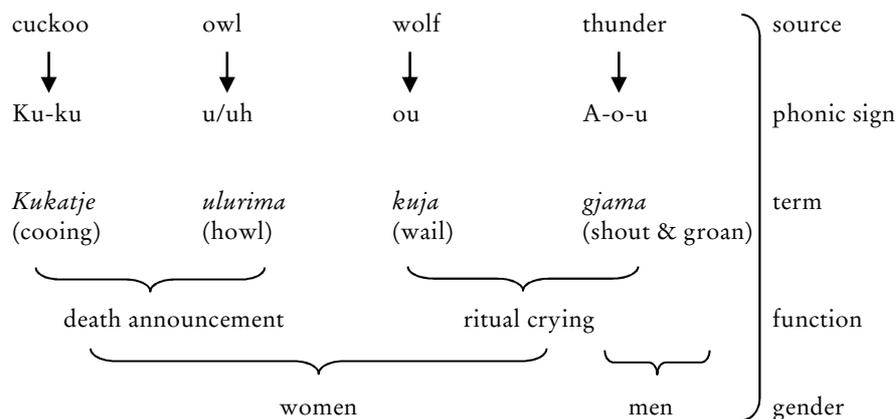


Traditional System of Mortuary Vocal Signals in Albania¹

BLEDAR KONDI (Halle/Saale)

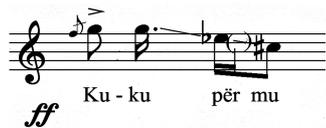
One of the aims of anthropological analysis is to identify the vocal signals of a traditional communication system in a death situation, classify them according to their function in that system and define their singular, particular and universal features. Imagination of death and bereavement, its intuitive deduction and vocal-behavioural externalization as howling, wailing, screaming etc. seems to hypostatize the archetype of crying itself among various local traditions and peoples. However, a howl or a wail can serve as an archetype only when it serves as an ideal for imitation. The expressive vocalisation of affective states shows a remarkable specificity in Albanian space: *ulurima* (howl), *kuja* (wailing) in Toskëria (south) and *kukatja* ('cooing', 'outcry'), *gjama* (roar) in Gegëria (north) are the most emblematic and significant sonic symbols which are extracted from real and mythical sources and are functionally integrated within a socio-cultural system of death and crying:



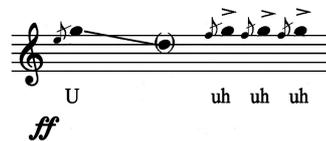
The comprehension of this vocal system calls for the theory of original mimesis, which in an ancient context means 'to bring for presentation', 'to express', 'to make similar to', 'to imitate', 'to replicate', 'to picture'. The traditional communicative system with vocal signals finds its *raison d'être* in the imitation of nature for the beginning of everything should be according to it. In Platonic terms, one might assume that signal-painting and uttered words 'are akin to the matter which they describe'. Co-existence of two socio-cultural paradigms – imitation of nature and subjective self-expression – makes no self-contradiction within Albanian funeral crying, although the contraries are mutually destructive. In this case they project, generate and

1 This article is realized within the frame of dissertation on *Death and Ritual Crying* – an anthropological approach to Albanian funeral traditions, Halle 2011.

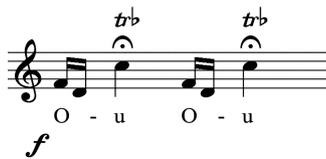
neutralize the psychic tension of bereavement and mourning. Fortunately the women in rural areas have preserved the ritual practice until today, but unfortunately they have lost the primal meaning. So, before going on to explain these terms in detail according to their source, linguistic meaning, vocal symbolism, ritual function and local aesthetics, it is necessary to note the musical transcription of vocal contours in order to clarify ambiguity and avoid any confusion between interjection and folk terminology:



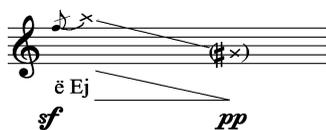
Kukatje (cooing) → cuckoo's outcry
Geg women



Ulurima (howl) → owl's hooting
Lab & Tosk women



Kuja (wail) → wolf's howling
Tosk women



Gjama (shout) → thunderclap
Geg men

Cuckoo and cooing 'Kukatja'

Since the ancient Egyptian civilisation up to the present-day pre-industrial societies, the bird has been seen as a symbol of spirit, a messenger, a singer of the graves and a mourner. The sound ideals of crying borrowed from birds, which are transmigrated spirits of the dead, shed light on a significant aspect of human nature: the living cry like their own dead and thus lament turns into a magical technique of communication between the existential realms. S. Feld offers a marvellous description of the Kaluli ornithological categories clearly based on the sonic, behavioural and moral characteristics of the birds in Papua, New Guinea. The complex features of the local 'bird families' can be systematically classified into three groups, respectively of noise, language and song as follows:

1. birds that make a lot of noise (*mada ganafodan*), that weep (*yelan*), that only 'sound' (*imilisi gonalan*);

2. birds that say their names (*ene wi salan*), that speak Bosavi language (*Bosavi to salan*);
3. birds that whistle (*bolan*), that sing gisalo song (*gisalo molan*)².

The entire sound symbolism of the Kaluli spiritual world clearly reflects the already-known sources of music in Hellenic antiquity: *pathos*, *logos*, *melos*, but at the same time – despite the factor of transmigration included in the Kaluli mythology – it also reconfirms the common origin of music from screaming, speaking and singing.

The exclusive terms for death cries and funeral crying in Geg areas (North Albania, western Montenegro, Kosovo, ethnic Albanians in Macedonia) *kukatja*, *kukama* ('cooing' or 'coo-coo-making') and *me kukat* ('to coo', 'to call coo-coo' i.e. 'to cry', 'to lament') derive from the ominous calls of the cuckoo and owl. Unlike the owl (*kukuvajkë*, lit. 'coo-coo-woe') or *kukumjaçka* (lit. coo-coo-meow), which is identified only with the death realm, underworld, fatality and curses, the cuckoo (*qyqe*, *kuku*) is a neutralized symbol of woe, transmigrated spirit, life prophecy, springtime and summer in Albanian folk beliefs; this bird synthesizes both the values of life and death and therefore it 'sings' and 'cries'. The laconic, onomatopoeic interjection *ku-ku* is a tragic bell that is heard especially among family members upon the first encounter with the death of a loved one; while the exclamatory phrase *ku-ku për mu!* (lit. 'coo-coo for me', 'cuckoo is calling for me', i.e. 'woe is me'), *ku-ku medet*, (which can be interpreted as 'what a misfortune', and a desperate call for help), and simply *ku-ku* are employed in ritual crying and mourning as significant poetic symbols for cosmic disaster:

Oh kuku, për ne kuku!
*Diell i lum prej qiellit zhduku!*⁴

Oh coo-coo upon us, coo-coo!³
Blissful sun, get away from heavens!

The verb 'to coo' *me kukat* signifies a technical term of mortuary crying as well as a metaphorical expression of adjuration to the dead [Montenegro]:

Çilja arkës ti at kapak
*Nigjoi motrat tue kukatë!*⁵

Open the cover of your coffin
Hear your sisters cooing!

The word *qyqe* (cuckoo) is the most common and meaningful symbol for self-address, self-identification and self-expression of women in their ritual crying; mourning women in funeral ceremonies try to console a bereaved mother with the socially codified expression of incitement and challenge: 'cry thou cuckoo, cry' (*qaj moj qyqe*, *qaj*); and beyond the event of death the interjections *ku-ku* (coo-coo) and *qyqja un'* (me the cuckoo) serve to express 'well-tempered' affects of wonder, dissatisfaction and pity in daily language. The mysterious communication between human and prophetic bird has been widely documented in Albanian traditional culture and both young and old people usually adjure and ask the bird to foretell their life ac-

2 See FELD 1990: 30, 72.

3 A common translation of this verse would be 'Woe are us woe!'

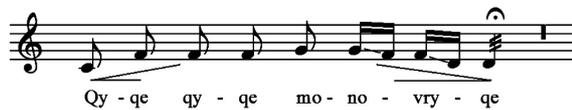
4 BERISHA & CETA 1987: 57.

5 GOJÇAJ 1975: 104.

cording to a three-line recitative formula uttered three times, as in the village of Suhareka, Kosovo:

<i>Qyqe qyqe kallaqyqe,</i>	cuckoo, cuckoo horse-of-cuckoo
<i>pash ty, pash mu,</i>	May I have you, may you have me,
<i>me m'kallzu sa vjet kam me rru!</i>	tell me, how many years will I live?

In spring the maidens from the southern area of the Kolonja region used to perform a ritual dance in a half-circle accompanied by a two-part song called 'the cuckoo is singing on the cliff', in which the cuckoo announces the wedding of unmarried boys and girls, the parental happiness of those who are married as well as the 'accompaniment of the old women' to the grave⁶. Two significant cases are encountered in the Lab area, South Albania: the only female singer of the vocal group Lapardha, Bardha Brahimaj, improvised the widespread mythical story of a sacrificed brother and sister transformed into bird and cuckoo using a plaintive recitative formula⁷:



<i>Qyqe qyqe monovryqe,</i>	Cuckoo, cuckoo, lonely one,
<i>Ç'e bëre të të vëlla,</i>	where did you leave your brother?
<i>Që ta therën mu si ka,</i>	being slaughtered like an ox,
<i>Mu si ka e mu si lopë,</i>	like an ox and like a cow,
<i>Gjakun ia hodhën në gropë;</i>	his blood thrown in the pit.

While a shepherd from the village of Tërbaç 'tells' the same story on his twin flute (*culë dyjare*): two melodic formulas, the cuckoo's call and pastoral, plaintive motive of the shepherd invoke the mythical call and response between mortal man and the prophetic bird (see next page).

In addition, Lab women prefer to use the ill-omened bird of cadavers, the croaking raven (*korba*) of doom and gloom as a self-curse symbol in the feminine gender: *a un korba* ('oh me the raven'). According to the custom of the village of Tërbaç, 'a woman has to cry out 'me the raven o my brother' (*korba vëlla*) only for the members of her tribe, but not for others'. An old woman from the village of Kuç, who was crying for the dead people of her tribe buried in the village's graveyard, presented herself as a black raven with many grave wounds in her soul:

<i>Ounë kam plagë shumë!</i>	O-I have so many wounds
<i>E korba, korba,</i>	me the raven, the raven,
<i>O se më janë vrarë me plumbë,</i>	O for my people have been killed
	by bullet
<i>E korba, korba ...</i>	me the raven, the raven ...

6 See transcription of KRUTA 1989: 173–174.

7 Several shorter variants of this myth are recalled and spelled like a threefold incantation in other local traditions of Toskëria, South Albania.

The emotive syllable of howling *ou* is unified with the word *unë* 'I' and instead of the spoken variant *ou unë* (ou I) the mourner composes the emotive word *ounë* ('woe-I' or 'woe-me'). This poetic symbol is further deepened by self-identification of Lab women as 'nun' and 'night': *a un korba, murga, nata!*

The musical score is arranged in three systems. The first system features the Shepherd's part on a treble clef staff with a tempo marking of ♩ = 152. It includes a rest followed by a melodic phrase marked with *8va* and *Ma*, and the instruction *poco frulato*. The Cuckoo part is on a lower staff, starting with a *mf* dynamic and a melodic line marked with *8va* and *tr*. The second system continues the Cuckoo part with a melodic line marked *8va* and the instruction *acce - le - ran - do*. The third system shows the Shepherd's part with a melodic line marked *8va* and a final melodic phrase marked *8va*.

The Howl – *Ulurima*

The howl is the most horrible and sublime manifestation of a death experience. In an Albanian linguistic context, the word *ulurimë* means 'ululation'⁸, 'howling', 'wailing' and according to folk representations, the storm, wolf, and widow howl from fury, hunger and pain; hence a characteristic verse in Lab crying came to be used as a local standard for emotional outburst: *ulurit si gratë e veja* (howl like widowed women). A howl expresses the individual incapability to face death alone; it's an alarm, a symptom for crisis, a call for help, vocal explosion filling the human space with the powerful and horrific vibrations of the presence of death. Sometimes, the paralysed reaction of a woman shocked by death is immediately compensated by the tumultuous group of relative women who wildly burst into howls in all directions: *upwards* for the fallen catastrophe, *sideways* to the people for joining them, and *backwards* into their wretched condition. In order to better illustrate the particular local system of howls and wails in the area of Labëria we will refer to two different sources of information: a foreign visitor from the 19th century (an 'outsider with exotic glasses')

8 The term *ulurimë* or *ulërimë* can also be translated as 'ululation'; the etymological context of Old English shows that 'ululation' comes from the owl's hoot and its reduplicated imitation ('ule' = 'owl'), but we will apply the term 'howl' as more coherent with Albanian linguistic context but also to avoid any confusion with ululations of joy among the Arabs, Africans or Amerindian people. There is no 'howl of joy' in Albanian traditional culture.

and a native peasant of our time (an ‘insider with emic competence’). The British painter Edward Lear (1850) described Albania under the age-long Ottoman oppression as ‘the most depressing of horrors’, as ‘Siberia or the exile of Turkey in Europe’ for all the Western officials living there, and as ‘vita d’inferno’ for the Roman Catholic clergies in whose eyes the poor Albanians were but ‘maledetti tutti dal cielo’. Despite his ‘indescribable dark terror’, the painter Lear offered invaluable personal experiences and keen ethnomusicological observations on the dramatic soundscape of death and crying in the Himara region and the city of Gjirokastra, historically considered the heart of Labëria. Only women – the real ‘hardworking race’ throughout Albania – ‘pour forth lamentable yodelling wailings for departed relatives’ while ‘washing clothes in the stream’⁹:

But hark! – wailing again! The quiet of the hilly city is suddenly broken and all the world of Arghyro Kastro [Gjirokastra] is startled with ill-omened cries! Heavens! What howls! ... The Cogia [imam] is chanting from the mosque opposite a few wild notes, most impressively sad as they rise above the small tumult of little cries in the lower part of the ravine. Each note is held on for an incredibly long time, and is distinctly marked with singular power and effect. Then the immediate family of the deceased swell the chorus, yodelling and shrieking with deafening clamour, and wonderful cries, half sob, half piercing howls; house after house takes up the doleful tale, and in less than an hour the melody of grief pervades the whole place, bursting forth from crags above, and resounding from depths below – shrill and solemn, bass and treble – one general lamentation and woe. Thank goodness, none of my neighbours in the khan [hostel] feel it incumbent on them to add to the wailing! for they are all travelling merchants, and share not in the three-hilled city’s mourning ...¹⁰.

It is very obvious from this description that the wail-like howls held on prolonged notes, which are imitated and transmitted house to house and spread like fire over the city, serve to unfold the tragic event; while ‘shrieking’, ‘yodelling’, and ‘wonderful cries’ (half sob – half howl) in chorus compose ‘the melody of grief’, the ‘doleful tale’, i.e. the collective funeral crying of the women, which, only in this city, is identified as *e qarë me botë* (crying with pouring out). Here ‘crying’ signifies ‘to lament with howls and words’, while ‘pouring out’ refers to intense or convulsive sobbing. In addition, the folk expression *qaj e bot* ‘cry and pour tears out’ is also encountered as a threefold magical expression of love and pain until suicide in any fairy tale from the Korça region. ‘The tremulous and multi-vocal wailing’ was permanently ‘in full play’ in this geographical region until the end of the 20th century; today, many villages in the south have become dramatically depopulated as a consequence of massive migration, both domestic and abroad, after the ‘90s, and their local traditions have partly or fully sunk under non-praxis and oblivion¹¹. Despite this voiceless landscape of *natura morta*, an old man from the village of Bolena, city of Vlora, recalled the female communication system of howls and wails for death events. He stated:

⁹ LEAR 1988: 77, 85, 110, 161.

¹⁰ LEAR 1988: 164–165.

¹¹ See PISTRICK 2009: 66–67.

“The women started to wail (*kuje*). They went out into the yard and howled several times in order to be heard by the neighbours and the village. As soon as the neighbours, brotherhood heard the howl they stopped working and ran quickly to where the death had occurred. After the wailing has been initiated with howls (*hapja e kujës me ulërimë*), the women and men in the village gathered in groups according to the village quarters went to the ceremony of death. When the women arrived near the house where the death had occurred, they began by howling *ú ú ú ú*. The first one began howling, then the second and so on in order up to the last. When the last one began howling, the first stopped and when the last one was done the first started again. This continued until they entered the room of the deceased. They ceased howling and after having sat down on both sides of the room they began to cry [with words]” (KONDI 2005).

‘To begin wailing with howling’ signifies first of all to make it known publicly that a death had occurred in one’s home and that the house was open for ceremonial crying and condolences. Everyone living in a local area intuitively identifies through experience the conventional or arbitrary wails and cries of women without recourse to any verbal articulation. When somebody dies in a village, the women do not expect an ‘invitation’ but run quickly of their own accord to the house in mourning. Howling, wailing and crying compose the ‘welcome etiquette’ to all the people coming for the ‘difficult event’ (*vaki*). Even today, the few old women forgotten by death still ‘receive’ their fellow villagers ‘with laments and howls’ (*i presin me vaj e ulërimë*) in every funeral ceremony. A household is called a *ksoll* (cottage) only in cases of death and every man should enter without calling out or knocking on the door. Hence the folk saying *o kasolle ku na mblodhe*, may be translated as a rhetoric question – ‘why did you call us o cottage?’ – but is explained as a pitiful fact of life: ‘only death makes the living be together’. The act of embracing at the beginning of the ceremony signifies spiritual support and co-suffering with the bereaved – ‘you are not alone’ (*nuk je vetëm*) – but embracing after the ritual crying implies consolation with an unuttered imperative: ‘enough with crying’ (*boll qave!*). The same system of communication and ritual function has been also applied in the Zagoria region: *e qarë me ulurimë* (crying with howl) was reserved for mutual exchanges of vocal signals between the mourning women while on their way to the house of the deceased, and *e qarë me gojë* (crying with mouth), which is still preserved and practised by women, signifies the ritual crying, i.e. trembling tearful discourse in loud voices for the dead. Some dwellers in the Lumi i Vlorës region, South Albania, affirm that ‘strong lamenting and wailing is done for young people’ (*për të rinjtë bëhet vaj e kujë e madhe*) and specify that ‘one cries for the old man but howls for the young’ (*për të vjetrin qahet, por për të riun ulërihet*). Thus, howling seems to be reserved especially for premature and unbearable losses of the young, and crying for the expected (and sometimes even wished) departure of older people.

During the ’50s Italian ethnomusicologists recorded a female responsorial lamentation for a dead son by the Arbëresh, (ethnic Albanians) in Molise, Calabria, South Italy. Although it was not a formal funeral setting, it remains a rare historical audio recording in which the wolf’s howl is ritualized into an emotive-antithetic response: three women unfold consecutive ascending howls at the top of their voice, following the imitation principle like in death announcements; after reaching the climax with a

powerful crescendo they turn immediately and join together in a declamatory dramatic gesture of death denial: *hu, hu, hu, s'është e vërtet* (hoo, hoo, hoo, it's not true!):

3 women

f Hu hu s'është e vërtet

f Hu s'është e vërtet

f Hu s'është e vërtet

Imitated howls → Parallel declamatio discharge

Charge

If you ask the Lab villagers 'why don't you howl any more while 'crying with words'? – some will simply answer: 'because it is very hard' (*sepse është shumë e rëndë*), i.e. it is emotionally unbearable, self-destructive. However, wailing is well preserved as a second or third voice in various multipart songs for historical migration (*kurbet*), compulsory military service (*nizamia*), historical dramas and elegies. In the social context of traditional music-making, wailing is technically designated as *ia kthen me grykë* (lit. 'he turns it with the throat' i.e. the 2nd voice responds to the 1st voice with crying, wailing). Plasticity, impulse, contour, colour and invocative power of a yodelled wail, keep its original aim and are therefore sufficient to convey the tragic character of every song.

But Lab people have another expressive vocal technique: the trembling jaw is an immediate sign of emotional catastrophe for the habitants of Lab area. It may be heard in alternation with the characteristic vowels of hysterical sobbing (*ë-ë*), the affective syllables of shaking fever (*bë-bë*), astonishment and dreadful pain (*bo-bo*). The speed, intensity and dynamic of this tremolo points to and also varies according to the emotional involvement of the mourner: in cases of bearable loss, the vocal-emotional effect of a trembling jaw is commonly heard at the end of every uttered phrase, namely, the gravitational sounds of 'crying with words' which serve to discharge the tension as well as 'to respond to his/her self' (*ia kthen vetë*). But when the weight of loss is unbearable, the utmost uninterrupted trembling of jaw will electrify the entire cried discourse. Such a trembling voice unfolds the sulphurous image of a burned spirit that is insoluble in tears. As a mourning woman or man cries and speaks with voice and body according to the custom, the modulating throat and trembling jaw will employ a great number of variations in the traditional mode of sound production, in order to articulate the rhetoric of dread and painful suffering with its characteristic effects. The expressive technique of the intense trembling of

jaw is symbolically employed in vocal multipart songs for the new migration phenomenon and recent human tragedies after the fall of communism.

Wail – *Kuja*

Like every phonic sign, *kuja* is a unit with two facets: meaning and value (*significatum*) and vocal form (the *significans*). The local term *kuja* ('cooya') and poetic self-address refers to the cuckoo's cry, while the vocal line and emotive syllable *ou* to the wolf's howl; therefore, we will translate this melodic unit as 'wail' in order to preserve the balance between different inherent references. The *kuja* is a symbol for catastrophe, death, self-sacrifice and grief and it constitutes a folk device for cathartic discharge: the griever repeats ceaselessly the wailing from beginning until the end of the crying, thus turning it literally into an endless torment for herself, but at the same time as a fire of self-purification. It happens that the continual wailing of a mourner does not go beyond its own limits, but is satisfied with remaining within itself. So the grief is manifested but not resolved ...



The essential features are ascending contour on the minor seventh (*heptad*) or the emblematic intervallic constellation: a 'light' descending minor third and 'hard' ascending minor seventh, throat → head vocal production. The immediate spring of the voice in a higher register and its prolonged suspension unfolds the progressive tension, which will be further generated through a yodelled repetition, tinged by constellation of dark-light emotive syllables: *ou, eu, ei, oi, oui, eui*. All the microtonal fluctuations, trill, tremolo effect, brightness of falsetto and so on are projected on the held tone. But the contour of intonation adds new meanings to the *significatum*: the highest note is the magnetic pole of vocal signal but heaven is the target, as the folk expression goes: 'to howl until the top of the heavens' (*të ulurish deri në kupë të qielit*). Thus, the wail is raised as a direct question to the dead, death, world, and God, and the non-reply makes it sound open, doubtful, unfinished and unanswerable. The dark closed syllable *ou* is charged with such an ominous power that a hearer sometimes has the impression that a woman is screaming *into* this syllable with tightly constricted vocal chords.

The image of death as a wolf is carved in the wail and according to local beliefs *po ulëriu buçja si ujk, do ikë një me të shumtit*. *Është dorë me një* (If the she-dog howls like a wolf, then one will join to majority [i.e. the world of the dead]. That is as simple as one + one). Georg von Hahn observed in South Albania that the household women gathered around the dead 'cry out in a terrifying wail, reminiscent of the howling of wolves (*Gebeule der Wölfe*), were it not mixed with high-pitched screams'¹². This vocal ideal and symbolic association should have been common in

12 VON HAHN 1960: 535.

several parts of Europe: the wild hunting stories from the German-Teutonic cultural sphere are deeply pervaded by that ‘shudder which came over people when they heard the baying of the demonic death hounds’¹³. It is no accident that the folk funeral lament has been documented by various synods in Latin and ecclesiastic lexicons as *ululatus*¹⁴. While the French music theorist of the 13th century, Elias Salomonis, described the vocal style of Lombard secular songs as *ululant ad modum luporum* (howling in the wolf’s manner). If the triton interval has been historically stigmatized as ‘devil’ in sacred music, then this ascending seventh may be designated as ‘wolf’ in funeral crying. Even the old saying ‘to hunt with the pack’ calls for a new ‘specific’ translation, namely, ‘to howl *like* and *with* the wolves’.

$\text{♩} = 120$
 f e - i e - i e - i e - i

$\text{♩} = 180$
 o - u o - u o - u o - u

$\text{♩} = 118$
 bi-rë bi-bi-ri në - i o - u o - u o - o - u o - u

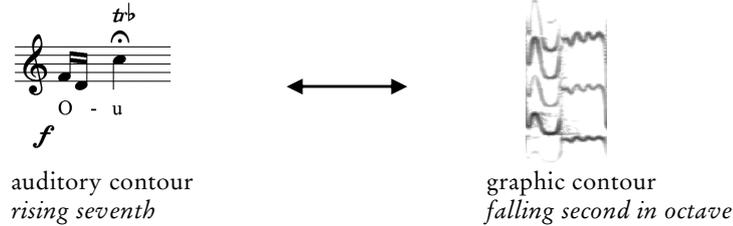
The powerful wails and cries of women exhibit two distinct types of relationship according to the situation: they are directly observable in the death announcement as isolated communicative signals, but they assume an expressive and contrastive function as discrete formulas in the course of ritual crying. In the Tosk case, the ‘exact’ meaning of ritual crying should not be defined by verbal improvisation of the mourner as it varies according to the proportion between speaking and wailing: the balance or predominance of one parameter is decisive. In South Albanian funeral crying it is the wail that gives identity and unity to the crying as verbal configurations are always changing within the limits of local traditions.

A striking feature of the electronic representation of a sound’s physical properties is that the punctuating wail is visually represented in the spectrogram not as an ascending seventh but as a descending second in a higher octave. The reason is simple: within the course of crying, the voice of the sonless mother is nasalized by sobbing

13 HERZOG 2000: 46.

14 DI NOLA 2003: 470.

and the computer recognizes and emphasizes the upper harmonics of her manipulated timbre; hence, the contradiction between audible perception and musical transcription of a sonic fact and the visual representation of its acoustical properties in a wideband spectrogram.



In Tosk folk taxonomy the female responsorial lamentations are usually called ‘crying with order’ (*e qarë me rend*) or ‘crying with recount’ (*e qarë me numërim*). The latter refers only to the discourse of the lamenter who has to ‘count and recount’ all the biographical facts, good deeds and virtues of the dead, while the accompaniment and support of the present women is taken for granted: ‘To recount’ means to shape the personal suffering in a special form of cultural coherence, which is induced and dictated by a regulative power of the human interaction: *the ethos*. The responsorial rhythm articulates the individual crying and the replied collective refrains – exclamatory, assertive, interrogative or negative – constitute a general stylistic feature for the ritual funeral lamentations in ancient times as well as for many present-day traditional cultures across the world.

How individual crying turns into responsorial performance

Solo lamenting-woman

recited verse

wailed formula

leader

women group

The Greek funeral lamentation appears in its most archaic form according to the determined order: *exarhos* – *stegnamoi*, i.e. an individual recited discourse alternated with cried collective refrains accompanied by chest beatings¹⁵. Homer unequivocally expressed in the *Iliad* that the *stegnamoi* of the female chorus constitute in their essence the most common formula for following a lament. The *epodos* (after-song) of the Xerxes lamentation for a military catastrophe has been constructed over the reiterated ululations of the female chorus¹⁶:

<i>Ξε.</i>	Βοα νυν αντιδουπα μοι	<i>Xerxes.</i>	Cry aloud, echo my cries.
<i>Χο.</i>	οιοι οιοι.	<i>Chorus.</i>	Οιοί, οιοί!
–	αιακτος ες δομους κει	–	Go wailing, to your homes.
–	ω ω!	–	Ιό, Ιό!

Such a relation between the *korifea* and the chorus in the elaborated lamentations of the tragedies, and especially the emblematic emotive cried refrain ‘οιοί!’ are formally confirmed even in the modules of the Tosk female funeral lamenting between the leading woman who ‘recounts’ and the group who ‘cuts it’ (*ia pret*) and completes her discourse with the periodical emotive unified refrain, composed by a falsetto wail:

mf $\text{♩} = 168$
T'ke-qen mo - tra ty moj Sha - no
o - i - ih

qysh na the - ve kra - hë tē o
o - i - ih

The separation of emotive refrain from the individual discourse of the lamenter and its transfer to the group of women participating in the rite is a very useful technique to control the dangerous emotional disorder of the bereaved as well as to lighten her burden of suffering. Hereby the grief regimen will be disciplined and distributed

¹⁵ See NILSSON 1911: 56.

¹⁶ After ALEXIOU 1999: 135.

We have to first distinguish between two essential types of vocal-verbal relationship in ritual crying of the Kolonja region and the city of Gjirokastra. The normative structure of ‘crying with wailing’ is composed of two discrete formulas: the wail and verbal utterance. The new verbal element that is added from outside the self-contained nucleus of wailing without affecting it may be called *expansion by subordination*. Tension of verbal density is followed, amplified and ‘resolved’ to tension of vocal climax. However, when the verbal content is unified with the wail without modifying its pre-existing structure and function, than one may speak here of *integration by coordination*. The essential difference of female funeral crying between two neighbouring local traditions becomes clearer: ‘speak and wail’ like Tosk or ‘wail every word’ like Lab¹⁷.

Toks



O son of yo-ur mo - ther o - u o - u

Lab



O son of your mo - ther

Both cases examined hitherto – Tosk wailing with verbal expansion and Lab verbalised wailing – offer two different cultural solutions to the same emotional problem; but at the same time they point to the central importance and determinative function of wailing in the constitution of a codified message. The spoken word does not fail to recognize the emotional gravity and healing power of the wail; for that reason, the wail is the primal source, generative process and final purpose of female ritual crying.

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17 In order to simplify the comparison between two melodic patterns we have taken a common translated verse *o bir i nenes ou!* (o son of your mother, ou) which helps in understanding the internal relationship between the wail and word.

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Audio-visual materials

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Diacritical signs



Invoiced breath



Shouted or spoken pitch



Scratched sound



Trembling jaw