Wanano/Kotiria women's *kaya basa* 'sad songs' as borders between sexes and discourse genres

Aimee J. Hosemann,
University of Texas at Austin and Southern Illinois University Carbondale
ahosemann@utexas.edu

In this paper, I discuss the way the words and context of performance of Wanano/Kotiria (E. Tukanoan) *kaya basa* 'sad songs' produce a particular kind of sociality between women that contrasts with the Othering produced through myths associated with men's *jurupari* flute rituals, and to the obscuring of referential meaning in men's shamanic practice. This allows me to explore the borders between men and women, and also between discourse genres.

In her preface to the Thirtieth Anniversary Edition of *Women of the Forest* by Yolanda and Robert F. Murphy (2004), Janet Chernela (2004) describes the way this book fundamentally reshapes the way gender in Amazonia is analyzed, especially with regard to the way separation between men and women can no longer be seen as merely an inevitability of hegemonic masculinity, but rather as the wellspring of a contrapuntal feminine power given space in the margins and interstices of the inherent incompleteness of hegemony. The Murphys' canonical examination of the lives of Mundurcú women in Brazil paints a beautiful, nuanced portrait of the labor women provide to keep society moving and of the strength of their bonds with each other, the tenderness of their maternal roles, and the sometimes convivial and sometimes conflicted relations they have with their in-laws. Important for my analysis in the way the Murphys demonstrate that women's separateness from men is not simply banishment from power, but rather a condition that creates the possibility for creating alternative meanings and enacting a politics in their own interest.

Chernela (1997) takes up similar concern in her work with the Wanano/Kotiria and in her collections of a mythic narrative told to her separately by a Wanano/Kotiria man and woman. By collecting these stories, she presents us with very clear evidence of what the Murphys described: that there are competing views of society (or differences in degree of socialization) that highlight the differences in concerns between the sexes: for women, their lack of access to epistemological and political power, and for men, their lack of access to reproductive power. As these works show, societies function and appear on the

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surface to be (relatively) cohesive units, even when there is a great degree of disagreement.

This is a tension that fundamentally underlies the discussion I present here, which is addressed and expressed in discursive practices that fall along gendered lines. The existence of these concerns is constituted and reconstituted in the course of male-female interaction. This leads us to a consideration of the discourse-centered approach to language and culture (Sherzer 1987), and its theorization of the way individual discursive patterns themselves constitute cultural practice, which then constitutes linguistic practice. We can expect, then, that we should be able to see evidence of the co-constitution of male and female social concerns through the lens of discourse analysis. Here, I focus this analysis on the production of a genre of Wanano/Kotiria women's *kaya basa* 'sad song' exchanges and its relations to two men's expressive practices, the *juruparí* flute and myth complex, and shamanic chanting. We will see how the subject matter, performance contexts, and relations to referentiality reflect the importance of ways of reproducing society – through reproduction of humans and through knowing – are dealt with. As I will discuss, the ability to perform a culturally salient discourse genre represents not just an aesthetic achievement, but also an epistemological intervention – a moment of or reclamation of symbolic domination (Bourdieu 1991). To speak or sing an alternative history or social analysis is to claim its truth by performatively speaking or singing it into reality. In previous work, I have analyzed women's *kaya basa* as a cacophonous, emotive space-claiming mechanism, an iconic singing-into-being of the female body, female voice, and female centrality in the midst of the periphery (Hosemann 2009, 2012, 2013). Here, I extend that singing-into-being as a way to make authoritative claims of power to define the symbols and meanings that constitute both female and male realities. These claims are salient in the moment of performance, but also in the way they resonate with, bounce off of, and contradict men's claims. This very much follows the example of Sherzer's (1983) work on Kuna ways of speaking, which urges us to understand discourse genres both by reference to themselves and to how they afford or constrain discursive resources in relation to other expressive forms. The division of discursive and performative labor accomplished by the three genres under discussion here highlights the importance of the individual as signified and signifier, as author and animator of reality.

Further, I apply Jonathan Hill's (2011, 2013, 2014) formulation of musicalizing the other described among the Wakuénai and Wauja to the Wanano/Kotiria case. In this model, there is a literal opening up of earthly territory through musical practice during mythical times wherein the use of music is central to creating the habitable world, but also a continuing emphasis on music as a way to harmonize conflictual social relations with other beings. I extend his investigation of "musicalizing the other" to a framework of "expressing the other" and to describe how this works in terms of creating social harmony through discursively controlled contact when those who are typically Other (e.g., affines like in-married women) aesthetically deal with those who other them (e.g., their husbands and members of his lineage), but from the perspective of those who are themselves Other. This process of musicalizing the other allows sound and hearing to take precedence (2013, p. 326), sonically performing some kind of social transformation, such as control over the intepretation of social relations enacted by singers. My model differs a bit from Hill's because I ultimately, want to include in my analysis all forms of discourse genres, not just ones locally understood as musical. Secondly, the *kaya basa* allow women to describe otherness and othering (p. 326), between themselves and between themselves and their affines, "acknowledging the otherness of the other [Basso, 2009], sharing the space-time of others … and always returning to one's own identity" (Hill, 2013, p. 327). What both

musicalizing and expressing the other offer is a theoretical view which focuses on expressivity and aesthetics as a way to productively manage difference as a core social principle, rather than focusing on difference as the core principle itself.

I draw this discussion from a larger project, which focuses on analyzing the linguistic and musical structures of Wanano/Kotiria *kaya basa* collected by Janet Chernela and archived through the Archive of Indigenous Languages of Latin America. Chernela recorded a wide variety of Wanano/Kotiria discourse forms, but they have not been compared in this way before. This larger project is an exercise in anthropological philology (Hymes, 1965; Becker, 1985; Bauman, 2005) with an eye to describing both linguistic and musical semiotics. I put men's and women's expressive forms in dialogue as a way to further draw out how it is exactly that women *mean* with these songs and what the songs mean as an alternative form of speaking about social and political matters. As individuals who are but also *are not* of their patriline, and as people who will never belong to their husbands' patrilines, women in E. Tukanoan societies generally did not have a licensed political voice. Now, according to Steven Hugh-Jones (1979) in his work with the Barasana, no Tukanoan was supposed to talk openly about political issues, so this talk has to be done in very particular circumstances, and is also balanced by the production of men's discourse genres. As part of this project, I consider how a single lexical item *boré* comes to have context-specific meanings in each of the three expressive forms I discuss. The polysemous nature of *boré* highlights necessity of understanding context like discursive genre as intimately involved in the production of meaning, which is reflected in so much linguistic anthropological work on ways referentiality and grammar must interact with – and sometimes bow to – the aesthetic and the expressive (e.g., Hymes, 1960; Sherzer, 1983, 1987; Webster, 2015).

To cite S. Hugh-Jones (1979) again, it is important to note that in NW Amazon, the attention to paid to various groups and to various practices hasn't been equal, so as he notes, if we endeavor to understand the expressive practices of one group, we often have to make reference to similar practices in E. Tukanoan and intermarrying Arawak groups to posit ways to fully flesh out our analyses. This mirrors the later suggestion by Beier, Michael and Sherzer (2002) that we should consider the workings of a greater NW Amazonian discourse area. I will discuss practices in other Eastern Tukanoan groups to suggest ways that things might work among the Wanano/Kotiria.

Now, a bit more background about the Wanano/Kotiria, who are linguistically exogamous – they marry speakers of a different language. The traditional territory of the Wanano/Kotiria is in the Uaupés (Vaupes) River area of the Upper Rio Negro region, where the borders of Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela meet (Chernela 1993; Shulist 2013, 2015). Traditionally, women have left their natal areas to marry a man who speaks a different language, ideally through cross-cousin exchange, and move into a household of patrilineally related men and their own in-married wives. All these wives may speak different patrilects, or father tongues (Chernela, 2013). Now, ideally women marry back into their mother's home village so that they enter a support system in their marital context. However, this doesn't always happen. A woman could conceivably be the only speaker of her patrilect in a *maloca*, or longhouse. Because they are understood as being the ones who will leave upon marriage, women are from birth not quite of the patriline in the same way their male relatives are. A mother's children do not grow up speaking her language, as they belong to their father. Women occupy themselves cultivating and processing manioc in gardens cleared by their husbands. This is intensive work, as manioc that's not handled correctly is poisonous. In general terms, then, women's greatest value is

in their capacity to produce children and manioc, but make no mistake, this creative capacity is no small thing. The productive capacities of woman and men can be analyzed as complementary or as in competition, and expressive practices like songs and myths are sites for the working out of these issues.

Today, on the Brazilian side of the border, there are about 319 Kotiria in 10 communities, and about 470 people in 13 Colombian communities (where "communities" are upriver of the cities of São Gabriel da Cachoeira and Manaus, where Wanano/Kotiria also live; Shulist 2015 citing IBGE 2010 census data). Wanano/Kotiria, like other indigenous people, have been migrating to the urban areas in recent decades seeking jobs, schooling, and health care Lasmar (2005, 2009; Shulist 2013a,b, 2015). This has the effect of dislocating indigenous people from their linguistic and cultural heritages, especially separating youth from the possibility of maintaining those by remaining upriver where there is a Wanano-language school (Shulist 2013b). Some Wanano/Kotiria who are motivated to pursue linguistic and cultural revitalization in São Gabriel da Cachoeira - known as an indigenous city because 85% of the population is indigenous - are finding it difficult to create a cohesive community in the urban setting that could make use of the kinds of revitalization materials and help linguists and anthropologists can provide (Shulist 2013b). Shulist (2013b) documents a fascinating situation in which many indigenous people are multilingual in multiple indigenous languages as well Portuguese and perhaps Spanish, and in which certain indigenous languages have been picked out for co-official status in Amazonas state (Baniwa [Arawak] and Tukano [E. Tukanaon]; Shulist 2013a,b, 2015). This creates a rank hierarchy among related indigenous languages, which in turn makes linguistic and cultural revitalization a complicated issue (Shulist 2013b, 2015). Lasmar, however, does indicate that gender relations among the Wanano/Kotiria may be undergoing transformation, as indigenous women marry Portuguese-speaking *brancos* 'whites' belonging to the Brazilian military who fit the tradition of linguistic exogamy, and who have the money to pay for important rituals that used to be the purview of indigenous men. In contrast to their female relatives, indigenous men do not tend to marry *brancas*, and are finding work and money difficult to come by (Lasmar 2005, 2009). It remains to be seen what long-term effects this change will have on ritual and other social structures, but indicates that discursive traditions may also undergo change, and thus it is important to explore and document traditional practices as fully as we are able. A goal of my project is to produce documentary materials for use in the upriver school and in urban areas, rendering the songs in ways that Wanano/Kotiria will find useful and which can be used in revitalization efforts when a satisfactory model can be found.

Women's *kaya basa* are sung during *po'oa* (drinking parties, *dabucurí* in *lengua geral*) that occur in the midst of exchanges of game, fish, or manioc, and involve the sharing of manioc beer (*caxiri*) between host and guest women, who exchange songs as they drink. Men don't often participate, though they can overhear and make commentary. Singers depict themselves as sad and lonely, often making use of iconic markers of ritual wailing, or texted weeping, as Chernela [1] (2003, pers. comm.) describes it; in the recordings, women are sometimes outright weeping as they sing. The context of singing is one of great cacophony and emotion, with feelings and images traded in a public airing

[1] Chernela has compiled an extensive and sensitive legacy of work on the *kaya basa* and women's lives among the Wanano/Kotiria in the tradition of Yolanda Murphy and Robert Murphy (1993, 2003, 2011, 2012, 2014, to name a few). In my ongoing work, I am extending her work in my on her archived recordings, adding considerations of different discursive features and musical analysis.

between women of different linguistic backgrounds, sonically claiming space. Women also depict themselves as ugly, little, and as horseflies or insects. The motion of insects, flitting here and there, never resting, is a common way to represent the female experience, which involves mixing, but never belonging, in this analysis given by Chernela (1993: 145-145):

(1) I am one who drifts;
I am one who mixes.
I am moving among your brothers
And I haven't even one brother.

Like a horsefly
That flies forward and backward
That flies here and flies there

These are discourses common among women, but there is still room to mark distinction, as I have done in previous work (Hosemann, 2013). I describe in that work how, by singing their feelings, women let out things that have to be stuffed down, and as they do so, they can create social harmony with women who may speak different languages, but they also musically acknowledge differences between themselves by outright statements of rank privilege through reference to sib membership and access to preferred resources like succulent ingá fruit and big-boned fish, as Chernela (2003) notes.

There is a second way women can mark distinction to each other: via the iconic invocation of their patrilect - women singing to each other in different languages are sonically enacting their Otherness. The long and purposeful history of marriage patterns has created an environment of intensive multilingualism, but the ability to understand across languages is not a given. Despite whatever barriers there are to referential meaning, those are overcome to some degree by the mere fact of participation – the aboutness of the songs, to use Greg Urban's (1991) term, means that while they may not understand in a referential sense, they understand the pragmatic goals of the genre and the types of things that are likely subjects. Here, I provide examples from other songs Chernela has recorded and analyzed and which I have reset; the lines follow the singer's breath and phrasing in Chernela's recordings (GVC001002T130 and GVC001R002I121, respectively). I use a practical orthography; the / indicates a line break.

(2) a. Makã ch~~u~~rimasono /
Looking for beer

Boretorokari	n~~u~~m~~u~~re:	makãch~~u~~rikoro
Will she stay up until dawn	any day,	she that looks for food

b. M~~u~~'~~u~~ rede m~~u~~'~~u~~ rede: boretore mahsono mahsono
To you, to you, woman, woman of the dawn

In example (2)a, the line that translates "will she stay up until dawn, she that looks for food?", has a similar theme to example (2)b, which translates as "to you, to you, woman of the dawn." These lines make reference to being women of the dawn (so *boretorokari* and *boretore* respectively, where *boré* = dawn). Women of the dawn are those who stay up all night, though they don't say why. There are two different ways those lines can be heard.

One way is through understanding that these drinking parties really are all night affairs, and at that moment, she really might have been up all night. However, there's an illocutionary force that peaks strongly here: a woman of the dawn has been up all night, working, toiling to make sure things take care of for husband's family's guests. The labor she performs is so that his patriline can meet social expectations, make good-faith resource exchanges, and work toward contracting future marriages with guest families. So while her labor makes these things possible, she does not at least overtly reap praise or value in return.

Now, let me take you back into the past, to explore why male-female relations have the potential to be so agonistic, and how dealing with this potential agonism remains embedded in expressive practices.

Among NW Amazonian groups, there exists a body of mythological narratives in which women become jealous of men's *jurupari* flutes and want them for themselves or actually have them outright first, causing male jealousy (Hugh-Jones, 1979; Århem 1981; Hill 1993, 2013; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1996; Murphy and Murphy 2004[1985]; Hill and Chaumeil 2013; Journet 2013; Wright 2015). In the latter case, via subterfuge, women conspired to steal the flutes, secreting them in their vaginas and running away with them. Society became topsy-turvy, and women were in charge; they could also be shamans. Men menstruated and lived as women (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1996; Murphy and Murphy 2004[1985]). The flutes had to be taken back, of course, and women to this day suffer the repercussions of this period of rebellion. *Jurupari* flutes are played by men, and women must hear them, but never see them, under the aforementioned threat of rape (S. Hugh-Jones, 1979; Århem 1981; Hill 1993, 2013; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1996; Murphy and Murphy 2004[1985]; Hill and Chaumeil 2013; Journet 2013; Wright 2015). Now, this only very rarely happens, and there is a sort of agreed-upon contemporary subterfuge being played out here - women know more about the flutes than they will admit, and men know that, but this is the order of things (Wright 2015). Murphy and Murphy (2004, p. 127) indicate that Mundurucú women can give rather good descriptions of the flutes, demonstrating that while they profess little interest in these instruments, they have been peeking at and talking about them. Part of what underlies the threat of women having access to the flutes is not just control of ritual power, but also creative control. Reichel-Dolmatoff (1996) describes a period in Desana oral history in which this was reality, not myth; Desana are an Eastern Tukanoan group living near the Wanano/Kotiria. These were the years before Eastern Tukanoans moved into the NW Amazon and began to live amongst Arawak speakers. Back then, the Desana were actually matrilineal and lived with the wife's family, and so women actually did consolidate ritual, political, and creative power. Contact with patrilineal Arawakans changed that social order for Eastern Tukanoans, and the only realms of power left to women were their aforementioned reproduction and manioc cultivation. In fact, their reproductive capacity has its roots in the mythological period in which they had access to shamanic power. The sad songs I examine provide an outlet for smoothing over the tensions existing in contemporary life that are rooted in mythical tension.

Interestingly, among Amazonian societies ritual flutes themselves are members of a "kinship group"– they are created within and are shared among kin networks (Hill and Chaumeil, 2011, p. 31; Århem, 1981; Murphy and Murphy, 2004; Wright, 2015). Flutes also have intergenerational relations across one ascending and descending generation (Hill and Chaumeil, 2011, p. 31) This presents a further way to think about how women and sacred flutes relate to each other – the distribution of both is fundamental to the creation of

patrilines and their relations with each other. Regarding *juruparí* specifically, it is important to note that not only is it flute music, it is also a complex of myths that describe male-female power struggles and set out parameters for proper marriages and gender relations, among other features. Turning again to Reichel-Dolmatoff's (1996) work with the Desana, he transcribes and translates four *juruparí* myths, providing a tremendous amount of further linguistic and cultural detail. I focus on some of that, as it contains some points of interest that speak to the women's *kaya basa*.

Recall that women have particular ways of representing themselves that on one level derogate the self as small and ugly or as an insect in constant movement. Recall also the lines mentioning being a woman of the dawn and the variety of meanings those lines can carry. Reichel-Dolmatoff (1996; cited throughout this paragraph) notes that, in the *juruparí* myths, fishing and hunting is often depicted. This is often a proxy for male-female relations, and women are often depicted as game animals like tapirs or fish - resources to be pursued, which varies from the way women present themselves in their songs as having undesirable characteristics. Hunting and fishing are enactments of creative power by provisioning protein and reproducing human society through proper management of relationships with animals. Men further provide generative potential to women by clearing their manioc gardens, and in fact, in *juruparí* myths, a metaphorical link is made between men's sperm and the starchy innards of paxiuba palms (*Iriartea exorrhiza)*. Starch is, of course, then, a salient material both for men and women, providing the stuff of life – in the former case, sperm to fertilize an egg, and in the latter, a dependable food source. These palms are evocative symbols for Desana, as the bodies of palms are constituted by both male and female parts, and provide important materials for items used by both men and women.

The imagery of dawn is also important in *juruparí* myths. The word "*boré*", commonly translated as dawn, means white in Desana and is a similar form in Wanano (Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1996; Waltz, 2007). Dawn in this area is described as a whitening of the sky (*boréuse* 'to shine, blaze, glow') and resonates phonologically with the term *moreyúuse* in Desana, 'to let a whitish plant-based fish poison dilute downstream'; this "plant-based poison" is made from palm material (Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1996). Perhaps unsurprisingly, this has sexual undertones, as women can be described as fish, and it's not too much of a stretch to see how they might be "poisoned." The use of *boré* then has gendered implications: for men, this has resonances with impregnation, while for women, it has resonances with internal fortitude. So the *juruparí* myths provide a way for men to think through their own creativity. Further, as the dawn is a period betwixt and between the night and day, which Reichel-Dolmatoff (1996) describes as heavy with potentiality, it has resonances with shamanism as well.

Let's now pursue the relation of men's shamanic practice to these other discursive forms. Women and shamans are actually tightly intertwined in Eastern Tukanoan society, and NW Amazonian societies generally. Shamans do share certain things with women: as Hill (1993) and Wright (2015) describe, women and shamans share complementary functions as intermediaries – women mediate between the patriline and human Others, while shamans mediate between humans and spiritual Others. Both are "open" – shamans open themselves to soul travel and healing through their taking of *yagé* and tobacco (Hugh-Jones 1979; Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1987; Hill, 1993; Wright, 2013, 2015). Their openness is also a reference to their knowledge, reflected in the regional general term of reference *paye*, or the one who knows (Riechel-Dolmatoff, 1987, 1996) Women are open, too – they menstruate and have to be properly ritually opened by shamans at menarche so

they can successfully give birth (Hugh-Jones, 1979; Hill 1993, 2011, 2013). Shamans move around a lot – they often move around to other groups as apprentices, and as part of their practice, their souls travel to places other people do not go in a solitary journey into potential conflict, not completely unlike that of a married woman (Chernela and Leeds, 1986; Wright 2013). Shamans have a tremendous amount of creative power, which is equivalent in scale to that of women's reproductive power. And, among the Barasana (Hugh-Jones 1979) and the Makuna (Århem 1981), male shamans actually derive their power from a particular female mythological shaman named Romi Kumu.

Finally, shamans and women share performative contexts in which referentiality depends on who the parties are to the interaction. Shamanic chants are high in pragmatic effect but low in referential meaning for anyone other than practitioners and supernatural beings (Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1987; Hill, 1993; Wright, 2013). While shamans may use their patrilect in their ritual work, they use it in an esoteric ways. As Chernela and Leed (1986) note, men may also travel to other groups to apprentice, so the language of their practice may even be a second language used in an esoteric fashion. For patients, denotation is not so much important as the embodied performance the shaman puts on that convinces them that his language is efficacious. Here we can speak of the further levels interwovenness can be found by teasing out the shamanism-specific use of *boré*, which has even another meaning. With its denotation of shining and resplendence, *boré* also has a connotation of "seminal," referring specifically to an erect penis – fertile potential (Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1996). This is curious, as shamans are to remain celibate to maintain their power and are in that sense sexually ambiguous (Hugh-Jones 1979; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1996). Their careers are interpenetrated with a focus on proper reproduction, maintaining the proper reproduction of human and animal life, which depends on careful contact between others. This gives shamans dominion over the control of protein from fish and game, while women have dominion over manioc starch, providing a complementary model of resource provision (Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1987). These boundaries are not just constructions of biological or social difference, they are also discursive boundaries. The shaman to some extent mediates between the canonically male domain of *jurupari* from which he draws some of his knowledge about social norms and myth, and the canonically female *kaya basa*, which reflect concerns about gendered relations expressed in the *jurupari* myths. The shaman's own language practices mark him as separate from ideologically opposed dynamics which it is his job to negotiate. This suggests that perhaps, dawn, openness, and fertility are related concepts whose facets interlock in different ways depending on genre.

In this paper, I have extended my ongoing study of the language and music of a woman's song genre called *kaya basa*, or sad songs. These songs commonly express women's difficult positions in Wanano/Kotiria society, as individuals who do not fully belong to any group. As I discussed, the theme of being a woman of the dawn resonates intertextually across discourse genres. The lexical item *boré* also appears in men's *jurupari* myth and shamanic chants with meaning related to sex and reproduction. What discourse genres have provided is a way to talk about and manage critical distinctions between the self and others at many levels. By expressing the other, one gives voice to the self and to the ability to function in society, letting sound and hearing shape something that approaches harmony.

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Aimee J. Hosemann, Department of Anthropology, University of Texas at Austin, SAC 4.102, 2201 Speedway Stop C3200, Austin, TX 78712. ahosemann@utexas.edu