

MEKELLE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC AND VISUAL ARTS POST
GRADUATE PROGRAM IN ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

ANALYSIS OF DIRGE IN THE CITY OF AXUM

BY

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WOUBE KASSAYE (PhD)

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC
AND VISUAL ARTS FOR PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

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DECLARATION

Tsehay Niguse Fitiwi, declare that this Thesis on “**Analysis of dirge in the city of Axum society**” is my original work for the MA degree in Ethnomusicology. It has not been submitted elsewhere, and all sources have been acknowledged. It was conducted under the supervision of Professor **Woube Kassaye** (Advisor) and Department of Visual Arts and Music, College of Social Sciences and Language, Mekelle University, in the academic year 2024/2025.

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Signature

Date

Glossary of local terms

Tigrinya to English Related Meaning:

ሓዘንተኛ – Mourner: - A person who is grieving or attending a funeral.

ሓዘን - Sorrow or Grief: - Deep distress caused by loss.

በኸያታ - Cry/Grief- To shed tears as an expression of distress.

ቀብሪ ወይም ምቕባሪ - Funeral: - The ceremonies or service held shortly after a person's death.

ምፅንናዕወይ ምድዕዓስ - Comfort/solace: - To console or provide relief from distress.

ነፍሲ - soul/spirit: - The spiritual or immaterial part of a human being.

ፀሎት -prayer: A solemn request or expression of thanks to a deity.

ሕብረተሰብ - community: A group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common.

ሸማግለ - Elder: an older person in a community often respected for wisdom.

ፈምዳ - Tradition: A belief, custom, or way of doing something that has existed for a long time.

ባህሊ - Culture: The customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or group.

ታሪኽ - History: - The study of past events.

ገጣሚ - poet: - A person who writes poetry. (Relevant for Melqes performers).

ድምዳ - Sound/voice: - The sound produced by the vocal organs.

ንብዓት - Tears: - Drops of fluid secreted from the eyes, typically in response to emotion.

ዝኸረ - Moumery: - The faculty by which the mind stores and remembers information.

ክብረ - Respect: - A feeling of deep admiration for someone or something elicited by their abilities.

ፍቕረ - Love: - An intense feeling of deep affection.

ሂወት - Life: - The condition the distinguishes animals and plants from inorganic matter.

ሞት – death: - The permanent cessation of all vital functions of a living organism.

ተስፋ – Hope: - A feeling of expectation and desire for certain things to happen.

ስድራቤት - Family: - A feeling of expectation and desire happens.

መቅብረ - Grave/Tomb: - A place of burial for a dead body.

ከቤሮ - Drum: - A percussion traditional musical instrument.

ፀናፅል - cestrum: - A types of percussion traditional musical instrument.

ፅንሃ - Like cymbal: - A types of percussion traditional musical instrument.

ደወል (ሰላዕ) - Bell: - made of stone and metal which is types of percussion

ጡሩምቧ - Earphone: - Musical instrument, which is an instrument similar to horn.

መለኸት - Billowing: - A horn of Musical instrument similar to Trombone.

እምብልታ - Billowing: - Musical instrument, which is calling instrument made of shambeqo.

ድባብ - Ornament: - Semis to Umbrella a color full or highly decorated.

ካባ (ልብሲ) Semi- dress: - a liturgical dress highly decorated wearing by priests.

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Abstract

This abstract explores the Axumite society's unique expressions of grief or mourning or dirge in Tigray, Ethiopia, distinguishing between the formalized chants of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church and the cultural, secular dirge. While the church's zema system, established in the 6th century by Saint Yared, offers a structured framework with modes like Ezil, Giez, and Araray, Dirge's emerges as a powerful form of oral poetry and lamentation. This practice uniquely defiance social norms that advocate emotional restraint, instead promoting raw, uninhibited vocalizations as a cathartic and authentic means of expression, predominantly by women. As a dynamic form of public lament, Elegy transforms personal loos into a collective narrative of suffering, particularly in response to socio- political traumas. It was a cappella nature amplifies unfiltered emotion, setting it apart from other musical forms. Ultimately, through sophisticated poetic device and its improvisational oral tradition, dirge serves not merely as an outlet for despair but as a profound art form that helps mourner's structure grief, reconstruct reality, and preserve society identity and resilience.

Keywords: *dirge, Axum, Mourning, E.O.T.C Zema system, Lamentation.*

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

In every human society, the profound experience of grief and loss was an inescapable part of life, prompting individuals and communities to develop intricate mourning rituals to navigate the emotional and social consequences of death. The universal human response to death was extensively explored in various studies, highlighting music's role as an antidote to sorrow and a means of navigating societal attitudes towards life and death. Specific examples from different continents further reinforce how music aids in grief processing, as a crucial coping mechanism (E Hanser *et al.*, 2023; Wojtkowiak *et al.*, 2021). Recent research also demonstrates the tangible benefits of communal singing for bereaved individuals, supporting music's function in healing and building resilience (Fancourt *et al.*, 2019). Even in the therapeutic context, music interventions are recognized for facilitating non verbal emotional expression during grief, offering crucial opportunities for connection and coping (Gillespie *et al.*, 2024).

Music consistently emerges as a central, transformative, and culturally indispensable element within these universal bereavement patterns. Beyond its aesthetic appeal, music holds immense power as a cultural phenomenon and a communicative medium, capable of conveying emotions, narrating histories, and forming collective identities that words alone often cannot (Martins *et al.*, 2021). It becomes a vital tool for social cohesion, uniting in the emotionally charged atmosphere of ritual, where it can mark transitions and create spaces. Literature review consistently highlights music's ability to promote participant cohesion and social creation, particularly in shared experiences like grief (López de Aguilera *et al.*, 2025). Furthermore, music's unique capacity to enhance emotional and social development directly supports its role as a mediator for community cohesion and emotional processing within specific groups (Annet, 2024). Recent studies explicitly explore how music in traditional ceremonies helps mitigate social disparities and foster a spirit of oneness, reinforcing social harmony (Matiure, 2025).

This study was rooted in ethnomusicology, a discipline dedicated to understanding music not in isolation, but as a dynamic cultural practice deeply embedded within its specific social and historical context (Recob, 2019). Moving beyond a purely formal analysis of sound, this field investigated the intricate relationships between music, human behavior, belief systems, and social structures. Ethnomusicology sought to understand what music meant to a society, how it functioned in daily life and ritual, and how traditions were passed on. The holistic approach, which also considered the ethical and methodological aspects of fieldwork, solidified the disciplines comprehensive perspective on music (DuBose, 2024).

The study focused on mourning music practices within the Axumite society, located in Ethiopia's Tigray region. Axum with its ancient imperial history and deep spiritual significance possessed a remarkably rich and distinctive cultural heritage. Despite Ethiopia's vast ethnomusicological landscape, the specific musical traditions surrounding mourning in Axum had remained largely unexplored and under documented in academic scholarship, leaving a significant gap in understanding the nuanced practices of grief and loss in this historically unique society. Research archaeological insights into Axumite death and community engagements with the deceased provided crucial historical context for current mourning rituals (Basanti & Mekonen, 2023).

This research aimed to bridge that critical gap by systematically analyzing Aksumite dirge music. The study identified its unique forms and structure. Explored its multifaceted sociocultural functions and understood its specific performance contexts and the roles of its practitioners. By illuminating the intricate relationship between sounds, emotion, cultural practice in Axumite mourning rituals, this study made a significant contribution to ethnomusicological knowledge. It enhanced the understanding of Ethiopian cultural heritage and provided valuable insights into the universal. Yet culturally specific, ways in which humanity confronted and transcended grief through the enduring power of music (Muluneh, Peng, & Su, 2024).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Mourning rituals and the music that accompanies them are profoundly significant cultural expressions across human society, serving as critical mechanisms for individuals and communities to process loss, express grief, and facilitate healing (Fuentes-Sánchez *et al.*, 2025). In the Axum society, these rituals are deeply embedded in the social and spiritual fabric. Despite the recognized

cultural richness of Ethiopian musical tradition, the specific role, characteristics, and socio-cultural functions of mourning music within the Axum society remained largely undocumented and underanalyzed in academic literature (Degarege, 2023).

Existing studies on Ethiopian music often focus on religious or secular performance traditions. Overlooking the intricate shades of music performed in the context of grief (Muluneh, Peng, & Su, 2024). This gap in understanding leaves an incomplete picture of Axumite cultural heritage. Risks the potential loss of specific musical practices as generations pass, and limits the ability to appreciate how music contributes to communal resilience and coping mechanisms during times of mourning. Therefore, a systematic analysis of mourning music in Axum is crucial to fill this void, contributing to ethnomusicological knowledge and offering insights into the unique way this community navigates grief through sound.

1.3. Objective of the Study

1.3.1. General Objectives

The general objective of this study was to systematically analyze the forms, functions, and cultural significance of mourning music or dirge within the Axum society.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

1. To identify and document the various musical forms (e.g., vocal styles, melodic patterns, and rhythmic strictures) spastically employed in the mourning rituals in the Axum society.
2. To explore the socio-cultural functions of morning music, including its role in expressing grief, facilitating communal solidarity, and guiding the grieving process.
3. To investigate the context and specific performance practices of mourning music, including who performs it, when and where it was performed, and its interaction with other ritual elements.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The study made significance contributions to several academic fields and societies. In ethnomusicology, it provided original empirical data that enriched the understanding of African

mourning music traditions and added to the limited scholarship on Ethiopian indigenous musical practices. The findings also offered valuable accepting for anthropology and sociology, contributing to the anthropological accepting of grief, cohesion, and the role of expressive culture within the context of Axum society. Furthermore, the research served as a foundational reference for future more extensive studies on Ethiopian funeral rites, music, and the complex intersection of culture, emotion, and sound.

By documenting specific musical forms and practices, the study aided in the preservation of Axumite cultural heritage, which was particularly important in an era where traditional practices were susceptible to change and disappearance due to modernization. The research also had a direct positive impact on the local community by raising awareness among the Axum society of the profound cultural value and intricate beauty of their mourning music traditions, potentially encouraging their continued practice and appreciation.

1.5. Scope of the Study

This study will primarily focus on the Axum society. It will concentrate on mourning or dirge music examining its forms, functions, performance context, lyrical content, and transmission within the rituals associated with death and bereavement. The research was involve qualitative methods, including interviews with society elders, ritual specialists, and practitioners of mourning music, as well as observation and documentation of mourning rituals where culturally appropriate and permissible. The study was not investigate in to the historical evaluation of Axumiets mourning music beyond what was ascertained from contemporary oral traditions, nor wasl it conducted comparative analyses with mourning music from other Ethiopian regions or cultures, unless it directly informs the Axumite context. The period for data collection to be limited to the duration of the research time.

1.6. Organizations of the study

This study was structured into five chapters to systematically address the research objectives. Chapter 1: Introduction provided the foundational context, beginning with the Statement of the Problem, which highlighted the under- documented nature of Axumite dirge music. It then outlined the Objective of the Study, detailing both the general aim of analyzing the music's forms and

functions and the specific goals of documenting its musical forms, exploring its socio- cultural roles, and investigating its performance practices. The chapter also presented the Research Questions that guided the investigation, explained the Significance of the Study for various stakeholders, and defined the scope and Delimitations of the research, focusing on the Axum society and its dirge rituals.

The subsequent chapters built upon this foundation. Chapter 2 presented a comprehensive Literature, synthesizing existing knowledge on ethnomusicology, Ethiopia music, and cultural practices related to grief. Chapter 3 outlined the Research Methodology, detailing the qualitative ethnographic approach, data collection methods, and analytical procedures used in the study. Chapter 4 presented and discussed the Results and Findings of the research. Finally, Chapter 5 provided a Conclusion that summarized the study's key findings, offered recommendations for future research, and discussed the study's lamentations. This structure ensured a logical flow from the initial problem to the conclusions and their implications.

CHAPTER-TWO

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Universal Dimensions of Grief, Loss, and Ritual

This section explores the fundamental human experience of bereavement and the societal mechanisms developed to cope with it. It delves into psychological and sociological understanding of grief, highlighting its profound impact and the essential role of communal rituals in its navigation (Asatsa *et al.*, 2025).

2.1.1. The Anthropological and Sociological Functions of Mourning Rituals

This subsection examines the cross-cultural significance of mourning or dirge music rituals as structured pathways for expressing grief, fostering communal solidarity, and facilitating symbolic transitions. Ritual provided a sense of control and meaning in the face of loss, contributing significantly to emotional processing and the social reintegration of the bereaved (Calitz, 2017). Studies consistently confirm that well executed post funeral ritual can substantially aid adjustment to bereavement, leading to positive psychological outcomes for participants (Tang, 2025). This highlights the active role of both collective and individual practices in mediating the grieving process across diverse societies, offering a necessary framework for navigating profound sorrow (Carter & Peacock).

2.1.2. Recent Scholarship on Grief and Ritual Value

Recent Empirical studies, particularly from the last five to seven years, have specifically investigated the intangible benefits of ritual engagement for bereaved individuals. Findings consistently show that positive participations in funeral services correlate with greater emotional well-being (Mitima-Verloop *et al.*, 2021). The therapeutic value of communal singing, for example, has been demonstrated to improve mental health, self efficacy, and overall well being among the bereaved (Fancourt *et al.*, 2019). Such research reinforces the argument that rituals, especially those incorporating expressive arts like music, are critical for navigating loss effectively (Bourgeois-Guérin *et al.*, 2021). The cultural shaping of grief through ritual, relationship, and collective remembrance also remains a key area of contemporary focus (Silverman *et al.*, 2021).

2.2. The Multifaceted Role of Music in Human Culture and Society

This section explores the profound and diverse roles music plays in human societies across various cultures. It explores how music serves as a powerful medium for emotional expression and regulation, a crucial facilitator of social cohesion and identity, and an integral component in ritualistic and transformative experiences. This discussion draws heavily from recent scholarship in music psychology, sociology of music, and Ethnomusicology (Liu *et al.*, 2024).

2.2.1. Music as a Mediator of Emotion and Cognition

This subsection delves into music's profound impact on human emotion, cognitive processes, and neurological response. Music, through its various elements (melody, rhythm, harmony, and timbre), can evoke a wide spectrum of emotions, from joy and excitement to sadness and contemplation (Trost *et al.*, 2024). It influences mood, memory, attention, and even physiological states. Music's emotional power wasn't merely subjective but rooted in complex interactions between acoustic properties, individual experiences, and cultural conditioning, providing a unique, often nonverbal channel for processing complex emotional states, making it particularly effective in the context of intense feelings like grief (Wu *et al.*, 2025).

Recent neuroscience and psychological research consistently sustains music's profound capacity to mediate both emotional states and cognitive processes. As highlighted in a 2024 study on music-induced emotions and common behaviour, music possesses a powerful ability to suggest a wide range of emotions, from high-arousal happiness to low-arousal sadness, through its acoustic properties such as mode and tempo (Yang *et al.*, 2025). This research indicates that music-induced emotions weren't merely ephemeral experiences but can significantly influence subsequent cognitive and behavioral outcomes, even affecting pro-social decision-making (Carvalho *et al.*, 2022).

The authors underscore that music's emotional power was deeply intertwined with empathic responses, suggesting that sad music, for instance, can promote pro-social behavior by fostering a shared emotional experience, demonstrating its potential to influence social interactions beyond individual listening (Piccardi *et al.*, 2024; Yan *et al.*, 2024). Elaborates on how both natural and man-made sounds, including music, profoundly affect attention, memory, problem solving, and decision-making. This extensive work details how musical training can lead to neurocognitive

adaptations. Enhancing abilities such as verbal memory. Creativity and even identification. The authors emphasize that music influences extend beyond trained musicians, demonstrating its widespread positive effects on mood regulation and cognitive performance across individuals of all expertise levels. The illuminates how the brain's engagement with music, whether through active playing or passive listening, facilitates complex emotional and cognitive processing vital for human experience (Yi *et al.*, 2021).

2.2.2. Music's Contributions to the Social Cohesion and Collective Identity

This subsection explores how music was a powerful catalyst for building and maintaining social cohesion, strengthening group identity, and facilitating collective action. Shared musical experience (singing, dancing, and communal listening) fosters a sense of belonging, reinforces group solidarity, and transmits cultural values and narratives across generations (Pinder *et al.*, 2025). Music can also articulate, negotiate, and even challenge social boundaries and identities, making it an invaluable tool for communities facing periods of stress or transition, such as bereavement (López de Aguilera *et al.*, 2025).

Music's pervasive role in fostering social cohesion and building communities was consistently highlighted in recent scholarly reviews, particularly in cohesion and an interdisciplinary focus. Examining music's relevance to social work, concludes that music demonstrably promotes 'participants' cohesion, community creation, and transformative actions' aligned with broader social goals (Sowers, 2024). These comprehensive analyses, creating findings from numerous studies, underscore those collective musical activities transcend mere entertainment; actively generating shared experiences that strengthen social bonds and empower individuals within a communal framework. Its findings provide a strong empirical basis for music's function in uniting individuals and groups through shared sonic engagement (Müller, 2024).

Beyond direct participation, music also contributes to social cohesion by acting as a powerful medium for articulating collective identity and challenging hegemonic narratives (Myrie *et al.*, 2022). A recent theoretical reflection on critical music pedagogy, though focused on education, highlights music's fundamental capacity as an 'agent for change' and a 'lingua universalis' that facilitates communication and understanding on equal terms within diverse communities (Müller, 2024). The article suggests that engaging in musical practices can help 'remap the sensory and emotional, and social life, particularly for marginalized groups. This emphasizes music's profound

ability to shape both individual self-perception and collective belonging within complex social dynamics (Heard & Bartleet, 2025).

2.2.3. Music in Ritual, Performance, and Transformative Experience

This subsection focuses on music's specific and powerful role within a ritual context. Music structures ritual time, creates sacred or liminal spaces, and facilitates transformative experiences for participants. Concepts such as "music king" (Small) describe an active, performative engagement with music that generates meaning and community (Korošec *et al.*, 2025). Through its aesthetic and reformative dimensions, music can transcend everyday life and transport individuals to states of heightened emotion, collective consciousness, or spiritual connection, making it crucial for linking the general function of music to its specific application in mourning rituals, where its transformative powers are particularly evident (Springsteen's).

Music's role in facilitating transformative experiences, particularly within a ritualistic framework, was a subject of growing interdisciplinary interest (Asplund & Thorgersen, 2025; Duman, 2023). Explains how music profoundly engages diverse neural networks, influencing sensory motor processing, cognition, memory, and emotional components. The capacity allows music to transcend mundane experience, creating a conducive environment for ritual efficacy allows an individual to change. The authors emphasize that music training can lead to significant structural and functional brain changes, reinforcing the idea that active engagement with music wasn't merely an auditory experienced but a powerful tool for shaped perception and fostering deep, often spiritual, connections within communal rites (Bartel, 2024).

Ethnographic studies consistently demonstrate how music was integral to the transformative potential of ritual, often serving as the primary medium for eliciting specific emotional states and facilitating mystical experiences (Silverman, 2021). For instance, a 2024 study on contemporary Moroccan Sufism intricately details how musical aesthetics, through specific rhythms and melodies, act as a powerful conduit for emotional expression and spiritual transformation within Sufi rituals (Marei & Shanneik, 2024). The authors argue that music fundamentally shaped participants' sensory perceptions and bodily experiences, serving as a vessel for spiritual transformation and a 'reflection of the divine,' thereby illustrating music's active role in creating and mediating sacred spaces and profound personal and collective change (Heimarck, 2022).

2.3. The Study of Music Based on Ethnomusicological Perspectives

This section establishes the disciplinary lens through which the study were conducted, outlining the core principles and relevant methodological considerations of Ethnomusicology. It defines the field, reviews its application to life cycle rituals, and addresses the crucial ethical considerations inherent in field work (Ahmadian, 2024).

2.3.1. Core Concepts and Methodologies in Ethnomusicology

Ethnomusicology was defined as an interdisciplinary field committed to studying a piece of music as a cultural phenomenon, exploring “not only what music was but why it is: what it means to its practitioners and Audiences, and how those meanings are conveyed (Story, 2022). The involves understanding music’s functions, performance practices, musical forms, and mechanisms of cultural transmission key concepts with in the filed included “ music king” (Small), which emphasizes active engagement with music rather than merely listening, and the distinction between emic (insider) and etic (out sider) perspectives, both crucial for a holistic study of musical behaviour in its cultural context.

The field emphasizes integrating the “ethical and ethnic principles” to ensure comprehensive and culturally sensitive interpretation (*Petrović, 2024*). A critical reflection on the field's evolving methodologies and theoretical debates highlights the shift towards more engaged and culturally sensitive research practice, underscoring the importance of understanding music as an active agent within communities, rather than a static artifact (*Harbert, 2022*).

2.3.2. Ethnomusicological Studies of Life Cycle, Rituals and Expressive Culture

This subsection reviews influential ethnomusicological scholarship that specifically investigates music within various life cycle rituals (birth, initiation, death) across different cultural settings. These studies analyze the symbolic relationship between musical forms, cultural meanings, and ritual efficacy, contributing to a broader understanding of how music serves to embody and transmit cultural knowledge surrounding critical life passages(*Kunnuji, 2025*). For instance, research explicitly discourses on how music was integrated into various life cycle events, including funeral rites, in West African societies. Such scholarship underscores the functional intent and cultural specificity of music in this context, providing a valuable comparative framework for

understanding music's role in marking significant life transitions (*Arko-Mensah & Agyeiwaah, 2024*). These analyses highlighted diverse regional examples and their specific methodologies, enriching the understanding of music's profound social and spiritual roles (*Aras et al., 2025*).

2.3.3. Ethical Considerations and Reflexivity in Fieldwork

Addressed the critical importance of ethical research practices in ethnomusicology, this subsection focuses on conducting fieldwork in sensitive cultural contexts involving grief and ritual. Discussions included the importance of informed consent, reciprocity with communities, researcher positionality, and responsible representation of cultural practices (*Baily, 2025*). It provides a comprehensive overview of these contemporary considerations, guiding researchers in navigating the complex cultural landscape with integrity. This ethical grounding was crucial for meaningful and respectful engagement with the Aksum community, ensuring the data collection and representation are carried out with the highest regard for the community's beliefs and well-being (*Dinh, 2023*).

2.4. The Distinctive Realm of Dirge or Mourning Music

This section delves specifically into dirge or mourning music as a unique and specialized genre within the border spectrum of cultural musical expressions. It explores the characteristics that set it apart, its primary functions in assisting with the grieving process, and the contexts and practices surrounding its performance (*Dinh, 2023*).

2.4.1. Typologies, Forms, and Sonic Characteristics of Dirge or Mourning Music

This subsection analyses the diverse forms and sonic characteristics that define mourning music across various cultures (*Dinh, 2023*). Common typologies include lament, dirges, elegies, and funeral hymns. Their typical musical features often include specific melodic contours (e.g., descending patterns), Rhythmic quality (often slow or flexible), and distinctness (*Segall, 2005*). These sonic elements are purposefully employed to evoke, express, and channel emotions associated with grief, functioning as culturally codified ways of articulating sorrow and remembrance(*Sutton, 2002*). vocal techniques (e.g., wailing, controlled sobbing, ululation, extended vocalizations), alongside typical instrumental accompaniment or its absence (*Biberstein, 2021*).

The fundamental characteristics that distinguish dirge or mourning music from other genres were profoundly shaped by cultural contexts, yet exhibit certain and mourning (Biberstein, 2021).

The introductory chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the myriad forms mourning music can take, from highly structured formal laments to spontaneous, emotionally charged vocalizations (Johnson, 2025). It highlights how specific melodic phrases, often characterized by descending lines, and particular rhythmic patterns are employed to universally convey sorrow and pathos. This foundational work demonstrates that the sonic landscape of grief is deliberately constructed to resonate with and facilitate the emotional processes of bereavement (Chu, 2025).

Among the most potent and widespread vocalizations in dirge or mourning music is wailing, a distinct sonic characteristic that transcends mere crying to become a formalized musical expression (Schäuble, 2021). As illuminated by (Baillargeon, 2024), studies on wailing practices in the Mediterranean, this form of vocalization often involves specific pitch inflection, sustained notes, and patterned repetitions that elevate it from a spontaneous outburst to culturally recognized musical forms. The research details how such wailings can be highly intricate, conveying layers of meaning, social commentary, and deeply personal grief through their unique sonic qualities. This exemplifies how vocal techniques in mourning music are not only emotionally charged but also culturally encoded for specific expressive and ritualistic purposes within a community (Spiri, 2024).

2.4.2. Psycho-Social and Spiritual Function of Dirge or Mourning Music

This subsection delves deeper into the specific functions that mourning music serves for individuals and communities during bereavement. It provides a structured outlet for the intense emotions of grief, aiding individuals in processing their loss. Music fosters a sense of unity among mourners, reinforcing social bonds and communal support in vulnerable times (Asatsa *et al.*, 2025). It also helps preserve the memory of the deceased, narrating their life, virtues, or the circumstances of their death. Furthermore, mourning music facilitates communication with the spiritual realm, aiding the deceased's passage to the afterlife or providing solace through connection with ancestors or deities. These functions demonstrate mourning music's active role as a therapeutic, social, and spiritual tool, rather than passive background noise (Viper *et al.*, 2022).

The psychological benefit of music within mourning rituals was manifold, facilitating emotional processing and communal coping mechanisms across diverse global contexts, as detailed by (Mattfeldt, 2024). Their analyses, drawing on examples from different continents, demonstrate how music provides a crucial outlet for the expression of intense sorrow, allowing bereaved individuals to externalize their grief in a culturally sanctioned manner (Meinhart & Rogers, 2023). The author highlighted that beyond the individual's catharsis, the shared musical experience within these rituals fosters collective emotional processing, reducing feelings of isolation and strengthening social bonds. This collective engagement helped to integrate the individual's pain into the communal experiences, aiding in the arduous work of psychological adjustment post-loss (Park & Halifax, 2021).

Beyond its psychological and social functions, mourning music frequently serves profound spiritual roles, connecting the bereaved to the sacred and facilitating a sense of continuity (Goibnazarov, 2022). As elucidated by a (Bruin-Mollenhorst, 2021) study on grief and the sacred religious belief and ritual practices, including music, are instrumental in constructing meaning around death and the afterlife. This research argues that songs and chants within dirge or mourning ceremonies can act as conduits for spiritual communication, helping mourners to feel connected to the departed or higher powers (Viper *et al.*, 2022). Such practices provide comfort, reinforce cosmological worldviews, and guide the deceased's spiritual journey, thus implanting music deeply within the spiritual architecture of a community's responses to morality (Leyton, 2025).

2.4.3. Performance Contexts, Practitioners, and Inter-Art Relations

This subsection focuses on the practical dimensions of mourning music performance. It discusses the specific contexts and stages within mourning rituals where music was performed (e.g., immediately after death, during vigils, funeral processions, burial, post-burial commemorations). It identifies the typical practitioners of mourning music (e.g., professional lamenters, family members, specific community groups, religious leaders) and their roles (Dankwa, 2022). This section also explored how mourning music interacted with other ritual elements such as spoken lamentations, prayers, gestures, dances, or the manipulation of ritual objects, forming a cohesive multi-modal experience. The performance of mourning music was a highly contextualized and often collaborative activity integral to the overall ritual efficacy (Bruin-Mollenhorst, 2021).

The contextual performance of mourning music was highly varied yet consistently integral to the unfolding of bereavement rituals across the globe, as comprehensively reviewed in a 2019 article on music's role in death rituals (Wu & Song, 2025). The scholarship details how music was strategically employed at different stages of mourning, from the immediate aftermath of death to extended commemorative periods, each performance serving a distinct ritualistic purpose (Lorea *et al.*, 2024). It highlights the diverse roles of practitioners, from designated ritual specialists to communal participants, whose contributions are essential for the music's efficacy. Furthermore, the review emphasizes how musical performances were often deeply interwoven with other expressive modalities, such as spoken word, gesture, and even specific and multi-sensory experiences of grief and remembrance (Kazemi, 2024).

Beyond auditory elements, mourning music frequently integrates with embodied performance and social action to amplify its ritual impact (Chiarofonte, 2025). As demonstrated by a study (Agenga, 2021), a study on grief performance in contemporary Iran. This research meticulously illustrates how specific vocal lamentations were synchronized with bodily gestures and communal participation, creating a powerful synergy that transcends mere sound. The authors analyze how this integrated performance not only expresses profound sorrow but also mobilizes collective memory and reinforces social solidarity among mourners (Jack & Obhuo, 2024). This inter-artistic approach highlights that the effectiveness of mourning music often lies in its holistic embodiment and its dynamic interplay with other ritualistic components, shaping both individual and collective experiences of grief (Hove, 2024).

2.5. Music and Cultural Heritage in the Context of Axumite

This final section situates the study within its specific geographical, cultural, and historical context. It provides an overview of Ethiopia's rich musical heritage, identifies existing scholarship on Ethiopian mourning practice, and then narrows the focus to the Axum community, highlighting its unique cultural landscape and the specific research gap this thesis aims to address (Osam, 2024).

2.5.1. Overview of Ethiopian Musical Traditions and Orthodox Tewahedo Church Music

Ethiopia boasts a vast and diverse musical heritage, holding a unique position within African music due to its distinct scales, instruments, and vocal traditions. The country was home to various

regional, ethnic, and religious musical styles (Kebede, 2023). Crucially, EOTC music, known as zema, was central to Axumite culture. Its historical origins were attributed to Saint Yared in the 6th century, and it features a complex modal system (Ge'ez, Ezle, and Araray) and a unique notational system (melekket). Zema functions deeply within the church calendar and was not merely liturgical music but a foundational aspect of Ethiopian cultural identity, influencing many other musical forms. Despite its profound musicological, cultural, and religious significance, the EOTC chant, known as Yaredawi Zema (Argaw Muluneh *et al.*, 2024).

This research underscores the intricate nature of EOTC's crucial performance chants, specifically focusing on yaredawi yezema silt, the modes adhering to Saint Yared's 6th-century standards. The author details the complex notation system, comprising eight neumes and alphabetical signs (Milikitch and Sireyu). Which convey aspects like pitch, duration, and ornamentation? This computational approach, while technical, reinforces the immense historical depth and structural complexity of Zema, demonstrating its foundational role in Ethiopian musical heritage and the need for continued comprehensive study (Ayalew & Lema, 2025).

The EOTC was not only a religious institution but a cornerstone of Ethiopian cultural and historical identity, particularly in regions like Tigray (Demem, 2023). Provides contemporary analyses of the EOTC's evolving role in post-2018 Ethiopia, navigating complex church-states and entire religious dynamics. While not directly focusing on music, the report implicitly emphasizes the church's pervasive cultural influence, which undoubtedly extends to its rich musical tradition (Hailu, 2023). Understanding the broader socio-political landscape and the church's place within it was crucial, as the resilience and adaptation of its spiritual practice, including music, were intimately tied to these dynamics, especially in regions deeply affected by recent conflicts (Goshu & Ridwan, 2025).

2.5.2. Existing Scholarship on Ethiopian Mourning Practice

This section critically reviews available academic literature that sparsely addresses mourning rituals or music within various Ethiopian cultural contexts. This might include studies on specific groups' funeral songs, lament traditions, or the role of music in commemorative ceremonies (Bamigbade & Akinwumi, 2025). It was crucial to identify the strengths and limitations of these existing studies, explicitly highlighted the significant research gap regarding detailed ethno-musicological analyses of mourning music in societies like Axum. While some general

ethnographic studies on Ethiopian deathways might exist, a dedicated ethnomusicological study of mourning music was largely absent, especially for Aksum (Kebede, 2023).

While comprehensive ethnomusicological studies on mourning music in Ethiopia are scarce, some recent regional research offers valuable insights into specific community practice (Bishop, 2024). For instance, master's thesis, 'Folk Songs and Musical forms and performance context associated with bereavement among the Agew, providing a localized example or emotional delve deeply in to the ethno musicological analyses of mourning music's symbolic or emotional functions, it highlighted the existence and importance of such musical genres within Ethiopian oral traditions (Elsner, 2021).

The broader context of traditional Ethiopian music, including genres associated with mourning, faces significant challenges from globalization and modernization, which impact their transmission and preservation (Demissie Kebede, 2025). As explored by, in an article frequently referenced in contemporary discussions, the influx of western musical styles and the commercialization of cultural expressions pose serious threats to indigenous musical traditions. The authors discuss how younger generations were increasingly drawn to global pop music, leading to a potential decline in the aesthetic appreciation and active practice of traditional forms, including those that were integral to rituals (Gatdet, 2025). This analysis was crucial for understanding the contemporary pressures that may affect the vitality and continuity of mourning music in communities like Axum.

2.5.3. The Historical Context and Current Cultural Dynamics of Axum society

This subsection provides a detailed overview of the Axum community, emphasizing its unique historical legacy as the center of the ancient Axumite Empire and its enduring significance as a spiritual heartland of EOTC. This profound historical and religious foundation shapes its contemporary cultural practice, belief systems, and social organizations, particularly concerning deathways and expressive culture (Yates, 2021). Information on the current socio-political environment in Tigray and Axum, especially any recent impacts that might affect cultural practice (e.g., conflict, displacement), was also included, as this can influence the performance and transmission of traditional music (Basanti & Mekonen, 2023).

The Axum society's understanding and management of death were deeply rooted in its ancient history, as evidenced by archaeological studies focusing on early Ethiopian deathways (Stahl *et*

al., 2023). To understand how ancient communities in Ethiopia, including those in Axum, engaged with their deceased from 50-800 CE. This research highlights the continuity of certain funerary practices and the profound spiritual connections between the living and the dead that have characterized this region for millennia. Understanding these historical attitudes towards mortality and remembrances is crucial for interpreting contemporary Axumites' mourning music, as it likely carries echoes of these long-standing cultural and religious sensibilities regarding the transition from life to the afterlife (Jacob Ponodath, 2024). The contemporary cultural dynamics in Axum, particularly those that shaped the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church (EOTC), are central to understanding its living traditions. As discussed in the March 2025 report.

The EOTC continues to be a dominant cultural force, even amidst recent political and social shifts in Tigray. The church's rituals and belief systems are inextricably linked to daily life and critical life events, including death (Bantigeza *et al.*, 2025). While the report does not specifically detail music, its analysis of the Church's resilience and its role in maintaining social fabric provides a vital backdrop for any study on Axumite mourning practices. The continuity of traditional music forms, especially those connected to religious rites, is likely influenced by the strength and adaptability of the EOTC within the community (Kahsay *et al.*, 2024).

2.5.4. The Intricate Tapestry of Axumite Dirge or Mourning

The Axum society, observes profound mourning rituals that are both sacred and secular expressions of grief. While the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church provides a liturgical framework through its Zema chants, the Tigrinya dirge stands as an equally potent and culturally pervasive secular form (Nordanger, 2007). The distinctive genre combines oral poetry, fervent lamentation, and poignant vocalization, serving as a crucial channel for both collective and individual grief (Falola, 2024).

This chapter delves deeply into dirge, extending beyond its fundamental characteristics to meticulously explore its intricate layers. We examine elegy through the lenses of its socio-cultural dynamics, underlying political nuances, the psychological processes of bereavement it addresses, and its profound personalization. Through comprehensive analysis, including illustrative Tigrinya Gitimi (poetic verses) to highlight its thematic breadth and emotional depth, this investigation aims to demonstrate how dirge not only facilitates the complex journey of grief but also powerfully reflects, preserves, and shapes the Axum society's identity and resilience in the face of loss

(Bihonegn & Mekonen, 2023). Significantly, elegy distinguishes itself from formalized church music and other secular genres, functioning uniquely as a conduit for communal sorrow and individual emotional purification (Omer, 2025).

Compared to some scholarly observations on grief in Tigray, which suggest authoritative discourses encouraging the avoidance or repression of overt emotional pain due to perceived negative consequences, elegy presents a striking contrast (Weldemikael, 2024). Unlike the societal norms, sometimes supported by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church, that advocate for emotional restraint in grief, elegy explicitly embraces raw, uninhibited vocalizations, sobs, and wails as integral to its performance (Tesfay, 2023). This demonstrates dirge as a culturally sanctioned space where intense emotional release was not merely tolerated but is central to the lament's authenticity and its powerful cathartic function. The nuanced dynamic highlights a crucial aspect of Axumite mourning, where the secular expression of dirge carves out a vital sphere for explicit emotional outpouring, potentially complementing or even challenging more reserved cultural attitudes towards public displays of sorrow in other contexts within the region.

2.5.5. Overview of Axumite Musical Heritage and Liturgical Traditions

The musical heritage of the Axum society was profoundly interwoven with the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, a tradition largely codified by Saint Yared in the 6th century (Tasisa & Flores, 2022). His Zema system forms the foundational sacred music, employing distinct modes relevant to mourning. Ezil. A melodic, gentle mode often conveying intimacy and tenderness, and a sweet mode, conveying intimacy and tenderness, particularly associated with fasts and periods of sorrow. Araray a melodic and expressive mode directly linked to somber occasions, including funeral masses and times of lament.

These modes collectively establish the fundamental melodic and emotional frameworks for church based mourning, influencing the overall sonic character (Muluneh, Peng, & Su, 2024). Recent scholarship, such as studies on computational analysis of Yaredawi Yezema Silt, consistently corroborates Saint Yared's pivotal role in the 6th century in establishing these three canonical modes (Falceto). While this reinforces the user's description, some research suggests a more nuanced application, indicating that Ezil is 'seldom utilized during fasting period' despite its presence in funeral contexts, implying a specificity rather than a general association with all sorrowful periods (Muluneh, Peng, & Su, 2024).

2.5.6. The Dual Nature of Axumite Mourning or Dirge Music

Axum mourning music manifests in two primary, distinct categories: Formal liturgical chants and traditional, often improvised laments. This chapter was explored both facets, recognizing that they serve different main purposes (Kumlachew, 2024). The distinction between the highly structured sacred music of the church and the more spontaneous, vernacular expressions of sorrow is crucial to understanding Sacred and secular, the full spectrum of mourning practices in the Axum community (Falceto). This duality aligns with broader academic discussions on Ethiopian musical traditions, which frequently draw a line between sacred, church sanctioned music (zema) and diverse secular, often improvised, forms (zema), thereby supporting the observation of distinct yet coexisting expressions of grief within the community.

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Ethnomusicological Investigates of Mourning Music Forms and Cultural Meanings

This study was employed a qualitative ethnomusicological approach to investigate mourning music in the Axum society. This methodology prioritizes understanding music as a cultural phenomenon within its social, ritual, and historical context, drawing on a combination of fieldwork techniques and rigorous analytical frameworks.

3.2. Research Design and Approach

The research would employed an ethnographic case study design. Focusing intensively on the Axum community. This approach allows for a holistic and in-depth understanding of the complex interplay between music, grief, and cultural practices within a specific cultural setting (Gu & Liu, 2025). The study was rooted in Ethnomusicology, emphasizing participant observation and emic perspectives to gain an insider's understanding of the meaning and significance of the mourning to the Axum society members (WA Mukuna, 2024).

3.3. Research Site and Participants

This study was conducted in the Axum society focused on cultural, historical, and spiritual significance as the center of the ancient Axumite empire and a heartland of the E.O.T.C.'s makes it a uniquely rich site for exploring deep-rooted cultural practices related to death and music (Muluneh, Peng, & Su, 2024).

Mourners and bereaved family members individuals directly experiencing grief who engage with mourning music. Religious clergy leaders and Priests including deacons of the E.O.T.C. who lead funeral rites and are knowledgeable about Zema and other spiritual music. Society elders and traditional practitioners like individuals with extensive knowledge of local customs, oral traditions, and historical mourning practices. Professional lamenters or ritual specialists, and individuals recognized for their expertise in performing specific mourning music forms. Musicians were an Individual who performs instrumental or vocal music during mourning rituals.

3.4. Data Collection Methods

A multi-faced approach to data collection was employed to capture the richness and complexity of Axumite mourning music. This triangulation of methods enhances the validity and reliability of the findings.

3.4.1. Participant Observation

The researcher would engage in long-term participant observation within the Axum society, attending mourning rituals, funeral ceremonies, memorial services, and related social gatherings. This involves active engagement in the daily life of the society to understand the cultural context in which mourning music was embedded (Tisdell et al., 2025). These methods allow for firsthand experience and observation of musical performances, interactions between performer and mourners, non-verbal clues, and the overall emotional and social atmosphere of mourning events. The researcher was observed the physical setting, participants' roles, sequences of events, and interrelation of music with other ritual elements (e.g., prayers, gestures, attire, and food) (Sturman, 2022).

Ethical considerations given the sensitive nature of mourning rituals. The researcher was maintained a respectful and unobserved presence, adhering to community norms and seeking explicit permission to observed and record appropriately (Kong et al., 2022).

3.4.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

The study utilized in-depth, semi-structured with key participants to gather comprehensive data. This approach was chosen for its flexibility, which allowed the researchers' to explore emergent themes while also ensuring that all core research questions were addressed. The interviews were carefully designed to cover a broad range of topics, including participants' personal experiences with grief and role of music in coping, the typology and classification of local mourning music and its specific musical features, such as melodic contours and vocal techniques (Lavee & Itzchakov, 2023).

The interviews also focused on understanding the broader cultural context of the music. Researchers explored the functions, and meanings of different mourning songs for individuals and the society, the specific performance context, timing, and the roles of practitioners. Additionally,

the study investigated historical changes and contemporary influences on these musical traditions, as well as the underlying beliefs about death, the afterlife, and spiritual communication through music. To facilitate a thorough analysis, all interviews were audio and where appropriate, video recorded with prior informed consent and then transcribed verbatim.

3.4.3. Audio-Visual Recording

High quality audio and video recording of mourning music performances will be central to the study. This includes capturing the sonic characteristics of the music, the visual aspects of performance (gestures, movement, setting, and interaction between participants), and the interaction between participants (Kärjä, 2021). Recordings were focused on capturing the full context of the musical event, including ambient sounds, audience's reactions, and the integration of music with other ritual elements.

Equipment has been ensure high loyalty data, professional grade audio recorders (e.g., Zoom H-series), directional microphones, and a video camera was used. Ethical considerations were explicit informed consent and obtained from all participants and community leaders before any recording takes place. Participants were informed about how the recording was used and stored, and their right to withdraw consent at any time was respected.

3.4.4. Archival and Literature Review

Existing historical documents, academic literature on Ethiopian history, culture, and particularly the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, could be thoroughly reviewed. This includes local historical accounts, ethnomusicological studies of other Ethiopian regions. and broader works on mourning ritual and music (Bozorgnia, 2024). This method provides crucial background information, helps identify the research gap, and contextualizes the findings with a broader scholarly framework.

3.5. methods of Data Analysis

The collected of data undergo a systematic process, integrating both musical and ethnographic insights. Musical transcription and Analysis were a system of audio/video recordings, focusing on melodic contours, rhythmic characteristics, vocal techniques, instrumentation, and textual analysis. The thematic analysis of to identified themes and patterns from interview transcripts and field

notes Contextual and Comparative analysis integrated funding in Axumite frameworks and compared with other cultures.

3.5.1. Musical Transcription and Analysis

Audio and Video recordings of mourning music was transcribed using an appropriate notation system (e.g., Western staff notation for melodic and rhythmic elements, coupled with descriptive text for microtonal inflections, vocalizations like wailing or ululation, and other non-standardized sonic features) (Lavee & Itzhakov, 2023; Obijiaku, 2024).

Given the complexities of Ethiopian music, careful consideration was given to accurately representing its unique scales and rhythmic structure. Musical Analysis were focus on identifying the following ideas. Typologies contours were identified recurring melodic patterns, especially descending lines. Rhythmic characteristic wich were analyzed tempo, meter, and rhythmic flexibility. Vocal techniques were detailed analysis of wailing, sobbing, ululation, and other expressive vocalization.

Instrumentation would identified wich types of instruments used and what their rol was played.

Textual analysis have been translated and interpreted lyrics, noting recurring themes, metaphors, and narrative structures. Special attention would paid to the relationship between musical structure and emotional expression, as well as the symbolic meanings embedded in specific musical elements.

3.5.2. Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Data

Interview transcripts and field notes were analyzed used thematic analysis and to identify recurring themes, patterns, and categories related to the function, meanings, and performance context of mourning music. The process were involve familiarization has been read and re-read data to gain a deep to understanding (Buckley *et al.*, 2024).

Coding was generated initial codes into potential themes. The generation were grouped codes into potential themes. Reviewing themes refined and defiened themes. Produced clear definitions and names for each theme. Producing the reported the weaving themes into a coherent narrative. Insight from the musical analysis have been integrated with the thematic analysis of ethnographic data to provide a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon.

3.5.3. Contextual and Comparative Analysis

The finding was continuously contextualized within the historical, social, and religious framework of the Aksum community and the broader Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Comprehension would be drawn with existing ethnomusicology scholarship on mourning music in other cultures to highlight both universal aspects and the unique characteristics of the Axumite tradition (Edwards, 2023).

3.6. Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitive nature of researching grief and ritual, strict ethical guidelines were adhered to throughout the research process. Informed consent prior informed consent was obtained from all participants. This includes clearly explaining the purpose of the study, data collection methods, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Consent would be obtained in a language and manner understandable to the participant, poetically involving local society leaders (Adem, 2024; Misiker *et al.*, 2023). Confidentiality and anonymity participant identities were protected through anonymization of data (e.g., using pseudonyms).

Confidentiality was mentioned in all research outputs. Reciprocity benefits and benefits shared of the researcher would strive to ensure that the research benefits the Axum society. This could involved sharing preliminary findings, providing copies of recordings or transcriptions, or contributing to society initiatives related to cultural preservation. Reciprocity fosters trust and partnership. Researcher positionality and reflexivity was maintain a constant awareness of their positionality, biases, and potential influence on the research process and interpretation (DuBose, 2024; Morrow & Kettle, 2024).

A reflective journal was kept to document personal experiences, feelings, and evolving understandings, which will be integrated into the final analysis to ensure transparency and enhance the credibility of the research (Baily, 2025). Cultural sensitivity all interactions and interpretations was guided by deep cultural sensitivity and respect for Axumite traditions, beliefs, and practices surrounding death and mourning. This includes respecting sacred, spiritual protocols, and local etiquette.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Analysis of Mourning Music in Axum Society

4.1. Specific Forms and Characteristics of Mourning Music in Axum

Mourning music in Axum manifested in two distinct categories like liturgical chants and traditional, improvised laments. Mewasiet was the primary liturgical form.

4.1.1. Liturgical chants for Funeral services Mewasiet (ጠዋስዕቲ)

Mewasiet were hymns and chants for several services and requiems within the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church. Performed in Ezil and Araray modes, the music evoked sadness and spiritual contemplation. Debtera (church cantors) and choirs typically performed the monophonic chanting. The vocal delivery followed musical notations (Melekket), allowing for controlled. Decorative vocalization (seriyu) that added emotional depth (Muluneh, Peng, & Su, 2024).

The texts were sacred, drawn from biblical sources and composed hymns, addressing mortality and the Christian promise of eternal life. Instrumentation included traditional church instruments like the Tsenatsil (cymbal) and keboro (drum). The purpose of Mewasiet was spiritual, offering solace and guiding the deceased's soul. While dirge was a general term for crying, dirge specifically referred to a distinct form of oral poetry and lament (Gilbert & Kelloway, 2021).

4.1.2. The Elegy Voice of Mourning Repeat Memory

Elegy a term from the Ge'ez root "to cry" or "laments" was a structured, spontaneous genre of oral poetry and song. Performed during funerals and memorial services (Tezkar), it served as a sophisticated artistic expression of sorrow, praise, and remembrance. Distinctive from simple crying, elegy was a cornerstone of Axumite and Tigrinya oral tradition (Bishop, 2023).

4.1.3. Origin and Oral Full-blooded

Dirge was an ancient cornerstone of Tigrinya oral tradition. Unlike codified liturgical music, it relied on improvisation within a traditional framework, drawing on memory, poetic skill and emotion. The oral lineage connected directly to the community has lived experience. Studies on Tigrinya oral poetry confirmed dirge was “composed while recited,” relying on skilled poets (Massenet) to shape societal attitudes (Oruç, 2022).

4.1.4. The Grievance Bearers' Performance and its location

Women who were culturally considered the principal mourners predominantly performed elegy. Close female relatives typically led, but others also participated. Individual known for their ability to compose and delivery powerful Elegies were called Waddasity (approvals) or Alqesty (Lamenters). Performance occurred in various contexts at the deceased’s home, during funeral processions, at gravesides, in mourning tents, and during memorial services (Tezkar) (Negash, 2017).

The prevalence of female lamenters leading Ethiopian funeral dirges is consistent with anthropological observations, which often highlight women’s central role in the vocal expression of collective grief, though some broader African contexts show more universal participation in wailing.

4.1.5. Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Elegy

Dirge was a communal act that reinforced social bonds and structured the collective experience of mourning. Its performance was embedded in Axum’s social fabric, emphasizing gender roles and the power of oral tradition. This function aligned with scholarly insights into Ethiopian funeral rituals as a socio- cultural performance that consolidated society identity.

4.1.6. Communal Grief and Solidarity

An individual sorrow mobilized the entire community. Dirge fostered a sense of communal solidarity, transforming individual sorrow into a shared burden. Often initiated by a close female relative, other mourners joined with shared wails, strengthening society bonds and mutual support. The practice of large mourning tents and communal gatherings underscored their vital role in

collecting. This practice of large mourning tents and communal gathering for extended periods is widely documented in Ethiopian funeral traditions, underscoring their vital role in collective healing and demonstrating

Table 1: Gitimi or Zema (1) (socio-Cultural shared community loss)

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
ዋይ ሓዘን፤ ዋይ ሓዘን፤ ምሉእ ዓዲ ዘብከዮ፤ እንታይ እሞ ክንገብር፤ በይኑ እንዶ ተረፉ።። ኣብ ዳዕሳ ደኣ ተሰቓልና፤ ንሕድሕድና ንረኸ፤ ይተኣከብ ሰብና፤ ኣብ ምፅንናዕ ነድህብ።።”	Way hazen way hazen mulue adi zebkye, Entayi emokigber beynu endo terifu. Ab da’asa da’a teseqilna nhidhidna nrkeb Yiteakeb sebna ab mtsinna’e nedihib.	Oh, Sorrow! Oh, Sorrow! That made the whole village cry. What then shall I do? Should I remain alone?

Table 2: Gitimi or Zema (2) (socio-Cultural shared community loss)

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
“ዋይ! ዓይነይ! ሞኪራ ዘይረአዮ፤ ዋይ ልበይ! ቁስሊ ዘይፈተነ።። ድምፀ ሰባት ንከንቱ ዝቐረዮ፤ ሕማቕ ዝገበረ ፅቡቕ ዘይፀገበ።። ህይወትና ተነጻላ ኮይኑና ብኸነትካ፤ ዋይ እግዚአብሔር ኣበዮ ርእስኸ።።”	Way aineyi mekera zeyira’aye Way lbey qisili zeyifetene. dimitsi sebat nikentu ziqereye, Himaqi zigrbere tsibuqi zeyitsegebe Hiwetka tenetsila koynuna biknetka way Egiziabihier Abeye riesika.	Oh! My eye! That person did not see fire Oh my heart! A wound that did not heal. The voice of people who fell on the road Who did evil, and who didn’t experience good. You God tore our life apart. Oh God, where is your head (presence)

4.1.6.1. Gender Roles and the Prominence of the Female and Male Voice

In Axum, women held a central role in public mourning rituals. Dirge gave them a powerful, cultural sanctioned voice for grief. While male handled logistical aspects, woman led the community in intense vocal lamentation. Their skilled performance was not just tolerated but admired, considered crucial to the mourning process. Talented performers were known as Elegiest transforming personal distress into communal art.

Table 3: Gitim (3) (socio- cultural Female Role/ Lamenters)

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
<p>አጆኹ ወይዘሮ! ንብረትኪ ተሸሊሉ ገደፍክዮ ኬድኪ ዕይኒኹ ዝምልመል። ክውጋዕ እንድዩ! ቀበርትና ክንደይ ከነ ኣብ ሰፈርና፤ድምዒ መልቀስ ንጉሰና ከነ።</p>	<p>Ajoki weyizero! Nibretiki, gedifkio kediki ainiki zmelmele ab e seferna dimtsi meliqes nigusna kone Kiwgae eindiyu qebertina kindey da'a kone Ab seferna dimitsi Melqes kindey da'a kone!</p>	<p>Be strong, Madam! Your possession has been taken; you have left it and gone, Your eye that was so watchful. Can it be told! How great our crying has become! In our neighborhood, the voice of Melqes has become our king.</p>

Table 4: Gitimi or Zema (4) (socio-Cultural shared community loss)

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
<p>ዋይ ‘ዛ ዓይ ትግራይ ዓዲ ጥበብ ዝነበራት ምሁራት ደቅኹ ብሞት ዝተረፉ። እዚኹሉ ፍልጠት ንብላሽ ዝተረፈ፣ መፃኢ ወለዶ ክድንቁር ተፈረዶ። ብርሃን ዓዲና ፀልማት ተሸዲኑ፣ ክትመሃር ዘይዕድመካ ዕድልካ ዝከሸፈ።</p>	<p>Way! Za'di Tigray adi-Tbeb Zineberet MihuraT deqiki Bimot ziterefu Ezi kulu filtet niblashi ziterefe, Metsaei weledo kidinqur ziteferedo. Birhan adina tselimat tekedinu, Kitimehar zeydimaka edilke zikeshefe</p>	<p>Oh! Land of Tigray, where wisdom once was, educated children, left by death. The time of learning, short by sticks (conflict), The future generation, trampled by hunger. The light of our land, hidden in darkness. We who did not wish to learn our fate diminished.</p>

4.1.6.2. Cultural Preservation and Intergenerational Transmission

Eledy served as a living archive of community history and values. It preserved memories, virtues, and moral lessons passed down through oral tradition. Younger members learned the themes, structures, and vocalizations by observing and participating, ensuring cultural continuity. Older elegy pieces offered insights into past events, functioning as a form of oral history. (Mokgoatšana et al., 2025).

This role was supported by scholarship on Ethiopian oral traditions, which emphasizes their crucial function in safeguarding collective memory. In addition, acting as a 'living connection to our past'

These traditions are seen as essential for cultural preservation and the intergenerational transfer of knowledge, especially during times of grief.

4.1.6.3. The Poetic Heart of Dirge with its Structure and Thematic Depth

A central function of dirge was lyrical praise for the deceased, weaving personal memories with generalized virtues. Recitative phrases and refrains were common. Mourners often used direct address to the deceased, enhancing intimacy. Dirge was rich in metaphor and imagery from Axumite, or injustice (Gebrihet *et al.*, 2025). The performance followed an emotional trajectory, from initial shock to structured lament, sometimes ending with pleas or resigned acceptance. This intricate structure confirmed lament as a profound and multifaceted art form.

4.2. Distinctions from Other Forms of Music

Axumite mourning music, encompassing sacred chants and traditional laments, had distinctive features rooted in its purpose. While sacred forms like Zema were codified, clergy was an improvised oral tradition. For example, while Mass shared poetic structure, it was for festivals, while elgy was exclusively for funeral (Izu, 2024). This distinction is evident when comparing clergy with Mass, another Tigrinya oral poetry genre though sharing poetic structure. Mass was performed on festival occasions, whereas elegy was exclusively for funerals and moments of sadness.

4.2.1. Contextual Performance of Dirge

Dirge was a core component of secular mourning, was performed in several critical contexts. It began at the deceased's home to express initial shock, continued during funeral processions to amplify the journey, and at the graveside for final expressions of separation. Mourning tents served as hubs for extended clergy, facilitating collective grief processing. Dirge was also performed at memorial services (Tezkar) alongside church prayers highlighting the holistic nature of Axumite mourning. This consistent presence across stages highlighted its integral role, providing a flexible emotional outlet (Modiba, 2025).

4.2.2. Comparative Analysis of Musical Features

The feature of Axumite mourning music were best understood by contrasting them with other genres of music. Mourning of music was exclusively tied to death and loss. In contrast, other

genres were for entertainment or celebration. This difference in purpose was a consistent finding in Ethnomusicological studies. Mourning music strongly emphasized melancholic qualities. Mewasiet relied on Ezil and Araray modes to evoke tenderness and sorrow. Dirge also featured mournful melodic contours. Other music conversely used a broader range of scales and modes (e.g. Tezeta, Bati, Ambassel, and Anchiho) that evoked joy or heroism. This distinction in model selection for emotional evocation was a core characteristic of the Ethiopian musical system.

4.2.3. Lament for the Nation/Homeland Cooperative Suffering

Individual deaths from war, famine, or violence often became metaphors for broader national suffering within clergy. The loss of a family member could symbolized the loss of a generation. Elegy thus became a lament for the collective body politic, expressing shared trauma. This capacity to embed collective suffering was a recognized characteristic of Eritrean and Ethiopian oral poetry.

Table 5: Gitim (5) (Political - Loss due to Conflict/Famine/Collective Suffering)

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
<p>ዋይ! ዓደይ ብሓዘን ዝተመልአት፣ ምሽጥር ልብኺ ካብልበይ ዘይነፀለ። መን ከምዝሓለፈ መን ከምዝተረፈ ሙሉእ ገዛና ኣብ ጥምቀት ምስ ሰፈረ።</p> <p>ኣብ ዕለተ ኣገስ ሓዘን ዝወረደ፣ ነንሕድ ሕድና በሰላ ልብና ከም ሓዊ ነደደ።</p>	<p>Way adey bihazen ztemelat, Mishitr lbiki kab libey zynetsele. Menkemzihalefemen kemziterefe, Mulue gezana ab timket misi sefere. Ab elete hagoss hazen ziwered, Nenihidhidna bsela libina kem hawi neded.</p>	<p>Oh! My village! That became as sorrow itself, The secret of your heart was not found in my heart. Who passed away, and who remained, Our entire house, swept away by the flood. In the season of joy, sorrow descended, Oh for us, our hearts that froze each other.</p>

Table 6: Gitim (6) (Political - Loss due to Conflict/Famine/Collective Suffering)

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
<p>ደቕኺ ዓደይ ብዓውደ ውግእ ዝተዘርገሕ ኩም እንሆ ደምኩም፣ መሬትና ደብቀዎ። መረብና ባኹኡዮ፣ ኣበሳና በዚሑ፣ እምበር ሞትኩም፣ እንታይ እዩ ትጉርሙ ዋዖ!</p>	<p>Deqi adey ab wigie ztzrghikum Enihe demikum meretina zifese Merebetina bakinu abesana bezihuye. Nisikum mumatikum entay eyu tirgumu.</p>	<p>My children of my country! You Who were scattered on the battlefield, behold your blood, it waters our land. Our food has decreased; our suffering has multiplied, However, your death, what surprises you! Alas!</p>

4.2.4. Personal Laments: Expressions of Intimate Loss

Though dirge could carry political weight, its primary function was the deeply personal articulation of grief. These laments focused on the intimate relationship with the deceased, highlighting their unique qualities and the profound void they left. This focus on intimate loss was a common feature of funeral poetry across, serving as a vital part of the grieving process.

Table 7: Gitimi (7) A Mother's Lament for a Deceased Son.

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
<p>ዋይ! ውላይይ ካብ ሰብ ዘይፈልዮኻ፣ ኣብ ቅድመይ ደጊም ዝጠፈኡ ድምፅኻ። ኣብኻእየ! መን ኮን ትብሉኒ እንትት ሓልፍ፣</p> <p>ልባይ ይነድድ ኣብዘይ መዓልትኻካ እንትትከይድ።</p> <p>ሕልፈተ ህይወተይ ክንራኸብ ዘይንኸእል፤ ፅመዋ ነገሱ ገዛና ጠፈኡ ድምፅኻ።</p>	<p>WaY! Weladey! Kab seb zeyfelyeka Ab qidemeyi degim tefixu dimtsika Aboka eye! Men kon tibileni entithalf, Libey yneded abzey mealtka entitkeyd Hlfete hiwetey knrakeb zeynikel, Tsimewa nigisu gezana tefieu dimtsika</p>	<p>Oh my child! Who din't distingue ish themselves from others (in good ness before me again. Your voice was lost. I am your father! How could you tell me (nothing) and pass away, my heartburns, without a day (to ripen in sorrow). The sign of my life, you cannot find me, in our house, today is not your sound.</p>

Table 8: Gitimi (8): A Mother's Lament for a Deceased Son

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
<p>ወዲየይ! ወዲየይ! ዓይኒ መርኣየይ! ገዛይ ዝፀበቕካ! ሰንሰለተይ!</p> <p>ከመይ ገይርካኒ ሓዲግካኒ ኹድካ? ንባህሪያትካ ሓሊፈ ደኣ እምበር ኹይደ? ኣይፋልካን! ኣይፋልካን! ክትመጽእ ደ ትኹይውን!</p>	<p>Weedy! Weedy! Ayini merayiye! Gezay zetsebeqk senseltey hadigkani Kemey gerka hadigkani Bihiriyatka halife da'a ember keyed. Ayfalikan kitmetsie do tkown.</p>	<p>My son! My son! The apple of my eye! You who brightened my home! My chain (my support)! How could you leave me and go? Shouldn't I have gone before you? No! No! Will you not come back?"</p>

Table 9: Gitimi Zema (9) Lament for a Community Leader/Protector

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
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ዓንዲ ናይ ገዛና፣ በዓል ዓባይ ሕቕ፣ ምእንታና ዝሓርር፣ ሙጥቃዕቲ ዝቕብዳ።	Anidi gezana ba-al abiyi hiqe Mientana ziharie metiquaeti ziqebtso.	Pillar of our house one with strong back supporter who burned for us, who intercepted attacks.
እሞ ሎሚ በዓል ቤት፣ ኣበይ ደኣ በዲሕካ?	Emo! Lomi baliti bet abbey dea betsihika.	Now, master of the house, where have you reached?
ፀላኢ ደኣ ካባኻ ምእመን ኢሉ'ዩ።	Tselae kabake miemini zeblu,	The enemy surely said, 'I am free because of you.
እሞ ሓይል ደርሕኹ ንንጉሡ! ሕማቕ ድምጺ ይበል ንጉሡ!	Himaq yerhiq tselae ninyew!	Therefore, the strength is gone! Voice is gone!
እቲ ክፋእ እውን ልቡ ንጉሡ!"	Etikifue Ewin yibel neiyew!	Heart is gone!"

Table 10: Gitimi (11) A Lament Reflecting on Chance/Purpose

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
ዋይ ባዓል፣ ዝተቐረፀ ድምፅኪ፣ ዋይ ሃለውለው፣ ኣብ ዓድና ዘይርከብኪ። ዓመት ሙሉእ ፣ ሓዘን ዝተሰከመ፣ ደስታ ደቅና፣ ብሓዊ ዝሓረረ። መርዓ ተረፈ ፣ ሓዘን ተተከኣ ፣ ዋይ እምበር ፣ ሎሚ ዓለም ክንክልክል።	Way! Be'al ziteqeretse dimitsiki Way Halowlow ab adina zeyrkebki. Amet mulue hazen ziteseke, Desita deqina bihawwi ziharere. Meri'a terefe bihazen tetekea, Way! Ember lomi alem kinklikel.	Oh, festival, whose voice was cut short, Oh joy /ululation n't found in our village. A whole year, carried by sorrow, The happiness of our children, scorched by fire. Marriage was left, and sorrow replaced it. Oh, but today, what will become of our world?

Table 11: Gitimi (11) A Lament Reflecting on Chance/Purpose

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
ክፋእ ዕድል ንጉዕዞና ዘበላሽዎ መዓት ጥራይ ዘምጽእ ብርሃንና ዘጥፍኡ። መዓት-ዓዲሙ፣ ንፍጥረት ዘስተማቕረ ከመይ ኣቢልና ንቕበሎ፣ እዚ ሓይል ቁስሊ።	Kifu eudul guezona zebelashewe Meat tiray zemitse brhanina zetife Meat adimu nfitiret zestmaqre, Kemey abilna niqibelo ezi hayal qusili.	Cruel fate that ruined our journey, That brought only calamity extinguished our light. Calamity called. That tasted of humanity. How can we accept this mighty wound?"

4.2.5. Poetic Devices and Emotional Resonance in Eulogy of Verses

Illustrative texts demonstrated the linguistic richness and emotional depth of dirge. The choice of Tigrinya, the vernacular language, ensured immediate and profound emotional resonance. This poetic artistry elevated dirge beyond simple wailing into a sophisticated form of oral literature. The use of poetic devices, such as direct address and metaphor, was a hallmark of the oral tradition,

confirming elegy sophisticated literary crafts man ship.

4.3. The Sonic Canvas of Dirge Musical and Vocal Characteristics

The distinctiveness of dirge was further underscored by its unique musical and vocal attributes. This focus on vocal expression aligned with broader lament traditions where the voice carried the primary burden of emotional conveyance.

4.3.1. Acapella Purity and Vocal Expressiveness

A defining feature of dirge was its near-exclusive reliance on the human voice. Unlike many secular Tigrinya songs that featured instruments, dirge was an Acapella performance (Chemotti, 2024). This amplified the raw, unfiltered emotion, allowing the voice to become the sole instrument for expressing grief through direct unmediated projection. The vocal amplifies the raw, unfiltered emotion of the lament.

4.3.2. Mournful Melodic Contours and Fluid Rhythm

While not strictly adhering to the modal system of Tigrinya music, dirge melodies typically featured descending or undulating contours, conveying sadness resignation. The rhythm was highly flexible and non-metrical, dictated by the performer's emotional flow. This fluidity allowed for profound individual expression. The non-metrical rhythm and descending melodic contours were consistent characteristics of laments globally, enabling expressions of grief (Clayton, 1996).

4.3.3. Rich Vocal Ornamentation and Communal Resonance

Performers employed a range of vocal techniques, including glissandos, microtonal shifts, and vibrato, to imbue their lament with emotional depth. The use of vocal fry or a deliberate "breaking" of the voice conveyed profound despair. Sobs, gasps, and loud cries were woven into the performance, blurring the line between raw emotion and artistic expression (Bedoya *et al.*, 2021). While often led by an individual song could transform into a communal outpouring a lead mourner would deliver a poetic verse, and others would respond with a collective wail or phrase. This calland response structured highlighted emotional intensity and amplified the collective nature of grief.

4.3.4. Psychological and Therapeutic Functions of Dirge

Beyond its aesthetic and social dimensions, dirge served crucial psychological and therapeutic functions, facilitating the complex process of bereavement.

4.3.5. Coping Mechanism and Reconstructing Reality

By structuring grief into poetic form, elegy acted as vital coping mechanisms. It provides a

framework for mourner to navigate the complex stages of grief. Narrative elements recounted the deceased's virtues and life story, helping survivors make sense of the loss. This act of remembering affirmed the deceased's value and their enduring impact, providing a pathway for meaning making.

4.3.6. Validation of Grief and Ritualized Transition

The public and communal nature of dirge validated a mourner's pain, assuring individuals that their intense grief was understood and shared. This communal validation reduces feelings of isolation and shame often associated with profound sorrow, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual support (Bihonegn & Mekonen, 2023).

The communal validation reduced feelings of isolation and sham. The sustained performance contributed to the gradual process of accepting the finality of death and moving toward a new reality. Dirge functioned as a ritualization transition, guiding the bereaved from immediate shock into a prolonged period of active mourning. This therapeutic aspect was deeply rooted in the communal philosophy of Axumite society.

4.4. Challenges and Nuances in Documenting Elegy

The documentation of dirge was fraught with profound challenges that stemmed from its very nature.

4.4.1. The Orality Improvisation Dilemma

The core challenge lay in elegy's dual nature as an oral and improvisational tradition. There was no single "correct" version of a lament. Each performance was unique at all. Simply transcribing the words stripped away essential elements like vocal timbre and rhythm. This created a paradox of preservation, as recording a performance could violate its inherent, dynamic essence.

4.4.2. The Ethics of Recording Grief

The performance context of elegy was a sacred space of profound vulnerability, making the presence of a researcher inherently intrusive. The validity of informed consent was also questionable when sought from individuals in acute grief. Decontextualized, the raw emotionality of dirge risked being consumed as a spectacle, a form of nosiness.

4.4.3. Context of Dependency and the Need for Thick Narrative

To analyze dirge responsibly, a researcher had to employ “thick description,” interpreting the performance within its dense web of cultural significance. This involved understanding non-verbal cues and reactions, as well as the specific time and place within the ritual. Without this rich, layered understanding, any analysis remained superficial.

4.5. Dirge in the Shadow of War

Tradition and transformation in contemporary Tigray. The most significant “recent update” to the understanding of elegy requires situating it within the catastrophic context of the 2020-2022 Tigray War. The conflict inflicted a scale of death, trauma, and social disorder exceptional in modern Tigray history (Gebre-eyesus & Reda, 2024). This has not only placed immense stress on the tradition but has also fundamentally transformed its function, content, and performance.

4.5.1. A Tradition Confronting Unprecedented Loss

Dirge evolved to navigate individual death. The war however created mass death that overwhelmed the capacity for personalized lament. The content adapted from mourning a completed life to lamenting lives brutally cut short. A significant challenge was the thousands of missing persons, forcing the tradition to adapt by performing laments over photographs or at memorial sites (Mac Conaill *et al.*, 2025).

The ritual focus required for a proper elegy a sustained individual, became a near impossibility. The emotional and physical capacity to mourn each person with the traditional depth was overwhelmed. Violent and traumatic death the content of dirge has had to adapt from mourning a life that reached a form of completion to lamenting lives cruelly cut short by massacres, drone strikes, and starvation (McGowan *et al.*, 2025).

This introduces a thematic layer of violence and injustice that was fundamentally different from the sorrow of natural passing. The mourned and the missing a significant challenged the reality of mass graves and the thousands of missing persons whose fates remain unknown. The tradition of dirge was centered on the presence of the deceased's body or a known grave.

4.5.2. New Thematic Urgencies

In the post war era, elegy carried the weight of collective trauma. Laments shifted from addressing the deceased to silent world. The mourning extended to encompass the loss of a generation and the distractions of homes. The poetic terminology now incorporated themes of loyalty and a desperate cry for justice, turning elegy into a moral arraignment (Demissie Kebede, 2025).

4.5.3. Elegy as Testimony and Vernacular Witnessing

In a context where official narratives sought to deny atrocities, dirge took on critical new functions as testimony. By naming the dead and detailing their manner of killing, performers created a public, oral archive. The act of naming was a profound act of political resistance against forced forgetting, functioning as a counter-memory (Pokharel, 2025). This makes the performance of elegy not just a cultural act, but also a human rights act assertion of the truth and the right to memory.

4.5.4. The Disruption and Adaptation of Ritual Practice

The war's physical and social devastation disrupted the logistics of mourning. Displacement fragmented communities, making collective gatherings difficult. Mourning become a more isolated affair or was reconfigured in compass for internally displaced persons (Addis, 2025). In the absence of individual graves, collective memorial sites become new centers for mourning rituals, blending specific loss with shared society pain. This transformed the performance space from the private home to the public square, further politicizing remembrance.

4.6. The Future of Elegy in the Mourning

Preservation, Adaptation, and Resilience were the future of dirge in Tigray defined by the resilience and creativity with which the people adapt this ancient tradition to their new reality. Its Survival depends on its ability to continue serving the profound psychological and social needs of a people grappling with an immense historical trauma.

4.6.1. The Resolution of Preservation in the Post-Conflict Era

There was now a historical urgency to document the dirge of this specific period. These are not just songs of grief; they are first-hand accounts of a people's experience of war, expressed in their most profound cultural idiom. Ethnomusicologists and oral historians, working carefully and ethically with Tigrayan communities, have a vital role to play in helping to preserve this living archive of testimony before it fades (Mason, 2019).

4.6.2. The Role of the Diaspora in Cultural Continuity

The Tigrayan diaspora has played a crucial role in raising awareness of the conflict. It is also a key space for the evolution of dirge. Away from the immediate context of Tigray, elegy may be performed in more formalized settings, such as community memorials or online gatherings (Zewde *et al.*, 2010). While this changes its nature, it also ensures its continuity, connecting diaspora youth to their heritage and creating a global society of mourning and remembrance.

4.6.3. Dirge and Its Influence on Contemporary Arts

The aesthetic core of dirge influenced a new generation of Tigrayan artists. The raw emotion, poetic, metaphors, and themes of loss and resilience found their way into contemporary poetry, popular music, and film (Yang & Zhang, 2025). The demonstrated that dirge was not a static relic but a living wellspring of cultural expression that continued to nourish the creative spirit of the Tigrayan people.

The enduring voice of a people dirge, the traditional lament of Tigray, was a testament to the power of the human voice to confront the abyss of loss. A sophisticated and indispensable social institution facilitates psychological healing, reinforces communal bonds, preserves history, and affirms cultural identity. Its deeply personal and improvisational nature allows each performance to be a unique testament to a lost life and a specific relationship (Negash, 2017). In the aftermath of the devastating Tigray War, dirge has demonstrated its profound resilience and adaptive capacity. It has carried the immense burden of transforming from a ritual for individual sorrow into a platform for processing collective trauma, a vehicle for public testimony, and a defiant act of counter-memory (Leger *et al.*, 2024).

4.7. Additional Tigrinya Poetic Laments (Elegy or Verses)

This section presented additional poetic verses to illustrate the thematic and emotional range of clergy. These examples reflected the emotional depth and metaphorical language found in traditional Tigrinya dirge, offering a richer understanding of these oral traditions. . They serve as windows into the individual and collective consciousness of grief within the Axmite society, highlighting various facets of loss and the human response to it.

4.7.1. Lament for a Worker or Protector

This lament often arises from the loss of a key family member a father, husband, or elder son- who served as the primary source of economic stability and physical security. The lament emphasizes the sudden vulnerability and profound practical disruption left in their absence.

Table 12: Gitimi (12) A Lament Reflecting on emotion/Purpose

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
<p>ዋይ ቆረሩኒ ፣ መሬት ዘይብለይ ፣ አብ ሸንኮለል ዓዲ፣ ዝሓደርኩ ለይለይ። ደቀይ ተዘርጊሖም፣ከም ፍረ እምኒ፣ መንከይክኣኽኸበም፣መንከይ ክድግፈኒ።</p> <p>ዋይ ወዮ ሓዘን፣ ካብ ዓድና ዘባርረና፣ ብኸመይ ኢና ደኣ ፣ ክንሓስብ ፀባሕና። ዓይነይ ምጥማት ፣ ደሞም ዝፈሰሰ፣ ልበይ ምሕላም ፣ ቃንዛ ዝወረሰ።</p>	<p>Way! Qoriruni meriet zeybeley, Abshenkolel adi zihaderku leyiley. Deqey tzerghiom kem emini fere Men ke akakibom men keygedfeni.</p> <p>Way weyo hazen kab adina zebarerena</p> <p>Bikemey enada kinhasb tsenihna; Ayney ktmt nizfesese domom, Libey mihlam qaniza ziwerese.</p>	<p>Oh, I am cold. Without my land, In a foreign village, I spent my nights. My children are scattered, like pebbles. Who will gather them, who will support me? Oh, woe the sorrow, that expelled us from our home How then, shall we think of our tomorrow? My eyes watching, their blood that flowed, My heart dreaming, seized by agony.</p>

Table 13: Gitimi (13) A Lament Reflecting on emotion/braved

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
ክዳነይ ዝነበርካ፣ንዓይ ነይርካ መክበሪ፣ አብ ቅድመይ ፀሊምካ፣ ክንድዚ ትኸይድ። ምሉእ ቤትና ወናኒ፣ ብባዶ ሓዲጉካ፣ መን አሎ ከምኻ፣ ሓይሊ ኩላትና ኢኻ።	Kdaney zneberka nay nerka mekberi Abqdmey tselimka kindi ‘ziuy tkeyid Mulue betina wenani bibado hadigka, Men alo kemake hayli kulatina eka.	You who were my garment,who was my shade in heat, You vanished before me, you traveled this far. The owner of our entire house, leaving it empty. Who else is there? Who can be strong?

4.7.2. Lament Questioning the Suddenness of Death

This type of dirge grappled with the sudden nature of death, reflecting a sense of injustice. It often personified death as an unwelcome invader. In addition of questioning of death’s suddenness was a common them in global lament traditions.

Table 14: Gitimi (14) A Lament Reflecting on emotion/Life end

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
ዋይ ወለዶና! ዘይበፀሐ መዓልቱ፣ ጉድጓድ ሕልሚ፣ዝተወርወረ ፍርዱ። ፀባሕ መፃኢና፣ብፀልማት ዝተሸፈነ፣ አብ ምድሪ አኽሱም፣ደም ዝተረገገ። ቃለ ትምኒትና ፣ ብንብዓት ዝተፃሕፈ፣ ምእንቲ ህዝብና ፣ ሞት ዝተሰከመ።	Way niwelodana zeyibetseh ma’altu, Ab godigad hilimi zitewerwer firdu. Tsbametsa ‘ena bitselimat ziteshefene Ab meriet Aksum dem zteregerege. Qal timinina bidem zitetsahife, Mi’enti hizbina mot zitesekmu.	Oh, our generation! Whose day did not arrive, In the pit of dreams, whose fate was cast? Our future tomorrow, covered by darkness, On the land of Aksum, blood poured out. The word of our hope, written in tears, For our people, death was carried.

Table 15: Gitimi (15) A Lament Reflecting on emotion/death

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
አንታ ሞት! ብዘይ ምፍላጥ ዝመፃእካ፣ አምፀእካልና ክፉእ ሓዘን፣ ልብና ዘርሰስካ ሓዲር ዓድና፣ ዘይምርአይ ጉድ ገበርካኒ፣ ንሱ ዘይፈልጥ፣ አበይ ተዘርግሐ።	Ata mot bizefilat zimetsaka, Amsikalna kifue hazen libna zsebrka hatsur adina zeymray gud geberkana Nisu zeyiflt abe tezergiha?	Oh Death! You who came without warning You brought sorrow, you tore our hearts. You made me unable to see our short time together He who did not know, where was he scattered?

4.7.3. Lament of Longing and Emptiness

This lament captures the profound sense of absence and the enduring yearning for the deceased, often expressed through sensory details that highlight the void left behind. The use of sensory details to express longing and absence was a recurrent motif in grief literature and oral traditions, as individuals often experience the absence of a loved one through a deprivation of sights, sounds, and other familiar presences.

Table 16: Gitimi (16) A Lament Reflecting on emotion/posses

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
<p>ዋይ ቆረሩኒ ፣መሬት ዘይብለይ፣ አብ ሸንኮለል ዓዲ፣ዝሓደርኩ ለይለይ። ደቀይ ተዘርጊሖም፣ከም ፍረ እምኒ መንከ አኻኸቦም፣መንከይ ክድግፈኒ ዋይ ሓዘን፣ ካብ ዓድና ዘባርረና ፣ ኸመይ ኢና ደኣ፣ከንሓስብ ፀባሕና።</p> <p>ዓይነይ ምጥማት ፣ ደሞም ዝፈሰሰ ልቦይ ምሕላም ፣ ቃንዛ ዝወረሰ።</p>	<p>Way! Qoriruni meriet zeybey, Ab shekolel adi zihaderku leyiley. Deqey tzerghiom kem emini fere Men keyiakakibom men keyi gedfeni. Way! Weyo hazen kab adina zebaerena Kikey enadea kinhasib tsenihina. ayiney</p> <p>kitimt nizfesese domom, Libey mihlam qaniza ziwereese.</p>	<p>Oh, I am cold. Without my land, in a foreign village, I spent my nights. My children are scattered, like pebbles. Who will gather them, who will support me? Oh, woe the sorrow, that expelled us from our home. How then shall we think of our tomorrow? My eyes watching, their blood that flowed, my heart dreaming, seized by agony</p>

Table 17: Gitimi (17) A Lament Reflecting on emotion/lovely

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
<p>አብ እምባ ወዲአ፣ነገራት ይጥምጥ፣ ንፋስ እንትነፍስ፣ድምፀኺ ይረኸብ ። ሓንቲ ቃል ንገረኒ፣ ዋላ ኣይተወግዕ ብዘይ ንስኺ እማ፣ ኣዲንተይ ሓሚመናኒ።</p>	<p>Abemiba wetsa negerat ytimtim Nifas entinefs dimtsiki yirekb. Hantiqal nigerini wala aytewadeni, Bzeye nsiki Ema ayney hamimen a ni</p>	<p>I climbed the mountain, searching around The wind blows, and I hear your voice. Tell me one word. Do not finish me, without you, my eyes are sick</p>

4.7.4. Lament Expressing Inability to Accept the Loss

This dirge reflected the initial shock and denial phases of grief. The mourner struggled to accept the reality of death and clung to hope for the deceased’s return. The depiction of denial and desperate hope was consistent element across diverse cultural expressions of grief.

Table 18: Gitimi (18) A Lament Reflecting on emotion/wandering loss

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
<p>ዋ!በሊሕ መንእሰይ፣ዕምረ ዘይፈተየልካ አብ ገድሊ ደምካ፣ ንምድረ ዝሃብካ።</p> <p>አይመውተንድኣ፣አይመለሰን ሓርበኛ፣ ምስ መላእ ትግራይ፣ዘይተፈጠረ ዕዳ፣ ቤተሰብ የውርድ፣ንብዓት ከም ማይ፣ ትምኒት ዝነበሮም፣ተሪፍ አብ በረኽ። ዋይ ዕርፍቲ ኣይትረክብ፣ ነፍሲ ወርሒ፣ ብሰላም ንግበሮ፣ ኣይርከብን ሕጊ።</p>	<p>way belh menisey emre zeyfetylka Abity gtm gedl demka nimeriet zihabka.</p> <p>Ayi mowitn dea a yimesn harbegna, Ab melae tigray zey teftere edz.</p> <p>Bieteseb yewird nibat kemm may, Tminit zineberom terefu aeb berka.</p> <p>Erefiti zetirekib nebsi werihi, Biselay nigbero ayirikebn higa.</p>	<p>Oh, sharp youth, life did not favor you. In the struggle, your blood, you gave to the earth. Neither my death, nor my hero's return, With all Tigray, created a debt (unpayable). Family sheds, tears like water, their hopes, Left in my wilderness. Oh, rest you won't find, wandering soul, let us make it in peace, a law not found</p>

Table 19: Gitimi (19) A Lament Reflecting on emotion/hope loss

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
<p>ወዮ! ወዮ! ----- አብ ደገ ፀኒሕኩኻ፣ ከይመፅእካ ሓዲርካ፣ መዓፅዒኡ ኣይመፅእን፣ክትመፅእ ተስፋ ገረ</p> <p>እንታይ ደኣ ይበሃል! ክመርረክ ዝደሊ፣ ንዓይ ገዲፍካ፣ ኣበይ ደኣ ተሰዊርካ።</p>	<p>Woye! Woye! ----- Abdege tsenahkukaye keymetsa hadirkaye Metsiu ayemetsen kitmetsie tesfa geyireyr.</p> <p>Entay de-a yibehal kemarerka zideli, Niay gidifka abbey de-a tesewirka.</p>	<p>I waited for you at the door, but you dn't come. I will not close the door, hoping you will come. What can be said! To wish bitterness upon you, Leaving me, where did you end up?"</p>

4.7.5. Lament for a Life Unfulfilled, and Lost Potential

This category of dirge mourned the premature end of a life, particularly a young person, focusing on unrealized dreams and potential. The universal sorrow for lives cut short was a common theme in elegiac worldwide.

Table 20: Gitimi (20) A Lament Reflecting on emotion/deep mourning

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
<p>ዋይ ባዓል ፣ ዝተቐረፀ ድምፅኺ፣ ዋይ ሃለውለው፣ አብ ዓድና ዘይርከ ብኪ። ዓመት ሙሉእ፣ ሓዘን ዝተሰከመ፣ ደስታ ደቅና፣ ብሓዊ ዝሓረረ። መርዓ ተረፈ፣ ሓዘን ተተከአ፣ ዋይ እምበር፣ ሎሚ ዓለም ክንክልክል።</p>	<p>Way! Be'al ziteqeretse dimitsiki Way! Halowlow abadina zeyrkebki Amet mulue hazen ziteseke Desita deqina bihawi ziharere. Meri'a terefe bihazen tetekea Way! Ember lomi alem kinklikel.</p>	<p>Oh festival, whose voice was cut short, Oh joy (ululation), not found in our village. A whole year, carried by sorrow, The happiness of our children, scorched by fire. Marriage was left and sorrow replaced it. Oh, but today, what will become of our world?</p>

Table 21: Gitimi (21) A Lament Reflecting on emotion/life shortend

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
<p>ወዮ! ወዮ! ፀሓይ ዝወፀት፣ ከይደቐቐት ዝዓረበ፣ አበባ ዝበቐለ፣ ከይዓበዮ ዝረገፈ። ትምኒት ዘይበፀሐ፣ ብኩሉስ ዕድመ ዝተሓፀረ ሕልሚ ኣይከነን፣ ከመይ ክንሸሞ።</p>	<p>Woye! Woye! ----- Tsehay zwetset keydekeket zarebet Abeba zibeqole key-abeye zirgfe. Tmnit zeybitsehe binus edmiu ztehatsre Hilmi aykonen kemey kishikemo.</p>	<p>A sun that rose, but set without reaching its zenith A flower that sprouted, but withered before growing. A wish unfulfilled, a life shortened, It is not a dream, so how can we accept it?</p>

4.7.6. Elegy from Axum Village Traditions of daily Life and Rural Bonds

These examples aimed to capture the authentic voice and imagery of traditional dirge, reflecting villagers’ daily lives and deep connection to their land. They emphasized the integration of agricultural and communal motifs into expressions of grief, grounding the abstract concept of loss in lived experience.

4.7.6.1. Lament for an Elder Village Wisdom Lost

The loss of an elder is particularly significant in traditional societies representing the loss of wisdom history and social cohesion this lament underscores that profound communal impact the reverence for elders and the communal impact of their loss symbolizing a depletion of collective wisdom and strength is a recurring theme in African oral traditions and cultural anthropology (Foláyan *et al.*, 2025).

Table 22: Gitimi (22) A Lament Reflecting on emotion/life suffering

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
<p>ዋይ ቆረሩኒ ፣ መሬት ዘይብለይ፣ ኣብ ሸንኮለል ዓዲ፣ ዝሓደርኩ ለይለይ። ደቀይ ተዘርጊሖም፣ ከም ፍረ እምኒ፣ መንከይ ክኣኻኽበም፣ መንከይ ክድግፈኒ። ዋይ ወዮ ሓዘን፣ ከብ ዓድና ዘበርረና፣ ኸመይ ኢና ደኣ፣ ክንሓስብ ፅባሕና። ዓይነይ ምጥማት፣ ደሞም ዝፈሰሰ፣ ልበይ ምሕላም፣ ቃንዝ ዝወረሰ።</p>	<p>Way! Qoriruni meriet zeybey Ab shekolel adi zihaderku leyiley. deqey tzerghiom kem emini fere men keyiakakibom men keyi gedfeni Way! weyo hazen kab Adna zebarerena Kikey enadea kinhasib tsenihina. Ayiney kitimt nizfesese domom, Libey miham qaniza ziwerese.</p>	<p>Oh, I am cold. Without my land, In a foreign village, I spent my nights. My children are scattered, like pebbles. Who will gather them, who will support me? Oh, woe the sorrow, that expelled us from our home. How then shall we think of our tomorrow? My eyes watching, their blood that flowed My heart dreaming, seized by suffering.</p>

Table 23: Gitimi (23) A Lament Reflecting on emotion/life wilderness

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
<p>በሊሕ መንእሰይ፣ ዕምሪ ዘይፈተላልካ ኣብ ገድሊ ደምካ፣ ንምድሪ ዝሃብካ። ኣይሞተን ድኣ፣ ኣይመለሰን ሓርበኛ፣ ምስ መላእ ትግራይ፣ ዘይተፈጠረ ዕዳ፣ ቤተሰብ የውርድ፣ ንብዓት ከም ማይ፣ ትምኒት ዝነበሮም፣ ተሪፉ ኣብ በረኽ። ዋይ ዕርፍቲ ኣይትረክብ፣ ነፍሲ ወርሒ፣ ብሰላም ንግበሮ፣ ኣይርከብን ሕጊ።</p>	<p>belih meniesey emire zeyfetylka Abity gedl demka nmeriet zihabka. ayi mowitn dea a yimesn harbegna, Ab melae tigray zey teftere edz. Bieteseb yewird nibat kemm may, Tminit zineberom terefu aeb berka. Erefiti zetirekib nebsi werihi, Biselam nigbero ayirikebn higa.</p>	<p>Oh, sharp youth, life did not favor you, In the struggle, your blood, you gave to the earth. Neither my death, nor my hero's return, With all Tigray, created a debt (unpayable). Family sheds, tears like water, Their hopes, left in my wilderness. Oh, rest you won't find, wandering soul, Let us make it in peace, a law not found.</p>

Table 24: Gitimi (24) A Lament Reflecting on emotion/diminished wisdom

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
<p>ወዮ! ወዮ!..... ዕምባባ መዓረይ! ንሓጎስ ዘይኮነ፣ ወርዱ ዘይመዝመዘ፣ ገዛና ዘብረሀ። ሎሚ ታይ ይበሃል፣ ሓውና ናብ ኣተወ፣ እንታይ ኣሎ ሎሚ፣ ንሱ ዘይብሎ ዓዲ ኹነ</p>	<p>Woye! Woye... Emibeba mearey, nihagoss zeyikone. Weridu zeymezimeze, gezana zebirhe. Lom tay kbehal hawna nab gudigad atewe Enitay alo lomi Nsu zebilu adi kone.</p>	<p>Woye! Woye... My flower of honey! You who filled us with joy, Whose wisdom never diminished, who brightened our house. Today, it cannot be said, our strength has entered (the grave). If there is anything today, it is a village without him/her.</p>

4.7.6.2. Laments for a young Farmer Unfulfilled potential

This lament addressed the death of a young farmer, intertwining the personal tragedy with the loss of agricultural promise. The theme of unfulfilled potential, particularly in agrarian societies was often deeply tied to the land.

Table 25: Gitimi (25) A Lament Reflecting on emotion/left by hunger

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
ዋይ ሃገረይ! አዝመራኺ ዝሓረረ፤ መሬትከ ፈርዩ ንማእረር ዘይበፀሐ ዝከሸፈ። ዋይ አዝመራና ንኸንቱ ዝተረፈ፤ ምግብ ሰላኢኡ ዝተለዕ ዘየለ። መሬትና ባዲሙ ብሓዊ ተሃሰዩ፤ ህዝብና ሃለቕ ብጥጫት ረገፈ።	Way hagery! azmeraki zharere, Meretki feryu nmarer zeybtsha zkeshefe. Way! AZmrana Nkentu ziterefe, Migibi tesaenu ziblae zeyele. Merietina badimu bihawi tehaseye, Hizibna haleqe bitimiet Regefe.	Oh! My country! Scorched by sticks (war's destruction) Your fertile land destroyed. Oh! Our farming, whose voice did not come out, In its season, no blessing came. The food of children, Ruined by fire, and we, left by hunger.

Table 26: Gitimi (27) A Lament Reflecting on emotion/departed suddenly

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
ወዮ! ወዮ! ንኸብረት ዘይበቕዐ፤ምስ መሓዝቱ ዘይጎየዩ ዘይሰሓቕ ዓውዲ ዘይረገፀ፤ ትሕቲ ምድሪ ዝኣተወ። እዚ ሓረስታይ፤ንኸሓርስ እናተመነዩ፤ በቕሓት ዝተቐረፀ፤ ሕልሙ ከይፈፀመ፤ ገና ብዕሸሉ ሃደፍ ከደ።	Woyo! Woyo... Nkbret zeybqia zeygoyeye eysehaqe Awidi zeyregtse, thiti mderi ziatewe. Ezi harestay kiharis enatemenye, Bequlu zteqoretse hilum keyfetesm Gena bieshelu hadeff kede.	a mountain that did not laugh, one not yet fit to be harvested, who did not tread the threshing floor, Who entered under the earth? He who longed for his plough, who raised his ox, Before his dream was reached, he departed suddenly.

4.7.6.3. Lament during Hardship Village Burden

This lament integrated personal sorrow with broader themes of communal suffering. It reflected a village grappling with adversity like famine or conflict. The merging of personal grief with collective hardship was a characteristic of society laments.

Table 27: Gitimi (27) A Lament Reflecting on emotion/departed suddenly

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
<p>ወዮ! ወዮ! እዚ ክራማት ነይሩ ኪንዲ ዓሰርተ፣ ንሱ ጊና ኣይመፅአን ተሰሓሒተ ገዝኡ። ዘመንስ ተቐይሩ ነይሩ መከረና ሓሊፏ፣ ስድራና ግናየለን ተበቲኑ ቀርቦ ዕዳልና ሓሲሞ። መሬትና ሓይው ነጻና ይፀበ፣ ንሕና'ዎ ኣብ ምድረበዳ ድምፅና ከይተሰምዐ።</p>	<p>Weyo! Weyo! Ezi kiramat neyiru kindi aserte. Nisu gina aymetsen tesahahitu geziu. Zemensi teqeyiru neyru mekerana halifu, Sidrana gin yelen tebetinu qeriyu edulna hamiqu Merietna hawiyu neane yitsibe, Nihna xab midrebeda dimtsina zeytesema.</p>	<p>Oh! Rains (shelter!) that were, for many years, Now again, I was stranded on the road. We long for my home, to return, My fate does not reach our neck is cut short in our heart. Our land was angered; it waits for us. Now the wildness, our voice found no echo</p>

Table 28: Gitimi (28) A Lament Reflecting on emotion/give consolation

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
<p>ወዮ! ወዮ! ህይወት! ብሓዘን ዝተጀመረ፤ ንዓድና ዘኸረመዩ፤ ንባድኡ ዘትረፈ። ንሕድሕድና ኣየራኸበና፤ ንብኸያት ተቐፀርና ብመዓት ዝኸደ ምፅንዕናዕ ሙን የሃብ።</p>	<p>wiyo! Hiwet bihaze tjemere Niadina zekorimeye. wiyo! Hidhidna zeyinirak ebbkyat binmeat zikedede mitsiniana men yehab.</p>	<p>Oh life! That began with sorrow. They seized our village that leaving it empty. We did not find each other; we are counted by our crying. He who went with calamity, who will give us consolation?"</p>

4.7.6.4. Personal Laments with Ritual Imagery or Lost Companion

This lament combined intimate personal grief with imagery from the familiar rural environment, making the loss tangible and relevant. The intertwining of personal grief with local and ritual metaphors was a common artistic strategy in oral laments.

Table 29: Gitimi (29) A Lament Reflecting on emotion/fate diminished

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
<p>ዋይ ላዲ ትግራይ ዓዲ ጥበብ ዝነበራት፣ ምሁራት ደቅኺ ብሞት ዝተረፉ። እዚኹሉ ፍልጠት ንብላሽ ዝተረፈ፣ መፃኢ ወለዶ ክድንቁር ተፈረዶ። ብርሃን ዓዲና ፀልማት ተኸዲኑ፣ ክትመሃር ዘይዕድመካ ዕድልካ ዝከሸፈ።</p>	<p>Way!Za adi-Tigray adiTebeb zineberet mihuraT deqiki Bimot ziterefu ezi kulu filtet niblashi ziterefe, Metsaei weledo kidinqur ziteferedo. Birhan Adina tselimat tekedinu, Kitimehar zeyiedimaka edilke zikeshefe.</p>	<p>Oh! Land of Tigray, where wisdom once was, educated children, Left by death. The time of learning, short by sticks (conflict), The future generation, trampled by hunger. The light of our land, hidden in darkness. We who did not wish to learn our fate diminished.</p>

Table 30: Gitimi (30) A Lament Reflecting on emotion/heart saddened

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
<p>ወዮ! ወዮ! ኣንታ ሓወይ ዝበልካኒ ዘይነፅፍ፤ እወ ሕልፊ እዩ ፍልፍል ማየይ፤ ሓወይ ንሓውኻ ። ሎሚ ብዕ ንፀይቲ፤ ብሰንክኻ ልበይ መሊኡ ሓዘን፤ በሉ እስከ እኸሊን ማይን ሓያል ኣየሓዘን።</p>	<p>Woye! Woye! Ata hawey zibelikani zeyinetsfi, Ewe hilfi yu filfil mayey hawy nihawka. lomi bisenkika libey meliu hazen, Belu Ekilin mayn hayal ayihazen.</p>	<p>Oh my brother! You who never dried up my or source, my spring of water, brother. Today I am not supported by a stick or a common staff, But by you or your absence. my heart is saddened.”</p>

4.7.6.5. Laments for a mother, the heart of the Home and community

In Axumite, culture a mother’s loss was lamented as the demise of the heart of the home and community. The theme of a mother’s profound impact and her loss being associated to the collapse of foundational support was extremely introduced in oral traditions globally.

Table 31: Gitimi (31) A Lament Reflecting on emotion/sorrow dwells

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
“ዋይ ኣደይ ፣ ንብዓት ዘይረሕሶ፣ ዓይኒ ኣዲኽ ፣ ወዲ ዘይፀብፀበ። ኣብ ገዛኽ ፣ ፅምዋ ዝነገሰ ፣ ኣብ ስምካ ፣ ልቢ ዝተቐደሰ ። ሎሚ ዘይተመነ፣ ብርሃን ንፅባሕ፣ ኣብ ልቢ ኣደ ፣ ሓዘን ዝወርሕ።	Weyo! Adey nibiat zeyeriso Ayini adika wedi zetsebisebe. Ab getsika tsimewa zinegese, Ab simika libi zitqedese. Lomi zeytemene birihan nitsebah Ab libi-adey hazen ziwerhe.	Oh my mother, whose tears never cease, Your mother’s eye, my son, no longer counts. In your house, silence reigns. In your name, a mother’s heart is consecrated. Today, a light for tomorrow was not wished for In a mother’s heart, sorrow dwells.

Table 32: Gitimi (32) A Lament Reflecting on emotion/heart not crumble

Tigrinya (ትግርኛ)	Translation	English Translation
ወዮ! ወዮ! ፣ ኣደየይ! ወሓለ ዮ! ማዕዖ ዓባየይ ገዛና ቆሰለ፣ ልባይ እውን ዛሕተለ። ንብዓትና ኸመይ ዘይንርእዮ ውሕጅ ዳኣ ዘይ ኮነ ዘይትውዳእ ምግብ ነይርኪ ሎሚ ዓረበት ።	Woye! Adeyey wehaleye, maetso abayey gezana qosel libey win zahitele. Nibiatina kmey zenreyo wihij da’a kon, zeyitiwdae migibi neyirki lomi gin arebet.	My mother! My elder sister (confident)! My big door! You who matured our house, Who guarded my heart? How can tears, let me see it, not be enough, Like a stronghold that would not crumble today, she has set.

4.7.7. Thematic and Artistic synthesis of dirge verses

These diverse verses demonstrated the remarkable versatility and enduring power of dirge. It employed a consistent set of artistic strategies to articulate grief across personal, communal, and political domains. These artistic choices rendered its sophisticated form of oral poetry, understanding its function as a vital mechanism for processing loss, reinforcing communal bonds, and transmitted shared values and history. Its ability to adapt to various forms of loss spoke to its enduring cultural resilience. The consistent applications of poetic devices aligned with the principles of effective oral performance, enhancing memorability and emotional impact.

Metaphorical richness was the use of vivid, culturally relevant symbols (costumes, mechanisms, mountains, fortresses, suns, flowers, ploughs) grounds abstract emotional pain in tangible, relatable imagery from daily Axumiet's life, making the grief profoundly accessible (Dawson *et al.*, 2025).

Direct address and rhetorical questions these devices create intimacy and urgency, drawing the listener directly into the mourner's immediate emotional state, fostering empathy and shared experience; they also serve as outlets for the existential questions that accompany loss (Campbell & Miller, 2023).

Anaphora and repetition: while not always explicit in these short examples, recurring phrases and repeated calls within longer dirge performances build emotional intensity and provide a rhythmic anchor, allowing for communal participation and collective outpouring of sorrow (Méndez-Vargas *et al.*, 2025).

Narrative elements of dirge often hints at a story of the life lived, the suddenness of departure, the hopes unfulfilled-contributing to meaning-making and the preservation of individual and collective memory (Philip & Ramachandran, 2025).

Emotional arc was a short each verses captures a specific emotional moment or trajectory, from disbelief and raw sorrow to longing, resignation, or even subtle critique, reflecting the complex, non-linear nature of the grief process (Mollès & Parada-Ulloa, 2025).

4.8. Performance Context and Timing

The rhythms of Axumite mourning involved a carefully orchestrated series of rites. Dirge was integrated into this sequence, facilitating transitions, intensifying emotions, and enabling the communal processing of loss. Its performance was deeply rooted in local customs and spiritual beliefs, serving as a means of managing social transitions.

4.8.1. Immediate Post-Death Period

The initial outpouring of dirge typically began almost immediately after news of death. This phase was characterized by intense, raw, and often chaotic expressions of grief reflecting immediate shock and profound disorientation (Tamanini & Bonafede, 2025). Located at the deceased's home, lament's volume and intensity grew as the society members arrived. Uninhibited vocalization, loud wailing, and physical manifestations of pain marked this phase. At this stage, dirge was an unfiltered emotional release.

4.8.2. The Funeral Procession and Burial Somber Escort

As the body moved to the burial site, elegy took on a rhythmic, mournful character. This phase was a public display of sorrow, transforming public thoroughfares into sacred spaces. The elegy continued until the body was interred, ensuring continuous accompaniment. Wails become a mournful drone by women. Other mourners, including men, contributed cries or sighs, reinforcing communal bonds.

4.8.3. The Immediate Mourning Period (Da'asa)

Following burial, the community entered an intense mourning period in the mourning tent. This was the primary stage for extended elegy, transitioning from raw spontaneity to structured poetic expression. Skilled lamenters composed elaborate verses, weaving personal eulogies. Dirge adapted a call-and-response pattern, fostering communal emotional release and solidarity (Bakelants et al., 2025). The establishment of a dedicated mourning space and the transition to structured lamentation are common elements in expected post-burial mourning periods.

4.8.4. Post Mourning period and Commemorative Funerals

Mourning in Axum extended beyond the initial week, marked by significant commemorative rites at intervals (e.g. 7th, 12th, 40th, 80th, six months, one year). The intense public dirge subsided, but its echoes resonated at these later gatherings as a poignant remembrance. Elegy performance at these stages was less spontaneous (Tang, 2025). The verses focused on cherished memories and enduring legacies, reflecting a deep sorrow rather than the raw edge of initial grief. These staggered commemorative rites were prevalent in many traditions, providing structured opportunities for ongoing grief processing.

Spontaneous moments of sorrow highlighted the non-linear nature of grief. Dirge could resurface in the private or spontaneous moments of sorrow when memories were triggered. These personal performances allowed for emotional releases long after formal mourning periods, a well-recognized aspect of grief.

4.8.5. Distinctive Practices in Axumite Mourning Music

Several practices defined the unique characters of Axumite mourning music. The primarily of female voice were the custodians and primary performers of elegy, their vocalizations setting the tone and emotional tenor of the mourning space. These deep cultural role positions women as central figures in the emotional processing and social management of grief. (Laotan-Brown, 2024). Men's public expressions are typically more restrained. The prominent role of women as primary lamenters and custodians of mourning traditions was a common feature across many cultures, where their vocal expressions were central to collective grief rituals and emotional processing within the community.

The mourning tent was a communal space was central to the performance context, where public grief was enacted, supported by collective presence, food sharing, and continuous dirge. Its construction and maintenance are significant communal efforts, symbolizing solidarity and shared responsibility.

A cappella, performance dirge was almost universally performed without a musical instrument. The raw power of the human voice, with its ability to convey nuanced emotion through pitch, timbre, glissando, and vocal breaks, is paramount (Pärtlas, 2025).

This emphasizes the directness and unadorned nature of grief, ensuring the emotional message was conveyed without external distraction, focusing entirely on the human voice as the vehicle for profound sorrow. The emphasis on unaccompanied vocal performance in laments, allowing the raw human voice to convey deep emotion without instrumental embellishment, was a characteristic shared by many traditional mourning music forms globally, highlighting the direct connection between voice and grief.

Oral tradition and improvisation "poetry" of dirge was largely improvised. While drawing on a repertoire of common metaphors, themes, and melodic fragments, specific verses are composed on the spot, adapting to the deceased's identity, death circumstances, and the mourner's immediate emotional state (Vale, 2024).

This makes each elegy unique and deeply personal, reflecting the dynamic nature of oral tradition and the creative capacity of the waddasi. The improvisational nature of oral poetry within traditional lament traditions is widely recognized, allowing for spontaneous emotional expressions

and adaptation to specific circumstances while drawing on established thematic and melodic frameworks.

Integration of sobbing and vocalized grief was unlike for some musical forms where emotional expressions are highly controlled; elegy explicitly incorporates sobs, cries, and guttural sounds of distress directly into the vocal performance. These were seen not as interruptions but as integral parts of the lament, enhancing its authenticity and emotional expression. The deliberate integration of non verbal expressions of grief, such as sobs and cries, directly into the musical performance of laments was a distinctive feature of many mourning traditions, emphasizing authenticity and catharsis over strict musicality (Barber, 2025).

Communal echo and shared wails were the call-and-response, aspects or simply the synchronized wailing and weeping of multiple mourners, transform individual grief into a powerful enveloping sound that signifies collective shared burden. This communal vocalization reinforces social bonds and creates a profound sense of unity in sorrow, ensuring no one mourns alone. The collective sonic experience was a hallmark of Axumite mourning, creating a powerful emotional resonance within the society.

4.9. Elegy A Resistant Voice of the Axum Society

The Tigrinya dirge was a multifaceted cultural phenomenon, blending oral poetry and poignant vocalization into a secular art form. Elegy actively built communal solidarity, transforming individual sorrow into a shared burden. It provided a crucial public voice for women allowing for culturally sanctioned expressions of grief vital for catharsis (Liu, 2025). It also ensured the vibrant transmission of cultural knowledge and values, acting as a dynamic archive of Axumite identity and resilience. In its subtle political undertones, elegy served as a sanctioned space for expressing collective trauma and offering a critique of prevailing conditions (Demissie Kebede, 2025).

Psychologically, elegy was an individual coping mechanism, facilitating intense catharsis and aiding in meaning making by celebrating the deceased's life. Its deep personalization ensured each lament was a unique tribute. The enduring relevance of eulogy despite historical upheaval testified to its capacity to navigate sorrow.

4.10. Performers and Their Roles in the Mourning Rituals

The performance of mourning music in the Axum community was a highly organized, emotionally charged, social undertaking. While mourning is a universal human experience, its expression was profoundly shaped by cultural norms and practices (Younan, 2023).

In Axum, individuals and groups are primarily responsible for leading and participating in the musical manifestations of sorrow, particularly the secular laments of *dirge*. These roles are often delimited by gender, age, social status, and proximity to the deceased. This intricate division of labor ensures that all dimensions of loss, personal, social, and spiritual, were acknowledged and processed, reinforcing communal bonds of shared human experience.

4.10.1. The Importance of the Female Voice in Mourning Rituals

While women's vocal elegy often dominated the soundscape of mourning, men's roles were equally vital, though expressed with more restraint. Men traditionally take on the primary responsibility for the logistical and organizational aspects of the funeral and the mourning period. In communal gatherings, they act as guardians of order, helping to maintain solemnity (O'Connor, 2019). Their expressions of grief were typically more contained, often manifested as deep sighs, moans, or rhythmic swaying. This quieter, ever-present form of grief provides a grounded and stabilizing force during an emotionally charged time.

Beyond their practical and organizational duties, men's participation also includes significant symbolic and verbal gestures. Verbally, men offer eulogies in a more narrative or oratorical style, recounting the deceased's achievements and life story. While they do not lead the poetic improvisation of the *dirge*, men frequently participate by joining in with collective cries of "Woye!" (Alas!) or "Ayyo!" (Oh!), which contributes to the collective soundscape of grief and unites the community in a shared expression of sorrow.

4.10.2. Male participation supporting roles and distinct expressions

The style and depth of participation in *dirge*, a form of Ethiopian lamentation, were heavily influenced by the mourner's age and their directed relationship to the deceased. Immediate family

members, such as the closest femal relatives like mothers, wives, and daughters lead the most intense and prolonged dirge. These performances were often raw and emotionally restrained, serving as the core expression of grief. Other female relatives and close friends also play a crucial part, joining in choruses and adding their own verses (Gitimi), which strengthens the communal solidarity and shared sorrow.

The role extended across different age groups, ensuring the continuity of the tradition. Elders, particularly women known as wadeseti bring a profound wisdom to the practice. They weaved historical context and philosophical reflections into their laments, giving their performances significant social and emotional weight. Mean while, younger generetions learn the tradition through participation. Children and youth incially express grief through spontaneous cying, but as they mature, they are taught the conventions of lamentation by observing and joining in the communal response. This process of learing and practicantion passes the intericate art of elegy from one generation to the next(Brown & Haynes-Thoby, 2025).

4.10.3. Age and proximity to the deceased

While elegy was a secular form of mourning, it was deeply intertwined with the social and spiritual fabric of the society. The mourning process was affected within a sacred context by the presence of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo priests and deacons, who lead the religious ceremonies and chants (Zema). This clearly distinguishes the secular elegy from the sacred Zema. Respected community members whom have high social standing or recognizing wisdom also influence the performance and guidance of mourning activity their proximity to the deceased and their recognized skill n lamentation(Beaman et al., 2004).

4.10.4. Spiritual status and social standing influences on leadership

While elegy was a secular form of mourning, it was deeply intertwined with the social and spiritual fabric of the community. The mourning process was affected within a sacred context by the presence of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo priests and deacons, who lead the religious ceremonies and chants (Zema). This clearly distinguishes the secular elegy from the sacred Zema. Respected community members whom have high social standing or recognizing wisdom also influence the

performance and guidance of mourning activity their proximity to the deceased and their recognized skill in lamentation.

4.10.5. Moments where certain songs/chants are more appropriate

The character of dirge a form of Ethiopian lamentation shifts depending on the stage of grief and the context of the death. In the initial shock of loss, the dirge was marked by raw, disjointed vocalization and primitive exclamations. As the funeral procession begins, the laments become more sustained and rhythmic, using repetitive phrases that emphasize the finality of the journey. The mourning tent, marked peak period for elaborate, improvised elegy. Here the verses become more poetic and detailed focused extensively on the deceased's life and virtues.

The content of the lamentation was always context dependent. A lament for a young person was often filled with questions about unfulfilled potential, while a lament for an elder was rich with praise for their wisdom and life achievements. In the later stages of mourning particularly during commemorative rites, the elegy becomes more reflective and noiseless (Treloyn, 2016). The verses at this point focus on cherished memories and the enduring legacy of the deceased, as the raw edge of initial grief has softened. In cases of conflict related deaths, laments was incorporated political undertones, serving as a form of social commentary and a vehicle for processing collective trauma.

In contrast, a dirge for a respected elder might be rich with praises for their wisdom, longevity, and positive impact on the society, laments for this lost in conflict (a common and heart breaking reality in Tigray's history, including recent periods) often incorporate strong political undertones, lamenting the injustices, collective suffering, or societal failures that led to their demise (Erba, 2024).

This demonstrates dirge capacity as a form of social commentary and a vehicle for collective trauma processing, offering a space for grief that extends beyond the personal to encompass the geopolitical. The dynamic adaptation of laments, connect, and style to different stages of mourning and specific circumstances of death, ranging from initial shock to reflections and socio-political commentaries, responsiveness of cultural depth,

CHAPTER FIVE

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Summary of the Study

Axumite mourning music was a sophisticated system blending two distinctive traditions. The first one was Mewasiet part of the sacred liturgical chant led by the clergy of the Ethiopia Orthodox Tewahedo church, and the second was elegy a secular improvised lament. While Mewasiet provided spiritual structure, dirge was the heart of the community's emotional and social response to death.

Dirge served as a multifaceted cultural tool. It was a vital coping mechanism that transformed individual grief into collective sorrow, reinforcing social bonds within the mourning tent (Da'asa). The oral tradition also functioned as a living archive, preserving history and communal values through improvised verses (Gitimi) that celebrated the life of the deceased.

Performance roles were clearly defined by gender. Women were as a primary lamenters and custodians of dirge, while men were supported logistics and often delivered a formal elegy, and lamenters recounting the deceased's achievements. The tradition was remarkable resilient, adapting its purpose in the face of historical trauma. During the Tigray War, elegy evolved justice. This dynamism ensured that the dead were honored, the living were comforted, and the society's narrative of sorrow and resilience endured.

5.2. CONCLUSION

This study profoundly analyzes dirge (ጠልቀስ), the secular mourning music of revealing it as a vital, multifaceted cultural phenomenon beyond mere sorrow. Elegy serves as a dynamic artistic, socio-cultural, psychological, and political vehicle for both individual and collective grief, providing a structured yet deeply personal framework for bereavement. Key distinctive practices define dirge the Primacy of the female voice in the leading emotional vocalizations and ensuring intergenerational transmission; the mourning tint as a central communal space for shared grief; a cappella performance emphasizing raw human voice; oral tradition and improvisation (Gitim)

making each lament unique; and the integration of sobs and wails for authenticity and catharsis, culminating in communal echo that solidifies social bonds.

Performers' roles are gendered especially women, particularly waddasi, lead dirge with poetic artistry, while men provide logistical support, maintain solemnity, and offer rhythmic solidarity through non-verbal gestures and exclamations (Woye/ Ayyo). Elegy adapts its character and themes across stages of grief from immediate shock to Elegistic narratives and reflective remembrance. Crucially, its contextual responsiveness allows it to function as a potent social commentary and a vehicle for collective trauma processing, extending beyond personal sorrow to address broader socio-political realities.

Ultimately, dirge acts as a resilient voice for the Axum community, facilitating catharsis, guiding emotional processing, aiding meaning, and validating grief. Its personalization preserves individual narratives, simultaneously strengthening communal bonds. Despite historical upheavals and modern influences, dirge was an indispensable, living cultural practice vital to Axum identity and resilience, ensuring the remembered dead, comforted living, and fortified community through shared human experience.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of mourning music or dirge, these condensed recommendations aim to advance scholarly understanding perceive cultural heritage, and strengthen community engagement with this crucial mourning tradition. The recommendations for preserving the dirge of mourning tradition of Axum focus on a two-pronged approach of studied Future research and community-led preservation. For scholarly understanding, a deeper linguistic and ethnomusicological analysis of the verses, using (Gitim) and vocalizations was proposed methods like acoustic analysis. This research was contextualized through comparative studies and psychological research to quantify dirge therapeutic benefits.

To ensure its longevity, a comprehensive digital archive of performances, notes, and biographies is essential. For cultural preservation, the recommendations emphasize empowering the Axum community. This includes community-led documentation and transmission efforts where Elders (waddasity or Melqesty) mentor youth. Integrating dirge in to educational and cultural programs, along with formal recognition for the Waddasi, was foster appreciation and intergenerational

learning. The initiative was designed to be society owned, prioritizing direct human –to- human teaching while using technology strategically to support the tradition rather than replace it. The approach, aligned with UNESCO’s priorities, ensure that the highly vulnerable elegy tradition continues to provide collective healing and assert communal resilience, securing its future for generations come.

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Appendix

Annex-1: List of Informants

Table 33: Exploring mourning at Aksum, this study investigates the role of music and rituals in different contexts of grief and celebration.

No	Name of informant	Age	Wereda	Tabia	Date	Occupation
1	<i>Shushay G/Mariam Gebre</i>	48	Aksum	<i>May weyni</i>	20/8 /2017E.C.	Melqesay or lamenter's
2	<i>Fitsum G/Mariam</i>	60	L/maychow	<i>Adi- ashatia</i>	29 /8 /2017 E.C.	Melqesay or lamenter's
3	<i>Haile Gebru</i>	70	L/maychow	<i>Adi-asehatia</i>	28/8 /2017E.C.	Melqesay or lamenters
4	<i>Ye'ebyo gebrehwet wolu</i>	84	L/Maichew	hatsebo	28/8 /2017E.C.	Melqesay or lamenter's
5	<i>Abraha Tikue</i>	60	L/maychow	<i>Semret</i>	26/8 /2017 E.C	Melqesay or lamenter's
6	<i>Tekeste Berhun Tikue</i>	57	Aksum	<i>Kindeya</i>	25/8 /2017 E.C.	Waddasi &lamente's
7	<i>Kesi- g/hear W/mueal</i>	50	Aksum	<i>Hawelti</i>	19/8 /2017 E.C	Religious leader's
8	<i>Afe-Gebez Yihdego</i>	70	Aksum	<i>Hawelty</i>	20/8 /2017 E.C.	Religious Leader's
9	<i>Haleqa Niguse Fitiwi</i>	86	Aksum	<i>Hayelom</i>	16/8 /2017 E.C	Community Religious leader
10	<i>keshi- Tadese Birihane</i>	71	Aksum	<i>Adiqerni</i>	17/09/2009 E.C.	Religious leader's
11	<i>Hagoss Gidey</i>	63	Aksum	<i>A/isehaye</i>	18/8 /2017 E.C	Community leader
12	<i>Shushay G/Mariam G/jwegs</i>	49	Aksum	<i>Kindeya</i>	20/8 /2017 E.C.	Playing melekkt
13	<i>Ato Tedross G/dan</i>	83	Aksum	<i>A/isehaye</i>	15/8 /2017 E.C	Community leader
14	<i>Keshi megoss</i>	54	Aksum	Hawelti	14/8 /2017 E.C	Religious Leader's
15	<i>Shushay G/Mariam G/jwegs</i>	49	Aksum	<i>Kindeya</i>	20/8 /2017 E.C.	Melqesay or lamenter's

Annex-2: List for Interview

በይዘአም/አን ነእዞም ቀጋሎም ቀሪቦም ዘለው ሕቶታት ብምርዳእ ግዜኹም ቀቲልኩም እትፈልጡዎ/ኦ ሐበረይታ ወይ መብራህርሂ ብምሃብኩም/ክን የመስግን። በዙይ ዝህቡናባ/ና ኣብ ፍልጠት ዝተሞርኮሰ ሓሳብ ኣብ ኣፈፃፀማ (ፅምብል) ሓዘን ንቀብሪን ማሕበረሰብ ከባቢ ኣኸሱም ዝቐርቡ ባህላውን መበቆላውን ዜማታት ሓዘን ብምፅናፅን ብምፅቃብን ብምስንድን ናብ ቀፃለ ወለዶ ተግባሮም ዝሰጋገሩ ኩነታት ምፍጣር እዩ።

1. ኣብ ቅርፅን ባህሪያትን መዚታን (Forms and characteristics the type and styles of morning music in Aksum community) ዝምልከት እቶም ዝቐርቡ ዜማታት ፤መልቀሳት፤ መዝሙራትን ከልኦትን ኣብ ማሕበረሰብ ኣኸሱም ዝግበር ስነ ስርዓት ሓዘን (ፅምብል) ቀብሪ ባሪያቶም ቅርሂ ኣቀራርቦኦምን ምስ ካልኦት ዜማታት ፍልልይ ኣለዎም ዶ ይብሉ/ይብላ መልሶም/ን እወ እንተኾይኑ ብኸመይ ይግለፅ ይብሉ/ላ።

- ሀ. _____
- ለ. _____
- ሐ. _____

2. ዜማታትን ደርፍተትን ስነ ስርዓት ሓዘን ማሕበረሰብ አክሱም (Performance and Yiming of mourning music in Aksum community) አገባብ አቀራርቦአምን ዝቀርብሉ ግዜን ብኸመይ መዓዝ ይቐርቡ ትብሉ/ላ?

ሀ. ከብ ግዜ ዕረፍቲ ክሳብ ሓመደ ድብ ዝፍፀም ይቐርቡ፤

ለ. ከከም ኣድላይነቱ ድሕሪ ዕለተ ቀብሪ እውን ክቐርቡ ይኸእሉ፤

ሐ. ካሊእ እንተሃልዩ ይገለፅ _____.

3. መቐረብቲን ኩነታት ተሳትፊአም (Performers and their roles) እንመንን ብኸመይን ሙዚቃ ሓዘን ኣብ ከባቢ ኣክሱም ይቐርብ እዩ ትብሉ/ላ?

ሀ. ሓዘንተኛታት፤ ልምዲ ብዘለዎም መልቀሶ ሰውኡት፤ ብመራሕቲ ሃይማኖት፤ ተግወቲ መሳርሕታት ሙዚቃን ገረባብቲን ዘቐርቡዎ እዩ።

ለ. ብዘሰልጠኑ ሙዚቀኛታትን ኣማተራትን ከመሰሰሱ ኮይኑ ዝቐርቡ ሙዚቃዊ ንጠፊታትን ካልኦትን ዝሓወሰ እዩ።

ሐ. ካሊእ እንተሃልዩ ይገለፅ _____.

4. ፋይዳታት (ረብሓታት) ባህልላዊ ዜማታትን ደርፊታትን ሓዘን ኣብ ማሕበረሰብ አክሱም (socio-Cultural Functions of Mourning music and Ritual in Aksum community) እንታእንታይ ክኾኑ ይኸእሉ? ትብሉ/ላ።

ሀ. ሓዘንተኛታት ዓሚቕ ሓዘኖም፤ ቃንዘኦም፤ ናፍቕቶምን ንምግላፅ ስርዓቱ ብዝሓለወ ኣገባብ ምንነቶም ዝገልፅሉን ከይዲ እዩ።

ለ. ነቲ ስርዓት ቀብሪ (ሓዘን) ብድምቀት ንክኸበር ንመንነት ማሕበረሰብ አክሱም ገለፅቲ ዝኾኑ ደርፊታት መልቀስ፤ ዋይታ፤ ኣውያት፤ ቁዛመ፤ መሳርሕታት ሙዚቃ ይቐርቡ ነቲ ስርዓት ቀብሪ (ሓዘን) ዝላዓለ ድምቀት ንክህልዎ ይገብሩ።

ሐ. ኩሎም ክገልፅዎ ዝኸእሉ እዮም።

መ. ካሊእ እንተሃልዩ ይገለፅ _____.

5. ንኸም/ኸን ኣብ ግዜ ሓዘን እተርቡዎ ሙዚቃ ዝፈጥረልኩም ስሚዒትን (Emotional Expression of mourning music in Aksum) ምስ እቲ መዋቲ ዝፈጥረልኩም ዕግበትን ብኸመይ ካብ መን ወሪስኩምዎ?

ሀ. ዘቐርቡ ሙዚቃ ዜማዊ ትሕዝቶ ዘለዎ መልቀስ ንመዋቲን ዓሊቱን ዘሞጉሱን ዘድንቑን ርዚን ዕምቆት ዘለዎም ግጥሚታት ብጥዑም ዜማ ኣጠዓዒመ ዮቕርብ።

ለ. ወገን፤ ፈታዊን ጎረቤትን መዋቲ ስለዝኾንኩ ስሚዒተይ ኣውያት፤ ብዋይታ፤ ብብኸይት ብቻላት እናጠዓዓምኩ ዘቐርብ እዩ።

ሐ. ብልምዲ ዝግወቶም መሳርሕታት ሙዚቃ ነቲ ስርዓት ሓዘን (ቀብሪ) ከም ባህሪ ናይቲ መሳርሕ ዝዕጅብን ዝግወትን እዩ።

መ. መራሕ ሃይማኖት ስለዝኾንኩ ብዝማረን ካልኦት ተግባራትን ንጥፊታትን ይሳተፍ እዩ።

6. ኣብ ተራ ቁጽሪ 5 ካብ ኣለው ኣብ እትሳተፈሉ ዓውዲ (Lyrical Content and Messages of the Aksum mourning music) እንትሃልዩ እተቐርቡ ብዝርዝር ግለፅ።

ሀ. መልቀሳይ እንተኾንካ ብዜማን ብግጥምን ዝተዓጀበ ይገለፅ።

ለ. ተግዋቲ ናውቲ ሙዚቃ እንተኾይንካ ትንፋስ፤ ውቅዒት፤ ክሪ ዓይነቱን ኣፀዋውትኡን።

ሐ. ኣውያት (ኣዋጅ) ተሳትፎኻ ተኾይኑ መዓዝ፤ ብኸመይ፤ ምስ መን ኮይንካ ትፍፅሞ?

መ. ካሊእ እንተሃልዩ ይገለፅ _____.

7. ኣብ ስነ ስርዓት ሓዘን ዝቐርቡ ሙዚቃታትን ደርፍታትን (Ritual Inteaction of mourning music integrated with other elements of funeral and mourning rituals) ምስ ካልኦት ስነ ስርዓት ሓዘን ፅምብላት ዝቐርቡ ዓይነታት ባህላዊ ንጥፊታት ይመሳሰል እዩ ዶ ትብሉ?

ሀ. እወ ኣለዎ ኣብነት ምስ ኣከዳድና ሓደ ኣድካ ኣውጊእኻ፤ትልሂት ዝመስል ምንቅስቃስ ኣካላት፤ ስርዓት ፍትሓት፤ ኣስካሬን ምኽባብ፤ ሰብኡትን ኣንስትን ዘይምትሕውዋስን ስብኡት ኣብ ድበን ካልኦትን ምስላዊ ተገባራትን።

ለ. የብሎምን ኩሎም ዓርሶም ኪኢሎም ጠጠው ዝበሉ እምበር እቲ ሓደ ምስ እቲ ሓደ ዝራኸቡ ኣይኮኑን

ሐ. ካብ ካልኦት ተግባራት ሓዘን ምስ ካልኦት ካብ ሓዘን ወፃኢ ዘለዉ ፅምብላት ብዝበለፀ ዝመሳሰል ኮይኑ ንዝኸበ።

መ. ካሊእ እንተሃልዩ ይገለፅ _____.

8. ከይዲ ምውርራስን ምምሃርን ናብ ቀፃሊ ወለዶታት ስርዓት ሓዘንን ካልኦት ፅምብላቱን ኣብ ማሕበረሰብ ኣኸሱም (Transmission And Training of mourning music and rituals in Aksum community) ዝፍፅምሎም ኣገባባት፦

ሀ. ስሩዕ ኣካዳሚ ተዘርጊሕሉ ንወሎዶታት ብሰብ ሞያ ናይ ባዕሉ ዝኾነስርዓተ ትምህርቲ ዘለዎ እዩ።

ለ. ካብ እዋን ቁልፅነትን ንእስነትን ጀሚሩ ካብ ስድራ ቤትን ማሕበረሰብን ብቃላዊ፤ ብትዕዝብትን ብቀትታዊ ተሳትፎን ዝወራረስ እዩ።

ሐ. ብዓበይተ ዓዲን መራሕቲ ሃይማኖትን ኣብ ሓደ መማእኸሊ ቦታ ዝወሃብ ትምህርቲ እዩ።

መ. ካሊእ እንተሃልዩ ይገለፅ _____.

9. ፅምብል ስነ ስርዓት ሓዘን ኣብ መሕበረሰብ ኣኸሱም ባህላውነቱ ሓልዩ ዶ ይወራረስ ኣሎ ትብሉ?

ሀ. መሊኡ ዘይጠፍእ ዋላ እኳ እንተኾነ ምብዛሕተኦም ባህላዊ ተግባራት ግና እናጠፍኡ እዮም። ኣብነት ዜማታት መልቀስን ዘልቅሱ ሰባትን፤ ናውቲ ሙዚቃ ከም መለኸት፤ ሓደ ኢድካ ኣውጊእኻን ተዓጢካ ምኽዳንን።

ለ. ምንም ጎደሎ ዘይብሉ ካብ ጥንቲ ዘመን ጀሚረ ስርዓቱ ሓልዩ እናተወራረሰ እዩ።

ሐ. ካብቲ ዝነበሮ ባህላዊ ኣቀራርባ ዝያዳ እናማዕበለን እናበለፀን ዝኸይድ ዘሎ እዩ።

መ. ካሊኦት ጠፊኦም ዝበሃሉ ባህሊታት ሓዘን እንተሃልዮም ይገለፁ ኣበይ መዓዝ ዝፍፀሙ ዝነበሩ

10. ኣድላይነትን ፅምቆትን ባህሊ ኣብ ስነ ስርዓት ሓዘን ማሕበረሰብ ኣኸሱም (Cultural Significance of mourning and ritual in Aksum community) ንመንነት ሕላገትን ንምንታይ ኣድላይ ኮይኑ?

ሀ. ካብቶም ቀንዲ መግለጺ መንነት ባህሊ እቲ ሕብረተሰብ ሸደ ስለዝኾነ።

ለ. ስሚዒት እቲ ሕብረተሰብ ንምግላፅ ናይ ባዕሉ ሓይሊ ስለዝወነነ።

ሐ. ንመስሕብ በፃሕቲ ዓድን ንተመራመርትን ከም ግብኣት ኮይኑ ከገልግል ይኸእል እዩ።

መ. ንኸሎም ስለዝጠቅም።

Annex-3: List for pictures of mourning ritual

Figures that show steps of mourning rituals were celebrated with many cultural and spiritual heritages at Endasemaeti church, Aksum, during the elder woman was death.



Figure 1: A solemn procession, marked by flag, Dibab, Tsenatsil, Tseniha, carried the grief rituals from a home to Aksum's Endasemaeti church.



Figure 2: In Aksum, a solemn mourning procession for the deceased moved from home to the historic Endasemaeti church.



Figure 3: As Aksum Endasemaeti church, its officiating priests and deacons solemnize the profound mourning ritual, defined by moments of sacred repose and the Fitihat prayers.



Figure 4: As men bore the departed to its hallowed threshold, Aksum's Endasemaeti church stood ready to embrace the profound continuation of the communal mourning ritual.



Figure 5: At Aksum's Fitihat, the clergy's resplendent liturgical vesture lent profound resonance to the solemn mourning ritual.



Figure 6: During a time of solemn repose, a Fitihat ritual for the deceased was observed at Aksum's Endasemaeti church, led by a priest or deacon, in addition used horses for show.



Figure 7: colorful religious Dibbs were used by youths from the community at the time for the Fitihat Endasemaeti church in Aksum, harmonizing the mourning ritual at circles.



Figure 8: At Aksum's Endasemaeti church, youths vibrant with Dibab harmoniously circle sorrow, transforming collective mourning into a striking, resonant ritual.



Figure 9: religious color full visuals with the monitor's one how guiding to all movements at Endasemaeti church Aksum the mourning ritual.



Figure 10: At Aksum's Endasemaeti church, the mourning ritual resonated with the solemn sounds of Melekket, Emmbilta, Turumba, and Masingo.



Figure 11: At Aksum's Endasemaeti church, the mourning ritual unfolded by the distinctive sounds of traditional musical instruments including Melekket, Emmbilta, Turumba, and Masingo.



Figure 12: mourning ritual accompanied by traditional musical instruments Emmbilta, Melekket, Masingo, and others round in the deceased at Endasemaeti church Aksum.



Figure 13: At Aksum's Endasemaeti church, collectors are gathered funds for Debes or Dassa in the remembrance of the deceased.



Figure 14: At Aksum's Endasemaeti church, a solemn mourning ritual encircled the deceased, accompanied by the sacred sounds of Tsenatsil, Kebero, Tseniha, Ambrela, and Cabbas.



Figure 15: A multitude of mourners gathered closely around the decease at Aksum's Endasemaeti church.



Figure 16: The deceased was solemnly conveyed to Aksum's Endasemaeti Church.



Figure 17: The deceased lay in solemn repose, encircled by mourners in front of Aksum's Endasemaeti Church.



Figure 18: At Aksum's Endasemaeti Church, the deceased of final rites resonated with sounds of Tirumba, the amplified call of a bugle Trumpet.



Figure 19: The mourning ritual at Aksum's Endasemaeti Church was completed with the resonant tones of Melekket-based musical instruments.



Figure 20: At Aksum's Endasemaeti Church, Melqesay joined the bereaved family lamenters in mourning.



Figure 21: women mourners and lamenters, in grieving At Endasemaeti church.



Figure 22: At Aksum's Endasemaeti church, Melqesty, and the mourners, joined the bereaved family and lamenters' carries the dead to in church graving.



Figure 23: Lamenters accompanied the mourners and the deceased in front of the grave.



Figure 24: The braved family, mourners, and lamenters interred the deceased at the grave.



Figure 25: The burial involved moving the deceased from the mourner bed to enter the grave (gibate meriet or dibe) for interment.



Figure 26: The bed used by the deceased one was moved to the church's storeroom.



Figure 27: The funeral concludes with the deceased's interment and the completion of the grave (gibate meriet or dibe).



Figure 28: At the church all mourners, lamenters, and the death families' prayer.



Figure 29: After the mourning period, people, liturgical materials, and musical instruments laid to rest beneath the great tree around the church.



Figure 30: Mourners, Lamenters, and the entire people bid farewell to the bereaved family with “Da’asa, Tsina’at yehabkum”.



Figure 31: After the mourning and funeral conclude, most people return, but the mourners stay at the deceased's residence.



Figure 32: After the mourning ends, traditional musical instruments like Melekket, Masinqo, and speakers were put away to the coming places.



Figure 33: Ayte ye'ebyo gebrehwet wolu performs laments or Melqes found at Endasemaeti church.



Figure 34: H/ Shushay G/Mariam g/jwergis playing Melekket performs laments or Melqes found at Endasemaeti church.

Figures that are show steps of mourning rituals, was celebrated in absence of cultural and less of spiritual heritages at Enda-Arbaete Ensisa church, Aksum during the elder man was death



Figure 37: At Aksum's Enda'arbaete Ensisa Church, Melqesay and the mourners joined the bereaved family and laments' carries the dead to in church grieving.



Figure 35: At Enda'arbaete Ensisa, church the all mourners and laments were went to carries the dead to the graeve.



Figure 36: At Enda'arbaete ensisa, all mourners and lamenters were went to carries the dead to the grieving place.



Figure 37: At Enda'arbaete Ensisa church all mourners, families of the dead follows to the burial for hamede dibe.



Figure 38: The bereaved family, mourners, and lamenters moved the deceased from the bed to the grave for interment in Enda'arbaete Ensisa church.



Figure 39: After the mourning period, people, liturgical materials, and musical instruments are stand in circle to ends beneath at the great tree “daero” around the church.



Figure 40: At Aksum's Enda'arbaete Ensisa Church, Melqesay joined the mens of bereaved family laments in mourning.



Figure 41: Mourners, Lamenters, and the entire people bid farewell to the bereaved family with “Da’asa, or Tsina’at yehabkum”.



Figure 42: At Aksum's Enda' arbaete Ensisa Church, Melqesay joined the women of bereaved family lamenters in mourning.



Figure 43: This local name is Selien or Tenkebot including Abojedid are covered or coffin for the dead (Ascarien or Riesa)

Figures that show steps of mourning rituals, was celebrated in absence of cultural and less of spiritual heritages at Enda-Eyyesus church, Aksum during the elder man was death.



Figure 49: The deceased lay in solemn repose, encircled by mourners in front of Aksum's Enda-Eyyesus Church.



Figure 44: As Aksum Enda- Eyyesus church, its officiating priests and diacons solemnize the profound mourning ritual, defined by moments of sacred response and the Fitihat prayers.



Figure 45: During a time of solemn response, a Fitihat ritual for the deceased would be observed at Aksum's Enda-Eyyesus church, led by a priest and deacons around the death one.



Figure 46: The Fitihat ritual at Aksum's Enda-Eyyesus church, singing, playing kebero, Tsenatsil, and meqomia profoundly expresses enduring E.T.O.C for the death.



Figure 47: This Aksumawite tradition signifies the enduring spiritual fusion of E.T.O.C Christianity with ancient, sacred landscape.



Figure 48: At Aksum Enda- Eyyesus church, Melqesay bravely joined the bereaved women's lamentations, adding a touch of solemn, yet powerfully expressed communal grief.



Figure 49: The researcher at Enda-Eyyesus church to participate at the funeral or mourning ritual.

Figures that show steps of mourning rituals, were celebrated in absence of cultural and less of spiritual heritages at Enda-Abune aregawi church, Aksum during the elder man was death.



Figure 50: The death one carry from her residence by the bears, mourners, and others Enda abune-aregawi church.



Figure 51: As Aksum Enda Abune- aregawi church, its officiating priests and deacon solemnize the profound mourning ritual, defined by moments of sacred repose and the Fitihat prayers.



Figure 52: The Fitihat ritual at Aksum's Enda Abune-Aregawi church, with the singing the mergeta, mezemran profoundly expresses enduring E.T.O.C reverence for the deceased.



Figure 53: The leader's one how monitor and guiding to all activities at Enda abune-aregawi church Aksum the mourning ritual.



Figure 54: A solemn procession, all mourners, funerals' marked by flag, Dibab, and coffin the deceased round the grief rituals from a home to Aksum's Enda-Abune aregawi church.



Figure 55: The leader who move from side to side guiding to all activities at Enda Abune- Aregawi church Aksum mourning ritual.



Figure 56: A solemn procession, all mourners, funerals' marked by pall, and coffin carried the grief rituals from a home to Aksum's Enda-Abune aregawi church.



Figure 57: A solemn procession, all mourners, funerals marked by flag, Dibab, Tsenatsil, Tseniha, and coffin carried the grief rituals from a home to Aksum's Enda-Abune aregawi church.



Figure 58: The brother's intense public lamentation at Aksum's Enda Abune-Aregawi church highlights profound family grief and the culturally expected, deeply expressed mourning traditions.



Figure 59: During a time of solemn response, a Fitiहत ritual for the death was observed at Aksum’s Enda Abune-Aregawi church, led by a priest and deacon round the deceased.



Figure 60: At Aksum Enda- Eyyesus church, collectors are gathered funds for Debess or Dassa in the remembrance of the deceased.



Figure 61: The most gathering of mourners at Aksum's sacred Enda Abune- Aregawi church, signals the commencement of deeply communal, ritually structured Orthodox funeral process.



Figure 62: mourners' second round for the deceased at rest in front of the Aksum's Enda abune-aregawi church.



Figure 63: The Fitihat ritual by mergeta, mezemrans, and deacons at Aksum's Enda Abune-Aregawi church, with singing, profoundly expresses enduring E.T.O.C reverence for the deceased.



Figure 64: The Fitihat ritual at Aksum's Enda Abune-Aregawi church, with singing, playing keboro, Tsenatsil, and meqomia profoundly expresses enduring E.T.O.C reverence for the deceased.



Figure 65: Husband of the death woman shamle Desta Hawaria live in Aksum Abay tsehay Tabia.



Figure 66: During a time of solemn response, a Fitihat ritual for the death was observed at inner of Aksum's Enda Abune- Aregawi church, led by a priest and deacon round the deceased.



Figure 67: A solemn procession, marked by playing keboro at the time of grief rituals Aksum's Enda-Abune-Aregawi church.



Figure 68: The bereaved family, mourners, and lamenters moved to the deceased from the bed to into the grave for internment (gibate meriet or dibe) at Aksum's Enda Abune- Aregawi church.



Figure 69: The bereaved family, mourners, and lamenters moved to the deceased from the bed to into the grave for internment (gibate meriet or dibe) made by bearers at Aksum's Enda Abune- Aregawi church.



Figure 70: Bearer's ends to construct the cemetery and the mourners stay encircle at the cemetery.



Figure 71: Mourners, Lamenters, and the entire people bid farewell to the bereaved family with “Da’asa, Tsina’at yehabkum”.



Figure 72: mourners at home back from the Aksum’s Enda-abune-aregawi church good by program (tseniat yehabkum).