonants or spirants; stops and affricates are considerably less common, as are closed syllables ([C]VC). [But note the exceptions to be discussed below]. There are in fact several subtypes of vocables, as Samarin [1972b: 144-145] noted, though not all musical traditions may make a clear distinction among them. On the low end of the scale of conventionality is tune-scanning, the spontaneous singing of nonsense syllables to carry a melody (e.g. when singing a purely instrumental tune, or when one has forgotten the words). An intermediate type, which I will call pseudo-instrumental, is represented by jazz vocal styles such as scat and be-bop, or *peurt-a-beul* (the "mouth music" of Scottish folk musicians [Sachs 1962: 36]). This is a more expressive and varied style of scanning, which gives one the impression of a vocal imitation of musical instruments such as the trumpet or bagpipes. The most conventional type is the wordless refrain, like that of the Christmas carol "Deck the halls", which is learned as part of the text of the song.

Now let us turn to the data on SC vocables. Each Georgian province has its own inventory of songs and musical genres. Polyphonic singing is found in most parts of Georgia, but with important regional and genre differences in melodic contours, harmonic structure, contrapuntal complexity (melodic or drone bass, presence of a descant, degree of parallel movement, etc.), and the use of accompanying instruments. Georgian song texts employ vocables to varying degrees, the range extending from 0 to 100%, i.e. some texts consist entirely of interpretable words, while others consist entirely of vocables {ex. 1}. In partially-worded songs, the vocables most typically alternate with the words, serving as a sort of refrain [example: 'Betgil' {ex. 2a}]. Songs without words, with texts made entirely of vocables, are by no means rare in the SC musical tradition. Such songs occur in several genres, for example songs accompanying collective work in the fields [naduri], laments sung at funerals [zær], and the round-dance songs performed at religious festivals [saperxulo]. The first references to vocables in Georgian writing date from the early 19th century [Bardavelidze 1976]. Ioane Bat'onishvili includes some examples in his discussion of Georgian poetry in the *K'almasoba,* c. 1820. A decade later, Teimuraz Bagrat'ioni called attention to what he called "ɣiɣini arna nanos qma" ("half-singing the sound arna nano") in Georgian folk poetry. The first word of this curious phrase, ɣiɣini, is used in modern Georgian with the meaning of humming or singing at half-voice, i.e. tune-scanning. It is also the name given to some West Georgian songs with totally or partially wordless texts (K72-74). The vocable sequence arna nano was chosen to represent the form of typical refrains. Sequences nearly identical to the examples cited in this text are still to be heard in numerous modern folk songs: arnano harni arnano; harlalo harli arlalo. The use of the term ɣiɣini to designate refrains of this sort is symptomatic of the vagueness of the demarcation between spontaneous tune-scanning and much of the vocable material attested in the refrains (or indeed "texts") of published SC folk songs.

Here are some examples of vocables in the folk music of three provinces in Western Georgia: *Guria,* where a dialect of Georgian is spoken, *Mingrelia* (where a distinct Kartvelian language, Mingrelian, is used) and *Svaneti* (a mountainous district in northwestern Georgia. The Svans speak dialects of the Svan language, a distant relative of Georgian and Mingrelian).

{1} **Vocables in three SC songs without words:**
a. «Zari» (Svanetian mourning song, 3 voices) [K7]
oi owo iawa, eio woiwowo ioi oi oy! oho io woi iowo owda woy!
wo iwoi woi io iwo iwo iwo ioi o io owoy!
oiwo io da oho i! o iwoi woy! iwoi ohoi woy!

b. «Perkhuli» (Gurian [W. Geo.] round dance song, 3 voices) [K51]
alali valali alaleo delo delasa, nani nauda;
delo aba rero aba delo da aba delo ovdela da o!
alali valali ari alale, alali alalali he!
heida valadialalo oyda dilu delo alalo.
deli odelio delo valalo, heyda valalo.
ururiu ururao, alalo uruau ururao alalo;
heyda varale heyda varale he!

c. «Okhokhoya-perkhuli» (Mingrelian round dance song, 4 voices) [K52]
oxoxoya vo ovorera oso varada, oso švarada;
oxoxoya vo xoxo oso švarada he oso varada! [2x]

{2} EXAMPLES OF PARTIALLY-WORDED SONGS:
A. Vocables as refrain:
"Betgil" Svanetian song (Upper Svan village of Becho) [Č95-97]

bail, betgil sabral, betgil ležri!	*Ba-il,* Poor Betgil, unhappy Betgil!
bail, ilba, ilba, bail,	*Ba-il, il-ba, il-ba, ba-il,*
bail, məlax-məžal inzorale,	*Ba-il,* Mulakh-Muzhal [villages] have assembled,
bail, ilba, ilba, bail,	*Ba-il, il-ba, il-ba, ba-il,*
bail, žav xagenax lelt'xaš murgwæls	*Ba-il,* They stood for the Lentekh round-dance,
bail, ilba, ilba, bail,	*Ba-il, il-ba, il-ba, ba-il,*
bail, aš xosk'ina twetnam k'wicras,	*Ba-il,* A white roe-deer jumped out toward them,
bail, ilba, ilba, bail,	*Ba-il, il-ba, il-ba, ba-il,*
bail, aš xosk'ina betgiš nabræqs,	*Ba-il,* It ran right through Betgil's legs,
bail, ilba, ilba, bail,	*Ba-il, il-ba, il-ba, ba-il,*
bail, ali betgiš misæn iri!	*Ba-il,* This indeed is Betgil's fate,
bail, ilba, ilba, bail.	*Ba-il, il-ba, il-ba, ba-il.*

B. Vocables intermingled with words:
"Jgəræg [St. George], stand by us" Svanetian song (Upper Svan) [S97b; Tu24]

oy **ǯgəræg**-ieha, **loygwīšēda**	*Oy* Jgəræg-*ieha,* sta-a-nd by-y us
ihāy ōy iha ohāy	*Ihaay ooy iha ohaay*
hay i **laygwišeda**,	*Hay i* stand by us,
ihay i, o, ihā o hā,	*Ihay i, o, ihaa o haa,*
ia oa iha iha io **ǯgəræg**	*Ia oa iha iha io,* Jgəræg,
si logwešd i o!	Stand by us *i o!*

There are interesting regional differences in the frequency and nature of vocables. I have examined the incidence of vocables in 300 Georgian folksongs from all parts of the country, published in the following anthologies: K'ok'eladze 1984, Lach 1935-36, and Mayradze 1987.

The former two anthologies are particularly useful, since most of the songs they contain were collected in the first half of the 20th century (Lach's sources were Georgian prisoners of war during World War I, and K'ok'eladze's scores date mostly from the 1930's). This is important for the determination of the geographic distribution of musical features, since the broadcast and recording technologies made increasingly available to Georgians since World War II have led to a far more diversified musical culture in all parts of the country. At festivals in even the most remote highland areas of Svaneti or Pshavi, as this writer can attest, one now hears music (both live and recorded) from a wide range of sources, foreign as well as domestic.

For the study of SC vocables I have found that scores are a more reliable source than the published texts of songs, including the thousands contained in the monumental 12-volume *Kartuli xalxuri p'oezia*. The editors of textual anthologies, understandably enough, give preference to intelligible textual materials, and often sift out the repetitous, space-consuming vocables. Wordless songs rarely make it into the anthologies at all (Šanidze & Topuria's Svan poetry anthology is a welcome exception). Folk-music anthologies, by contrast, have as their object the presentation of the melodic and harmonic structures of folksongs, and all sung text is included, whether or not intelligible to the singers. Four principal "vocable areas" can be distinguished on the basis of my corpus of 300 songs. Not surprisingly, these correspond closely to the principal musical areas distinguished by the musicologist Maisuradze [1990] on the basis of purely musical features of Georgian folksongs (*see map in annex to paper*).

(i) WEST GEORGIAN ABA DELO NANINA AREA (centered in provinces of Mingrelia, Guria and Imereti; also Ach'ara, Lechxumi, Rach'a), the folk music of which is characterized by:

*A very high frequency of vocables, either in refrains or in entirely wordless songs.

*Frequent use of expressive vocables (see below), especially in Gurian polyphony.

*In vocables, sequences of successive prevocalic /r/ are not uncommon (e.g. orero rero orera reri orera in the Ach'aran travel song K47), even though such sequences tend to undergo dissimilation in the spoken dialects of the West Georgian region (e.g. the phrase a**r** a**r**i(s) "is not" > ar-a**l**i(s) in Gurian [Žɣent'i 1936: 53] and Ach'arian [Noɣaideli 1972: 58]; the same process has also been described for the Lower Imeretian dialect [K'ublašvili 1985: 72] and for Mingrelian [Q'ipšidze 1994: 09]).

*Certain sequences of syllables — subject to a degree of variation — occur in folksongs throughout the region, hence the label I have chosen for the West Georgian area. Here are some examples of the titular "aba delo nanina" sequence, from four different provinces and three distinct genres of song (all excerpts from K'ok'eladze 1984):

K48 Imeretian travel song: … ***aba rero ranina*** *hey!*
K63 Mingrelian banquet-song: … ***aba delo nanina*** *da dilau da nanina!*
K65 Imeretian travel song: … ***aba deli*** *voi vodilao* ***nanina*** …
K66 Ach'aran wedding-escort-song: … *vodelia* ***nanina aba delia*** *he!*
K86 Gurian travel song: … ***abadelo*** *odela* ***ranina*** …

The segment deli(s) vodeli and variants is likewise widespread in the Mingrelia-Imeretia-Guria area (K18, K45, K49, K51 etc). A rarer, and phonologically more marked sequence (oisa) ra(y)da švara(y)da occurs in the adjacent provinces of Mingrelia, Abkhazia and Svaneti, each with a distinct spoken language (K24, K26, K 38, K79, K84, K91 etc.; LL24-25, LL31, LL36):

K24 Mingrelian: … ***oy sa rayda švarada*** …
K38 Abkhaz: … ***sivarayda*** *vo va!*
LL24 Abkhaz: … ***oisarada švarada*** …
LL31 Svan: … ***oj sa radiš worada*** …
LL36 Svan: … ***wo seri raš worada*** …

(ii) EAST-CENTRAL GEORGIAN ARALO AREA (centered in the large Georgian provinces of Kartli and K'akheti. The 45 songs in Maɣradze 1987 indicate that Meskheti, to the southwest of Kartli, can be included this area). The employment of vocables in the folk music from this region contrasts with the western pattern in several respects:

*A lesser frequency of vocables, always in refrains; entirely wordless songs are very rare.

*In vocables, sequences of successive prevocalic /r/ do not occur.

*The most frequently encountered vocable motif in the east-central area is aralo and its numerous variants. One also hears the sequence aru aralo, especially at the beginnings of songs.

K8 Kartlian-K'axetian cart-driving song: … *aru aralo aralo da* …
L28 Kartlian shepherd's song: … *arxaralo darxaralo* …
L70 K'akhetian: … *aralali aralalo* …
M1 Meskhetian: … *harale* … *haralo*
M19 Meskhetian: … *hoxay ralo harli haralo da* …

Similar refrains appear in two round-dance (perxisi) songs recorded in the early 19th century:

B295b round-dance song: … *aralalo, vali valalo!*
B295c round-dance song: … *arxalalo, vali valalo* …

(iii) SVANETI. The highland West Georgian districts of Upper and Lower Svaneti are as distinctive in their music as in their language (Svan being the most divergent member of the SC language family [Tuite 1997]). Svan vocables differ notably from those used in the music of other regions.

*Unusual phonological inventory. In both the western and east-central lowland areas, a handful of phonemes make up the vast bulk of attested vocables. These comprise the five vowels (/a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/), the glides /h/, /v (w)/ and /y/, and the alveolar consonants /l/, /r/, /n/, and /d/. Some other phonemes are limited to specific vocable motifs: /b/ (almost never encountered other than in the sequence /aba/), /s/ and /š/ (in the West-Georgian motifs mentioned above). A few others appear to be limited to expressive vocables (see below), which are a prominent feature of Gurian polyphony. The phonological makeup of Svan vocables is considerably more diverse, including relatively high incidences of /š/, /g/, and /m/.

S5 *saai-hodi da* …
S69 *goy, goy, goy goy, reraša!*
S74 *bileba* … *oril oysa, bileba*
S93 round dance *bail, ilba, ilba, bail*
S87 dance song *šaiama šamarera hori horira* …
S89 dance song *vogil vogil vasa, hai šina vogile* …
S90 dance song *voisa rera ramaša, voisa rera ramaša!*
LL35 *hoya de šonaš šiva hogrila diva vayi vay ha* …

By contrast, the a-capella polyphonic funeral lament known in Svan as zær is not only entirely wordless, but the number of non-vowel phonemes used rarely goes beyond the glides /h/, /w/ and /y/. I believe this selection is conditioned by considerations of sonority (these beings the most sonorous consonants); Bolle Zemp [1997a, 1997b], however, sees in these phonemes the fragmented and transformed exclamation of grief woy!

*Expressively modified words (esp. names). In some partially-worded songs recorded in Svaneti, the vocables are interspersed with the text, and sometimes the words themselves are expressively modified as in the hymn 'Jgəræg, stand by us,' {ex. 2b}, and in the excerpts shown here. (This sort of word-internal modification occurs also in some of the Havasupai songs in Hinton and Watahomigie [1984]).

S1c *tamar dedpæl* [Queen Tamar], ***ta**ya**mār**ælī*
S98 ***lāl**ia **xōr**ia **xō**ya **č̣ā**ya, diāa ō diāa ōy ihōy*
***o**y iha **k'vihā** dom siā oya rēyō.*
(= lalxor i xoča(ɣ)w ogk'viha! "May we hear good (things) about (our) community")

(iv) NORTHEAST GEORGIAN HIGHLANDS (Pshav-Xevsureti, and neighboring regions)

*Vocables are not typical of the most common highland musical genres (monophonic round-dance songs, heroic ballads and love songs), except for the addition of a line-final /a/ or /o/ to fill out the syllable quantity [Tuite 1994: 22-23].

*Vocables do occur in the archaic genres performed during mourning and funerals. These include the qmit nat'irali ("voice-weeping"), sung by a lead mourner (qmit mot'irali: always a woman, sometimes with quasi-professional status) accompanied by the other women (mokvitineebi "sobbers") grouped around the corpse of the deceased. Voice-weeping has a distinctive melodic contour, marked by a sharp descent on the last few syllables of the text to a low, sustained note. The syllable sung on this final note is almost always /o/, whether or not grammatically motivated, as shown in the Xevsur examples published by Šanidze (X734-744), and the scores transcribed by Čxik'vadze (ČxXI-XVI) [musical example #1]. The chorus of "sobbers" follows each line of the lead mourner's text with a wordless refrain. The variants noted employ a very limited range of phonemes, somewhat like the Svan zær described above: ihe he hia hya, or ihio, hio, hio.

§2.1. The grammar of vocables. Mention was made earlier of localized paradigmaticity as a feature of the idealized Saussurean lexical sign. It has long been recognized that no language achieves this ideal, since the phonological systems of all known languages impose restrictions on permissible sequences of phonemes. But even if absolutely localized paradigmaticity is never realized, the degree of locality manifested by lexical forms in a given language may vary in interesting ways, due to factors operating on the iconic plane. Iconicity, as was said above, favors suprasegmental expression. The images and diagrams underlying phonotactic constraints, poetic structure, sound symbolism, and expressive vocabulary in general spread over several segments at the level of the syllable, word or larger syntagmatic unit. The expressive vocabulary of French, for example, is dominated by word or root shapes of specific types: fully or partially reduplicated syllables (*frou frou*), unusual syllabic onsets and codas (*schklonk, zgnomf*), and a preference for vowel sequences going from higher to lower pitch (i-a-u: *tic-tac, pif-paf-poum*)

[Frei 1929: 277-283; Grammont 1960: 379-380; Schneiders 1978: 164-165].[4] A more subtle association between expressivity and suprasegmental paradigmaticity has been noted by Malkiel [1990b] in his study of "root morphemes" in European languages. Root morphemes are canonical root or word shapes associated with particular meanings, often expressive or playful. In Italian, for example, Malkiel detected a "close-knit group of … disyllabic adjectives displaying the same canonical form ($C^1VC^2C^2$-o/a) and sharing, in addition, a certain stylistic flashiness and flamboyance; a semantic tendency to denote a feature either negative, or ridiculous, or both; plus an unmistakeable raciness as regards tone or social register"; examples include buffo "ridiculous"; sciocco "silly, insipid", guaffo "rough, uncultured" [1990b: 99-101].

The domination of suprasegmental paradigmaticity is naturally far greater in the case of non-intensional forms such as SC vocables. The most localized unit at which form-determining constraints can be detected is the syllable (e.g. the preference for open syllables, and particular shapes of descant, staccato and imitative vocables, to be discussed below). At more global levels, one notes the near-exclusive use in vocables of high-sonority phonemes. Further on in this section, more speech-like features of vocables will be presented: the use of morpheme-like filler vowels, conventionalized vocable motifs, and intonation-linked conjunctives.

§2.2. The phonology of vocables. The majority of the vocables occurring in Havasupai songs consist of open (vowel-final) syllables, where the onset is a resonant consonant (glide, nasal, or liquid) and the syllabic nucleus is a low or mid vowel (/a/, /e/, /o/). Both of these high-sonority phonetic features contribute to the quality of the tone produced by the singers, according to Hinton; in her words: "in the search for maximum 'brilliance' of tone combined with maximum 'depth' of tone, relatively low vowels do the most to attain this ideal tone quality" and "the use of glides and nasals allows the uninterrupted flow of vocal resonance, and in songs, allows the continuation of melodic tone" [1980: 297-8]. Low vowels have greater sonority — relative acoustic intensity — than high vowels; the sonority of resonant consonants [liquids, nasals, glides] is somewhat less than that of the vowels, then come the spirants (voiced followed by voiceless), and finally the occlusive consonants. Among the last group, voiced stops are more sonorous than voiceless [Ladefoged 1975: 219-220; Vennemann 1988: 9].

It is my distinct impression that vocables of the form {resonant + nonhigh vowel} are very common in SC music as well. They do not predominate, however, to the same degree that they do in Havasupai music. First of all, the voiced stop /d/ (and less frequently /b/ and /g/) occur in the syllabic onset of SC vocables. A degree of metalinguistic awareness of this tendency is reflected in the lexicon of the Xevsur dialect of the northeast Georgian highlands. The expressive verb babani (root baba-) is glossed as "textless mourning, the rhythmic repetition of interjections reflecting distress while mourning the dead, e.g. ba-ba-ba-ba-ba-i, da-da-da-da-da-i" [Gogoč'uri 1974].

Vocables with high vowels are not rare, and non-resonant consonants occur from time to time. However, certain of these 'non-canonical' vocables can be accounted for by the same principles, that is, considerations of musical aesthetics. I will touch on two instances here, both from the province of Guria in western Georgia.

2.2.1. High vowels and glottalized stops in descant vocables. Probably the most prominent feature of Gurian folk music is the inclusion in many songs of a high-pitched descant [k'rini].

[4] The high-to-low vowel sequence /i-a-u/ has also been observed in the expressive vocabulary of other languages, such as German and Russian [Malkiel 1990c: 162, 167].

Consistent with the piercing tone with which this vocal part is sung, high vowels predominate in the vocables found in the k'rini descant, e.g. ururiu ururao [K51], rimt'iri rimt'iri [K29]. The same effect has been noted by Bolle Zemp [1997a, 1997b] in her detailed musical and phonetic analysis of the wordless Svanetian polyphonic funerary lament (zær): the high front /i/ is correlated with high pitches, tensing of the voice and dissonance ("accords à forte rugosité"), while /a/ and /o/ are accompanied by a more relaxed voice and less dissonance.

More significantly, vocables with ejective obstruents, which are otherwise very rare in Georgian songs, are commonly employed in the Gurian k'rini part, as in the excerpt shown in musical example #2. It seems likely that these sounds are favored in this context because of their sharper tone, compared to that of the voiced and voiceless aspirated consonants with which they contrast phonologically (indeed, the traditional term for the series of ejective obstruents in Georgian is mk'vetri "sharp, shrill" [Šanidze 1953, §16]).

The Kartvelian languages, and in particular Georgian, have an extensive inventory of expressive verbs. Georgian expressives have been described in detail by Dee Ann Holisky in her dissertation, from which the following examples are drawn [Holisky 1981:122-4]. Note the systematic phonaesthetic association between high vowels and ejective consonants in the expressive word and higher pitch in the sound described, as was noted for descant vocables:[5]

{3} Sound symbolism in Georgian expressive verbs [note that non-ejective voiceless occlusives are aspirated in the SC languages]

root vowel: [i] . . . . . [a]

{softer, higher pitched, positive}	{louder, lower pitched, negative}
č'q'iv-is '[bird] screeches'	*č'q'av-is* '[jackal] howls'
žɣiv-is 'twitters'	*žɣav-is* 'bellows'

manner of articulation:

EJECTIVE . . . . . ASPIRATE . . . . . VOICED

{higher pitched, less intense, positive}		{lower pitched, more intense, negative}
č'ič'i-n-ebs 'makes an unpleasant high sound (as a *zurna,* a Georgian reed instrument)'	*čiči-n-ebs* 'insists on something, talks persistently about something'	*ǯiǯi-n-ebs* 'talks unendingly, in a bothersome way'
t'k'ri-al-ebs 'laughs [sb. full of emotion, e.g. a young girl]'	*tkri-al-ebs* 'rattles, clatters like horses' hooves'	*dgri-al-ebs* 'makes noise, thunders'

reduplication

GEORGIAN EXPRESSIVE VERBS:	SVAN EXPRESSIVE VERBS:
tux-tux-ebs 'bubbles [thick liquid]'	*k'ar-k'ac-e* 'cackles'
lap'-lap'-ebs 'gleams, shines'	*q'ər-q'in-i* 'croaks'
paca-puc-obs 'scurries around busily'	
sun-sul-ebs 'runs around sniffing'	

[5] The higher pitch of ejective consonants compared to voiced and voiceless pulmonic occlusives is likely also to be a factor behind their use in diminutives in Wishram Chinook and some other western North American languages [Nichols 1971].

2.2.2. Closed syllables in staccato vocables. SC vocables are almost always formed of open syllables. Closed (consonant-final) syllables are rare, but they do occur in some West Georgian songs featuring a sort of staccato accompaniment (hop'! hop'! or ham! ham!) in the lower voices. Clearly the abrupt closure of the syllable by a consonant, in particular a labial stop in which the lips are brought together, contributes to the desired staccato effect [musical example #3].[6] Closed syllables terminating in a labial ejective were also noted in the refrain of a Georgian hay-mowing song transcribed in the 1820's: ep', op' [Bardavelidze 1976]. I will refer to this subclass of non-canonical vocables, which employ a wider range of phonetic ingredients but which are restricted to specific musical environments, as staccato vocables. Vocables with initial and syllable-final labial stops are used in other musical traditions, notably in the vocal style known as "be-bop", which was popular among jazz musicians some decades ago [Samarin 1972b: 144-146]. One important difference between SC staccato vocables and be-bop is the pseudo-instrumental nature of the latter, the punctuated, percussive vocables of be-bop and Celtic mouth music serving to imitate the sounds of musical instruments such as the trumpet or bagpipes. The traditional vocal music of most Georgian regions, and in lowland West Georgia in particular, is polyphonic and unaccompanied. The formal characteristics of most types of SC vocables reflect the nature of the music itself, rather than any instrument used to play it. The primary contrast is between melody-bearing vocables, whose high-sonority, open-syllable shape is most adequate for a legato, flowing singing style; and special-purpose vocables adapted to the particular demands of descant and staccato vocal accompaniments.

2.2.3. Task-specific imitative vocables. Vocables containing unusual sound sequences, including some which are otherwise unattested in the lexica of the Georgian dialects, occur in songs performed while performing certain tasks. The texts of spinning songs [sapeikro] are commonly punctuated by vocables such as bz(r)i or čari-rama, which seem to echo the sound made by the spinning wheel or the rhythm of the work [OZ927, 929, variants pp 566-7; Tu45, 47, 48]. Women's milking songs, claimed by some informants to have a magical calming effect on cows, feature an interesting variety of vocables, some of which seem structurally closer to lexoids. These include expressively modified variants of deda "mother", and the interjections nc'de and ptru or tpru, (all of these atypical, but not impossible, consonant clusters in Georgian), sung with a "soft, caressing tone" to insure good milk yield [OZ999-1013 and variants pp. 591-597].

2.2.4. The phoneme /h/. In some languages the distribution of a particular phoneme — or a specific positional occurrence of a phoneme — is restricted to a particular class or type of lexeme. For example, the English phoneme /ð/ only appears in initial position in closed-class words, especially deictics: 'this,' 'there,' 'they,' 'the,' 'thus,' 'then.' It follows that initial /ð/ is a signal that the word it begins is one of a restricted class of pronouns, adjectives and conjunctives. The glottal fricative /h/ plays a strikingly similar signalling role in the lexicon of the SC language Laz, a close relative of Mingrelian. With the exception of a handful of loans from Turkic, Persian or Arabic, the only Laz words with initial /h/ are deictic pronouns and adverbs (ha "that", him

[6] According to Nuckolls [1996: 140], the phonaesthetic effect of closed syllables and labial consonants is exploited in a more rigorously semanticized way in one group of Quechua sound-symbolic adverbs: "A closed final syllable can imitate a gesture of closure, the completion of an action, or … the abrupt contact of one surface with another. Some of these phenomena can also be iconically described by a constriction of the articulators, as is created by lip rounding".

"this"; hako "here", heko "there" [Marr 1910: 238-9]). In the lexica of the Georgian and Mingrelian languages as well, /h/ has a more restricted distribution than any other phoneme. It is extremely rare in ordinary lexical items, and has often disappeared (or is in the process of disappearing) from those contexts where it had earlier been present.[7] The sole exceptions to this tendency toward h-dropping are in certain peripheral areas of the lexicon: interjections (e.g. Georgian hai–ha! "bravo!", hee! [exclamation of surprise]) and calls to animals (cp. these examples from Ghlonti's dialect dictionary: hot'pu 'call to get a bull or ox to start moving,' haga(ga) 'call to drive away a dog,' hakša 'call to drive away a rooster,' huči-huči 'call to sheep'). The frequent appearance of /h/ in Georgian and Mingrelian vocables thus associates them with these other elements of the lexical periphery.

§2.3. The morphology and syntax of vocables. The close relationship between vocables and the music to which they are sung is observed in their syntagmatic as well as paradigmatic structure. The formal structures of vocable sequences parallel in many ways those of the accompanying music. Like the melodic line, SC vocable sequences are characterized by both repetition and variation at different syntagmatic levels. One also notes interesting parallels — to the point of "borrowing" certain particles — between the contours of SC vocable refrains and intonational groups in ordinary speech.

2.3.1. Repetition with variation. Despite their limited phonemic inventory and simple syllable structure, exact repetition of SC vocable sequences — at the level of either individual syllables or longer groups — appears to be strongly constrained. With the exception of staccato vocables, where repetition of the syllable is accompanied by repetition of the musical note and its dynamic features, SC vocables are rarely repeated more than twice. Even the nonword texts of the Svan zær, which typically employ only three consonants, are characterized by this avoidance of excessive repetition (see the texts in {1} and Bolle-Zemp [1997b]).

Far more frequent are imperfect and incomplete repetitions, with modification of vowels and/or initial consonants, or duplication of only part of the preceding sequence. Consider the Gurian and Mingrelian wordless song texts given in {1} above. No syllable is repeated more than twice in succession, and the same is true of vocable groups (e.g. heyda varale heyda varale in the Gurian round dance). Both song texts are replete with partial repetitions:[8]

alali valali alaleo **del**o **del**asa …
deli o**del**io **del**o valalo, heyda valalo …
ururiu **ururao** …
oso varada, oso švarada …

The preference for partial rather than exact reduplication is a feature of the expressive morphology and vocabulary of many languages. Morphophonemic reduplication commonly involves only part of the root (as in the Greek or Sanscrit perfect). French onomatopoetic words

[7]The Classical Georgian 2nd-person subject or 3rd-person object prefix h- is no longer pronounced in many contemporary dialects [Shanidze 1920, ch. 7]. Initial /h/ has likewise vanished from many words borrowed from neighboring languages, e.g.: [h]azri 'opinion,' [h]aivani 'balcony,' [h]asak'i 'age.' According to Frei, "c'est une loi que dans toutes les langues le phonème rare, et surtout les phonèmes employés rarement dans une position ou une combinaison données, se prêtent d'autant plus, en vertu de leur aspect inédit, aux créations expressifs" [1929: 281].

[8] Ironically, vocables in the West Georgian area are immune to the one productive dissimilation rule affecting the spoken language, i.e. that blocking successive prevocalic /r/'s.

formed by strict reduplication (*miam miam, glou glou*) are as a rule less lexically codified, and new ones are continually being created. Onomatopoetic words with partial reduplication (*pêle mêle, charivari*), on the other hand, are lexically more stable. These latter also appear more frequently in literature and advertising (cp. American *cash-n-carry, wash-n-wear*) [Groupe μ 1990: 181].

Partial reduplication is also common in children's nonsense genres, such as the rhythmic vocable-filled texts sung by children while jumping rope. As in SC refrains, the repetitions occur at several levels of structure, and are interwoven in remarkably sophisticated ways with assonance and poetic parallelism. One such song was given in Fig. 1; here is another, recorded from a seven-year-old by Sanches & Kirschenblatt-Gimblett [1976: 102]:

Onna wanna tat t**a nee a**,
See a wee a comp**a nee a**;
Silva rack a tick a tack,
I see a wee a one.

In his study of glossolalia, Samarin [1971: 60] attributed the "avoidance of the appearance of complete redundancy" to "the obvious purpose of the speaker to sound as if he were talking a real language". This motivation seems less likely to account for the widespread occurrence of repetition-with-variation in a large variety of genres, playful as well as serious. These seem to be sufficiently universal and automatic that one might be led to postulate a deep-seated compulsion to variation in human language-users (and singers).

2.3.2. Conjunctions in vocable sequences. Several high-frequency vocable sequences are identical to Georgian words, more precisely, to speech-connective particles: da "and", aba "well", hoda [resumptive: "and as I was saying …"], and ho "yes". This could easily be mere coincidence, were it not for certain distributional facts which point to the special function of these sequences. Almost all occurrences of the phoneme /b/ in the corpus of West Georgian vocables I have examined are in the sequence /aba/. The phonemic make-up of the Svan zær, as noted above, comprises only a handful of high-sonority consonants. The sole exception, as shown in {1a} is an intrusive /d/, occuring only in the sequence /da/. What is more, the "syntax" and intonational properties of these sequences are comparable to those of their homologues in spoken Georgian.

What the particles da and aba have in common is their preference for either the beginning or the end of syntactic units, and their intonational properties. The particle aba characteristically occurs as the lead-in to a speech turn (e.g. aba, ras vizamt? "Well, what should we do?"), in which context it is pronounced with a slight intonational rise. It can also occur by itself as a complete utterance, having the force of a questioning "well?" (abá?) In either case, it is pronounced with higher pitch on the second syllable. The particle da is an all-purpose conjunctive, like English "and", joining single words, phrases or entire clauses. Unlike "and", da attaches intonationally to the preceding rather than following conjunct. It may continue the downward melodic contour of the completed segment to which it is attached, especially if the speaker hesitates before supplying the next conjunct.

A third particle-like segment commonly found in vocables is ho, which in speech has an affirmative form either in the context of a regular speech turn or as a brief "back-channel" response to indicate to the speaker that one is listening. The interjection he can have a

comparable affirmative force; additionally (in casual Tbilisi speech, at least), it is part of the interaction-closing formula aba, he! "well, OK, then" (to which the response is often: aba, ho! "well, so long, then").

In syntactic and intonational terms, these particles can be represented schematically as follows:

#abá …	rising melody, beginning of unit
… dà, …	falling melody, end of segment, followed by another segment
… hō!# (*also:* … hē!#)	flat intonation, affirmation, final segment

These same conjunctions appear in vocable sequences, where they appear to fulfill comparable syntactic and intonational (melodic) functions. The particle aba occurs at the beginning of vocable units (often accompanied by delo, rero and their variants), and bears a rising melodic line (abá). By contrast, da comes at the end of vocable units or "phrases", and is marked by a pitch lower than those born by the preceding vocables (dà). Finally, many larger units of nonword texts, or the songs themselves, end with an affirmative ho! or he! sung to the final note.

The carry-over of intonation-bearing conjunctions from ordinary speech to the nonsense refrains of songs might be linked, at some level of speech production, to instances of the "borrowing" of precisely these types of particles in language-contact situations. Examples that come to mind include the use of Russian conjunctives and adverbs, such as daže "although", nu "well", koroče "in brief", within an otherwise solidly Georgian matrix in Tbilisi urban speech; and the common occurrence of English "anyway" and "OK" in informal Québec French. Brody [1987] examined the borrowing of Spanish conjunctions, connectives and hesitation fillers (which she groups under the term "particles") into the Mayan languages. In her view, the use of Spanish particles, even in an otherwise solidly Mayan text, can be compared to code-switching in a context of asymmetric bilingualism (Spanish being the "power code" in this context). The interspersing of these relatively salient clause-initial particles "lends a Spanish feel to the discourse. Even where most of the words and constructions are Mayan, a few Spanish particles will give the flavor of the prestige language" [Brody 1987: 510; cp also Bright 1979: 270].

It might be that the intonational group-bracketing function of Spanish particles in Mayan or their Russian counterparts in Tbilisi speech renders them particularly susceptible to redeployment in a second language, in that they indexically link the discourse they frame to a cluster of attributes (urbanity, prestige, etc.) associated with the source language. In the context of vocable sequences, da, aba and ho might perform a comparable function in attributing speech-like traits to the bracketed refrains, with the music paralleling the intonational contours they characteristically bear.

It should be noted that the particles da and aba are distinctly Georgian and — perhaps through borrowing — Mingrelian as well. The Svan conjunctive meaning "and" is i. The occasional usage of the Georgian particle da in Svan vocable sequences might therefore have a double motivation, serving to associate the vocables with ordinary language, and with Georgian (the literary and liturgical language in these areas) in particular. The regular Svan conjunctive i may also be relatively common in song texts, although it would be difficult to reliably distinguish it from the background of non-signifying /i/'s and /y/'s, both very high-frequency phonemes in Svan vocable sequences.

2.3.3. The syntax of vocables and the syntax of music. In Jakobson's formulation, music, glossolalic poetry and non-representational art in general are dominated by an "introversive semiosis, a message which signifies itself" [1968/1971: 704; cp. Nattiez & Benoît 1990]. In poetic structures composed of signifying lexemes, "equivalence in sound projected onto the sequence as its constitutive principle, inevitably involves semantic equivalence" [Jakobson 1960/1981: 40]. When such structured formations are constituted of musical tones or vocables, the absence of signifieds of the usual sort brings into even sharper relief the formal equivalences generated at various levels by poetic regimentation. The introversive semiosis of music and wordless poetry, Jakobson goes on to say "is indissolubly linked with the esthetic function of sign systems" [1968/1971: 705]. This esthetic function, I believe, draws upon the iconic potential of forms as deployed on the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic planes. In the case of vocables, this includes the exploitation of phonological resources as presented in the preceding sections: sonority, the expressive use of particular phonetic features in particular musical contexts. On the syntagmatic plane, the esthetic effect of vocables, like that of the music to which they are sung, is evoked through both REPETITION — the generation of poetic equivalences at various hierarchical levels on the axis of combination — and VARIATION. The ubiquity of repetition with variation in SC vocables, in expressive vocabulary, and in the spontaneous productions of glossolalists was discussed in §2.3.1 above. Both are essential for music as well. As Ruwet trenchantly observed in a critique of fundamentalist-serialist attempts to rid music of all repetition, "s'il est vrai que la variation est l'âme de toute musique, il n'en est pas moins vrai que qui dit variation dit répétition: il ne peut y avoir variation sur un plan donné, quel qu'il soit, que s'il y a en même temps répétition sur un autre plan" [Ruwet 1972b: 136].

In the case of SC vocables, it is clearly the music which establishes the pattern to which the vocables are in a sense fitted. Melodies need not be sung to vocable texts, but in SC folklore vocables are limited to those poetic genres which are sung, not recited. The music, syntagmatically structured in accordance with the principles of repetition and variation (or repetition and transformation [Ruwet 1972a: 133]) — principles which are doubtless fundamental to all codes which are dominated by an introversive semiosis — furnishes the iconic ground (of a diagrammatic type) underlying much of the formal structure of vocable sequences. The phonological material fitted to the music-based template includes motifs of localized distribution which draw on a more diversified phonemic inventory, alongside phonologically simpler material which gives the appearance of effacing itself in favor of the melody it bears — almost to the point of appearing little different from spontaneous tune-scanning — even though these vocables are learned along with the other elements of the song.

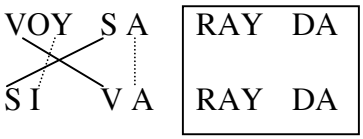
§2.4. Degrees of conventionality in SC vocables. Some features of SC vocables are shared with comparable genres of nonwords from other parts of the world. In addition to those characteristics inventories in §2.2, one notes a far higher frequency of consonants from the dental-alveolar place of articulation (t, d, n, r, l, s, š), compared to the labial, velar and postvelar series. The predominance of dental-alveolars has been described for vocables elsewhere, both in refrains and improvised tune-scanning [Samarin 1972b: 144].

Of more restricted distribution are vocable motifs, such as those localized in the West and East Georgiasn musical areas mentioned above. In certain cases, juxtaposition of variant forms permits the determination of the contours of a basic (ancestral?) form. Here are the five Mingrelian, Svan and Abkhaz variants of the oisa ra(y)da švara(y)da) motif represented in our corpus, with the phoneme groups placed in columns for easy comparison:

K24 Mingrelian:	oy	sa	ray	da	š	va	ra	da …
K38 Abkhaz:	—	—	—	—	si	va	ray	da
LL24 Abkhaz:	oi	sa	ra	da	š	va	ra	da …
LL31 Svan:	oy	sa	ra	di	š	wo	ra	da …
LL36 Svan:	wo	se	ri	ra	š	wo	ra	da …
BASIC FORM:	**voy**	**sa**	**ray**	**da**	**si**	**va**	**ray**	**da**

Taking into consideration the likely direction of phonetic shift (e.g. /va/ is more likely to shift to /wo/ than the reverse; likewise for the shift /si/ > /š/), a basic form can be derived. This form is itself composed of two sections of equal length (four syllables), each having identical endings and initial segments in a relation of partial inversion:

parallelism and inversion:



The somewhat unusual phonological inventory from which this motif is composed, and its limited geographic distribution, might induce the investigator to search for a meaningful textual fragment in some other language which is known to have been used in the vicinity.[9] One would then hypothesize the subsequent distortion of the fragment into the above forms by singers who did not understand the source language. Fairly evident cases of such transformation will be examined in Section §4 below. As far as the oisa ra(y)da švara(y)da) motif is concerned, however, the heavy overlaying of syllabic and phonemic parallelisms in its likely antecedent renders any such etymological speculation highly tentative.

Even the less obviously motif-like segments of the vocable portions of SC song texts show a degree of conventionality, comparable to that of the accompanying music. There are differences from one recording to another of what is considered to be "the same" song, especially when the variants come from different provinces, but the degree of variation is consistent with a mechanism of oral transmission in which improvisation is held to a minimum. (Improvisation does occur in the performances of some genres, but is limited to the intelligible portion of the text or to ornamen-tation of the principal melodic line). It should be recalled that the principal song genres in lowland East and West Georgia and in Svaneti are polyphonic, performed by groups of at least three and often a dozen or more men. This encourages new singers to reproduce the elements of the song — including vocables — as they are performed by more experienced members of the group.

§2.5. Frequency of vocables and the linguistic environment. Wordless songs, composed entirely of vocables, are especially common in the non-Georgian-speaking communities of Mingrelia, Abkhazia and Svaneti. Songs without words frequently accompany the dancing of the round dance (perxuli) at religious festivals, and at funerals (the Svan lament zær). A particularly noteworthy fact is the rich phonemic inventory of Svan vocables, rendering them more word-like than the vocables attested elsewhere in Georgia. In these three provinces of western Georgia, a diglossic linguistic situation obtained from at least the early Christian period to the present. The

[9] In a study of Ossetic-Abkhaz isoglosses, Abaev [1949: 316] mentioned the "typical refrain" Abx. warajda = Oss. wærædæ, though without attempting any further analysis. The presence of this refrain in Ossetic folksongs indicates that this "vocable area" extends to the central Caucasus.

Mingrelian, Abkhaz and Svan languages were, as they still are, spoken by the mass of the population, but were never used for writing or in the (Orthodox) liturgy. Classical Georgian was the primary medium employed in elite circles, along with Greek in some areas. Georgian was used for the writing of administrative and legal documents, dedicatory and funerary inscriptions, and all manner of religious texts (translations of the Bible and liturgy, lives of the saints, prayers, etc.). It was the latter uses of Georgian in particular which brought the Mingrelian, Abkhaz and Svan-speaking peasantry into regular contact with it, even though they could not read, nor in most cases even speak, Georgian. The exclusive use of Classical Georgian in the liturgy and in prayers doubtless fostered a impression of its prestige, sacredness and power, as will be further illustrated in the discussion of charms to follow. It still remains to be demonstrated, however, that the more word-like elements of the unintelligible texts of certain song genres — especially those performed in ceremonial contexts — derive from specific expressions in liturgical Georgian as used in the minority speech communities of western Transcaucasia.

By contrast, vocables are formally simpler and limited to the refrains of worded songs in the relatively monolingual East Georgian heartlands of Kartli and K'akheti. Although the languages of Georgia's conquerors — especially Persian — were in common use among the elite, they appear to have penetrated less into the popular imagination than Classical Georgian did in Mingrelia, Abkhazia and Svaneti. The primary reason for this difference, I am convinced, is the absence of Persian and Turkish from religious use (liturgy, prayers, charms) among a peasantry which remained nominally Orthodox Christian. In the SC context, at least, religion and folk-medicine, rather than writing and colonial administration, were the principal vehicles bringing the largely unlettered lower classes into contact with elite languages.

§2.6. Vocables and etymology. Some scholars have claimed to see in certain vocables from Kartvelian folksongs the remnants of ancient theonyms or words borrowed from old Near Eastern languages [see the summary of these attempts in Bardavelidze 1979: 78-80]. Here are some examples, cited by Maisuradze [1989, 1990]:

(h)arialale [common refrain in Geo. folksongs]
⇐ Urartian *ari alale* 'give it to me, Alale [name of Urartian harvest deity]'
odoia [name of Mingrelian song], (w)oda dia, wodiwo [Svanetian vocables]
⇐ ?Basque[10] *odoi* 'small cloud'; ?Akkadian *Adadi* [name of weather deity]
nanina, iav-nana [common refrains, especially in lullabies]
⇐ *Nana* [claimed to be name of ancient Caucasian mother-goddess]; cp. Sumerian *Inana*

Unfortunately for these etymologies, the strong preference for high-sonority phonemes in vocables makes the possibility of a purely coincidental resemblance with these deity names all the more likely. In the search for lexical relics among the nonword components of SC songs and charms, it would appear that lexoids (see §4.3 below), rather than vocables, are more likely to yield trustworthy evidence.[11] Their phonemic inventories are far less restricted and less liable to

[10]The hypothesis that Basque is genetically related to some, or all, Caucasian languages has been argued by N. Marr, Shota Dzidziguri and Juri Zytsar' among others.

[11]Some scholars have argued, for example, that the repeated lexoid "erce" at the beginning of one Old English charm (*Erce, erce, erce, eorþan modor*) was originally intended as an invocation of a pre-Christian "earth mother" akin to the Frau Herke of German folklore [Dobbie 208]. Ignorant as I am of the philological merits of this case, I would say only that the non-vocable-like phonological structure of "erce" makes such an etymology prima facie more plausible than those offered for the three Georgian examples just cited.

phonetic modification due to considerations of sonority. With a wider range of phonemes available for comparison, the risk of merely chance resemblance between a lexoid and a possible cognate is significantly reduced.

§3. High-frequency morphology, sonority and expressive formations. In many languages the set of phonemes employed by bound morphemes, pronominals or other closed-class lexical groups is constrained in some way. The Russian declensional suffixes, for example, employ all five vowel phonemes, but only four of the 24 consonants (/v/, /y/, /m/, /x/) [Jakobson 1958/1971]. Restricted numbers of consonants likewise participate in the inflectional suffixes of Czech and English [Jakobson 1949/1971: 108; Jakobson & Waugh 1987: 58]. A similar distribution obtains in the inflectional morphology of ancient Greek, which employs all of the vowel phonemes, but only a handful of the consonants (principally /s/, /n/, /t/ and /m/); the nominal and verbal morphology reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European shows the same characteristics [Szemerényi 1996: 160, 314-316; Lehmann 1996: 145, 172-175]. The Kartvelian languages are characterized by a well-developed inflectional morphology. The inflectional morphemes of all three languages are constructed from a restricted inventory of higher-sonority phonemes: all vowels and most resonant and fricative consonants are used, but only a handful of occlusives (stops and affricates). Of the latter, voiced and aspirate consonants — to the total exclusion of ejectives — are used to form inflectional affixes [see {4}].

An examination of the vocables occurring in a corpus of songs from four West Georgian provinces [Guria: 10 songs; Imereti: 7; Mingrelia: 20; Svaneti: 33] reveals a strong similarity with the phonology of the Kartvelian inflectional affixes: in both cases high-sonority phonemes predominate. Indeed, the phonemes at the absolute bottom of the sonority scale — ejective occlusives — are totally absent from the inflectional morphology and from non-expressive vocables (i.e. vocables not limited to specific musical contexts). The association between sonority and inflectional morphology, if it holds for a significant number of languages, is a topic best treated at another place and time. In the case of vocables, which are intended to be sung, the preference for higher-sonority phonemes might be explainable on musical grounds: such sounds would contribute to the flow of melodic tone, as Hinton had noted in her study of Havasupai song. Indeed, it is the highest-sonority phonemes (vowels and resonants) which are the most frequently used in vocables throughout Georgia.

{4a} Sonority of Georgian phonemes:

VOWELS	RESONANTS		FRICATIVES	OCCLUSIVES					
i u	*m n l r*	voiced:	*v z ž ɣ*	*b*	*d*	*ʒ*	*ǯ*	*g*	—
e o	*(w) (y)*	aspirate:	*s š x h*	*p*	*t*	*c*	*č*	*k*	*(q)*
a		ejective:		*p'*	*t'*	*c'*	*č'*	*k'*	*q'*

most sonorous . . . . . [**scale of sonority**] . . . . . *least sonorous*

{4b} Inflectional morphemes in the SC languages

Person and number markers (verbal)

	GEORGIAN	MINGRELIAN	SVAN

1st person:	*v-, m-,*	*v/b-, m-*	*xw-, m-,*
	gw-		*l-, n-, gw-*
2nd person:	*(s/h-), g-*	*g/k/r-*	*x-, ǯ-*
	-t	*-r, -k, -rt*	*-d*
3rd person:	*(s/h-)*	——	*l-, x-*
	-s, -a/o,	*-s, -u, -n,*	*-s*
	-es, -en, -nen, -t	*-an, -nan, -es*	*-x*

Case and number markers (nominal)

case:	*-i, -s, -ma, -o*	*-i, -k, -s, -iš*	*-s, -m, -d, -iš*
	-is, -it, -ad	*-iša, -iše, -it*	*-šw*
number:	*-eb, -n, -ta*	*-ep/-en*	*-ar, -ēl, -iādu*
			-a, -w

Stem formants (verbal)

present-stem:	*-eb/ob, -av,-am, -i*	*-um, -im, -em/ep*	*-e, -ēšg, -er*
'version':	*a-, i-, e-, u-*	*o-, i-, a-, u-*	*a-, i-, e-, o-*
other suffixes	*-d/od, -en/n/in*		*-ən, -w, -āl*

{4c} Inventory of phonemes in **inflectional morphemes**:

	GEORGIAN	MINGRELIAN	SVAN
vowels:	*a/e/i/o/u*	*a/e/i/o/u*	*a/ā/e/ē/i/o/u/ə*
resonants:	*m/n/l/r*	*m/n/l/r*	*m/n/l/r/w*
fricatives:	*v/s/(h)*	*v/s/š*	*v/s/š/x*
occlusives:			
voiced:	*b/d/g*	*b/g*	*d/g/ǯ-*
aspirate:	*p/t*	*p/t/k*	——
ejective:	——	——	——

{4d} Inventory of phonemes in **vocables**: (most common phonemes in bold)

	GEORGIAN [GURIA, IMERETI]	MINGRELIAN	SVAN
vowels:	***a/e/i/o/u***	***a/e/i/o***/*u*	***a/ā/e/ē/i/ī/o/ō/u***
resonants:	*m/**n/l/r/y***	***l/r/y***	*m/n/l/r/**w/y***
fricatives:	***v***/*s/**h**/x*	***v***/*s/š*	*s/š/**h**/x*
occlusives:			
voiced:	*b/**d***	*b*	*b/g/ǯ-*
aspirate:	*t*	——	*t*
ejective:	*(p'/t')*	——	——

§3.1. Suffixoids in nicknames. The use of phonological sequences identical to high-frequency morphemes in certain expressive formations may however stem from a closer link than their respective preferences for higher-sonority phonemes.

In his paper on "root morphemes", Malkiel [1990b: 81-156] examined the case of the English suffix /–y/, which occurs in a large, and growing, class of playful/whimsical disyllabic adjectives (*flimsy, grumpy, pudgy,* and the like). In these formations, the expressive aspect of the meaning is signaled by the iconic-diagrammatic template underlying the root as a whole, rather than by the suffix alone. In view of its deployment as part of a root morpheme, Malkiel [1990c] qualified

this /–y/ as a "suffixoid". The suffixoidal use of /–y/ is one manifestation of a more general pattern in English expressive morphology. Various high-frequency suffixes (*-y, -s, -s-y, -er-s*) can be appended to names, common nouns and adjectives, typically accompanied by truncation of the root to a single syllable: *Caits, Caiters* < Caitlin; *Wills* < (Prince) William [in British tabloids]; *preggers* < pregnant; *gramps* < grandpa; *footsie, Bugs(y),* etc.[Mühlhäusler 1983; Southern ms.].[12] The iconic template conveying expressivity comprises a root of specific shape (monosyllabic) followed by one or more of the above suffixoids. The suffixes employed in these formations have been, in a sense, bleached of their primary meanings and used to form words of a particular shape. The suffix /-s/, for example, is ordinarily employed in English morphology as nominal pluralizer, possessive suffix, and 3sg-present marker in verbs. As an expressive-forming suffixoid, it seems to have none of those meanings. The factors that contribute to the suffixoidal exploitation of morphemes include: (1) high frequency; (2) polysemy; (3) the different homophonous morphemes occupying the same position relative to the root; (4) high-sonority phonological makeup. The combined effect of these factors appears to loosen the signifier-signified bond, and renders the phonological forms of these morphemes more susceptible to semantic "bleaching" and recycling as components of expressive root morphemes. This phenomenon is not limited to English. One type of Georgian nickname is formed by similar incorporation of highly-frequent, polysemous suffixes into root morphemes. *Keti, Keto* < Ketevan; *Oto* < Otar; *Dato* < Davit, and the like, are derived by truncation of the name and suffixation of the vowels /i/ or /o/. These vowels are homophonous with the Georgian suffixes /-i/ (nominative case in nouns, 1st/2nd-person passive or aorist ending in verbs); and /-o/ (vocative case in nouns, 3rd-singular aorist ending in verbs)

§3.2. Suffixoidal filler vowels in Svan and Georgian poetry. In Georgian folk poetry, whether or not end rhyme is employed, the line or hemistich is composed of a metrically-regulated number of syllables (typically five or eight). A variety of devices are employed to aid in achieving a constant line length, including the exploitation of Georgian's rich suffixal morphology, and the addition of "filler vowels" [Tuite 1994: 20-23]. Since these vowels are added for purely metrical reasons, and have no intrinsic semantic content, they may be properly considered a type of vocable. The use of filler vowels is especially frequent in the folk poetry of the eastern (Pshav-Xevsurian) and western (Svanetian) highland areas of Georgia. The position of the inserted vowels is not the same in the two regions, however, a difference which I believe is correlated with the distinctive morphophonemics of the Svan and Georgian languages. In eastern Georgian folk poetry, the vowels /a/ and /o/, and less commonly /e/, may be added at the end of the line to complete the required syllabic quantity, and also contribute to the rhyme scheme. A significant proportion of the line-final /a/'s and /o/'s in the Kakhetian ballad "At Xidistav we'll make a pact" [Tu14] and the Pshav round-dance song "The Cross of Lashara spoke" [Tu55], for example, are filler vowels. The structure of these filler vowels is such that one might class them as suffixoids in Malkiel's sense. Although semantically unmotivated, the filler vowels /a/ and /o/ are identical to the highly frequent forms -a and -o, each the instantiation of several homophonous suffixes (-a = 3sg past-indicative desinence, postposed copula, or a desinence employed in case endings; -o = vocative case or direct-quotation marker). When two filler vowels are used, they appear in the order -a-o, e.g. zamtari magvidis-a-o "winter comes to us-a-o" [Dolidze 1975: 73], and never the reverse. This corresponds to the sequence in which the

[12] I wish to acknowledge the helpful responses to my query concerning the English expressive suffixoid -s supplied by a dozen subscribers to the internet list HISTLING in late January 2001.

homophonous suffixes always appear: the various -a desinences follow the stem, and quotative -o is in absolute final position. The sequences resulting from the addition of a filler vowel therefore have the same shape as combinations of lexeme + suffix -a and/or suffix -o.

One finds two types of filler vowels in Svan folk poetry. One type is suffixal. According to Chant'ladze [1969], some postposed filler vowels are in fact archaisms, being etymologically-motivated vowels which are no longer retained in ordinary spoken Svan (e.g. poet. t'ub**a** 'gorge', ordin. Svan t'ub < *t'aba; cp. Geo t'ba 'lake'). In other cases the default filler vowel /i/ is added (e.g. t'wibi < t'ub+i); this /i/ is most probably a suffixoid based on the homophonous nominative-case desinence /-i/, now only represented by umlaut of the preceding vowel in the modern Svan dialects. The dynamic accent of earlier stages of the Svan language, which contributed to the loss of final vowels such as the above, has also brought about the reduction of unaccented vowels within the word, to a far greater extent than in any other SC language or dialect. In all Svan dialects save Lent'ex, every even-numbered vowel (except the final one) of a word is liable to syncope or reduction [Topuria 1946; Tuite 1997: 9-10]. In the language of Svan poetry, however, this type of reduction, like the loss of final vowels, may be "undone". The resulting forms usually correspond to the underlying morphology, but one finds numerous examples of the etymologically-unmotivated filler vowel /ə/ being inserted into words simply to fill out the syllabic quantity of the line. For example, the verb form anɣri "he came" appears three times in the first section of the round-dance song "Dali is giving birth" [Tu3]. In one instance it is pronounced as in spoken Svan, in another, one schwa is added (anɣəri), and in a third case, *two* schwas are added (anəɣəri), in order to arrive at the requisite eight syllables. Infixed filler vowels are not attested in any other region of Georgia. The expressive intermingling of vocables within words, such as **ta**ya**mār**æli (< [Queen] Tamar), likewise limited to Svan poetry within the SC area, appears to be an extension of the "morphophonemics" of Svan filler vowels for melodic purposes.

§4. Lexoids in Georgian charms and songs. Until recently, the healing of certain types of illnesses and other functions — protecting livestock from predators, assuring a good harvest — were entrusted to local experts, most often women, who could be found in almost any Georgian village. These individuals were known for their ability to recite the appropriate charms and spells, usually in a whisper, accompanied by ritual actions (such as scraping a piece of charcoal with a black-handled knife, a common means of countering the effects of the evil eye). As summarized by Gagulašvili in his 1986 book on Georgian magical poetry, SC charms (šelocvebi) come in a variety of shapes and sizes. The texts of some are addressed to the illness, or the agency who caused it (demon or wielder of the evil eye), with the intention of casting them out, frightening them away, or cursing them [G 146-164]. Others are formed around recipes for preparing herbal medicines, typically put in the mouths of divine personages (e.g. "Christ said: Go over to the marble garden, pick three stems of clover, three stems of plantain …" [G 167; other examples G132-133, 164-175]). One popular genre is in the form of a dialogue between Christ, Mary or a saint and the cause of the illness, personified as an ogre or demon. The two meet while travelling; in one version, the "white ogre" announces to Mother Mary that he is on his way to "drink the blood in a person's body, eat the soft parts, gnaw on the bones", etc. She responds "No! [In the name of] the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, I will not let you into a person's body, I will not let you drink blood", and so on [G 130]. Alongside interpretable texts with an evidently goal-oriented content (curing recipes or dramatizations of divine beings neutralizing the cause of the problem), there are charms composed wholly or partly of

uninterpretable segments, which Gagulašvili calls "abracadabras" [G137-141], and which I will term "lexoids" in the following sections of this paper.

If vocables are most common in men's polyphonic singing, lexoids appear in an oral genre performed predominantly by women. According to the ethnographic accounts cited by Gagulašvili [1986: 205-208] — including his own field observations — SC women are the primary users and transmitters of charms. Older women teach them preferentially to their daughters, daughters-in-law and grandchildren; these latter begin to make use of charms after marriage and the birth of their own children. There are indications that men also employed certains types of magical verse, to assure success in hunting and to foster a good harvest. These farming and hunting charms are far less well attested in the ethnographic record than the healing charms associated with women, but they have been more widely used in earlier times (most collections of SC folklore date from the late-19th and 20th centuries). Healing charms are almost exclusively learned and utilized by women. In many parts of Georgia, for example Guria, both male and female specialists practiced folk medicine, but their respective functions did not overlap. The treatment of broken bones, wounds and other external disorders necessitating heavier, more aggressive practices were the province of male "surgeons" (dast'akarebi). Female practitioners (ekimbašebi) dealt with internal disorders — illnesses, psychological problems, various pains and discomforts — as well as childbirth-related matters and the counteracting of the effects of the evil eye through the use of charms, herbs & magical practices [Mak'alatia 1941: 338-341; Gagulašvili 1986: 207].

As noted by Bardavelidze [1979: 186-201], Gagulašvili [1986: 108-159] and Suladze [2000], the texts of SC charms are characterized by extensive parallelism, at almost every level of their structure. Here is a fully-worded example, which will serve to illustrate the multilayered poetic structure typical of the genre. Although charms are recited or intoned rather than sung, their texts are interlaced with parallelisms and repetitions comparable to those occurring in the wordless refrains discussed in §2.

Georgian charm against the evil eye [G83]

gask'da	*šavi*	*k'lde,*	*gamevida*	*šavi*	*k'aci*	*šavi*	*cxenit,*	*šavi*	*iaraɣit,*
burst	black	cliff	came-out	black	man	black	horse:INS	black	weapon:INS
c'avida	*šavsa*	*zɣvasa,*	*čauq'o*	*šavi*	*xeli,*	*amoiɣo*	*šavi*	*gveli,*	
went	black	sea:DAT	stuck-down	black	hand	took-up	black	snake	
gadak'ra	*šavsa*	*kvasa,*	*isemc*	*k'vdeba,*	*isemc*	*gžeba*			
struck	black	rock:DAT	thus-OPT	die	thus-OPT	be-torn			
šeni	*avi*	*tvalit*	*šemxedvare.*						
your	evil	eye:INS	looker						
gask'da	*c'iteli*	*k'lde,*	*gamevida*	*c'iteli*	*k'aci*	*c'iteli*	*cxenit,*	*c'iteli*	*top-iaraɣit,*
burst	red	cliff	came-out	red	man	red	horse:INS	red	gun-weapon:INS
c'avida	*c'itelsa*	*zɣvasa,*	*čauq'o*	*c'iteli*	*xeli,*	*amoiɣo*	*c'iteli*	*gveli,*	
went	red	sea:DAT	stuck-down	red	hand	took-up	red	snake	
gadak'ra	*c'itelsa*	*sip'sa*	*kvasa,*	…	…				
struck	red	slick	rock:DAT						
gask'da	*tetri*	*k'lde,*	*gamevida*	*tetri*	*k'aci*	*tetri*	*cxenit,*	*tetri*	*top-iaraɣit,*
burst	white	cliff	came-out	white	man	white	horse:INS	white	gun-weapon:INS
c'avida	*tetrsa*	*zɣvasa,*	*čauq'o*	*tetri*	*xeli,*	*amoiɣo*	*tetri*	*gveli,*	
went	white	sea:DAT	stuck-down	white	hand	took-up	white	snake	

gadak'ratetrsa sip'sa kvasa, … …
struck white slick rock:DAT

"The black cliff burst open, out came a black man on a black horse with black weapons. He went to the black sea, stuck in a black hand, pulled out a black snake, struck it against a black rock. Likewise may that one die, be torn apart, who cast an evil eye upon you.

"The red cliff burst open, out came a red man on a red horse with red weapons. He went to the red sea, stuck in a red hand, pulled out a red snake, struck it against a smooth red rock. Likewise may …

"The white cliff burst open, out came a white man on a white horse with white weapons. He went to the white sea, stuck in a white hand, pulled out a white snake, struck it against a smooth white rock. Likewise may …".

The poetic function can be observed at work in all levels of the charm's structure, from the submorphemic to the level of the text as a whole.

1. The charm itself is usually repeated three times.

2. The parallel structures of the three principal sections (groups of sentences), each featuring one of the three color terms "black", "red", "white". This color triad is frequently employed, with contrastive symbolic associations, in Georgian folklore and ritual [Čoloq'ašvili 1992; Gagulašvili 1984].

3. The parallelism in adjacent phrases (e.g. *čauq'o* ***šavi*** *xeli, amoiɣo* ***šavi*** *gveli;* ***isemc*** *k'vd****eba, isemc*** *gǯ****eba***).

4. The repetition of the color terms within each section.

5. Certain morphemes (the instrumental-case desinence -it, dative-case -sa, the present-passive suffixes -eb-a) are repeated within syntactic units.

6. The text is richly larded with repeated phonemes and phonetic features (assonance and alliteration, as in: *gas****k'd****a … **k'ld**e; **š**eni **avi** **tvalit** **š**emxed**vare***)

§4.1. Lexoids and (con)text. I have coined the term "lexoid" to denote a class of nonwords which bear a much closer resemblance to the phonological configuration of the core vocabulary than do vocables; i.e. lexoids frequently consist of closed syllables and obstruent consonants. Besides charms and spells, lexoids are found in certain Svanetian song texts; a number of these nonsense songs are included in the collection Šanidze, Topuria and Gujejiani [1939]. In formal terms these songs are very similar to charms. They are replete with parallelisms at the phrasal, lexical and phonological levels; furthermore, the lexoids they contain are commingled with recognizable Svan words and fragments of Classical Georgian (the liturgical language of the Georgian Orthodox Church). Examples of lexoids are shown in the charm and song excerpts in {5}.

One important difference between vocables and lexoids is their relation to the surrounding text. In songs containing both words and vocables, the latter are generally segregated from the former. Vocables occur in the refrain, the accompanying voice parts, or at one end or the other of lines containing words. The intermingling of vocables and words, as in the Svanetian hymn to St. George in {2}, is far less common. Lexoids, by contrast, are often found completely imbedded in otherwise worded texts, to the point of being declined like ordinary nouns or conjugated like verbs (see ex. {5b}). Some texts consist largely or even entirely of lexoids; this is most common in snake charms (either for driving snakes away or healing snake-bite).

{5} EXAMPLES OF SC LEXOIDS:

a. Georgian charm for curing snakebite, c. 1830 [T 139]:
isarpot'e, israme, abrast'ani, ori t'ont'ant'e, lamez, natie,
čac'ganute, sip'on, sip'ie, šavi, šavnes da šavgates.
{all lexoids, except ori 'two,' šavi 'black,' šavnes ?'they harmed sb.'}

b. Two variants of a Georgian snake charm

I. (province of Tusheti) [MT 201] {lexoids underlined}

p'it'i, p'it'i p'ist'anama,		*ast'anga*	*da*	*ačanaga,*
???		??	and	??
gvelo	*mogvirak'rak'di,*	*moxrilo*	*ǯoxo,*	*gašešdi.*
snake:VOC	you-came-slinking-to-us	bent	stick:VOC	become.stiff:IMPER

'Snake, you came slinking towards us. Bent stick, become stiff! (lit. turn into wood)'

pirksa pirki	*macvia,*	*pirkta*	*beč'edi*	*macvia,*	
?:DAT	?:NOM I-am-wearing-it	?:GENpl	ring	I-am-wearing-it	

'… I am wearing the ring of pirks' [? < Geo. *pirkl-* 'tiny, insignificant amount'? *pikr-* "thought"?]

pirkisa	*ɣwtismšobelo,*	*šen*	*gaašeše*	*gvelia.*
?:GEN	mother-of-God:VOC	you	make.it.stiff:IMPER	snake

'Mother of God of pirk, stiffen the snake!'
("While uttering this charm, wave a hazel stick at the snake and it will stiffen on the spot.")

II. (province of Rach'a) [G 192]] {lexoids underlined}

k'i-k'i, k'i-k'i, k'ibanaxi,		*ačanaxi, bačanaxi,*			
???					
gvelo	*šen*	*gamorak'rak'di,*	*txilis*	*ǯoxivit*	*gašešdi.*
snake:VOC	you	you-came-slinking	hazel	stick-like	become.stiff:IMPER

'Snake, you came slinking here. Like a hazel stick, become stiff! (lit. turn into wood)'

c. Two Svanetian nonsense song (from the Upper Svan village of Lenjer)

I. [S115; Tu25] {lexoids underlined, possible Georgian words in boldface}

ak'alǣd-mak'alǣd,	***exsa,***	***pexsa,***	*tanæɣžina,*	
	?	?foot:DAT(Geo)	mountain-pass-on	
rik'sa,	***pxik'sa***	***kondarasa,***	*čāmsæri bərdaluq'wi.*	
?stick:DAT(Geo)	?scratching:DAT	savory:DAT	?????	
k'iri	***k'irsa,***	***č'iri***	***č'irsa;***	***č'irsa,*** *pirwsa lapuriša.*
lime:NOM	lime:DAT	want:NOM	want:DAT(Geo)	cow:DAT cow-shed-in

II. [S114a; Tu25] {lexoids underlined, possible Georgian words in boldface}

erek'veni-merek'veni,	*čibčik'veni, čabark'veni*	*ɣāč'ōl*	*k'āp'ōl.*
		cheeks	open

če:i	*k'atxəld*	*lart'amisga*	*igwranāle,*	*ile-mile,*
copper	cup	garden-in	rolls-around	
dæič'iri	***qoqobǣl,***		*rik'i-rik'i*	*mormoč'ǣl.*
you-caught	pheasant			

čxara	*č'alæy,*	*dærižana,*	*mərzaq'ana,*	*tatarq'ana,*
nine	river	Darejan	M.	T. (names)
otarəla	*bačæ*	*gwigwi,*	*esil-besil,*	*besyanduri,*
O.	"stone's	heart"[13]		
sik'antxuri,	***k'almaxuri,***		*sk'i:šuri,*	*sk'ibunduri*
	fish (trout)-?			
viryæy,tatær	*šeganc'ipxs.*			

d. Georgian-language Christmas song recorded in Mingrelia; [C108]

alatasa,	***malatasa,***	[[[[x^a x^1 x^2 x^3] [x^b x^1 x^2 x^3]]
(nonwords)		
xeli	*čahk'ar*	***k'alatasa,***	— — — — [x^c x^1 x^2 x^3]]
hand:NOM	stick.it.down.in.it	basket:DAT	
amoiɣe	*sami*	*k'vercxi,*	— — — — — — — —
take.it.up	three	egg:NOM	
ɣmerti	*mogvcems*	***barakasa,***	— — — — [x^d $x^{1'}$ $x^{2'}$ x^3]]
God:NOM	he.will.give.us	abundance:DAT	
k'ič'ebia,	***k'ič'ebia,***	[[[y^a z^4 y^5 x^6] [y^a z^4 y^5 x^6]]
(nonwords)		
dagezardos	***bič'ebia.***	— — — — [y^b z^4 y^5 x^6]]
may.he.grow.for.you	boys:NOM	

"*Alatasa, malatasa,* stick your hand into the basket; Take out three eggs, God will grant us abundance; *kichebia, kichebia,* may your boys grow up."

§4.2. Echoing and reduplication. The frequency and density of parallelism in charm texts is such that a useful distinction can be drawn between two subtypes of lexoid. These represent two distinct sources for lexoids, although both may contribute to the form of any given example. The first type of lexoid is derived by the reduplication (usually partial), or even inversion, of another form. In many sequences of words and lexoids, a kernel can be detected from which most or all of the phonological makeup of the others is generated by reduplication. In {5d} above, k'alata-sa ("basket" + dative suffix) provides the template for the rhyming lexoids alatasa and malatasa; the same relation obtains between bič'-eb-i-a ("boy" + plural + nominative-case + filler vowel) and its nonword echo k'ič'ebia. The anonymous composers of Svan poetry seem to have had an especial fondness for partial reduplications of this kind [further examples in S68, 69, 78, 79, 111-119]; inversions of phonemic or syllabic sequences, relatively rare in other SC regions, are another feature of Svan verbal art (cp. the two-layered syllabic inversion in the refrain to the song 'Betgil' {2a}: ba-il il-ba, il-ba ba-il). The Svan text {5c} is structured by local parallelisms overlain by phonological echoes of more distant forms, and merit a closer look. The kernel generating the first set, ak'alǣd-mak'alǣd, is of uncertain origin, but its ultimate source may well be the Georgian word for "basket", already discussed with regard to the song {5d} from the neighboring province of Mingrelia. It is followed by another Georgian word, pex-sa "foot" + dative, which is accompanied by its partial reduplicate exsa, and is more faintly echoed by the initial cluster of pxik'sa in the following line. Interlocked partial parallelisms of this sort

[13]This expression refers to a stone — ranging in size from a round pebble to a 2-foot-high vaguely anthropomorphic rock — kept in some Upper Svan households to insure health and prosperity [Chartolani 1977].

continue in fact up to the very end of the segment: The lexoid pxik'sa is paired with its echo rik'sa, itself a partial inversion of k'irsa in the next line. This latter form is a Georgian word in its own right ("[quick-]lime" in the dative case), although its form is so overdetermined in the context of this nonsense poem that its Georgian meaning may only have been a minor motivation (and no motivation at all for subsequent generations of monolingual Svan singers). The remainder of the second line contains kondarasa, the Georgian name of a local variety of the herb savory, and the sequence čāmsæri bərdaluq'wi, for which no gloss or explanation is known to me. The final line consists largely in what appears to be interpretable Georgian text: "lime on (or to) lime, need on need", comprising a nominative-case form followed by the dative of the same word. The meaning of this phrase, if there ever was one, is obscure, leading one to suspect that the juxtaposition of the roots k'ir- and č'ir- was motivated by phonetics more than by semantics. Furthermore, both roots rhyme with the Svan lexeme pirw-sa, the dative of the root meaning "cow", which might have been the anchor to which the preceding chain of partial echoes is attached. Any such speculation about the processes underlying the composition and transmission of song and charm texts is, obviously, of limited value in the absence of detailed knowledge concerning the diffusion of Georgian-language texts in medieval Svaneti, a question to which we will return in §4.3 below.

Textual variants provide valuable clues concerning certain aspects of the generation of sequences from kernal elements. Although it cannot be determined which of the variants in [5b} is closer to the Urtext, it is significant that the initial lines of both manifest nearly identical poetic structures. Both variants begin with iterated open syllables comprising an ejective stop + /i/; these take up the first four syllables plus the onset of the following lexoid. The remaining three syllables of this lexoid is a close echo of the two rhyming (or near-rhyming) lexoids occupying the second half of each line. Note that the lexoid ačanaga of variant I is phonetically very close to the the lexoid ačanaxi of variant II:

Var. I:	*p'it'i, p'it'i*	*p'i**st'anama**,*	***ast'anga** da*	***ačanaga** …*
Var. II:	*k'i-k'i, k'i-k'i*	*k'i**banaxi**,*	***ačanaxi,***	***bačanaxi** …*

The types of partial reduplication which generate lexoids in charms and nonsense songs are also to be found in more mainstream Georgian vocabulary, in the relatively productive, expressive-like derivations signalling plurality, iterativity, distributivity and related notions. One of the principal morphophonemic patterns used for this function is /m/-reduplication, e.g. xili-**m**ili 'Obst' < xili 'fruit'; axlo-**m**axlo 'nahgelegen, benachbart' < axlos 'near'; k'uč'-**m**ač'-i 'Gedärm, Innereien' < k'uč'i 'stomach' [examples and glosses from Neisser 1953: 56]. Compare the same pattern in such lexoid pairs as erek'veni-merek'veni, ile-mile; alatasa-malatasa; the Abkhaz charm beginning ala, mala, sala, mala [G123], or the children's finger-counting rhyme atiti, matiti, romelia šuatiti? *"Atiti, matiti,* which one is the middle finger?" [cited by Neisser 1953: 56].[14] One restriction on /m/-reduplication in Georgian derivational morphology is that it is dissimilative: the initial consonant, if there is one, of the root must not be itself a labial. The same restriction appears to apply to the formation of lexoids by /m/-reduplication.

[14] A variation of /m/-reduplication is reduplication with /b/ — like /m/ a voiced labial stop — in initial position: lexoids generated in this fashion include ačanaxi-bačanaxi, ek'enia-bek'enia. Neisser [*loc. cit.*] noted examples of /b/-reduplication in regular vocabulary as well, e.g. čala-bula "Abfallstroh" < čala "straw". It merits mention that /m/-reduplication is known to several speech communities in the Balkans and Caucasus, and thus appears to be an areal phenomenon; cp. Friedman 1996, Bruening and Vaux 1997.

§4.3. Language mixing in charms; the "etymologies" of lexoids. The second set of lexoids comprises simply all those whose forms cannot be explained by the mechanisms just discussed. Among the instances already mentioned are the uninterpretable sequence čāmsæri bərdaluq'wi from {5c}, and the lexoid variants ačanaga and ačanaxi.

The phonologically more diversified, word-like shape of lexoids has provoked much speculation concerning their origins. In many cases, the probable source can be pinpointed from examination of the form of the lexoids — especially when several variants exist — supplemented by ethnographic and historical documentation of ritual language use. Another variant of the charms in {5b} opens with the line č'ii, č'ii, č'ič'manaki, isp'anaxi da čanaxi [G113]. The first three "words" are lexoids, formally very similar to the initial sequence in Variant II above (k'i-k'i, k'i-k'i, k'ibanaxi). The following words do, however, have conventional meanings in Georgian: isp'anaxi means "spinach", and čanaxi denotes either a type of cylindrical container for flour or grains, or a dish made of mutton, eggplant and tomatoes. Although the exact sequence of derivation cannot be known with certainty, one can easily conceive how the pair isp'anaxi da čanaxi — of which one element was almost certainly chosen because of its three-syllable rhyme with the other word — can, by different pathways of phonological deformation and the sprouting of reduplicate lexoids, give the Variants I and II shown above.

Classical Georgian words and phrases, often garbled, appear in many SC charms and spells. Since the introduction of Orthodox Christianity to Georgia in the 4th century, a form of medieval literary Georgian has been used as the liturgical language throughout the country, even in provinces where another language was spoken by the majority of the people (e.g. Svan in Svaneti, Abkhaz — a Northwest Caucasian language completely unrelated to Georgian — in Abkhazia). Even after contact between the center and peripheral parts of Georgia was disrupted by the frequent invasions of Mongols, Persians, Turks, etc. in the 13th-18th centuries, this SC equivalent of Latin continued to be used by the priesthood even as the elements of a resurgent indigenous paganism came to predominate in their religious practices. To the present day, the xucesi (priest) of some Xevsur communities intones a garbled pastiche of motifs from the Old Georgian Bible and Orthodox liturgy before sacrificing each animal offered during the summer festival of Atengena.[15] One indication of the syncretism underlying central Caucasian folk religions are theonyms based on the names of Georgian or Greek Orthodox saints (e.g. the Svan deity *Taringzel* < Old Geo. mtavarangeloz- "Archangel"; the Ossetic deities *Mikalgabyrty* < Sts. Michael and Gabriel, *Fælværa* < Sts. Florus & Laurus, *Tutyr* < Theodoros) [Dumézil 1986]. The lexoid k'irialesa in Mingrelian charm [C 89] is probably from the Kyrie-Eleison of the Orthodox liturgy (as are similar lexoids in Svan ritual songs, e.g. k'iriavolesia from "Elia lərde"). The description of a Svanetian 'soul-returning' [kunem lit'xe] specifies that the ritual expert who is to escort a dead person's soul back to the home village 'recited prayers in a mixture of Svan and Georgian' [locs ragdiw lušnus i kartwils ču lupurtina] [Davitiani et al 1957: 301]. Some Svan-language charms have been collected [G152-3], but the bulk of such texts recorded from Svan-speaking informants have been in Georgian, even if the reciter had a poor knowledge of that language [G187].[16]

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[15] I have witnessed these performances myself in recent years; a sample of Khevsur pseudo-Old Georgian prayer style recorded by S. Mak'alatia the 1930's is given in MX 256. Mak'alatia characterizes it as a "mixed-up and incoherent … imitation of the Holy Scriptures", which the priest "has mechanically memorized, and recites at a breathless pace". [The language of Khevsur shrine invocations, including high-speed recitations of orally-transmitted garbled versions of Biblical texts, is analyzed in more detail in my 2011 paper "Xevsur shrine invocations: iconicity, intertextuality and agonism" in *Folia Caucasica: Festschrift für Jost Gippert*].

[16] Dadiani et al. [2001] also report a Mingrelian-language charm (against warts) that had been collected in Svaneti.

The snake charm in {5a} gives the impression of almost total gibberish, but most of the forms appear to be constructed around Georgian lexemes, and — what is more important — lexemes of frequent occurrence in charms and incantations. It may also be a pertinent factor that the lexoids seem to be grouped in pairs, save for a triplet at the end of the text:

isar*pot'e,* ***isr****ame* < is(a)r- "arrow"

*abras****t'an****i, ori t'on****t'an****t'e* < t'ani "body", with partial reduplication in t'on-t'an-t'e. The lexoid abrast'ani might be a modified form of the expression alvis-t'ani "cypress body", which in the specialized language of highland Georgian paganism denotes the banner (droša) carried by the priest during ceremonies, and to exorcise the demons believed responsible for especially serious illnesses [Charachidzé 1968: 220-223]

lamez, natie [modifications of lamazi "beautiful" and nateli "bright"?]

čac'ganute [uninterpretable, although the "prefix" ča- and final -e lend it a vaguely verb-like appearance]

sip'*on,* ***sip'ie*** < sip'i "smooth, slick"

šavi*,* ***šav****nes da* ***šav****gates* < šav- "black"

The roots sip'- and šav- and the mention of weaponry recall the evil-eye charm cited at the beginning of this section. Allusions to beauty and brightness are common in healing texts, and the lexoid abrast'ani might conceal a reference to a healing ritual still practiced in the remote villages of northeast Georgia.

The Abkhaz-Georgian linguistic frontier is especially promising terrain for the investigation of the imbedding of prestige-language material in folk texts, in view of the unrelatedness of the two languages, and the quantity of variants attested on both sides of the border [G187-188]. A monolingual Mingrelian speaker can detect numerous phonetic, grammatical and lexical similarities in the Georgian language at first hearing (and indeed the relatedness of Mingrelian and Georgian was apparent to the 18th century geographer Vaxušt'i Bat'onišvili, long before the advent of comparative linguistics in the Caucasus). Abkhaz and Georgian have no such points of resemblance, save a handful of lexical borrowings, and the phonological and grammatical systems of the two languages are radically different. In several cases, despite the distortion of phonological form accompanying the appropriation of Georgian materials into a text performed by Abkhaz speakers, variants from the two sides of the language divide are sufficiently close to merit the comparison of Abkhaz lexoids to their probable Georgian source (sometimes through the mediation of Mingrelian, which is spoken by many Abkhazians). One family of charms, apparently quite popular in the area, begins with the formula ek'enia, bek'enia, bek'ens xat'i svenebia *"Ek'enia, bek'enia,* the icon is enshrined at Bek'en" [G112] or one of its numerous variants. One Abkhaz variant collected by Ǯanašia has the initial sequence ák'enia, bák'enia, cácxania … [Ǯ163]; the third "word" could be from the Georgian cacxi "linden" with a plural suffix, possibly originating in a mishearing of bek'ens xat'i. An Abkhaz charm published by Gagulašvili — intended to protect livestock from predators — is clearly based on a Georgian model similar to the following, recorded in Mingrelia over sixty years ago:

[Georgian; MM 347]	ek'enia,	bek'enia,	bek'es xat'i	svenebia;
[Abxaz; G188]	*EK'ENISA,*	*BEK'ENISA,*	*BERSAXAC*	*ZENEBISA,*
	"Ek'enia, bek'enia, the icon is enshrined at Bek'e;			

meupeo, čamoq'are xe bark'ali rk'inisao, nadirs k'bili šeuk'ari …
AɣE, DAɣE *ČEMIQ'UARE,* … XINISA *K'INISA* … *K'IBIRI* GAK'OK'ILI GERISA
Lord, throw down a tree shank of iron, bind the teeth of the beast"

Rather more problematic are Abkhaz charms with long lexoid sequences not traceable to any recognizeable Georgian utterance. The following two variants [G139] are sufficiently close that one might suspect a third-language source (Arabic?), although the materials have evidently been distorted by reduplication and rhyming:

[var. 1] *elumxa mesk'luna misluna /marnuš, barnuš sodarnuš / olla, xolla,*
[var. 2] *elimha melimha misinuš marnuš, sazarnuš halola,*

[1] *k'vat'a illa billaxi / alim, až yivim.*
[2] *q'uatalhəi biluhi …*

As it turns out, some Georgian informants, according to Gagulašvili [1986: 139, 256-7] claim "Arabic" or "Tatar" (i. e. [Azeri] Turkish) origin for some of the lexoid-filled charms they recited, for example:
["Arabic"] *siptili sopri, / t'imote hasri. / harsagi zurum / hane soptura, / k'arisra potra p'irakven*
["Tatar"] *sanavte, sopute, ǯanapta, asamta, topta, takar, reka, eni* [both from G139]

These two charm texts shows some recurrent phonological patterns, which do not seem be mere cases of partial reduplication. One notes the very high frequency of aspirated stops compared to the voiced and ejective series. Although all three series of course occur in native vocabulary, loanwords into Georgian show distinctive asymmetries. In recent loans from Russian and other European languages which have two stop series, plain voiceless stops are replaced by ejectives in Georgian. By contrast, aspirated stops are common in earlier loanwords, most of which come from eastern languages such as Arabic and Turkish (e.g. katinauri "flowery compliment", from Arabic; tutuni "tobacco" from Turkish) [Andronik'ašvili 1996]. Aspirated /p/ is particularly frequent in loans, since it replaces the phoneme /f/, which is lacking in the phonological inventories of all SC languages except Laz. Initial /h/, as was noted earlier (§2.2.4), is also found in some loans from eastern languages, although it is of extremely limited distribution in native vocabulary.

Although the Arabic language had almost no currency among the non-Islamic majority of the Georgian population, it would have been associated with certain important figures from Georgian medieval literature (e.g. protagonists identified as Arabs figure prominently in the medieval epics *Vepxist'q'aosani* ["Knight in the panther's skin"] and *Amiran-Darejaniani,* oral versions of which circulated widely in Georgian folklore). The peasantry may also have had some awareness of the heavy Arabic component in traditional Georgian medical and pharmaceutical vocabulary, as reflected in the handbooks [k'arabadini], composed from the 11th century onwards [Rayfield 2000].

§4.4. Wonder-working icons: Lexoids and the coefficient of weirdness. Numerous societies recognize textual genres which are believed to have a special power or efficacy, and which are distinguished from ordinary utterances by what Malinowski has famously called a "coefficient of weirdness" [Malinowski 1935: 218-223]. The oldest magical texts for which we have documentation go back almost to the dawn of writing. The Mesopotamian incantations

from four millenia ago reveal many of the same features that characterize the SC corpus of magical poetry: rich and multilayered poetic structure, and the use of foreign linguistic material [Reiner 1970; van Dijk et al. 1985]. Of the 96 Old Babylonian magical texts published by van Dijk et al. [1985], over half are in Sumerian, and fourteen are entirely or partly in unknown languages. Some of the latter have been provisionally identified as Elamite or Hurrian, most remain unidentified. Here is the text of incantation #41, a four-line charm against some kind of worm, in an unknown language [van Dijk et al. 1985: 33]:

[ku].ul.ki.im.ha ku.ul.ki.im.ha
ku.ul.si.ha.ra ku.ul.si.ik.ra
ku.li.ra.bi.ka
ku.li.ra.bi.na

It is almost beside the point whether this and similar incantations will eventually be shown to be meaningful texts in some ancient Near Eastern language, or lexoid sequences of the sort we have seen in SC charms. The signifiers, whether or not they were attached to signifieds in Saussure's sense, were clearly deployed with poetic parallelism as a primary consideration.

The Trobriand incantations transcribed and analyzed by Malinowski are distinguished from ordinary speech in many of the same ways. The texts are interwoven with repetitions and parallelism, and lexemes are used which are "weird and unusual; in a way, nonsense words" [Malinowski 1935: 219]. Furthermore, the performance itself differs from everyday speech acts along several parameters: the incantations are intoned by authorized ritual specialists, addressed to plants, insects or other nonhuman objects, and "pronounced according to a special phonology, in a sing-song, with their own rhythm and with numerically-grouped repetitions" [loc. cit.]. These formal and pragmatic characteristics, in Malinowski's interpretation, are consistent with "the deeply ingrained belief that magical spech must be cast in another mould, because it is derived from other sources and produces different effects from ordinary speech" [Malinowski 1935: 218].

In the case of Georgian charms, the coefficient of weirdness likewise consists in the manner of recital (typically in a whispered voice), the nonhuman addressees (supernatural beings, snakes, and so forth), the simultaneous performance of ritual gestures, and the internal structure of the charms themselves. Within the context of magical texts, lexoids have functions which may be also achieved by ordinary lexical items. At the level of syntagmatic structure, lexoids — particularly those of the first type — contribute to the poetic parallelism typical of this genre. As signifiers without interpretable signifieds, lexoids signal the special nature of magic poetry according to local ideologies of language use, and certain lexoids — those of the second type — are endowed with the efficacy believed to inhere in particular textual traditions (Georgian folk-Orthodox, "Persian" or "Arabic"). Some of the glamor attributed to these traditions stems from their use of writing, a skill mastered by relatively few in mid-19th-century rural Georgia.

Upper-class women were particularly sought after as healers, since they could read the medical handbooks — which in addition to recipes for herbal medicines often contained healing charms [G 15-19] — and because they could write down charms or prayers for use as amulets [avgarozi; see G20, 189-90; Mindadze 2001]. As in neighboring Islamic districts, where written verses of the Coran were widely used in folk medicine, many unlettered SC villagers believed that the healing powers of magical texts derived as much from their instantiation as written artefacts as from their content. The writer Ilia Č'avč'avadze thus describes a provincial

noblewoman prescribing a treatment for a neighbor's child suffering from migraine (šak'ik'i) in his novel *K'acia-Adamiani:* "I will write down a prayer for you, my Babale, stick the paper with the writing to that side where [the child's] head hurts, and leave it there two-three days; if it is migraine, it [the paper] will dissipate it straightaway".

The ubiquity of parallelism in magical texts merits a more detailed and more thoroughly comparative study than can be undertaken here. Multi-levelled poetic structures (as in the evil-eye charm presented at the beginning of this section), and highly symmetrical forms, including palindromes [Preisendanz 1949; Betz 1992; Kõiva 1998], have been described in magical texts from many regions of the world. One is tempted to investigate parallels between the poetically-regimented structures of charms and the symmetrical forms of drawings, such as Navaho sandpaintings, which are created during healing ceremonies. "The sandpainting", according to Witherspoon's interpretation [1977: 168], "depicts the desired order of things, and places the patient in this beautiful and ordered world. The patient thus becomes completely identified with the powerful and curing agents of the universe". Could it be the case that in some folk-medical traditions, if not necessarily that of the Georgians and their neighbors, the poetic structures of healing charms are conceived as orally-realized diagrams of the symmetry and order, and therefore wellness, the reciter aims to induce in the patient? It is almost certainly the case that no single causal factor can functionally motivate the poetic structures of SC charms and incantations. "The mnemonic value of meters seems always to have been recognized" [Justice 1979: 270]; this is obviously an important consideration where magical texts are concerned. Set against the background of ordinary speech, itself more rhythmic and more "poetically" structured than is commonly supposed [Silverstein 1984; Tuite 1993], the heightened and foregrounded parallelisms of charm texts enhance their "weirdness", their special status as performative speech acts.

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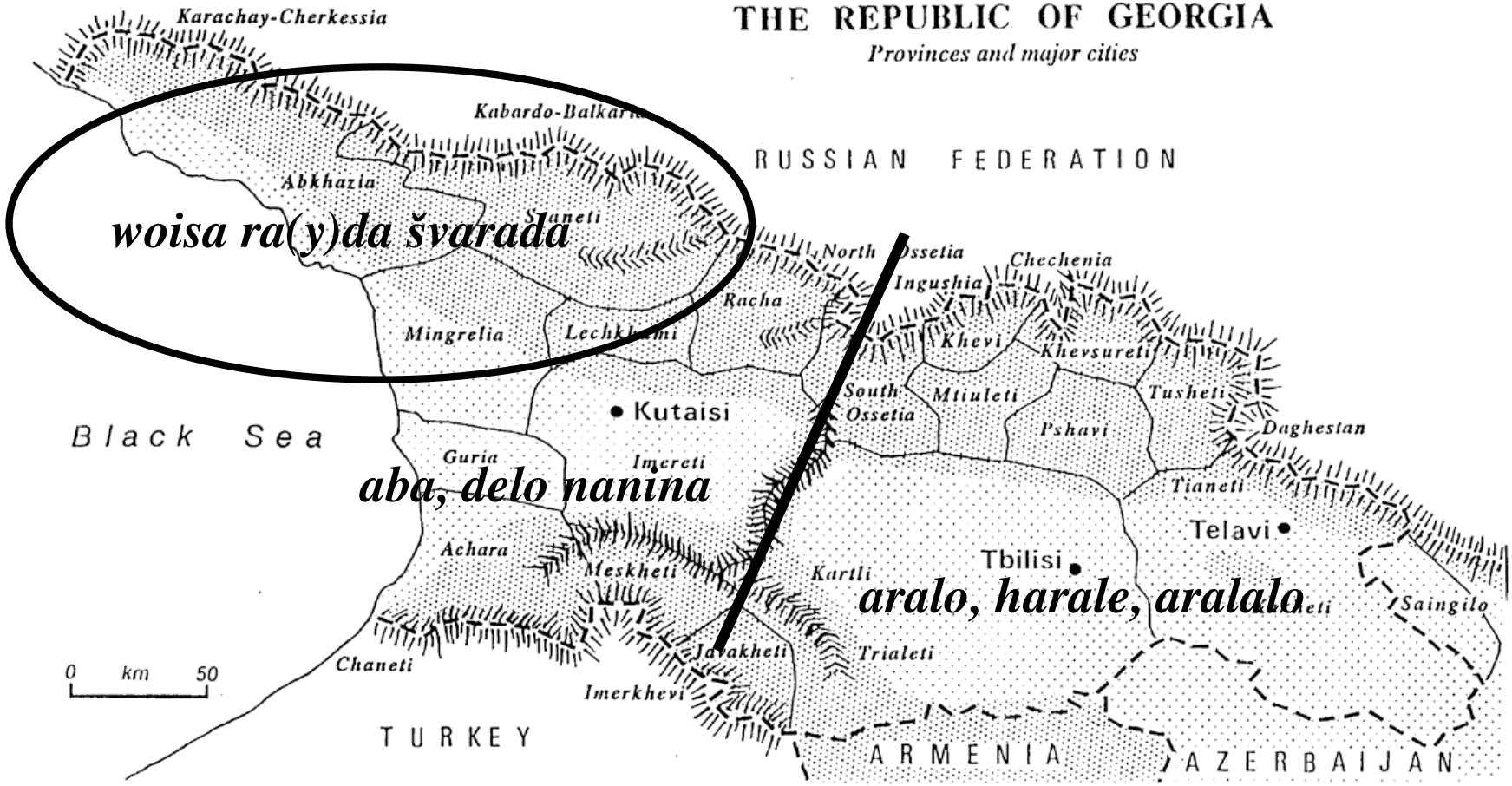
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Provinces and major cities
Karachay-Cherkessia
Kabardo-Balkaria
RUSSIAN FEDERATION
Abkhazia
Svaneti
North Ossetia
Chechenia
Ingushia
Racha
Mingrelia
Lechkhumi
Khevi
Khevsureti
South Ossetia
Mtiuleti
Tusheti
Kutaisi
Pshavi
Daghestan
Black Sea
Guria
Imereti
Tianeti
Telavi
Achara
Tbilisi
Meskheti
Kartli
Saingilo
Javakheti
Trialeti
Chaneti
Imerkhevi
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TURKEY
ARMENIA
AZERBAIJAN
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aba, delo nanina
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