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Rhythms of Passage in north-central Namibia, Oukwanyama

Yannick van den Berg

Abstract

This contribution explores the first ritually given step of an Eenghali, the ‘event of death’ as it is called in Oshikwanyama (Oukwanyama, north-central Namibia). This first step of an Eenghali signals the beginning of a time of profound personal transformation for those directly affected and the community they belong to. In an Eenghali, sound aligns very closely with bodily action and meaning-making practices. It marks and accompanies ritually and socially institutionalised moments of existential mobility, pointing at these routinised practices’ transgressive potential. Moreover, as rhythms become embodied, sound and rhythm open a direct door to lived experience and shared imagination. Sensitive to aesthetics, meaning-making practices and sensory experiences, the piece focuses on their entanglement. It argues that there is a link between rhythm and competence, and this link allows for the experience of an emotion; between rhythm and competence there emerges an outreaching empathy towards something that does not easily find an emotional equivalent: death, and more precisely, the death of someone loved.

On the 6th of October 2017, Anna Fikameni died while giving birth to her third child. In immediate response to this sad news, her husband, close kin, extended family, and friends gathered at her homestead. Through their coming together, they initiated a months-long process of collective grief and subsequently facilitated the possibility for catharsis. For those directly affected and the community they belong to, this coming together formally signalled the beginning of a time of profound personal transformation. In Oshikwanyama, the language spoken in this part of north-central Namibia, this time—the ‘event of death’, as locals sometimes paraphrase it—is called *Eenghali*.

The Eenghali—the first part of which, *Oshitondoka*, this contribution will focus—consisted of seven subsequent ‘steps’. The term *Oshitondoka* directly translates to ‘people come running’. When people hear of a person’s passing, they leave everything in place and run to gather at the deceased’s homestead.^[1] Everything you will hear and read in this contribution concerns this first phase of people’s grief; when people gather at the deceased’s homestead and grieve, cry and wail.

How to research such a moment? Following my intuition, I spontaneously decided to leave my camera at home and to do without external technical equipment as far as possible (including the

notebook). I relied solely on sound and my bodily presence at the moment. I let my phone record the situation, yes, but then put it completely aside. Therefore, the quality of the recordings you will hear could be better. Nevertheless, in the end, this unforeseen change in methodologies proved more than worthwhile, and so, throughout the next couple of months, I began to work with sound more professionally, just as I learned to pay attention to the spontaneous expressions of my body—and then to the bodies of the people around me. Be that as it may, the original and first recordings contain much of the spontaneity which led me to change gears in the first place.

Please see HTML version for accompanying audio

Figure 1: Sound extract 1 – Wailing and singing

Father Ngube, a friend of the family and the priest who was called to this situation, approaches the homestead. Me and Meme Nancy—mentor and confidant to Father Ngube, and, like him, a friend to John Fikameni and family—walk closely behind. Already, some people are present and cars parked on the field outside the homestead's walls.^[2] We are at John Fikameni's compound, Anna Fikameni's husband.

The wailing is the first thing we hear. Indeed, I think, it is how I was told; how the women enter the field, long, elongated cries move through the air, shaking with anguish. As we cross the field and approach the homestead, I see people crying and others starting to. Those who cry sway in their walk or need to be supported.

Father Ngube, once through the homestead's gate, captures the spatial setup with one spontaneous look around. Meme Nancy and I do not dare to speak a word anymore. The priest doesn't even bother to go around and shake hands, as it would have been customary. If one enters a meeting already in place, one goes clockwise, from left to right, the left hand on the right elbow, if one greets a person of respect. There are people near the gate, grim-faced men and others hurrying or crying. Some men are sitting on the benches attached alongside the inner side of the homestead's concrete walls, working their phones and waiting.

Ignoring them, we walk straight towards the homestead's second house; Father Lasarus Ngube with me and Meme Nancy in tow, leaving behind confused looks. In the back of that house, in the shade, we find everybody sitting on the ground. The noise, up until now only perceptible as a somewhat distanced sound, bald, impressive but not touching us directly or emotionally, now falls towards us. With the force of a wave taller than man, the wailing overwhelms us, encloses us. It is not a liquid sound, but you cannot force yourself against water.

The people gathered behind the house cry and sob and wail. Some older women continuously repeat words. In their uncontrollable grief, these women hold themselves, hold their fists to their tear-covered faces, sway back and forth, pray 'Maria, Maria, Maria', and sob 'oh dear God, oh God', reach out for other people, and for one woman especially. This woman sits at the centre of it all, and it is Anna Fikameni's mother, embraced and held by three people simultaneously. She cries uncontrollably, gasps wetly for air, repeats the ever-same words, 'why me? Oh Lord, why me?'. Another woman echoes her sorrow, John Fikameni's mother, sitting opposite her. 'I should die too; I should die too', the old lady moans; both women sway back and forth—both their bodies tremble and quiver.

Father Ngube, not minding Meme Nancy or me, gets behind Anna's mother without hesitation. The priest goes down on his knees and firmly lays his arms around the woman's shoulders, embracing her compassionately, with sadness and love.

'Aie', 'okay', 'ee', he softly speaks. He weighs her in his arms, tries to calm her, but he can't.

Eventually, a lady starts singing a hymn, her voice thick with tears. Ngube joins in, as, shortly afterwards, do Meme Nancy, me, and many people around us. Father Ngube's voice sounds surprisingly clear; the notes resonate cleanly. He does not sing loudly, just so that it suffices the situation. Like that, the group spends time, with Ngube intoning another hymn, once the first has come to an end; and slowly, slowly, the wailing ebbs down.

Every now and then, new people come around the house's corner and join the mourners. They, too, cry and wail, some of them too weak, their spirits too low, to stand on their own. Foremost the women throw themselves directly into the arms of Anna Fikameni's mother, where they grieve together. Eventually, John is brought, supported by two men, holding his arms. John sinks to the ground, unable to stand, completely exhausted. He does not sway back and forth, not as intensively as the others, does not speak any words, but leans back against his father's legs and stares, stares blankly into the open sky.

I now study John more closely and startle. This man seems to be entirely at the end of his tether, emotionally drained. Shock presses John into apathy. Grief, anguish, and lack of sleep had him depleted further. He indeed wouldn't have been able to drive a car, as Father Ngube indicated earlier this day. John doesn't register how someone lays a wet towel upon his forehead to soothe and cool him.

More people join in the chant. And what during past Eenghali I perceived as somewhat distanced to my own emotional experience now occurs spontaneously. Now, to me, what happens seems rooted in life; life lived to its fullest.

Tears well up in my eyes too. Initially, I was concerned. I had decided to come to John's homestead because I knew it was expected of me, because I was curious and because some of the people I cared about would be there, suffering. But now, as the tears well up, I'm getting lost. Slowly, I begin to resonate with the emotional tides around me, and the boundaries of myself, having shielded me so far from what happened around me, open up; the distance between me and the situation collapses inwards, it feels, towards lived experience.

The crying is contagious. Perhaps due to my ethnographic training, I can still observe the situation. Our crying infects other people around us. It spreads immediately to the newcomers joining our group. These people are led by those who have, by now, been present for a longer time, whose tears run quietly. Would I be to articulate an anthropological theory—this would be the moment when a fieldworker has to forgive reflective reasoning, as it has become secondary to experiencing the situation, inconsequential.

Then, I cry, a veil in front of my sight. It brings me closer to the people around me. Meme Nancy, sitting near me, starts to shift on her seat. She clearly starts to be uncomfortable with how the situation develops.

I want to start the discussion with a first observation: repeatedly, there are times during an Eenghali when the activities slow down and allow them to stretch over a more extended period and times of not necessarily hurried but focused activity. This condensation of actions repeatedly characterises an Eenghali's individual moments and is something that permeates all seven steps of an Eenghali: *Oshitondoka*, *Omutanda weenghali* (the start of the camping period where people gather at the homestead to console the bereaved family or mourn their beloved one for an even number of days), *Exupulifo* (memorial service), *Efudiko*, *Epako* (funeral service and burial) and lastly, *Ekufepo leenghali* (the official end of the camping period), *Olushuno* and *Okupendula*.

All in all, people behave as if the time they spend together is *their* time. There are no real conditionalities external to people's experiences (no one needs to work through a to-do list, for example); all that counts, all that the people *do*, is living the situation.

From the very first response, when people rush to the deceased's house to hear what happened (*Oshitondoka*), right to the last step, *Okupendula*, which goes on for months after the burial—with fellow villagers and family members visiting to check on the bereaved family—time and tasks condense and stretch, and various activities as well as times of rest alternate.

In Eenghali, rhythm takes centre stage. Rhythm is explicated on the microlevel in concrete bodily acts, as it harmonises and synchronises the mourners via wailing, singing and praying. It is explicated on the macro-level as ritually given daily routines—then weeks, and then, finally, months—'channel' individual responses to grief into a communal endeavour that consequently provides the means for personal transformation and societal reintegration.

According to Dobler (2016), rhythms—present in most human labour—can be categories of anthropological analysis. For doing so, Dobler differentiates variants of rhythms from factors affecting these, such as 'what do we work on?' or 'what do we work with?' (*ibid.*, 2016).

As Dobler observed concerning north-central peasant work, strenuous bodily work is often done in bursts of activity and followed by periods of rest. Therefore, the regular rhythm of the working movements is integrated into a slower rhythm of effort and relaxation. This rhythm of activity and rest helps, amongst other reasons, such as the syncing of bodily movements on the micro-level, to transform the work done into an expression of one's agency. For instance, both strain and rest prove that the work done is one's own (*ibid.*, 2016, p. 872).

The alternation of tasks and the variation of work rhythms are two other factors that tie into the feeling that what one is doing is one's own. When we look at how the Eenghali's *structure* interrelates with the people's *doing* and vice versa, this becomes immediately understandable: on the micro-level, practices such as people coming together to pray and remember, encouraging each other with God's Word, or singing hymns characterise what happens during an Eenghali. Another such example is the enduring, communal effort materialising in services such as donating food, time, or the sharing of tributes. In Anna Fikameni's case, *Omutanda weenghali* lasted eight days. Anna's relatives gathered at her homestead, mourned her, and prepared to take their farewell during these days. Family members, neighbours, friends, and visitors gathered in the homestead's yard in the evenings. There, they talked quietly, listened to someone reading from the Bible, remembered Anna or sang together. In her room, her mother and most close female relatives sat in Anna's stead on her mattress, wearing black headscarves and dark gowns. Near it, a small altar showed her image. This devotional and calm atmosphere stood in stark contrast to the urgent lamentation of the *Oshitondoka*, the people's coming together where some literally left things lying around and hurried to meet the deceased's family.

However, in all these examples, *what* one was doing—and what eventually the whole crowd would do together—followed an exact logic of social differentiation, finetuned alongside coordinates of gender, social proximity and degree of kinship (among many more).

Once they entered the homestead, only the women wailed, and only those whose ‘job’ was to do so. Moreover, although everybody came running, only some would enter the homestead. Most would gather in the immediate proximity of its main gate. And even fewer would proceed to the epicentre of mourning, where Anna’s most close relatives gathered in well-chosen separation. In adapted variants, this socio-spatial setup was repeated on many other occasions.

After the memorial service, for instance, which took place in the field in front of Anna’s homestead, only members of the family and honoured guests such as the Anglican clergy present on that day would be allowed to enter the premises. The public was very much welcomed but was served its food outside the homestead’s walls.

That means that what happened during this Eenghali was intersubjectively orchestrated to allow for the collective action to take on a sense of its own. This did not *have* to happen, but the *possibility* of it happening existed from the outset. As someone once mentioned to me in the case of her charismatic worshipping: if these possibilities are acted upon successfully, ‘[w]e do, as long as the Holy Spirit tells us to do’. It was the same during the Oshitondoka and many moments of the Eenghali’s subsequent steps.

In what is to follow, I want to make a threefold argument. First, as we could hear in the field recording (and those that will follow), apart from a division of times of crisis, liminality and, ultimately, societal reintegration of Anna’s family members and husband, there is an element of conjointly lived moments of intense emotional affection. This circumstance leads me to think of the famous concepts of social drama and *communitas*.^[3] Of *communitas*, Edith Turner writes: ‘*Communitas* is togetherness itself. [...] [Victor Turner] and I knew it as the basic unaccommodated human being. The basic being—seemingly a lonely figure—is actually gifted with an immediate and genuine sense of the other, the plural of beings’ (2012, p. 4, 6). She then paraphrases *communitas* with the sense of being one, or being a group moved by love—which, according to her understanding, implies well-practised social effectiveness and the effect of deliberate support (ibid., 2012, p. 194).

Second, the people participating in the Oshitondoka and the Eenghali’s subsequent steps were also highly competent—for instance, if you were drawn towards the homestead and then maybe even towards the epicentre of mourning, you knew what to do. This, in part, speaks to the above mentioned intersubjective orchestration. However, I want to say here that rhythms are not always a function of their corresponding practices. Practices can be done for their own sake. Moreover, in many cases, routinised practices form the instruments serving a purpose, not only tools.

The Anglican hymns sung during the Oshitondoka were all traditional tunes, and everybody present knew them by heart. Additionally, no one was stopped from wailing while singing. These ritual movements were routinised and independent enough to open up a space for collection, like in routinised work. Father Ngube, after the Oshitondoka, spoke about the relation between Anglican hymns, wailing and crying. ‘Yes’, he said, ‘some people only then stop [wailing] when we are singing’. After a while, he added, ‘you know, the way we grieve, it’s relieving’.

However, I am not looking to understand work here, but rather the music in rhythms and the music in sound. You could say, I am seeking what Dobler rightly dubs ‘regular, musical rhythms’ when he reflects on Karl Bücher’s seminal publication *Arbeit und Rhythmus* (Dobler, 2016, p. 870–871).

Bücher (1909 [1895]) not only reflected on work rhythms but also on the influence of music and tonality in work. For Bücher, rhythm, which may be given by the interlocking of activity from moment to moment, was joined by the invigorating influence that music *in itself* exerts on the forces, the pleasure of the tone itself.^[4] That is the third point.

After all, this is what I could hear: in addition to the aforementioned intersubjective orchestration, there was, in almost everything people were doing, elaborated beauty in sound, the voices shaking, the hymns are sung richly in texture and the atmosphere vibrant with meaning. The wailing added to the silence of others, and the emotionality of it all carried the crowd away.

All of this amounts to the notion that although other sensory capacities than sound can also trigger emotional responses, it is sound, in my view, that holds a prime position in triggering such physical and rhythmic responses, at least in north-central Namibia.^[5] As we shall see, sound can be understood in terms of physical movement and touch. At the same time, it surrounds, embeds and even penetrates the community of participants. It may cause the participants to move in a synchronised way.

In Oukwanyama, it sometimes becomes hard to spot where something outside begins and an inside ends, instead, become allies; intricately linked, they seem to demand even more direct emotional responses from the person experiencing them. In this, they either make her shy away from experiencing what is at hand—or pull her even closer to pure action and being, their union arousing what Brenda Farnell once called ‘somato-sensory modes of knowing’ (1999).^[6] In any case, there is always a ‘tonality’ to the reaction: pleasure, disgust, horror, indifference, one’s heart torn and shredded because of having lost a loved one.

These three aspects—the sense of being one, the link between rhythm and competence and the music in sound—led me to understand this Oshitondoka, its wailing, mourning and emotions, in terms of *communitas*, and the modality in which this moment occurred, as a form of music-making. It is a form of competence that one acquires through practising, routinisation and embodiment.

Clearly, I have just described this process as an ideal one. Many people did not experience the events in such extreme circumstances or clear-cut categories. Nevertheless, many of them remembered what happened as an exceptional experience. There is no strict separation between body and mind in such immediate moments. Instead, the separation itself, if there ever was one, becomes experiential—insofar as when the moment *endures*, for some, there now is only sound. And sound, as we shall see, I sometimes equate, for methodological purposes, with the spontaneous living of the situation people find themselves engrossed in.

Please see HTML version for accompanying audio

Figure 2: Sound extract 2 – During prayer

The group sings three hymns, numbers 246, 235 and 236 of the Anglican hymn book. They are all traditional tunes. Father Ngube lets go of Anna’s mother, stands up, and gradually everybody calms down, the wailing falls silent, and the crying dries out.

Now and then, the people’s voices break while singing, mine as well—but Father Ngube sings straight. I, crying and invested in the situation, briefly wonder whether this is some professional schism comparable to mine. Later, when I have time to ask, I will learn that it indeed was. Many

people, however, will remember this moment as one of remarkable quality—and some will have felt as if being allowed to be present and standing beside themselves at the same time, crying and going with the flow.

Whenever new people arrive, they join in our doing, and quickly they calm down. Nevertheless, a few newcomers lunge themselves directly into Anna's mother's arms, blinded by grief, blind to what happens around them. After a while, the crying stops entirely. Father Ngube starts to speak to the people about how God has taken control of the situation and how one should turn towards God in such times. Then, he offers them words of condolence.

As he ends his speech with a collectively spoken 'amen' and starts to intone a longer prayer, the people fold their hands; some close their eyes or bow their heads.

Please see HTML version for accompanying audio

- Figure 3: Sound extract 3 – Amen

In Eenghali, the participants do not question the activities' purpose, nor the emotions, the social reintegration or the social structure inverted. The activities' purpose, possibly extrinsic to what is done, becomes intrinsic during the ritual process—people begin to do for the sake of doing and not for the sake of future benefit. In my view, this alteration's paradoxical nature constitutes one of the principal prerequisites of a ritual fully enacted: rich with meaning, deeply emotional, and, overall, a kind of action which may have repercussions on the self, one's community and sometimes even on how one understands what there is or even can be in the first place. Such actions hold answers to how the world works, one's position in it and what one can expect of the future.

How does that work? How do we get there?

In this case, during this Eenghali, and as shown for the first moments of Oshitondoka—the immediate coming-together—*sound* was crucial for the collective shift towards intrinsic motivation.

In spiritual action, sound often works formally. For instance, sound marks transitions within and between a ritual's various phases. However, sound can grow into the *music* of a particular event; it only exists as long as the vibrations continue, it makes itself precious to the participants.

To specify the relation between sound and music somewhat more: it is worth mentioning that the German word *Klang*, to which I refer in my application of the word sound, does not include all oscillations and vibrations but only those that enter into *harmonic* vibration relationships with each other. And, be they octaves, thirds or fifths, they come in specific cyclical repetitions and forms. Their possibilities even include, for example, counterpoint, polyrhythm, or dialogic call and response. In all these cases, the relationships between two or more sounds cease to be random insofar as they begin to resist interference—most decidedly, something that sounds, that *makes* a sound, is not noise and, in most cases, stays that way. Add a new sound to it, and the whole thing shifts towards a new balance. Therefore, one of the many mysteries of rhythm is not only that a rhythm always seeks to converge with another rhythm, but that this tendency, in every instance of its occurrence, *sounds*.

The idea relevant to my argument is that since the tendency of oscillations to enter harmony is, in fact, physically given, the same tendency (to converge, to resonate) may continue and translate into people's activities. Conversely, it now becomes possible to assign specific meanings, feelings and

activities to specific sounds. This means that in the very same way that emotions are bodily events—and I understand the body as the most fundamental mode of being in this world—one’s body has the inherent capability to ‘reach out’ to transcendence. If one, for whatever reason, ‘steps out’ of one’s familiar surroundings and habitual responses, one makes a transcendental experience. In such moments there is a shift in the sense of one’s being. Insofar as what one does, feels or experiences, one truly is. To bring that thought to its logical conclusion: matter and immateriality, like all other dualistic distinctions typical of Western thought, converge in the here and now as activity and movement and I, as an ethnographer and participant of this world, can learn how that feels.^[7]

Starting from a more general application of the word *sound*, sound thus becomes a prerequisite for what people call music.^[8] Metaphorically speaking, the transition from sound to music occurs when the world begins to ‘sing’, or starts to ‘be more’. Or, to put it another way: music is the sound of things converging.

As I hope to exemplify in this contribution via sound, we can use this circumstance ethnographically. In the very same physical radicalness in which a phenomenon occurs, we ethnographers can decide to use our bodies to ‘access’ it. If this is to happen wilfully, the ethnographer needs to know how to do it. Such an act presupposes training, body-awareness and self-reflection: ethnographers need to know how to let their bodies spontaneously resonate with their surroundings.

Another difficulty lies in the subsequent analysis and representation; without dissecting the phenomena in question into impersonal meaninglessness, one needs to go beyond a metaphorical or even a symbolic level. One needs to actually try to trace these perceptions and feelings into the specific psychosomatic, physical, and cultural forms they are—forms to which, in this issue, we give the label ‘rhythmic aesthetic formations’.

So, in addition to being a marker for (shared) competence, sound aims directly at personal involvement and emotionally lived experience. Furthermore, this involvement is, always, a doing. To clarify once more: sound does not depend on words, for instance, but it directly works in that it needs the involvement of one’s whole being—even when one ‘only’ listens to it.^[9]

‘Even the idea of it [music] is emotional’, writes Edith Turner. ‘It has its living existence in its performance, and its life is synonymous with *communitas*, which will spread to all participants and audiences when they get caught up in it’ (2012, p. 43).

Don Ihde, a phenomenologist of sound, argues:

Sound permeates and penetrates my bodily being. It is implicated from the highest reaches of my intelligence that embodies itself in language to the most primitive needs of standing upright through the sense of balance that I indirectly know lies in the inner ear. Its bodily involvement comprises the range from soothing pleasure to the point of insanity in the continuum of possible sound in music and noise. Listening begins by being bodily global in its effects (2007, p. 45).

That sound permeates and penetrates one’s whole bodily being is an important observation—and that listening begins by being bodily global in its effects, already a methodological intervention. For a long time and in many variations, social anthropologists used this knowledge as a skill, aligning their being to how the people around them did things. There is a fundamental relationship between rhythm, physicality, and emotion. A change in a rhythm affects our body (breath, heart rate, and others); any effect on our physical being inevitably changes our emotions and influences how we feel and perceive.

Initially, I came to Namibia equipped with a video camera, ready to supplement my ethnographic fieldwork with the recordings of bodily micro-practices. As this contribution hopefully made clear, the Oshitondoka drastically changed that. It just felt very wrong to even turn up with a camera, let alone turn it on. Consequently, I refrained from filming and began to learn from the people's method of involvement.

This emphasis on sound was not a rejection of joint experience or shared imagining, but on the contrary, an invitation by the people to follow them in their ways of doing—and this was an invitation open to all people present.^[10] Rather than merely witness, I could now experience the unfolding of events more closely. If we were to speak about events such as this Eenghali after we experienced them, that may be another case entirely. However, I, present in the situation and endeavouring to meet my research partners and friends at eye level, had to do this. The main thing that counted were the emotions lived.

Additionally, listening in the sense of Ihde not only continued on a subconscious level but was instructive—it led people to align themselves with what was going on. It enabled those present to find what Edith Turner calls *communitas*, an extension into a socio-centric mode of being. In this way, it allowed the participants of the Oshitondoka to 'join in'.

I do not wish to argue that sensory capacities other than sound would necessarily exclude emotional immediacy, nor that these capacities work in strict separation from each other. I do argue, however, that sound, based on a well-orchestrated rhythm, led me to understand and 'live' the whole Eenghali as a musical event and reflect on its emotions and practices in terms of music-making.

The question remains: to what degree was it sound that made this experience possible? Although other sensory capacities can also trigger emotional responses, we can make methodological use of our bodies' physical and rhythmic responses to sound. Because even though we often think of sound as invisible, it *is* physical movement and touch.

Because individual senses are, in different ways, particular senses of a more general sensibility (sound is vibration, hearing can be understood as a particular sense of touch), one can hear not only by associating particular sensory inputs with particular antecedents in the world. Sensory inputs become feelings, bodily processes, which we can assign to meaning. In the end, we also hear with colours, patterns and other impressions.^[11]

Consequently, sound can take on many properties. It can sting, hurt, be short, precise, airy, bright or sombre and so on. Here, we start with translating the metaphoric and the symbolic into practical, physical 'methodologies' and enhance our understanding of the body and its practices as dynamically embodied and potentially open towards external, unseen forces—but that is another story for another time. Music-making, however, also goes the other way: it is creative expression, and, like Edith Turner writes above, its life is synonymous with *communitas*.

I think doing and reflecting about fieldwork in such a radical way is a fruitful and promising avenue. It provided me with a sense of:

- a) how individual responses to grief were channelled into a communal endeavour, providing the means for personal transformation and societal reintegration.
- b) how the coming to terms with something unimaginable does not easily find an emotional equivalent: death, and more precisely, the death of someone loved. Here, music and music-making are instructive as sound aligns very closely with bodily action and meaning-making practices—and, in

this case, the seven steps of an Eenghali. Sound marks and accompanies ritually and socially institutionalised moments of existential mobility, hinting towards these routinised practices' transgressive potential. As rhythms become embodied, sound and rhythm open a direct door to lived experience and shared imagination.

Imagination was part of what we 'worked on' during this Eenghali. It shaped the variations of rhythms of practically everything done in these moments. There are some hidden patterns of 'rhythmisation' at work, patterns of care, caring and affinity. *Otium in labore*—emerging from the link between rhythms and competence, secretly relies on that language, which also is, in its more expressive voice, the language of desire, longing and belonging; of, finally, loss and love.

Reaching out with that kind of empathy does the empathy towards, ultimately, death—death as an experience commonly unimaginable and beyond the human horizon. This empathy serves as a counterpoint to life and new things. It manifests in one's personal ability to carry several voices on equal footing.

Notes

[1] The term, my teacher concerning 'all things Anglican', Father Ngube, explained to me, originates from a practice common in 'earlier times'. Because people heard the wailing or the members of a homestead shouting, they came running. However, they did so not only in the case of someone's death. The wailing and shouting could have indicated danger, be this raiders, fire or anything else. The division into seven steps also goes back to him. Additionally: I do not wish to present this Eenghali and its 'seven steps' as something that always happens as described in this piece. How an Eenghali develops depends very much on the situation. The single 'steps' vary according to age, the economic situation (whether the person was a 'breadwinner' or not, how wealthy or renowned the family is), gender and more.

[2] In addition to the socio-spatial set-up, the whole procedure possessed a well-defined cultural and symbolic vocabulary. However, the discussion of this rich 'vocabulary' goes far beyond the scope of this piece. For this reason, I bracket it out. Regarding this and other points, the interested reader may find more detailed information and empirical descriptions in my dissertation (forthcoming).

[3] As they were originally formulated by Victor Turner (1969); see Förster (2003) for a comprehensive overview of Turner's conceptions. For the original writing about 'rites of passage', see van Gennep (1960).

[4] See for instance Bücher (1909), p. 41-42.

[5] Thomas J. Csordas (1993) suggested in the 1990s that somatic modes of attention—attending to and with the body—are culturally differently 'patterned'. In this, he expands, amongst others, on Marcel Mauss' (1960) essay *Les Techniques du Corps*.

[6] In her article, Brenda Farnell (1999) nicely shows how anthropology's study of the body over time evolved from an observational approach towards understanding the body and bodily practices as dynamic embodied action—an understanding of human meaning-making as (a) a dynamic action, (b) done not in isolation from the world and one's social embeddedness, and (c) open to a wide and interpedently working variety of somato-sensory modes of knowing (touch, smell, taste, pain, kinesthetic sense and so on). For an ethnographic account of an arousing of the senses see also Robert R. Desjarlai's *Body and Emotion* (1992).

[7] The same holds true for moments of rupture or dislocation.

[8] Johann Berendt shows this very well with numerous audio examples in *Vom Hören der Welt*, in Berendt (2018).

[9] Nevertheless, of course, we have to say that there is a medium present: sound itself.

[10] See Kesselring (2015) and Dobler (2015) for a similar line of thinking.

[11] Exactly as the musician Evelyn Gleenie writes, she can distinguish various sounds from each other because she perceives them physically differently (and in different regions of her body in each case). Without surprise, she can then describe a particular sound as ‘thick’ (Gleenie, 1993).

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