



Article / Artículo / Artigo

Narrativity in Sound: A Sound-Centered Approach to Indigenous Amazonian Ways of Managing Relations of Alterity

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Abstract

Indigenous Amazonian peoples use musical sounds, natural sounds, and musicalized speech in a multitude of ways to manage transformational powers of movement, displacement, and historical engagement with various categories of “others”: mythic ancestor-spirits, spirits of the dead, animal and plant spirits, affines, neighboring indigenous peoples, and non-indigenous peoples. In this essay, we develop a sound-centered approach to relations of identity and alterity as a critical alternative to perspectivism, which privileges visual ways of knowing by characterizing relations with others as a process of “other-becoming” that allows humans to imaginatively *see* themselves from the other’s point of *view* and that reduces these processes to predatory relations of consuming, or being consumed by, “others”. The transformational powers of musical sounds and words go far beyond a mere shifting of perspective between humans and non-humans seen as predatory enemies. Instead, these musical processes are better understood as the creation of a shared musical-and-verbal sonic space of historical engagement that allows for acknowledging the otherness of the other and for effecting social transformations. The shift from myth-centered intellectualist approaches such as structuralism (or its contemporary manifestation as perspectivism) to sound-centered modes of theorizing has profound implications for the way research in ethnomusicology and linguistic anthropology is conceptualized and practiced. Ethnomusicologists are only beginning to grasp the full complexity of indigenous sonic worlds. We need to find ways of engaging these worlds by consciously taking into consideration our own practices of listening to, recording, and interpretation of musical sounds; thus, understanding these practices as processes of creating sound-centered narratives in collaboration



with our indigenous interlocutors. In this essay, we introduce the concept of mike-positionality, or the position of sound recordists as they interact with ethnographic subjects during inscription processes and as they participate in the broader processes of constructing sound-centered narratives. By calling attention to the analytical and creative dimensions of *hearing*, *listening to*, and *recording* human and non-human sounds, the concept of mike-positionality allows us to move toward an understanding of narrativity in sound as the basis for managing relations of alterity in Amazonia.

Keywords: Sonic ethnography, narrative practices, music-language interrelations, Northwestern Amazonia, media anthropology

La narratividad en el sonido: una aproximación centrada en el sonido a las formas de gestionar la alteridad de los indígenas amazónicos

Resumen

Los indígenas de la Amazonia utilizan sonidos musicales, sonidos naturales y discursos musicalizados en una gran variedad de formas. Con ellos gestionan los poderes transformadores del movimiento, el desplazamiento y el compromiso histórico con varias categorías de los “otros”, tales como los espíritus míticos de los ancestros, los espíritus de la muerte, los espíritus de animales y plantas, los afines y los vecinos indígenas y no-indígenas. En este artículo desarrollamos una aproximación centrada en el sonido para comprender las relaciones de identidad y alteridad. Este enfoque constituye una alternativa crítica al perspectivismo, el cual privilegia las formas visuales del conocimiento y caracteriza las relaciones con los otros como un proceso de “conversión en el otro” que permite a los humanos verse imaginativamente a ellos mismos desde el punto de vista del “otro” y que reduce esos procesos a relaciones predatorias de consumo de los “otros” y por los “otros”. Los poderes transformadores de los sonidos musicales y las palabras son más que meros cambios de perspectiva entre humanos y no-humanos considerados enemigos predadores. Esos procesos musicales son mejor comprendidos como la creación de un espacio musical y verbal sónico históricamente constituido que permite reconocer la otredad de los otros y la realización de transformaciones sociales. El cambio de enfoques intelectualistas centrados en el mito, como lo es el estructuralismo (o su manifestación contemporánea, el perspectivismo) por modos de teorización centrados en el sonido, tiene profundas implicancias para las formas en que son conceptualizadas y realizadas las investigaciones en etnomusicología y antropología lingüística. Los etnomusicólogos recién están comenzando a entender toda la complejidad de los mundos sónicos indígenas. Tenemos que encontrar maneras de involucrarnos en esos mundos teniendo en cuenta, de manera consciente, nuestras propias prácticas de escucha, registro e interpretación de los sonidos musicales, entendiendo dichas prácticas como procesos de creación de narrativas centradas en el sonido, en colaboración con nuestros interlocutores indígenas. En este artículo introducimos el concepto de *mike-positionality*, el cual se refiere a la posición de las personas que registran el sonido cuando interactúan con los sujetos etnográficos durante el proceso de grabación

y cuando participan en el amplio proceso de construir narrativas centradas en el sonido. Al llamar la atención sobre las dimensiones analíticas y creativas de la audición, la escucha y la grabación de sonidos humanos y no-humanos, el concepto de *mike-positionality* permite movernos hacia una comprensión de la narratividad en el sonido como la base para la gestión de la alteridad en la Amazonia.

Palabras clave: etnografía sónica, prácticas narrativas, interrelaciones música-lenguaje, noroeste de Amazonia, antropología de los medios

A narratividade no som: uma abordagem sonora para gerenciamento de relações de alteridade entre os indígenas amazônicos

Resumo

Os povos indígenas amazônicos usam sons musicais, sons naturais e discursos musicalizados, em uma diversidade de maneiras, para gerenciar poderes transformativos de movimentos, deslocamentos e engajamentos históricos com várias categorias de “outros”: espíritos ancestrais míticos, espíritos dos mortos, espíritos de animais, plantas e afins e vizinhos indígenas e não indígenas. Neste artigo desenvolvemos uma abordagem centrada no som para a compreensão das relações de identidade e alteridade. Estes enfoques constituem uma alternativa crítica ao perspectivismo, o qual privilegia as formas visuais de conhecimento e caracteriza a relação de alteridade como um processo de “conversão no outro” que permite aos humanos verem-se imaginadamente a partir do ponto de vista do “outro” e que reduz este processo a relações predatórias de consumir ou ser consumido pelos outros. Os poderes transformativos dos sons musicais e das palavras vão muito além de uma mera mudança de perspectiva entre humanos e não-humanos vistos como inimigos predatórios. Estes processos musicais são melhor entendidos como a criação de um espaço sônico-verbal compartilhado e historicamente constituído, que permite reconhecer a alteridade dos outros e a realização de transformações sociais. A mudança de enfoques intelectuais centrados no mito –como o estruturalismo (ou sua manifestação contemporânea, o perspectivismo)– por modos de teorização centradas no som tem profundas implicações para as formas em que são conceituadas as pesquisas em etnomusicologia e teoria linguística. Os etnomusicólogos estão apenas começando a compreender toda a complexidade dos mundos sônicos indígenas. Precisamos encontrar maneiras de engajar-nos nestes mundos, tendo em conta, de maneira consciente, nossas próprias práticas de escuta, registro e interpretação dos sons musicais, desta forma entendendo estas práticas como processos de criação de narrativas sônicas em colaboração com nossos interlocutores indígenas. Neste artigo introduzimos o conceito de *mike-positionality*, o qual se refere à posição das pessoas que registram o som quando interagem com os sujeitos etnográficos durante o processo de gravação e quando participam do amplo processo de construir narrativas centradas no som. Ao chamar a atenção sobre as dimensões analíticas da audição, da escuta e da gravação de sons humanos e não humanos, o conceito de *mike-positionality* nos permite alcançar uma compreensão da narratividade sonora como base para

a gestão da alteridade na Amazônia.

Palavras-chave: etnografia sônica, práticas narrativas, inter-relações música-linguagem, noroeste da Amazônia, antropologia dos meios

Fecha de recepción / Data de recepção / Received: febrero 2017

Fecha de aceptación / Data de aceitação / Acceptance date: abril 2017

Fecha de publicación / Data de publicação / Release date: agosto 2017



Introduction

This essay seeks to develop a sound- and music-centered approach to ritual communication among indigenous Amazonian peoples as a critical alternative to perspectivist and other structuralist models that privilege verbal meaning and visual imagery and that have largely ignored the significance of musicality and sounds. Our critique builds on recent attempts to shift from the visualist bias of perspectivism to a concern for transformations that unfold primarily through musicalized speech, instrumental music, and other sonic phenomena (Brabec de Mori, Lewy, and García 2015; Seeger 2015; Hill 2013). At the same time, the present essay deepens the critique of perspectivism by arguing that shamanic and other ritual transformations between humans and non-human “others” are primarily a sound-centered process of using musical sounds, natural sounds, and musicalized speech in a multitude of ways to manage transformational powers of movement, displacement, and historical engagement with others¹. Although perspectivism deserves credit for bringing scholarly attention to processes of transformation between humans and animals, its practitioners have largely mistranslated indigenous cultural worlds by ignoring the central role of music, speech, and the interrelations between them in the building of indigenous communities and in their historical interactions with plant and animal species of the Amazonian rain forests.

Recently, different scholars have started the theorization of audible worlds in indigenous America by revising the perspectivist paradigm and promoting a more open attunement with the complexity of concerns raised by the sonic interaction between multiple beings, personhoods, and natures (Menezes Bastos 1999 and 2011; Brabec de Mori and Seeger 2013). They highlighted why perspectivism set aside the sonic dimension in order to achieve its theoretical objective of describing the circulation of alterity and personhood in the area (Lewy 2015: 9). They demonstrated that there is a fundamental difference between an ethnographic and an indigenous “ear” noticeably by contrasting a point of listening that is academically trained and socially foreign to another that is communally constructed and non-print based, and they showed how this difference between points of listening blurred the boundaries when ethnographers leave their recording devices in other hands (Seeger 2015: 32). However, these studies did not address two specific points that we consider relevant to the recent discussion about these audible worlds and their significance in the so-called “ontological turn”. The main reason for Viveiros de Castro’s and his student’s abandonment of the perception and production of sonic phenomena “to other specialists’ consideration” (Lewy 2015: 9) was not so much that sonic phenomena were understood as the object of a differentiated field of study, but the less prominent role Viveiros de Castro assigned to plants and to other embodiment practices of managing relations of alterity in regions of the world where animism and shamanism produce and reproduce a differentiated living cosmos (Hill 2013: 327; Hill 2011a: 4). And our second point concerns the need for more attention to and reflection about technologies of making sound recordings as a process of blending the

¹ In the most general sense, these “others” include not only animal and plant species, artifacts and other material objects but also mythic ancestor-spirits, spirits of the dead, affines, neighboring indigenous peoples, and non-indigenous peoples.

ethnographic and indigenous points of listening during fieldwork and the possibility that collaborative uses of playback devices may result in experiential commensurabilities between indigenous and non-indigenous worlds rather than ontological separations and incommensurabilities.

Over the last three decades, researchers have broken new ground by recognizing how language and music are interrelated throughout Lowland South America and adjacent regions (Sherzer and Urban 1986; Graham 1986 and 1995; Seeger 1986; Hill 1993). “It is impossible to study language use in lowland South America without paying attention to the intimate relationship between musicality and speech” (Sherzer and Urban 1986: 9). A discourse-centered approach to indigenous cultural worlds in South America requires us to give attention not only to textual and other verbal dimensions of meaning construction but to the musical dimensions of discourses that are sung, chanted, played on aerophones or other instruments, or voiced by non-human others (e.g., birds, frogs, fish, forest animals, trees, or bodies of water). When we remove mythic meaning from the pedestal that Levi-Straussian structuralism and perspectivism have placed it upon and instead take musicalized speech and sound as the central foci of analysis, a much more interesting theoretical approach to myth-music interrelations begins to emerge. Placing musical sound and speech at the center leads to an understanding of music as the principle means of mediating relations between the animal-humans of primordial mythic times and fully human beings, both living and dead, of historical times. And by extension, performing and listening to music becomes a means for mediating relations between human beings as members of social communities (however locally defined as families, clans, phratries, language groups, etc.) and a wide variety of “others”, defined not only as mythic animal-humans but also as various categories of spirit-beings, non-human species or objects, other indigenous groups, affines, and non-indigenous peoples. This “music-centered” approach is supported by a number of ethnographic studies from a variety of linguistic affiliations and across widely separate geographic locations in Lowland South America (Basso 1985; Whitten and Whitten 1988; Graham 1986 and 1995; Hill 1993, 2009, and 2011b; Piedade 2011; Mello 2011; Franchetto and Montagnani 2012). Music, or more specifically musicalized speech and instrumental sound, provides a privileged means for human trafficking with the undifferentiated world of mythic animal-humans, while language and speech (including mythic narratives) are the pathway to fully differentiated, socialized men and women and clearly distinct groups of kin and affines. Yet the boundary between music and speech, or musicality and lexicality, is extremely fuzzy and permeable, and it is precisely in these gray areas of lexicalized musical sounds (e.g., musical “voices”) and semi-lexicalized, musicalized speech that we find the sources of shamanic powers of transformation and journeying between regions of the cosmos.

Translating specialized discourse genres that are performed through singing, chanting, playing instruments, or some combination of these registers presents special challenges to linguists, ethnomusicologists, and other social scientists. By making the process of translation visible rather than hidden, researchers have attempted to demonstrate how to produce readable English translations that allow readers to see precisely how culturally specific knowledge, individual emotions, contextual meanings, and verbal creativity can be carried over from oral performances in Native Latin American languages to written texts in English (Sammons and

Sherzer 2000). Translation can never be reduced to a merely mechanical activity of transporting immobile signifieds from one language to another but requires the creation of “signifying instruments” distinct from the original medium of signification as part of a broader process of “attending to the indigenous experience of verbal artistry” (McDowell 2000: 211-212). The method of collaborative ethnopoetics asks us to look under the hood of the translation process to explore the poetic processes that can take us from the original medium, however it may be replicated in audio recordings or visual transcriptions, to a translation that somehow manages to convey most of the emotional overtones, degree of (in)formality, and implicit knowledge of the original recording or transcription (Sammons and Sherzer 2000). One of the many virtues of McDowell’s method of collaborative ethnopoetics is that it gives clear recognition to the collaborative nature of the translation process, especially when it concerns the translation of richly poeticized discourses such as those often performed in sacred rituals and collective ceremonies in the indigenous communities of Lowland South America. At the same time, McDowell’s definition of collaborative ethnopoetics can be extended from the verbal and linguistic process of translation to one that intentionally encompasses both musical and verbal dimensions of poetic “speech” into a single unified approach to translation. Signifying instruments are seen as tools for attending to the indigenous experience of both *verbal and musical* artistry as well as the complex interrelations between verbal and musical dimensions of discourse (Hill 2015).

In this essay, we seek to move beyond the processes of translation and transcription to the more basic level at which musical ways of speaking, instrumental music, and natural sounds are experienced, inscribed, and transformed into a sound recording. If McDowell’s method of collaborative ethnopoetics required researchers to look under the hood of the translation process, what we aim to accomplish in this essay is to examine the shared space of listening in which people interact as they perform and reproduce musical words, voices, and sounds coming from non-human others. To some extent, this experiential approach to music and sound was anticipated in a recent essay on “the ethnographic ear”:

The ethnographic ear is not the same thing as the ear of an ethnographer. The ethnographic ear is created through the interaction between the ethnographer and the members of the community who jointly focus on sounds” (Seeger 2015: 30).

The ethnographic ear is a reflexive, hybrid point of listening that develops through the mixing together of the ethnographer’s previous ideas about and experiences of sonic phenomena and the process of immersing oneself in the soundscape of a community of people and giving sustained attention to their ideas about music and sound. However, this reflexivity and hybridity based in communality is not the exclusive privilege of ethnographers. The idea of a native ear without history and differentiated from a non-native one (Seeger 2015: 32) not only freezes the possibility for native ears to have intricate genealogies of listening but also puts aside the transversal and fertile ground of Amerindian aurality (Beaudet 2011: 389) by misrepresenting as much the role that techniques and technology have had in the production of knowledge about music and aurality, in the disciplining of tongues and ears, and in the consolidation of sonic ontologies in the region since the beginning of the nineteenth century (Bessire 2012: 200; Ochoa

2014: 15).

The main goal of this essay is to take McDowell's method of collaborative ethnopoetics and its extension to include signifying instruments that are both verbal and musical, Feld's (1996 and 2004) concept of narrativity with sound and modes of knowledge through listening, and Seeger's concept of the ethnographic ear (Seeger et al. 2015) as a point of departure for exploring the subjectivity and sensual experiences of persons who are both listening to and recording musical, verbal, and human and non-human sounds. To this end, we introduce the concept of mike-positionality to encompass the reflexive activity of initially experiencing and recording sonic phenomena as well as later activities of remembering how such inscriptions of recorded sound originally happened. Our concept shares with Kheshti's "acoustigraphy" (2009: 15) an interest in accounting for how points of listening are inscribed during ethnographic contexts to explore anthropological concerns. However, the way we are proposing it goes further by addressing the inscription process itself as part of the discussion about personhood and composite anatomies in Amerindian scholarship, rather than considering it simply as a form of writing culture. These multiple points of listening are not limited to the researcher's own initial experience and subsequent playing back of recorded sounds but also include acts of sharing these points of listening with indigenous performers, other members of their community, other communities of people, and even subsequent generations who are descended from performers whose voices and/or instrumental sounds were recorded at some point in the past.

Before presenting ethnographically how this shared listening problematizes the above-mentioned notion of perspectivism, we want to develop the concept of mike-positionality by establishing our analytical position in the agenda Feld and Seeger have disclosed. Instead of revising the notions of cultural difference and audible aesthetics of knowledge at the core of both scholars' approaches, we move forward to what Ochoa has called a "conceptual ground for issues of domination –territory, culture, nature, music and sound begin to be radically interrogated" (2016: 113). In this sense, we interrogate the nature of ethnographic listening by arguing that cultural differences and audible aesthetics of knowledge obey to an economy of listening always mediated by a transduction process that allows or not the sharing character of what is heard. It is from this transduction process that we are calling mike-positionality that the politics of differentiation and the ways of managing alterity matter for a sound-oriented approach in the region.

What about the ethnographic mike?

Several decades have passed since that the emergence of *the ethnographic ear* (Clifford 1986: 12) and the *cyborg* (Haraway 1985) firmly highlighted the need for interrogating the anatomy of scientific objectivity and the gendered corporality of knowing practices and its politics of differentiation in the north Atlantic. Consequently, to take up this question again necessarily must include considerations about the prosthetic role of technical developments that have accompanied the naked ethnographic ear along with its desire for listening and research (Stern 2003). At this point of the discussion, as Haraway (2000: 313) pointed out, there "is no fundamental, ontological separation in our formal knowledge of machine and organism, of

technical and organic”, and the ear and microphone have become dependent on each other: the organic has become a helper of the electromechanical and vice versa (Stiegler 1998: 24, Simondon 2012: 1). In such an era, where there is “no distance between the recorded voice and listening ears, as if voices traveled along the transmitting bones of acoustic self-perception directly from the mouth into the ear’s labyrinth” (Kittler 1999: 37), the recordist’s authorship necessarily ranges between ontological, political issues and technical challenges of representation, and not only between discourse analysis and its quest for textual meaningfulness. In the case of Amazonian ethnographies produced in Colombia, a large majority of those reel-to-reel recordings and tapes were discarded after transcriptions were done and are still unclassified and undigitized in archival institutions located in Bogota. Those tapes retain the sonic meaningfulness of the myths that constitute the foundational corpus of Amerindian ethnology of the Northwest Amazon region but their uselessness also reflects the foundational pronouncement of an ethnomusicology without linguistic counterpart and vice versa (O’Neill 2015: 145).

Prior to this advantage for the ethnographic ear to playback the sonic object of its desire, there have been simple and recurrent activities, usually taken for granted, in which people were organized and placed in front of microphones, and whereby their acousmatic presence was significantly crafted, edited, articulated and organized (Feld 2004: 741). Duncan and Gregory (1999: 5) masterfully named these conditions “ethnographic pressure and reduction”. Sound recordists working in the field have responded affirmatively to the ethnographic pressure inscribing in sounds what was not hand written and have answered to the ethnographic reduction by leaving on the microphone’s membrane the possibility to capture something from cultural difference. In addition, recordists have mastered political relations through the recording process whereby people are finally organized and magnetically or digitally compressed. These relations have been called “specification of discourses in ethnography” (Clifford 1986: 13) and refer to the expressions of institutional constraints, disciplinary certainties, and careers politically validated in which the conditions of possibility for a shared listening are also anchored.

For these reasons, our argument is that the position of the sound recordists in the text they produce is framed by the geopolitics of knowledge, ethnographic constraints, practices of aural interchange, and the ontological challenges that entail their affinity with technical objects or other kinds of materialities. According to the intersection of these four dimensions, we can identify, analyze, describe, and problematize their *strategic location* as producers of representations in a broad question about the relationship of production on narrativities in sound, rather than a question about the interpretation of the sonic texts they produced. In fact, sound recordings and the way they are made are not only a crystallization of political and historical relations with others by compressing space and inscribing time in and through sound technology (Brady 1999: 93) but a medium for blurring or overemphasizing cultural difference via listening as an exchange practice where the senses are redistributed (Ochoa 2002 and 2011).

Consequently, if this technology of writing with sounds moves fast, it obviously also accelerates the possibility for others to read or hear representations produced by ethnographers, thus locating the ethnographic ear into an interpretative asymmetry in relation to the native ear despite seeming as if it were at the same level of representation. In these instances, inscription

processes become practices of recognition, not only sound recording but even data collection, losing their intrinsic attachment to colonial regimes of prestige (Brady 1999: 104; Fox 2012: 544; Denning 2014: 39) to join other forms of knowledge and power under different epistemological orders (Cayón 2013: 438; Hugh-Jones 2012: 164). By practices of recognition we mean any activity established by human interaction with the aim of building kinship through the inner work of each participant. These activities in which participatory auralities are increasing, are framed by an interest to mobilize reflexivity, affect and fertility, and at the same time work on the distinguishing features of those who participate, humans included. In such a context, the assumption of sound recordists as data collectors make no sense anymore because the relation they promote is not based in the negotiation of identities. In other words, what is at stake in this mediation emerged by enacting with technological devices are practices of recognition via sound inscription and sharing of listenings whereby sound recording and playback devices are bridging modes of relationality, instead of collecting the immutable essences that we think cultural practices have (Ramos 2012: 486) nor even instrumentalizing any ontological separation between points of listening after being transformed by mutual circulation. Or as Povinelli and Parameshwar have suggested, “in a given culture of circulation, it is more important to track the proliferating co-presence of varied textual/cultural forms in all their mobility and mutability than to attempt a delineation of their fragile autonomy and specificity” (2003: 391).

Narrativity in sound: The Wakuénai male initiation ritual of March 1985

Male initiation rituals among the Arawak-speaking Wakuénai of southernmost Venezuela provide a strikingly clear illustration of the importance of place, space, and movement in ritual communication and associated narrative practices. These rituals are called *wakapéetaka iénpitipe*, or “we show our children”, referring to the central importance of sacred wind instruments that are shown to the group of male initiates for the first time. Immediately prior to showing these flutes and trumpets to the initiates, a senior ritual specialist begins to sing-into-being the celestial umbilical cord that connects the sky-world of mythic ancestors to the world of human descendants, both living and dead. Each time the chant-owner sings the highest of four pitches making up the opening song, the group of men playing ancestor-trumpets responds with a loud burst of sound. On the fourth time, the entire orchestra of men begins playing flutes and trumpets and come outside a ritual enclosure to show themselves to the group of initiates². The chant-owner’s opening song shifts directly into a long series of chanted speeches that name all the places along major rivers and their tributaries in lowland regions of northern South America (Hill 1983, 1993, and 2011c). This process of chanting place-names is musically performed through the use of different starting pitches, microtonal rising, acceleration/deceleration, crescendo/decrescendo, loud/soft contrasts, and percussive sounds made by tapping ritual whips on an overturned basket that covers a bowl of sacred food (*karidzamai*) that in turn becomes the first meal of the newly initiated young men after their period of ritual fasting. After this long series of musically dynamic chanted speeches, the

² For a more detailed description and interpretation of this musical dialogue between a chant-owner and the primordial human being of myth –played-into-being on a set of wind instruments– see Hill (2015).

final song returns to the center of mythic space, the “navel of the world” and place of mythic ancestor spirits’ emergence. By using exactly the same four sung pitches, the opening and closing songs create a stable musical center of mythic space, anchoring the more dynamic chanted speeches that move away from and back to the central place of ancestral emergence.

This musical creation of places and movements in sung and chanted speeches during male initiation rituals is directly linked to narrative discourses about the mythic creation of animals, plants, and other life forms during the life cycle of the primordial human being of myth, or *Kuwái* (Hill 1993 and 2009). A mythic narrative about the origins of ritually powerful chanted and sung speech (*malikái*) explains how this discourse genre originated when the body of the primordial human being of myth emitted powerful sounds that opened up the world for the first time and created all the species and objects of the natural world.

Kuwái began to speak the word-sounds that could be heard in the entire world. The world was still very small. He began to speak, ‘Heee’. The sound of his voice ran away and opened up the world (Hill 2009: 119).

After teaching the songs and chants for male initiation to *Dzúli*, the first chant-owner (*malikái limínali*), the trickster-creator (*Iñapirrikuli*, or “Made-from-Bone”) and his male kin pushed *Kuwái* into a bonfire, and the world shrank back to its original miniature size. A tall palm tree erupted from the ashes of *Kuwái*, and this tree became the source of hollowed out logs that were made into sacred flutes and trumpets³.

‘How do you make sound with them?’ Made-from-Bone tried to blow through them. ‘It’s not like that’, said squirrel, who took out a feather from a large hawk. ‘With this you can make sound’, he said to Made-from-Bone. Made-from-Bone blew air with the hawk feather, and it made a sound. ‘Heee’, and then the world opened up again, from here to there, this entire world. The sound went up into the sky above. All the sounds of *Kuwái* spoke –*waliáduwa*, *máliawá*, all of them. Made-from-Bone heard how this one sounds, how that one sounds, how the other ones sound (Hill 2009: 128).

The cycle of narratives about the life cycle of *Kuwái* and his fiery transformation into sacred wind instruments can be understood as a metadiscursive commentary about musical and verbal arts, or an indigenous theory of the creative powers of language and music.

Audio recordings of the Wakuénai male initiation ritual of March 1985, including performances of instrumental music, ritual speeches, women’s drinking songs, and the ritually powerful singing and chanting (*malikái*) for the boys’ sacred food, are available at Indiana University’s Archives of Traditional Music, the Interamerican Institute for Ethnomusicology and Folklore (INIDEF) in Caracas, and at the Archives of Indigenous Languages of Latin America (www.ailla.utexas.org, KPC002R002I001-KPC002R002I019.mp3). These recordings originated from a field trip to the Guainía River in Venezuela in June and July 1984, when I spent two weeks

³ Each of these instruments is said to be a part of the body of *Kuwái* such that a group of men playing a large set of different instruments forms a collective enactment of the primordial human being of myth. At the same time, the instruments have animal namesakes that refer to various species of birds, fish, frogs, and forest animals.

refining my interpretation of *malikái*, a genre of ritually powerful singing and chanting that forms the central core of ritual performances in male initiation rituals. Before my departure, the village headman and chant-owner, Horacio Lopez Pequeira, asked me if I would be willing to leave my stereo recording equipment until the following year so that his son, Felix, would be able to learn the various performances of singing, chanting, and praying that make up the genre called *malikái*. The first stage in learning *malikái* requires the apprentice to memorize long lists of spirit-names, and having access to tape recording equipment would clearly provide a very useful way of assisting the traditional learning process. So I decided to leave my recording equipment with enough blank tapes and batteries to allow the Felix to practice learning *malikái* singing and chanting. In return, I asked Felix to make recordings of any rituals, ceremonies, or other occasions at which people were performing instrumental and/or vocal music. I returned to the village in July and August 1985 and was pleased to learn that our experiment in collaborative ethnomusicology had fully succeeded in both of its objectives. Felix had recorded several hours of *malikái* singing and chanting and was making considerable progress in memorizing the long lists of powerful spirit-names for initiation rituals and other rites of passage. And he had also made recordings of female and male initiation rituals, both of which had taken place in March 1985. Over the next several weeks, I spent many hours listening to these tape recordings with Felix and his father, Horacio.

In addition to making this excellent set of audio recordings of the male initiation ritual, Felix had also become very proficient at writing down his thoughts; transcribing the texts of songs, speeches, and narratives; and keeping a written record of ritual activities. In July 1985, I worked closely with Felix to translate these field notes into English. Later that year, after returning from Venezuela to the United States, I typed up my English translation of Felix's notes and sent them along with a report and copies of the tapes to the Archives of Traditional Music at Indiana University. My translation of Felix's notes are available on-line at the Archives of Indigenous Languages of Latin America (www.ailla.utexas.org, KPC002R003I001.pdf). These notes are important because they were made during the ongoing flow of ritual activities and because they show what features of the ritual process are most interesting to a native participant-observer. In the following paragraphs, I will refer directly to these hand-written notes and provide exact details of the locations of corresponding sound recordings in the digital archives at AILLA so that readers can understand how the sound-recordist originally inscribed specific events during the male initiation ritual.

Neither the cassette tape recordings nor Felix's hand-written notes happened without some planning. Before I left the village in July 1984, I had typed up a detailed, line-by-line Spanish translation of the English text in the instruction manual that had come along with the Sony Stereo Walk-About cassette tape recorder when I had purchased it. Along with the tape recorder, I left a pre-amped stereo external microphone with a separate power switch. For reasons that will become clear below, it was very important that the tape recorder was small, light-weight, and highly portable, since it allowed Felix to move around with at least one hand free in the course of the male initiation ritual. The external microphone provided higher quality and more directional stereo sound than the smaller built-in microphones that came with the recorder; having a separate on/off switch on the microphone allowed Felix to start and stop the recorder with one hand while writing

notes with his other hand. In addition to tape recording equipment, accessories, and a Spanish translation of the owner's manual, I had made a template for Felix to help him organize his notes according to date, time, and place and to number each of the 5 x 8 inch index cards according to the cassette number and side being described. I wrote out four questions on the template: 1) *¿Cómo se llama esta música en Waku?* (What is this music called in Waku?) 2) *¿Quiénes son los cantores y/o instrumentistas?* (Who are the singers and/or instrumentalists?) 3) *¿Quiénes son las otras personas que escuchan?* (Who are the other persons listening?), and 4) *¿Cuáles son las principales razones por las que la gente hace música hoy?* (What are the principal reasons why people are playing music and/or singing today?) Figure 1 displays the notes Felix wrote on the opening day of the male initiation ritual, 17 March 1985.

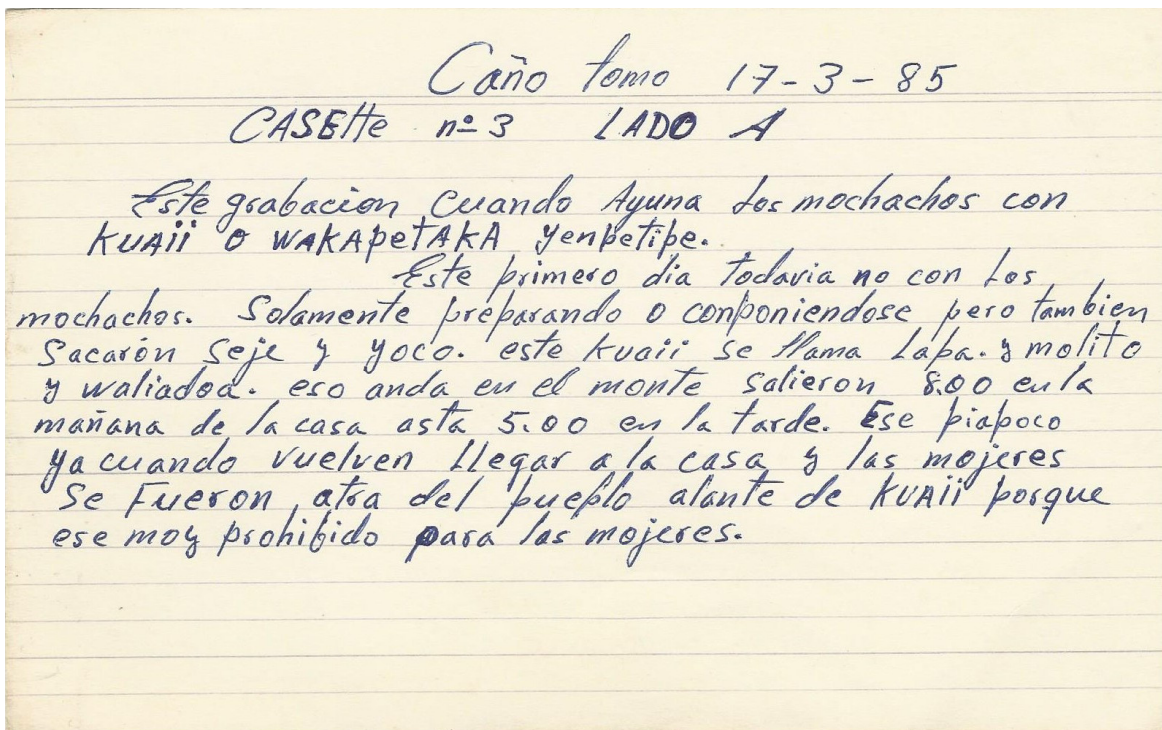


Figure 1

What immediately becomes clear from this short paragraph is the importance of movements, of leaving the village early in the morning and walking in the forests until late in the afternoon. As they moved across the landscape of forests and streams, the men harvested wild palm fruits that would later be made into fermented drinks for consumption during the days of ritual fasting (see photos 1 and 2). They also cut down pieces of *macanilla* palms and stripped the bark from *yebaro* trees to make the sacred flutes and trumpets of Kuwái. Returning to the village in the late afternoon, the melodic sounds of the *waliáduwa* and *máliawá* flutes and the low barking sounds of the *dapa* trumpets were accompanied by the slow percussive sounds of wooden paddles gently tapping against a canoe's gunnels and the swirling sounds of water being paddled (www.ailla.utexas.org, KPC002R002I001.mp3, KPC002R002I002.mp3). Just as Felix's notes emphasized the

importance of movements across the landscape, so also did his recordings capture the sounds of musical instruments moving from the forest back to the village.



Photo 1



Photo 2

After the first two days, the ritual activities shifted from movements out into the forests and back to the village to a complex series of movements within the village. Felix's notes and tape recordings were made from various points of listening, or specific places that allow listeners to perceive movements of singers, instruments, and dancers. Women and uninitiated children were secluded inside a special ritual house with walls made of clay, whereas the boys undergoing initiation remained inside a small hut with walls made of palm fronds. Groups of adult men danced and played the flutes and trumpets of Kuwai outside on the village plaza; women, children, and male initiates could hear but not see the men's instrumental performances.

día 20-3-85 Lado B

Este día ya para enseñar los mochaos, mirar kuaii
Fuimo una hora ahiendo Castigo volvimo a las 4.00 y
Las mojerere pintaron los mochaos con pinta Rojo
a los que termina de pintas ellos y se fueron al monte
y dejaron eso mochaos que van a mirar diablo o kuaii
despues Horacio sacó ellos a Fuera de la casa ahy ellos para una
~~Fina Fila~~ todos los Hombre ~~a~~ adentro de una casa prebasando
cayadito y adurnandose. despue Horacio empesó a llamas kuaii
para que pa Fuera a enseñar los mochaos. 3 Vese contestó
kuaii a los y ya salio a Fuera adonde está los mochaos
y Horacio el que da consejo a ellos el mismismo Castigo ellos
tambien cada papa de los mochaos dieron consejo a los
hijo de ellos este consejo sobre kuaii que no cuenta
a nadie peor a las mojerere que el kuaii está muy prohibido
este no es un Juego este kuaii viene del comienso del mundo
este kuaii nacional, este no echo de cualquiera. Este
hecho de Dio igualmente como piedra, agua y tierra y monte

Figure 2

In figure 2, Felix described the moment when the male initiates were shown the flutes and trumpets of Kuwái as a communicative process of call and response, the chant-owner singing the highest of four pitches making up the opening song for male initiation in order to call for Kuwái to come outside and show himself to the initiates. Three times he sang out this note, and each time the group of men answered with a burst of sound from inside the hut made of palm fronds. On the fourth time, the entire group of men emerged from seclusion and played the flutes and trumpets of Kuwái as they danced in circles around the initiates. In this ritual moment, there was a complete fusion of music and speech, of verbal art understood in terms of musical sounds and musical art understood as a verbal speech act. In order to record his father's singing and the men's playing of flutes and trumpets, Felix had to position himself in exactly the right place *close* to his father and *between* him and the ensemble of wind instruments. The audio recording (www.ailla.utexas.org, KPC002R002I004, 01:16-04:45) thus created a point of listening that allowed for an integrated perception of musical and verbal sounds and the interactions between them, a space where the powerful chant-owner's singing became unified with the group of male flute- and trumpet-players who were playing-into-being the powerful proto-human being of myth.

Late at night on the same day, the group of male initiates were taken to bathe in the river and sent back inside the hut made of palm fronds. The focus of ritual activities shifted then to the men's playing flutes and trumpets on the plaza outside and to the women's singing drinking songs (*pakamarántakan*). People had all been fasting on nothing but palm fruit drinks and manioc flour for three days and nights, and now they were also drinking strongly fermented beverages (*yaláki*)

and becoming increasingly drunk.

Otra vez brinda yalaki están borracho. Ese a la casa de las mujeres. Julia está cantando los otros están gritando a molito ellos lo llama mawa ese molito esta fuera de la casa (Felix Oliveros, notes, 30 March 1985)⁴.

Felix's notes here are somewhat more condensed and far less detailed than his notes from earlier in the day. No doubt the prolonged fasting, heavy drinking of *yaláki*, and lack of sleep were having an effect on him. Nevertheless, these brief descriptions are remarkably clear and reveal that Felix had thoughtfully selected a point of listening that foregrounded women's singing, speaking, and emotions. While writing notes with one hand, Felix was also busy recording the sounds of women's voices with his other hand. And it was these sound recordings that really told the complete story⁵.

The following is a more detailed description of the sounds captured in I006 and I007:

6 mins., 04 secs.: woman singing a drinking song (*pakamarántakan*)

6 mins., 42 secs.: other women begin speaking loudly, drunkenly to each other; loud gales of laughter

8 mins., 04 secs.: *molítu* flute faintly audible from a distance, outside house

8 mins., 35 secs.: *kapetiápani* singing heard in the distance from outside house

9 mins., 08 secs.: *kapetiápani* singing becomes much louder as line of male singer-dancers enters women's house; percussive sound of whip handles being pounded against floor; several other women begin singing drinking songs; another woman sings out and sustains loud, high note

10 mins., 40 secs.: men's *kapetiápani* singing continues with volume going up and down as group of male singers and their female dancing partners move around perimeter of house; women's singing continues but without laughing and talking

15 mins., 52 secs.: sound of men's singing and percussive accompaniment gradually fades as line of male singer-dancers exits women's house while women remain behind

16 mins., 12 secs.: woman begins singing new drinking song as men's *kapetiápani* singing becomes increasingly faint outside and eventually stops

17 mins., 38 secs.: second woman begins singing *pakamarántakan*

19 mins., 40 secs.: *molítu* flute heard from outside far away; woman begins to sing and shout to *molítu* (or 'mawá')

21 mins., 05 secs.: sound of *molítu* flutes continues but still faint

25 mins., 48 secs.: woman sings *pakamarántakan*, other women begin shouting over her song; loud laughter of women and girls fill the house

29 mins., 58 secs.: second woman begins to sing *pakamarántakan*, more laughter ensues

⁴ Approximate English translation: "Again yalaki is given out; they are drunk. This is happening in the women's house. Julia is singing and the others are shouting to the molito frog, which they address as 'mawa', this molito is outside the house".

⁵ Readers are strongly encouraged to download KPC002R002I006 (www.ailla.utexas.org) and start playing it back on their computer before reading the next paragraphs. For a more complete appreciation of the sounds contained on these recordings, listeners may want to consider imbibing a glass or two of their favorite alcoholic beverage.

I007 1 min., 08 secs.: woman calls or shouts out to mawá (*molítu*) flute, which is heard from outside the house but is now very close and loud

The first and most obvious feature that emerges from listening to these beautiful recordings is that the night of March 20, 1985, was more than just a solemn moment of collectively recognizing a group of young men's coming-of-age; it was also a joyous celebration of Dionysian ecstasy and inebriation; an episode of drinking, singing, and dancing; and above all a time of laughing and joking. Women's voices filled the house with joy and laughter, singing and speaking, and shouting loudly enough to make themselves heard through clay walls by men playing *molítu* flutes and other wind instruments on the plaza outside. In response, the *molítu* flute-players "spoke" back through their instruments, letting the women know that they wanted to drink fermented beverages:

Molítu: *Mu, mu, mu. Mu-tu-r-ru.*

Women: *Pímaka píra turúru, Molítu?*

(Do you want to drink liquor, *Molítu*?)

Molítu: *Oh-hon, mu, óh-hon.*

(Yes, *mu*, yes)⁶.

A second prominent feature of the recordings is that the point of listening remains consistently female-centric from start to finish. Felix began the tape recordings from inside the women's house well before the line of men singing *kapetiápani* had approached and then entered inside. Likewise, he chose to stay inside the women's house after the line of male singer-dancers had left so that the sound of the men's voices fading into the distance provided the women's point of listening.

Another striking feature of the recordings is the contrast between male formality and female spontaneity. In the first 9 minutes of the recording, we hear women speaking, singing, and laughing in a deliberately chaotic style. One woman began to sing, another woman started speaking in a loud and aggressive voice that could be heard over the first woman's song, a third woman began to sing even more loudly than the others, various women and girls began to speak, and while all these voices were simultaneously audible, the entire house erupted in gales of laughter. When the men's singing of *kapetiápani* became discernible in the distance, the sounds of women speaking and laughing ceased, leaving only their drinking songs and a sustained high note to balance the men's increasingly loud singing and distant flute playing.

As the men entered the house in a single line of dancers, they sang *kapetiápani* and banged the handles of their *kapéti* whips against the clay floor in complete unison. *Kapetiápani* is arguably the most solemn and formal genre of collective male singing and dancing, since it evokes the moment when the mythic trickster, Made-from-Bone, and his brothers pushed Kuwái into a bonfire, causing the world that Kuwái had opened up with powerful word-sounds to shrink back

⁶ For a detailed account of these instruments' use for "speaking" with women in rituals, see Matos Arvelo (1912) and Hill (1983, 1993, and 2011b).

to its original miniature size. The women were not totally excluded from the men's demonstration of unity and orderliness, since many of them joined as female dance partners in the line of singer-dancers that moved in circles around the inside of the house. The fact that other women continued to sing drinking songs during the men's performance of *kapetiápani* indicates that the men's performance did not silence the women, who might not have been able to speak and laugh while the men were singing but who could continue to sing, or speak in musical voices⁷. Once the men had left the women's house and their singing had come to an end, the women's levity resurfaced: several different women began singing *pakamarántakan*, a woman started speaking loudly over the singers' voices, other women began conversing, and gales of laughter once again filled the house. Finally, a woman called out to the *molítu* flute player, who replied with several short bursts of sound⁸.

The male initiation ritual of 1985 continued for two more days and ended on the morning of March 22 with the departure of Kuwái from the village. In Felix's own words, "*Los Kuaii están viajando; da lástima cuando se fueron*" (The Kuwáis [plural] are traveling; it was sad when they left) (Felix Oliveros, field notes, March 22, 1985). As was the case during the first two days of the ritual, the notes from the final day gave clear expression to the central importance of movements. And once again, Felix's tape recordings demonstrated a deep understanding of the importance of the movement of sounds. A group of men playing the flutes of Kuwái (*waliáduwa* and *molítu*) had danced in single file down to the port at the river's edge, where they had entered a large dugout canoe and were paddled off into the distance without missing a single beat. For more than two full minutes, the sweet, repetitive sounds of three *waliáduwa* flutes gradually faded until they became completely inaudible. From time to time, a blast or two of high-pitched sounds from the *molítu* flute punctuated the continuously flowing melody of the three *waliáduwa* flutes. The long, slow fading out of musical sounds in Felix's recording was more than merely an interesting ethnoaesthetic effect: it was a point of listening that expressed one of the central mythic principles of the male initiation ritual, the movement of musical sounds across the landscape as an opening up of the social and historical space of specifically human beings.

⁷ The genre of *pakamarántakan* is a form of musicalized, or sung, speech. These songs are verbal texts that are improvisational, situational, personal, emotional, and musical. Although many of these songs express sorrow, other songs are humorous and light-hearted.

⁸ The general contrast between male formality and female spontaneity is found throughout the Northwest Amazon region and reflects the basic social pattern of relatively stationary agnatic kin groups (patrisibs and phratries) versus women's outsider status and movement between patrisibs due to the principle of virilocal post-marital residence. Goldman's account of gender complementarity in Cubeo rituals is strikingly similar to the gender relations in Wakuenai rituals: "In ritual, men supply order, while women give spontaneity. [...] in the case of the Cubeo the female as profane is a complement of the sacred and not altogether outside of it" (1979: 281).

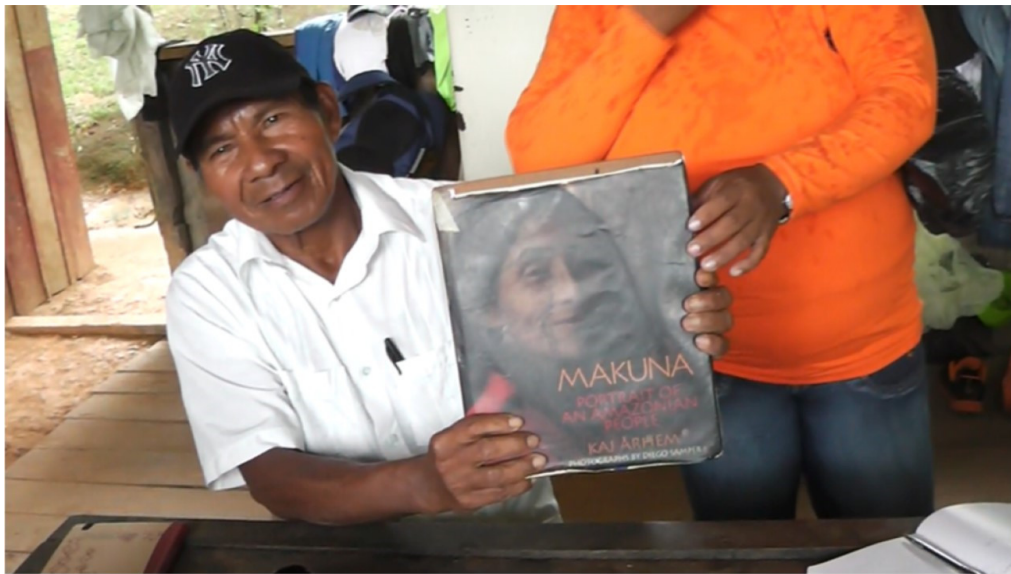
A dabukurí of recordings in Tukanoan aural fields

Photo 3. Miriki at Jose Esteban Valencia's house in Mitú. Photo by Juan Castrillon

The man who is shown in this photo is Miriki (Enrique Llanos), a Cubeo shaman from the Northwestern Amazon. He wears a New York Yankees cap and smiles joyfully, exhibiting the front cover of a book written by the Swedish anthropologist Kaj Århem about the Makuna, an indigenous group that also represents a recognizable other for the Cubeo. This otherness is due by their place of origin, the language or “patrilect” that men use to set the tone for their phratries’ vitality, and other differences that made it really difficult for them to share their musical instruments with others despite their similarity in an organological sense and their closeness in terms of linguistic affiliation, shamanic reproduction of their ontological presence in their cosmos, and in terms of political organization within the Colombian state (Hugh-Jones 1993: 97; Cayón 2013: 411). The picture was shot within a collaborative project of sonic cartography entitled *Si, oímos selva* funded with a grant from the Ministry of Culture and the Music Documentation Center of the National Library of Colombia in 2013. The project was co-authored with a group of three women who are public workers linked to the health system, Miriki, and a Makuna shaman from the Komeña River named Raimundo Valencia. The project updated the website contents of a music cartography managed by the Music Documentation Center, returned to Tukanoan families audiovisual and sonic documents produced during the 1960s and 1970s, and co-produced four audio releases⁹ in three indigenous communities near Mitú in the Colombia northwest Amazon region. This excerpt does not focus on the ethno-poetics generated during the collaborative process of recording developed by more than forty male and female interpreters of Cubeo, Makuna, Tukano, Barasano and Kotiria origins in 2012 and 2013. Rather it analyzes a more general aspect

⁹ The four releases were not paid for by the grant nor even appear on the website of the National Library. <http://www.territoriosonoro.org/CDM/indigena/> [Markers: Makuna, Kubeo, Wanano, Tukano, Varasano, Tatuyo].

of the entire process to build on the notion of shared listenings and their interaction with events technologically mediated as mentioned before.

During the moment in which the picture was shot we were giving back a set recordings to a Makuna family that resides in Mitú. Brian Mosser and Donald Tyler made the recordings in 1960 and as it was usual for the region, those were stored in Bogotá and given to official archives without being returned for more than five decades. We visited this family after Miariki identified the name of Ignacio Valencia, a Makuna shaman he had met before. When we were gathering together listening to the recordings, the son of Ignacio told us that he never believed in the stories his father confided to him about British people going to his house to sound record their daily life and ritual activities. In this sense, the recordings were heard by him, his wife, and his daughters as a vague idea of something that happened, a kind of noise that was not entirely clear and eloquent as to be formally remembered as the surrounding sounds of his father's big house in 1960.

There are no sounds to go along with the photo, but the joy of Miariki grabbing the book and highlighting or shouting something in particular about the presence of the gift was sonically and visually actualized during our visit. What was this joy made of? Was it a kind of collective joy in which collective pride is portrayed over the individual differences? Additional description of what happened before and after the picture was taken is useful here, not because what is provided by the image would be considered as insufficient, but because our idea of indigenous populations receiving repatriated goods have replaced to a great extent the indigenous analytics they use to read, to hear, to touch and to account for these mimetic texts crafted by non-indigenous visiting researchers.

In the beginning of our visit, Esteban's wife who appears surpassing the borders of the picture behind Miariki was not completely sure about having the book with them since they had moved out from the Pirá-Paraná decades ago. Miariki was emotionally touched by the fact that we were traveling into meaningful events rooted in a recent past and recovering ideas, memories, sounds, and images to locate them in the body of different individuals without the mediation of his plants of power, like tobacco, *duppa*, or *yagé* and without having to set foot outside the ceremonial house. He even went so far as to consider his *duppa* snuff as his spiritual sound recorder, because it had similar effects on the way memory and time can be crafted. However, most surprising of all was the fact that for him and the Makuna shaman the whole mediation of the single event we were doing, along with what Álvaro Soto and Michael Kraus had recently done, was acting as a *dabukuri of recordings*¹⁰: a redistribution of a harvest planted decades ago for the benefit of those who attended it. To my understanding, Miariki's joy was celebrating a mode of affinity that reinvigorates the place-person of each of those who participated in the event without the erasure

¹⁰ The two emblematic cases at the time the radio program began to be broadcasted were the visit made by Michael Kraus, a German anthropologist who traveled to Mitú in 2011 to give back the recordings made by Theodor Koch-Grünberg in 1903, and the visit made by Álvaro Soto, a Colombian anthropologist who conducted fieldwork in 1967 and who returned to Mitú in February 2013. Their visits, the constant dialogue between indigenous associations, and the general theme of the two Colombian feature films shot in the region (Dorado 2010, Cabrera 2016) have generated awareness and have introduced a different mode of interchange whereby objects were passed from anthropologists to indigenous Tukanoans, gradually shifting a pattern that had characterized scientific expeditions for decades in an area deeply enmeshed on politics of resources extraction (Correa 1996, Hill 1996, and Saguier 2016).

of kin affiliation or as a claim of cosmopolitanism.

In synthesis, his joy and my perplexity at listening to something completely unheard of for my teleological order of things –because for my understanding “I” was giving the recordings– led me to suggest that Tukanoan analytics include objects, events and the role of whom take place in them as intraspecific agents prone to be transformed, along with humans, and non humans animals. In this specific case, these recordings and it’s given historical value went through “ways of transformation” (Els Lagrou (2012: 112); thus, strengthening sociocosmological calendars and relocalizing indigenous points of listening.

Taking seriously this way of understanding reality makes us wander “what does a music repatriation mean for an audible world in which voices, sounds, events, and actors are constantly transformed? How to delineate a methodological device for redistributing these shared listenings in which Tukanoan audiences navigate their musical thought through sonic and performative indexes?

A sonic butterfly in the FM

Radio fans who tuned in to *Yuruparí Estereo* around about 6:30 AM on a Sunday morning in the first quarter of 2016 in *Mitú*, the capital city of the Northwestern Amazon region in Colombia, were treated to the nasal, thick and formalized voice of Miariki, accompanied by the gentle and expressive voice of Juan Castrillon, a mestizo anthropologist. The audiences who were accustomed to listening to the retransmissions of radio programs broadcast in Bogotá or to local news and daily announcements, were exposed during four months to *Tataroko*, a radio program of interviews, technical explanations, detailed descriptions of musical practices, verbal art, and biographical details of knowledgeable people associated with the shamanic musicology of the region¹¹.

Episode #	Date broadcasted	Contents
1	2/21/16	Sonic trip to <i>Camutí</i> , <i>Mitú</i> and <i>Ceima Cachivera</i> 's villages conducted by Enrique Llanos and Juan Castrillon in 2013.
2	2/27/16	The details on how the shaman and the anthropologist arranged the trip to <i>Camutí</i> and <i>Ceima Cachivera</i> , and about all details of the sounds broadcasted in episode one.
3	3/5/16	Homage to Gaudencio Moreno a Kotiria shaman, the only living musician who participated on the recordings made by Carlos Garibello in <i>Mitú</i> , in 1962.
4	3/13/16	Homage to Gaudencio Moreno (part 2).
5	3/20/16	The dedications and feelings of children through dancing, game playing and listening to songs.
6	3/27/16	A special program (part 2) about affect and relations expressed through children's songs and games in Vaupes.

¹¹ The entire program can be accessed in www.middleear.net/radio [accessed May 27, 2017].

7	4/3/16	Elder women songs from <i>Camuti</i> , <i>Ceima Cachivera</i> and <i>Virabazú</i> .
8	4/9/16	Elder women songs (part 2), men songs, and comments about the continuous flow of <i>manioc beer</i> , sound, and spoken word.
9	4/16/16	About the idea of developing the radio program, its purpose and the meaning of its name.
10	4/23/16	The jungle beings, their sounds, their voices, and the ways they have to be experienced by humans
11	5/1/16	Some findings from research about recordings related with musical and sonic practices in the region. Commentary about the Anglo-Colombian expedition conducted by BBC in 1961.
12	5/8/16	The Owner of the Instruments and his central role in the organization of musical life among indigenous communities from Vaupes.

Table 1. First season of Tataroko

Since *Yurupari Stereo* went on the air, its main purpose was to provide to 16 young bachelor policemen who were both indigenous and non-indigenous a playback of their mother's messages after they were kidnaped by FARC guerillas in 1998. However, the radio station has been particularly open to different kinds of programing less attractive to commercial purposes, entertainment, or institutional propaganda, such as those promoted by the police and the Catholic church stations, the other two radio frequencies in the city. Even though its name made an explicit reference to one of the big Amerindian themes that have pervaded the Amazonian narrative (Bierhorst 2002: 45), its main concern has not been the dissemination of indigenous values across its audience, but to contribute to the "integral development of human dignity of the people who live in the region"¹². As a radio station, *Yurupari Stereo* still bounces among the tensions that characterize grassroots movements in the neoliberal context of the Northwest Amazon. These movements are not entirely grounded in indigenous communities, as it has been suggested for those radio stations working among indigenous regions where the media scapes were founded and structurally articulated by non-indigenous outsiders (Castells 2011: 134).

In addition to the dialogic character of speech production and heteroglossia present on the Tukanoan way of speaking that entails transformation in another instance of the voice (Chernela 2011: 195), there were also "the local complications of speaking in one's 'own' voice" (Fisher 2012: 72) characterized by the tensions individuals are facing between their informal economy and the conditions of governmental and non-governmental investment. In other words, *Tataroko* was broadcast in a region of the Colombian Amazon in which the right to speak authoritatively about something is already understood as an abuse against someone else's right. This trait is less an egalitarian retention from a kind of ideal tribal life in which the communal good prevails over the individual, than the consequent mistrust cultivated by a political economy in which practices of

¹² Corpodihva website. <http://corpodihva.org>. [accessed May 27, 2017].

extraction and patrimonialization¹³ have replaced or reshaped evangelization as the fundamental tone for social interaction among differentiated subjects and their multiple systems of affiliation (Piot 2010: 5, Cole 2001: 16).

Notwithstanding, it was through this instability and interference where the complex dialogue intended by *Tataroko* was held. The program wanted to tune Tukanoan and non-Tukanoan audiences into twelve podcasts of thirty minutes each about the recent history of indigenous music practices in the region; fully detailed explanations in Cubeo about myth, voice, timber changes and linguistic exogamy; shared listenings, ingestion of substances and the processes of constructing of sonic objects. Simultaneously it had the purpose of making the audiences part and parcel of this audible complication in which Tukanoan and Spanish voices were veiling, revealing, and transforming each other by talking without translating what the other wanted to say (Spivak 1988: 74).

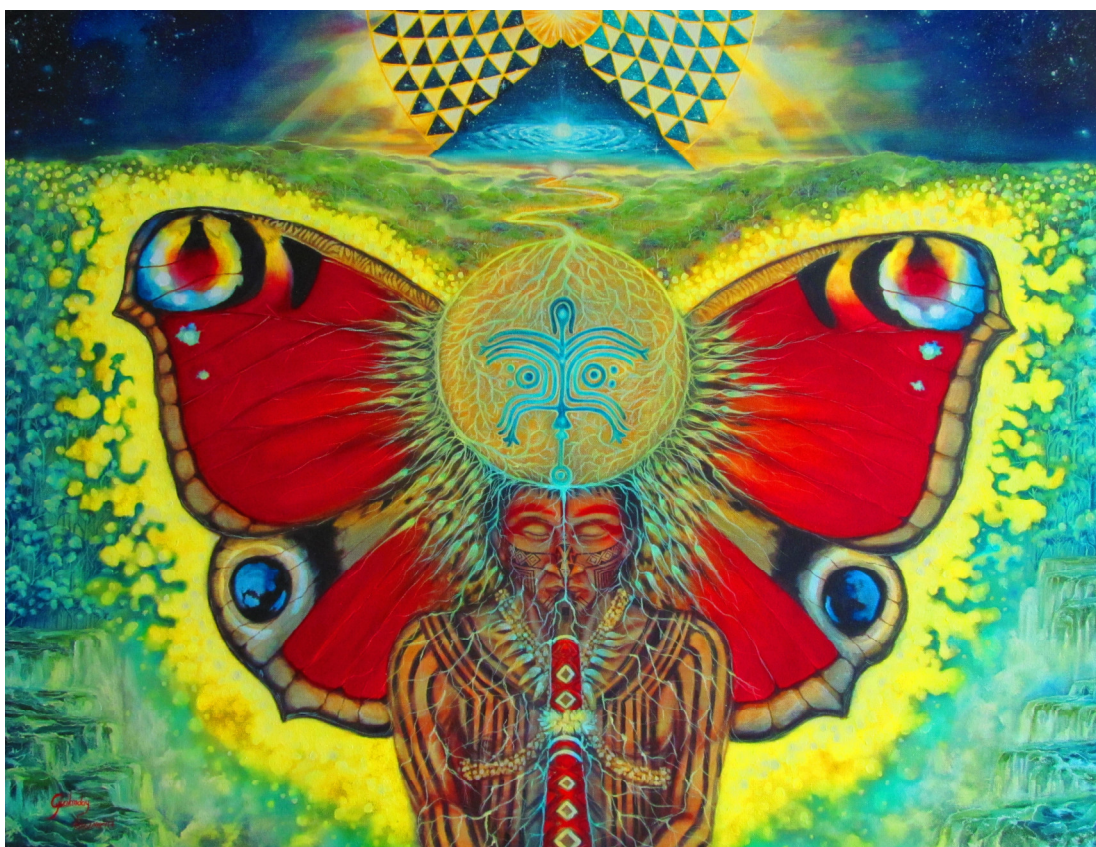


Figure 3. Tataroko. Oil on canvas by Oscar Javier León (Gualanday), 2016

This was the manner the *dabukuri* of recordings turned into a methodological device to

¹³ By patrimonialization at the Amazonian context we follow the general thought of Jackson (1995), Chaumeil (2009) and Hugh-Jones (2010) when they describe it as the multiple instances in which indigenous practices and the knowledge they have about them are being instrumentalized, objectivized, and rigidly formalized by indigenous associations or by a national governments to negotiate the adoption of UNESCO normativity on Cultural Heritage in their territories.

circulate the sonic archive co-produced in 2013 and those others authorized by the families to be shared. The whole structure of the radio program was intended to *describe* how Tukanoan mike positionality in the person of knowledgeable specialists have the strength to recognize the composite sonic/musical anatomy of humans and non-humans, and to negotiate different modes of relationality between sound and persona in order to preserve the vitality they conduct in so far as spirits, plants, animals, or humans. *Tataroko* avoided reproducing the format of commercial radio and its own listening practices as Fisher (2012: 78) and Cuesta (2012: 147) have criticized the disciplinary training that indigenous operators have been receiving from different governments. Instead, it took seriously three fundamentals in Tukanoan “musicalization” (Hill 2011b) and turned them into deliberative ways of addressing audiences by 1) emphasizing the transformation of people into sounds via instrumental or vocal interpretation of specific repertoires; 2) repeatedly alluding to practices of recognition where certain animal beings and the sounds they make are dictated by their body movements; and 3) developing a sonic event in which modes of perception are intensified and conditioned to diversify the listening position of those who participate on it. That is locating vision and audition on different layers of a same event as it does happen during *yurupari* rituals, in which only certain listeners can see and testify what is happening inside the long house or *maloka*, while others try to make sense of the sounds, voices and musics that get assembled around the ritual’s big scenario¹⁴. These fundamentals were strategically exemplified by Miariki presenting the butterfly (*Tataroko* in Cubeo language) and its place in a transformational chain where they appeared as the body of ancestors who were voices heard in a mourning ceremony (*oyno*) as a way to be remembered by the next generations, and as a way to set up different species of butterflies in association with the type of substance they like to smell and to eat, and to differentiate derived uses of each of them.

To conclude, *Tataroko* intended to paraphrase the transformation that these two Tukanoan shamans made of the aforementioned repatriation process by broadcasting multilingual audio documents through a Yuruparí trumpet that was neither made out of palm-bark nor stored under water. The aural transposition Tukanoan thinkers are using to inscribe and to remember technologically mediated sonic events is pushing the need for a mike-positionality able to transduce how Amerindians are managing relations of alterity through circulation practices of sounds and the apperception indexes that recognize them in their way of transformation.

Concluding thoughts

In this essay, we have developed a sound-centered mode of theorizing relations of alterity among indigenous Arawak- and Tukano-speaking communities of the Northwest Amazon region. The shift from myth-centered, intellectualist approaches such as structuralism and perspectivism to theoretical approaches that privileges music and sound is far more than a mere process of trading visual images for auditory ones. Sound-centered approaches to alterity and identity that we have advanced here and that are beginning to emerge more broadly in the ethnology of lowland South

¹⁴ These three indexes of Tukanoan musicalization were explored by Gualanday, the commissioned artist to create the visual component of the radio program.

America (e.g., Hill and Chaumeil 2011, Brabec de Mori 2013, and Brabec de Mori, Lewy, and García 2015) diverge sharply from fetishized ontological separations between natural and cultural realms. Our approach supports a more nuanced understanding of the ontological dimension within indigenous Amazonian thought, such as Cayon's suggestion (2013: 409) that for the societies of Northwestern Amazonia protection, reciprocity, and predation act as modes of relationality between beings in which humanity as conceptual referent is given in grades of condition rather than types of species. These gradations in conditions of humanity also matter when technical beings are joining the discussion about relationality in multiple levels making these musicalized and verbalized speeches reproducible as we have presented. As the way of transformation moves forward, the interest of digging ontological separations between species and kinds to account for relations of alterity should gradually shift to, perhaps, more problematic conjunctions in which shared listenings and fluent composite anatomies and physiologies effect social transformations recognizable or masked through sound, musicalized speech or any other form of audible inscription.

Sound recording and subsequent playing back of recorded sounds are ways of creating shared points of listening, or collaborative spaces of experiential commensurability that allow for reflexivity and hybridity in the hearing of music, speech, and sound by indigenous people and non-indigenous researchers alike. The rapid adoption of modern communicative technologies, such as audio and video recording, radio, and the internet among indigenous Amazonian peoples is but one more clear indication that these communities are not now, nor were they ever before, "peoples without history" or Levi-Straussian "cold societies". Collaborative ethnopoeitics and ethnomusicology require transparency in accounting for how sound recordings were initially made and subsequently interrogated at shared points of listening that allow researchers to attend to the indigenous experiences of verbal and/or musical artistry.

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How to cite / Cómo citar / Como citar

Hill, Jonathan D. y Juan Castrillon. 2017. "Narrativity in Sound: A Sound-Centered Approach to Indigenous Amazonian Ways of Managing Relations of Alterity". *El oído pensante* 5 (2). <http://ppct.caicyt.gov.ar/index.php/oidopensante> [Web: DATE].