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Talking Culture: Women in the Production of Community in the Northwest
Amazon

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Too often, anthropologists uncritically re-represent the essentialized and deproblemized notions of groupness presented to them by a subset of stakeholders. In so doing, they reinforce the privileged positioning of a sector of society in the creation of meaning. By neglecting the unauthorized participants of society and presenting only the normative perspective, these analyses obscure the complex relationships and social realities that are the objects of anthropological analysis.

By considering the roles of Eastern Tukanoan women and women's speech, this paper reproblematizes group identity and belonging in the northwest Amazon of Brazil. By including women's speech in the structure of participation, the gendered perceptions of group belonging are foregrounded. They show that, from the standpoint of women, the Eastern Tukanaon "language groups" do not constitute ethnicities, as suggested by the cumulative corpus of ethnographic description.

Some 14,000 speakers of Eastern Tukanoan languages inhabiting the Uaupés River and adjacent areas in Colombia and Brazil are linked through kinship and marriage ties. Sorensen identified 13 languages as members of the Eastern Tukanoan language family, including Tukano, Tuyuka, Tatuyo, Barasana, Piratapuyo, Wanano, Desano, and Kubeo (Sorensen 1967, 1973). However, despite ongoing contact and a deliberate maintenance of linguistic separations that exceed those of the Romance group, models of ethnic pluralism do not accurately describe the Eastern Tukanoan case. A number of factors, including the correspondence between linguistic performance and group membership, loyalty to the language of one's descent group, and obligatory out-

marriage across language groups, serve to establish a single speech community in which numerous codes interact according to shared norms and beliefs.

With few exceptions (Basso 1985, 1987; Briggs 1992, 1993; Chernela 1988a, 1997a) women's discursive forms from the Amazon basin are underreported. The absence of attention to women's performance in the northwest Amazon, in marked contrast to Venezuela (Briggs 1992, 1993) and the the southern extension of the Amazon basin (Basso 1985, 1987) may be related in part to a generalized neglect of women's expressive forms. Women's invisibility in the anthropological record has been visited often (Chernela 1997b); the case of the northwest Amazon is yet another example of that omission (Chernela 1997a).

Although the Eastern Tukanoan *po'ali* (also called *po'oa, pudali, po'ori*)[1] ceremonials have been the subject of several works, focus has been limited to cosmological aspects (Hugh-Jones 1979, Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971) or economic and political processes (Chernela 1993). In these approaches the spontaneous, creative, and generative features of the ceremony are discounted in favor of the more normative and scripted aspects of the men. In fairness to male anthropologists, it is recognizably difficult for those at the men's side of the ceremonial space to discern the communications of women in the arena of competing sounds. Anthropologists who neglect that space, and the meanings generated there, have thus held to the perspective of the male agnatic descent group in validating the "official," and in neglecting the unauthorized, yet no less important, perspective.

In examining group identity and intergroup relations I consider naturally-occuring greeting speech recorded during *po'ali* exchange rituals in which several language groups participate. A number of authors (among them, Rivière 1971; Urban 1986, 1988a) have argued that greeting speech, occurring at sites of group articulation, is

itself a sign, carrying information about the relationships of the groups engaged in mutual address. The theorized linkage between greeting speech style and intergroup relations is grounded in the premise that the greeting form is itself a metacommentary on the relationship of the speakers of the greeting. The style, encoding relations, stands *for* them. If so, when properly read, the style would convey information about the relations of the groups in greeting.

The greeting form, known in Wanano[2] as *kaya basa*, glosses as "sad songs." It resembles other forms of texted weeping in its indexical connection to grief by means of vocalizations that iconize the cry (Feld 1982, 1990; Sherzer 1986; Urban 1988a). In its intonational contours it corresponds to other wailing forms from South America, including the wailed greeting known as "The Welcome of Tears" (Metraux 1947), a wept greeting practiced predominantly in Central Brazil (Urban 1988a).

As an engendered form linking grief and death to social commentary, the Tukanoan *kaya basa* bears functional similarity to to other Amazonian wailing forms associated with death and mourning such as the Warao *sana* (Briggs 1992). Like that female form, it contains textual phrases that closely resemble spoken discourse, serving as a vehicle for social commentary within the parameters of the performative frame. However, although the Tukanoan *kaya basa* may be said to be a an emotionally moving metaphor for death, it is not a direct funerary form. Instead, it is a style of greeting performed on the festive occasions when differently identified local groups meet and greet one another. In the *kaya basa* the death that is referenced and mourned is not that of a deceased loved one, but the singer's own living death, her social isolation and separation.

In participatory structure, too, the Tukanoan case differs from other native south American wailing forms. Graham (1986, 1995), for example, reports ritual wailing

practiced by the Shavante of Central Brazil in which vocalizations are limited to a minimal sequence of three vowels. The *dawawa*, as this style is called, is performed by a Shavante male individual who receives it in a dream. While the Warao and Shavante performative events are intracommunity foms of expression, the Tukanoan *kaya basa* is performed by members of differently identified social units. It signifies isolation, as does the Shavante form, but unlike the Shavante form it accomplishes its opposite: solidarity. ·While it foregrounds official group identity, it simultaneously surpasses the official community boundaries to create an inclusive community of participants.

Descent and Language: the *koroa*

The Wanano term *koroa* refers to an exogamous descent group of any level of magnitude, including language groups and their constituent patriclans or sibs. Members of a *koroa* are said to be children, or descendents, of a founding ancestor. For the Wanano, the descent group, and its members, take their names from an ancestor's name combined with the suffix *-pona*, meaning "children of." By adding *-kuro* (masc.) or *-koro* (fem.), an affix denoting person, a member of the sib Biari Pona, for example, describes himself or herself as a *Biari ponakuro/ponakoro*, a Biari Pona man or woman, literally, a "child of Biari." The notion of *koroa* establishes an in-group based upon the criterion of common descent from a named ancestor.

The same descent ideology that establishes consistent principles for belonging privileges the manifestation of group identity through linguistic performance. Speakers of some twenty distinct languages recognize an equivalence between linguistic performance (i.e., language spoken) and membership in a named patrilineal descent group. Thus, the anthropologists' denomination "language group" (Jackson 1974, 1976, 1993) to refer to the maximal descent group closely reproduces the normative model.

Contradictions of groupness can be seen most clearly at the level of the settlement, as each is regarded as belonging to a single linguistico-descent group. This leads to the

assumption, by outsiders, that the residents are themselves all members of the settlement's affiliated language group. As the language group is treated as a separate ethnicity by anthropological narrators and state actors alike, the consequences are far-reaching. The representation of named descent groups as separate entities neglects the principal basis of Eastern Tukanoan cultural identity and solidarity -- that the conjugal pair must represent different linguistico-descent groups. Those not included in the mechanical representation of the settlement as belonging to a single, named language group, and the generalizations that derive from this, are women -- the in-marrying wives who are members of other language groups. [3]

From the normative standpoint, group identity and affiliation are unabmiguous, all groups are distinct and absolutely impermeable. From the standpoint of social interaction, however, no single language group is autonomous. Although the recognized boundaries between language groups are constructed as closed, language groups are in fact interdependent since marriages occur across, and never, within, the language group and ongoing marriage exchanges link groups over generations.

Women, Language, and Identity

The theoretical thingness or essentiality of the language group in space is complicated by the mobility of speakers. One patterned move is the change in residence at marriage when a woman moves to the village of her husband. Since marriage is not permitted within the language group, all of the in-marrying wives in a sib-settlement are speakers of other languages.

The practice of virilocal post-marital residence, combined with patrilineal descent reckoning and linguistic exogamy, results in a local settlement in which males and their children speak one language, while in-marrying wives speak other languages. In the Wanano Tukanoan village of Yapima, the eight in-marrying wives derived from five different language groups.

This residential arrangement furthers the solidarity of a resident male brotherhood and exacerbates the political subordination of women. Although in-marrying wives form strong affective bonds with each other, with women of the same language group forming monolingual clusters within the village, numerous factors limit their impact as a formal, cohesive, political power. For most women, input into village level politics takes the form of gossip and other informal social criticism.

When a woman moves to the village of her husband on marriage, she shifts her loyalities from the village of her birth to the divided loyalties between natal and conjugal families; these divided loyalties will characterize her adult, postmarital, life, as she mediates between her own descent group and that of her husband and children.

The rapport established between a wife and her in-laws is critical to her well-being. Ideal linguistic circumstances for both partners occur when the preferred practice of patrilateral cross-cousin marriage is followed. Then, a man marries his father's sister's daughter. In these marriages, a woman marries a man who is a member of her mother's language group. They exchange the affect laden terms *bachü*, for father-in-law who is mother's brother, and the affectionate term *paka mako*, for sister's daughter. Although he speaks to her in the cadences of her mother's tongue, she responds in her own identifying language, i.e., her father's. In such marriages, a woman is said to be "marrying back," returning as "belongers" in the villages into which they marry (Wanano: *makari koro*), in contrast to wives whose mothers are not Wanano, and who are said to "mix" among "others" (Wanano: *sü'sari koro*) (Chernela 1988a).

A woman's "belonging" may be interpreted in several senses. On the one hand, "belongers" are daughters of Wanano women, promised over generations to "return" as wives to Wanano male offspring. The new wife has "returned" in yet another sense. Linguistically she returns to the sentimental cadences of her mother's language. The group into which she

marries is rendered intimate, not strange, by the ease and affect associated with her maternal language.

A child is exposed to both mother's and father's speech but learns to supress mother's language in public. Speaking competence and rhetorical skill are prized in father's language -- the language of speaker's descent group -- but public demonstrations of mother's language are strongly sanctioned.[4] In the transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next, every attempt is made to avoid hybridization, since it is considered essential that linguistic identities remain distinct and linguistic boundaries kept stable.

At the level of a local village the language of the agnatic relatives is the unmarked variety of speech, with in-marrying wives speaking alternant, marked, varieties. This is not because of any value that is attached to a single language *per se*, but because of its alternant status within a setting in which the local agnatic core consists of speakers of a single and politically dominant language. The speech of a married woman serves to index her outsideness within the context of the local descent group into which she has married. [5]

Language and Ritual

The *po'ali* is an exchange cycle carried out among sibs of different settlements that echange marriage partners. The occasion of the *po'ali* marks life-cycle passages, such as naming, female puberty, male initiation, and marriage. More important than focus on individual transition, however, is group transformation, as each *po'ali* entails a metacommentary on the relationships of the two participating entities, constructing, and thereby, defining and redefining, each group's relatedness to the other.

Several forms of exchange occur throughout the *po'ali*, forming a nested hierarchy of lesser or sub-prestations within the principal ceremonial. Among the various modes of exchange is the language exchange (*durukua kototaro*), of which the song exchange (*basa kototaro*) is one part. In it, speakers tend to perform in their own language regardless of the languages spoken by hearer-recipients.

The dramatic center of the *po'ali* is the gift exchange in which a donor sib presents another with foodstuffs or specialized crafts. As a collective event, each sib accumulates goods and presents them in bulk to a receiving sib. A group *is* what it gives, and its relationship to the receiving group is manifest in the prestation (Chernela 1993). Abundance conveys the generosity and good will of the offering group. The act of exchange may establish new relations, repair lapsed ones, or cement existing ones. The gift transfer of any one *po'ali* is part of an ongoing exchange, as the receiving group must reciprocate at a later date. Thus donors and recipients alternate roles ad infinitem so long as the relationship obtains. The language and comportment of the ritual is alternately antagonistic and solidary, a reminder of the conditionality of the alliance. The *po'ali*, in this sense, stands for the relationship, and its relative stability.

In the *po'ali* exchange ceremony, linguistic roles take on specializations and organization unlike that of day-to-day life. When different local groups come into contact, as they do in the *po'ali*, sociolinguistic relationships between codes and speakers undergo major shifts, as the statuses of different codes collide, compete, or alternate, according to microcontexts, both temporal and spatial, within the larger social and ritual arena. In the series of ceremonial speech events, linguistic varieties are alternately foregrounded and backgrounded, performatively communicating the larger community of belonging. Instantiating connections and differences between different participating groups, the *po'ali* both blurrs and reinforces the boundaries of political and social configurations.

In the ceremonial center of the dance house male interlocutors adhere with consistency to one or two standard varieties of speech, as men from one descent group communicate with men from another descent group in formal dialogue, each producing the standard language of his descent group. While men proceed from greeting to oratory, then flute-playing and dancing in the center of the ceremonial space, the vocalizations of women

occur in the all-female sector at the far end of the longhouse. In contrast to the monolingual or bilingual interactions by men at the center of the longhouse, women's performative interactions occur along the portion of the periphery occupied by women. There diversity in linguistic performance is the norm.

While the occasions of the the *po'ali* call attention to distinctions between near and far kin, in-group, and out-group, own group, and others, these demarcations, associations, and the emotions they evoke, differ markedly according to gender. The occasion of the *po'ali*, when two sib settlements visit one another, carries particular importance for women, since a visiting sib may include a woman's close kinsmen. These occasions evoke recollections of separation and recall the cadences of familiar speech associated with familiar speakers. Too, they may arouse sentiments of longing and ambivalent allegiances.

If the host and guest groups are in-laws, as is typical, the males will form two linguistically distinct units. The corporate solidarity of each group is manifest in speech. When in-law sibs meet, males regard the in-laws as "other," *paye mahsa*, a term which carries the connotation of "strangers" or "aliens." Yet, the in-laws -- considered by the males of a settlement to be distant, non-kin, and "other" -- may be their wives' nearest kin.

In the context of the settlement into which they have married, the languages spoken by in-marrying women are the utterances of outsiders, of "others" (*paye mahsa*). Married Tukanoan women who perform these songs describe themselves as "mixers" (*su'sari mahsa*) in the settlements of their spouses. On the occasion of the *po'ali* ceremony, the multiple and differing allegiances of women become salient as they manifest ties, at times ambivalent, or conflicted, to husband's group, own group, and the linkages they have to other wives, who, although possible members of different descent groups and speakers of different languages, share their common experience.

The *Kaya Basa*[6]

The *po'ali* performances dramatize linguistic affiliation as a principle which shapes identity, reflecting both individual (self-) consciousness and social relations. These points are demonstrated in the sample translations which follow.

The texts presented here were collected along the middle Uaupés River in Brazil between the years 1978 and 1981.[7] Excerpts were selected from approximately 200 hours of vocal performances on the basis of illustratory value. The songs were taped during exchange ceremonies in which the tape recorder was placed on the women's side of the dance house. Transcriptions and interlinear translations were prepared in the field with the help of native speakers. Performers usually sang in own language. All performances took place in villages considered to belong to the Wanano language group. The texts presented here were sung in three related Tukanoan languages: Wanano, Tukano, and Kubeo. Two additional languages, Tukanoan Desana and Arawakan Baniwa, present in the *po'ali* and in recording, have not been transcribed by the author.

I do not take up linguistic distance here, since the analytic distinction between multilingualism and multidialectism is problematic (Gumperz 1971:101) and the social recognition of separation between codes treats all as being subject to the same rules of consistent monolingual speech, independent of code proximities.

The *kaya basa* constitute a native class of songs bearing a name and sharing attributes of form and content. *Basa*, 'songs' (pl. of *basaro*[8]), is preceded by the descriptive *kaya*, which glosses as 'sad recollections,' or 'sad memories.' The subject of the texts is typically isolation and distance from loved ones. This dilemma, expressed through the conventional imagery of "wandering" and "mixing," is distinctly female.

The *kaya basa* form part of a vocal exchange that accompanies a beer exchange and functions as a greeting between hosts and guests. Entering a large dance house, the newly arrived guests separate by gender and sit along opposite walls. Hosts stand and

greet each guest individually. The male greeting is delivered in spoken speech, characterized by back-channeling and described in the literature as "ceremonial dialogue" (Basso 1986; Sherzer and Urban 1986; Urban 1986, 1988b). The female greeting, in contrast, is wept, sung, and texted. The *kaya basa* is initiated by a woman of the hosting village as she serves seated recipients. Approaching each guest in turn, she dips her gourd into her store of beer and extends it to the recipient with her wept greeting. After drinking the full contents of the dish, the recipient is expected to return it to the donor with an acknowledging performative turn of her own. Texts are spontaneously composed, although many women have preferred and memorized verses. Despite differences in the phonological systems, the commonalities of themes and conventions of the *kaya basa* construct sameness in a context of difference.

Establishing Difference

Self-referential lines that place the singer in a linguistic-descent context, for example, are found with frequent repetition in all turns.[9] When a woman sings, "*Yü pini Kotiria koro-ka*," "I am a Wanano woman," she constructs a boundary that links her to some, yet separates her from others. In an example that typifies this pattern, a Wanano singer of the Biari sib emphasizes her affiliation, marking it at the opening and repeating it periodically. She names both her language group affiliation, Kotiria (Wanano), and her sib affiliation, Biari Pona:

> *Yü phinita Kotiria koroka*,
> I, yes, a Wanano woman.

> *Biari ponakoro himareka yabinare*
> The Biari pona woman is hated

In addition to naming her own descent group affiliation, a married woman also names the descent group of her husband and children in the course of a song. For example, a Tukano speaker identifies herself as wife of the "Buoyero people," a Wanano

sib. By naming her husband's sib, a woman locates herself within the constellation of

interlocutors.   By virtue of her husband's identity, many of her listeners will be her

cross-cousins or sisters-in-law.

The lack of correspondence between descent group and post-marital residence is

a common theme in the *kaya basa* of married women. In the following excerpt, a

Tukano speaker differentiates herself from the sib members (descendants of Horipoko)

into whose village she has married:

> *Ati makarikago pako nitimiota*
> Not a niece of this sib-village
>
> *Horipoko mako nitiapïi*
> I am not a daughter of Horipoko
>
> *Horipoko makoaka nitiapïi*
> I am not [emphatic] a daughter of Horipoko
>
> *Nitiapïina mii basuko...*
> My cousin, I am not...
>
> *Dahseago mako niapïina*
> I am a daughter of a Tukano
>
> *Ate makarikago mako nitiapïi*
> I am not a daughter of this village
>
> *Ate makarikago phako nitiapïi*
> I am not a niece of this village

The terms daughter, cousin and niece are here used according to the contrastive

forms found in unilineal cross-cousin relational terminology. The singer is a "daughter"

of a Tukano; in other words, she is daughter of a Tukano father. When she says,

unhappily, that she is not a "daughter" of this village, not a "niece" of this village, she

emphasizes her isolation: her mother was **not** from the village into which she married.

She is therefore more of an outsider, more of a loner than is the song's listener. Her

circumstances should invoke sadness.

The term cousin is always used here to refer to a cross-cousin, as the better translation for parallel cousin is sister or brother. Across the genders, the term cousin carries a sexual connotation, as these are the relatives whom one may marry. Within genders, the term suggests a relation more distant than that between "sisters," as sibling terms are extended to any member of one's own language group. In several ways, then, this song segment signals isolation and marginality.

Establishing Sameness

At the most superficial level the *kaya basa* wail communicates and underscores difference and isolation. On a different level, however, and employing linguistic resources and strategies of greater breadth, the speech event communicates solidarity. This is of particular interest, since solidarity is accomplished without compromising linguistic boundary markers essential to Wanano social identity.

Participants share a common ground of norms, preferences, and expectations. Among these areas of shared knowledge are participant-relations, sequential orderings and structures, speakers' goals, and epistemological grounding. All songs, independent of the languages in which they are performed, are organized according to a common set of principles that govern linguistic form-form, form-meaning, and form-function relationships.

The range of discourse devices and strategies employed in accomplishing solidary ends, while maintaining adherence to own language, include the following commonalities:[10] 1) framing; 2) perjoratives 3) evocative goals; and 4) participation. I will provide a brief discussion of each of these in turn.

Opening and closing frames

Among the shared properties of form-meaning relationships is the organization of talk within the song. A number of framing devices are used to situate speaker and

hearer in the performative context.[11] For example, the beginning of the song is
signalled by a refrain that references the exchange of drink and specifies giver and
recipient.

Opening frame of Wanano singer-server:

> *Sini tiano sini tiano*
> Take this drink, take this drink
>
> *Yahuri pona siniha wahakare*
> Gourd of the Yahuri people

Opening frame of Tukano singer-server:

> *Sininahe*
> Please take [this drink]
>
> *Sinina, sinina*
> Drink, drink
>
> *Miisa basuta...*
> You, in-law...
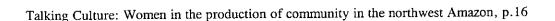>
> *Yiika basuko, yiika basuko*
> My cousin, my cousin

In response, a singer-recipient returns a song with a reciprocal opening frame, as the
following Wanano citation shows:

> *Watagii, watagii yiika*
> Bring, bring to me
>
> *Nasamori numia yiika musaka*
> You [plural and affectionate], my sisters-in-law

Frames: embedded speech[12]

A second framing device is the use of internal quotations. Portions of text with
greatest evocative power are allocated to different spokespersons, or mouthpieces,
producing a voice-within-a-voice, or a quoted frame within the text.[13] A song consists
of a series of segmented discourse units or voice frames narrated in nonlinear sequence.

A singer communicates to the hearers through direct discourse, then shifts abruptly to cited speech within the same song. This produces a lamination of one frame of quoted speech, upon another.[14] In this way, passages may be attributed to different raconteurs. In the following excerpt, a Wanano singer cites her Desano son:

*Yü phoko thiniko nina**[15]
My mother is passing through*

Yü phoko himare nyonkoro ari maka
My mother is of the ancestors of that village over there

Makari korota
A woman who belongs to a village
...
Yiika phoko bühawetire
My mother is sad

A voice frame must be closed. In the following example, a Tukano woman cites her son to close her song:

Mani pünika poteosome atiro vesina
We can't stand the way you carry on

Niamibu niamibu yü makiika, yü makiika
So says my son, so says my son

Internal voice frames within the performance may serve a variety of purposes. By singing "in the voice" of a speaker who is not present, such as a relative, the singer achieves the illusion of distance from the message and from the hearer. In this way the singer may increase her persuasive impact by calling upon authoritative "voices" as advocates. She also creates the illusion of distance between herself and the content of her song. This device is typically used to convey information heavily laden with affect such as shame or outrage. Abu-Lughod describes the way in which songs express hidden sentiments among Bedouin women (Abu-Lughod 1986). The use of "voices" enables the Tukano singer to "veil" or disguise, in the Abu-Lughod sense, her true sentiments. Although in practice songs are

rarely finished before they are interrupted by the respondent, ideally a song should end with a quotation attribution, such as, "so says my son to you."

Perjoratives

Kaya Basa performers make use of a number of refrains with common meanings and functions sung in different codes. By refrain I mean a section composed of one or more song lines that is repeated throughout a song performance. These are separated by innovative, spontaneous narratives describing the specifics that support the claims of the refrain.
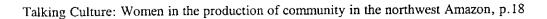
Among the most repeated refrains are self-referential, perjorative descriptors. These include references to self as a woman who is sad (*bühawetiri koro*); alone or lacking (*mariani koro*: 'woman without'); detested (*yabiri koro*); envied, and therefore criticized (*abiari koro*); one who was not "chosen" (by a spouse) (*ti beseweri koro*); ugly (*nyari koro*); sickly (*thipari koro*); wandering (*thinari koro)*; or 'mixing' (*sü'sari koro*). The construction is, in each case, *koro*, signifying "woman," preceded by a modifier. Although they are fitted into the personalized narrative constructed by the singer, the phrases are stereotypic and are used in the *kaya basa* in a conventional manner. These conventional phrases appear in the texts of speakers of each language group, performing similar or identical semantic and syntactic functions, as the following examples illustrate.

The following excerpts were selected to demonstrate the way the conventionalized themes of alienation and isolation are explored in the turns of speakers of different languages.

This Wanano example demonstrates the themes of isolation and wandering:

> *Thiniko niha*
> I pass through
>
> *Phakuori masono*
> A simple woman

Wüana mariako
Without brothers*

Nonana yoarose
Like a horsefly

Khapari warirose
Whose eyes are plucked out

Dokawa thiniko
Batting, I wander

Yü phinita büha wetiko.
I am [Emph.] sad.

The performer continues, a Wanano woman of the Biari sib singing to her Tukano-

speaking sister-in-law, as she describes herself as "hated," "mixing," and "wandering:"

Kha'are thinikoka
In the midst I go

Yüka pasuro
My sister in law

Nyano wa'ako nihapa
Ugly, I am going

*Marine yabina yirepa**
We are detested, we are*

Yüka pasuro
My sister-in-law

Mahsa sü'sarinare
People who mix

Manu titiana
For having taken a husband

Biari ponakoro hinareca yabinare
Woman of the Biari sib is hated

Yüka pasuro mükükade
My sister-in-law, to you [I say this]

Although set in the improvised wording selected to narrate unique events in the

Wanano singer's life, the phrases *marine yabina*, "We are detested," *nyano*, ugly, *wa'ako*,

wandering about, *su'sarinare*, mixing, are all conventional to this performative style.

To show similar intent in the song of a Tariano singer, we continue the verse

partially cited above:

> *Tariago, Tariago, niapü nabü, yü pünika*
> Tariano, Tariano, I say, yes, I am
>
> *Phase küoguako, phase küaoguako*
> Poor me, poor me,...
>
> *Yü pünika ahpe mahsa vaterore.*
> I wander in the midst of Others.

In addition to the perjoratives ugly, passing-by, and being "in the midst", the

following Wanano excerpt illustrates the convention: "You will never stand (or tolerate) me":

> *Yahori ponakoroka*
> Woman of the Yahori sib
>
> *Yüka phinita, nyari korokade*
> I, yes, the ugly one
>
> *Khüna numia watarore wa'aroi...*
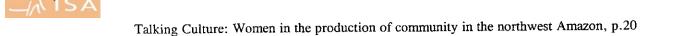> Wandering in the midst of the Desana women...
>
> *Biosse Yahori ponakoroka*
> You will never stand the woman of the Yahori sib

On a different occasion, a Wanano woman sings:

> *Bioside bioside khüniio nyariro namonoka*

> No one can stand, no one can stand, the ugly wife of the Desano

The following Tukano example demonstrates the commonality of perjorative

descriptors across languages. This segment of a Tukano text utilizes an internal quote to

emphasize the isolation of the singer who leaves direct speech to attribute a citation to her

son. The excerpt in Tukano illustrates the refrain, "no one can stand me," as well as a

number of other perjorative discourse devices that occur across languages.

> *Yü pünika poteo somenabu*
> You will never stand me
>
> *Yü pünika atiro vesiagü*
> The way I wander
>
> *Ahpe mahsa vaterore poteo some poteo some*
> Other people will not stand me, the wanderer...
> ...
> *Poteo some ahpe mahsa vaterore*
> Other people will not stand me wandering in their midst
>
> *Atiro vesiagü niamibü yüka makiiaka, yüka makiika*
> So says my son, my son

The following contrastive examples show similar thematic refrains, drawn from Kubeo, an Eastern Tukanoan language that is of greater genetic distance to Wanano and Tukano than are the latter to one another. In the following Kubeo example, the semantic functions of the terms I translate as "passer-by" and "no one can stand" are likely equivalents to the Wanano and Tukano usages, despite the differences in the linguistic codes of the producers. Similar, too, is the connotation that the terms engender in the message's recipients:

Kubeo singer, citing her sister:

> *Amenityu*
> Passing by
>
> *Ameniteyu veleyu*
> Passing by badly...
>
> *Ma'anle mu'anle yüabecive hiocoapa*
> You won't be able to stand her...
>
> *Hioco hopü cube cota*
> My sister is a wanderer

Yet another Kubeo example illustrates use of the phrase "no one can stand":

> *Muinconpa hiape aio*
> You will not stand the way I speak
>
> *Heali mubu heali, heali mube hiapa*
> Speaking this way, like this, like this, you are not going to stand me

The performer, singing in Kubeo in a Wanano village, intends the message to indicate that people will not stand what she says nor the way she says it -- i.e., in a language that is some distance from the languages of her listeners and not necessarily understood by them. This singer is the most socially distanced woman of any in the village; her alternant variety underscores her separation. Having been widowed, she married into a village in which she has no relatives.

Shared evocative goals: weeping

Meta-narration is a shift out of narrative time in which the performer calls the attention of the audience to the performance as a performance (Bauman 1975, 1986; Bauman and Briggs 1990). These devices, often eliminated in translations and analyses, tell us much about the way the performer perceives the narrative as both message and as code. In the following examples, singers specify the goals of the performance.

The goal of the *kaya basa* is to evoke weeping. In this passage, a Wanano woman quotes her son to say that her performance will bring people to weep:

Barota yükü tikokari mu tikokari mü
After I, go [die], you will cry, you will cry

Müka mahsa ba'aro nuku tire thüothiata tiakari inyokoro
After seeing you, after hearing you, people will cry, mother.

The lines demonstrate the causal-connective role of the gerund-like verb form. *Thüothiata*, the case in point, may be translated as "upon hearing," or "after hearing," but it may also be translated as "for having heard," demonstrating the causal role of the verb form. The influence is effected through seeing (*nükü*), and hearing (*thüokü*). The power lies in "that which is from your mouth" (*mü dükerore*), and the desired result is sadness (*büha weti kükare*: they will be sad) as evidenced by crying *(tiakari)*. When well-executed, a song will cause its listeners to cry.

In this song performed by a Tukano speaker, and directed to me, the listener, we find the same meta-level discourse as the Tukanoan speaker (similarly) quotes her son:

Müsare nisare yü makü
Says my son to you...

Pehkaso punika
White woman,

Khayago samoba
You will be saddened

Yü phako usero reba
[By the words] from the mouth of my mother *

Ni'ame yü makü
Says my son

Compare the Tukano, *Yü phako üsero reba*, to the Wanano, *Yü püko mü düikerore*, each conveying the meaning "from my mother's mouth." Too, each precedes the conventional phrase, "says my son," Tuk., *ni'ame yü makü*, Wan., *niyüka yü makü*.[16] The examples underscore, once again, the broad range of features, both semantic and syntactic, common to the *kaya basa* of the linguistically distinct intermarrying language groups of the Northwest Amazon.

Addresing herself to me and to the tape recorder, the singer alludes to a future time (and place) when her words will cause people to cry in a far-away place.

Mode of production: cry signals

It is the goal of the performer, then, to cause her listeners to weep. To this end, the singer conveys her own sadness through a number of technical and poetic devices. The Wanano combine the vocal features aspiration, voiced breathing, and glottal closure to produce a sound that signals a sob and dramatizes the singer's pathos.[17] While these features appear in conversational speech, they are used with greater proliferation and in unique combination in texted weeping.
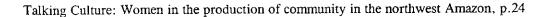
For example, the Wanano affixes that occur with great frequency in *kaya basa* are the aspirated diminutive suffix *-khii*, the aspirated emphatic suffix *-phini*, and the aspirated demonstrative suffix *-phii*. The high front vowels *ii*, and *i* predominate in the suffix forms. The plosives p, t and k are in each case followed by an aspiration, and, with the exception of *k*, preceded by a glottal closure. The use of glottal stops, aspirants, and high pitch contribute to the vocal qualities that characterize the lament and contrast it from ordinary, spoken language (Urban 1988a). These devices commonly occur at the ends of lines and at points of narrative peak.

Although end-line affixes are generally one or two syllables in length, they are combined performatively to produce a compound, multi-syllabic ending, as when *-phini*, an emphatic affix, is followed by *-'tha*, a second emphatic, producing an extended, three syllable ending in which each vowel is protracted and each consonant aspirated.

Line-end affixes serve both aesthetic and semantic ends, though the relative import to each varies. Semantic and aesthetic goals may be independent of one another, so that an affix may be added for purely aesthetic or purely semantic purposes. The impact of the song is greatest, however, when the affix meets aesthetic and semantic ends simultaneously. This is best illustrated in the use of the frustrative affix, *-ma'hi*, placed at the end of a word to convey the frustration of the speaker.

The suffix *ma'hi* serves to convey frustration or desperation in the singer through extra-semantic means, as well, as it combines two icons of crying: vocal breaking and voiced exhalation. There, the signals of crying function simultaneously on two levels: 1) in mimicking the sob, and 2) in semantically communicating frustration.

The compound verb *nima'hi*, for example, combines *ni*, first person past tense of the verb to speak, with the frustrative affix for that person, *ma'hi*, to produce the form, *nima'hi*, I said (frust.), as shown:

Stem	frust. suffix	suffix (person)
ni- (to say)	*-ma-*	*-'i* (I, we), *-re* (you, they)

The neutral I said, *ni*, is embellished with the affix to produce a word that

semantically encodes frustration: *nima'hi* = I said (frustrated). Here the *-i* is preceded by a

breath so that it is a voiced exhale.

The following citation in Wanano demonstrates the *-ma'hi* ending as the lament

reaches a narrative climax:

> *Müre, müre, yariakoputa, arirede wakoi*
> To you [I say], to you, when I die
>
> *Yu pasuro, mahsare tarirore biato papoma'hi*
> My sister-in-law, to our guests, I offered fish,
>
> *Noi tarirore niimiiko wahaka*
> To our guests, I offered a calabash of beer
>
> *Phoka wahaka wama'hi*
> A calabash of manioc flour I gave
>
> *Yu pasuro, yu metede mahsarede wakhema'hi*
> My sister-in-law, I was gracious and generous

Reciprocal address

In contrast to the differences described earlier, a number of performative strategies

link participants. Perhaps the most salient of these is the use of complementary, symmetrical

terms in different languages.

Brown and Gilman (1960) use the term solidarity to describe forms of pronoun

address that are both reciprocal and symmetrical. They then correlate this linguistic parity

with social equality. In the *kaya basa*, a performer addresses her listener using a kin term.

In the Tukanoan matrix of address forms, none are symmetrical for speakers of the same

language. Reciprocal and symmetrical pairs of kin terms are found in in-law address forms

only, terms used exclusively by speakers of different languages. Tannen (1993) points out

the tendency among English speakers to assume that solidarity is a function of sameness. But

for Tukanoan women, for whom multilingual speech is the norm, difference alone does not necessarily convey antagonism.

By using symmetrical, reciprocal terms in different linguistic codes, two singers construct solidarity within a context of difference. For example, in recorded songs of Tukano and Wanano cousins, Tukano speakers repeatedly sing the phrase "*yü basüko, yü pünika,*" "*my cross-cousin, I yes.*" The Wanano speakers use the symmetrical form for the same referent set in the same conventionalized mode to convey the same message in own language: "*yü tanyo, yü pini.*"

The reciprocal cross-cousin address paradigm, *tanyo*, for Wanano, and *basuko*, for Tukano, demonstrates the principles of symmetry and reciprocity while conserving and underscoring difference. Reciprocal terms meaning "my sister-in-law" are sung in similar dialogic fashion. Linguistic contrast is maintained, while solidarity and parity are communicated. Occasionally, as songs intersect, address terms are sung simultaneously, with each singer using the term of her own language to produce an intertextual polyphony of wailed relationship forms.

The Structure of Participation: How does a song mean?

When these performances are examined within the social context of their production, and when the turn-by-turn character of talk is considered, the coherence of the performance, rather than its fragmentation, takes on relevance. In the texted weeping form of the northwest Amazon the different languages converge in the production of a collective text.

The following two listings of sequential turns recorded at the *po'ali* of two different Wanano sib-settlements shows speaker's language affiliation in order of turn:

I. Bukakopa, December 1978
   1. Wanano
   2. Desana
   3. Kubeo

4. Wanano
5. Desana
6. Desana
7. Wanano

II. Yapima, April 1979
   1. Wanano
   2. Tukano
   3. Desana
   4. Desana
   5. Wanano
   6. Wanano
   7. Wanano
   8. Wanano
   9. Wanano
   10. Desana
   11. Tukano
   12. Desana
   13. Wanano
   14. Tukano
   15. Wanano
   16. Wanano
   17. Wanano
   18. Tukano
   19. Kubeo
   20. Tukano
   21. Tukano
   22. Wanano

Each song turn forms part of an interactive sequence of language or greeting exchanges accompanied by a beer offering. The greeting exchanges of men occur at the opening of the ceremonials, and later give way to other performative acts. The greeting songs of women accompany the offering of beer, and continue long into the night. In contrast to the spontaneous and highly emotive quality of the female texted performance, the male greeting shows little improvization and lacks affect. These performative styles reiterate gender ideologies that link women with emotional indulgence and men with emotional abstinence (Chernela 1997a, 1988c).

After drinking the full contents of the dish, the recipient is expected to return it to the donor with a turn of her own. The performance of one turn-taker will ultimately be

interrupted by the responding performer; the turn may be built upon by a third, and so on, although at any point the first singer (the host) may resume, or a bystander may insert a contribution. Participatory features, such as "coming in on the beat," are important to the ensemble experience, and contribute to the coordinated social action. It is not uncommon for performances to overlap. Furthermore, several hosting women may sing-weep-serve simultaneously, producing a series of interactions that may intersect. On one occasion, for example, a Kubeo and a Baniwa speaker performed simultaneously, each performer weaving her lines in relation to the other's. Each linguistic variety is foregrounded momentarily as a focal point that in subsequent moments becomes backgrounded, exposing performatively the agora of linguistic varieties.

A recipient responds by speaking to some of the themes introduced by the first singer. The repetition of conventions and themes across languages produces a multi-vocalic parallelism that contributes to total performative impact. United by common meanings, forms, themes, and conventions, this speech style may be described as a "wailing medley" or thematic "jam."

South American wailing forms have been assumed to be monologic and no counter cases have been presented to challenge the generality (Sherzer and Urban 1986; Urban 1998a, 1991). However, the wept greetings of Tukanoan women combine dialogic features with a sequential or chaining form,[18] where the total performance may be said to be the accumulated performances of the individual contributors. A coherence is accomplished by the cumulative inputs of multiple performers, speaking and weeping in *different languages*. The result is a weaving of diverse voices into a fabric that is multivocalic, chaining, and interchanging. The enmeshed product is a meta-wail of women's shared grief and isolation. The combined product of several overlapping solos performed simultaneously is empathy and community, constructed through the various contributions of individual speakers of different

languages speaking out their isolation -- together. Through jamming on discontent and isolation, the interaction produces solidarity.

The meta-message of solidarity is accomplished not through linguistic comprehension *per se* but through the act of participating in a process, contributing, or lending a voice -- the voice of the "other" in the language of the "other" -- to the multiple voices of other "strangers." Here the sum of "strangers" among "strangers" is solidarity and comeraderie.

In the *kaya basa* several different types of listeners are involved participants, including those who are deliberately addressed by a relationship term, others who are not addressed but to whom a message is directed, and those who may be inadvertant or accidental interlopers. A speaker may structure participation by addressing one listener as the designated recipient, while targeting her remarks to another. For example, when the woman of the Wanano Biari sib sings to her Tukano sister-in-law, "We are detested, my sister-in-law," she sings to nearby listeners, some of whom may be the very critics she implicates in her statement. The Tukano woman who cites "We can't stand the way you carry on" intends her plaintive cry to be heard by the suspected adversarial authors of such commentary who, although not addressed, may be within hearing distance. This strategy allows the singer to convey a message to the overhearer without appearing to do so, managing her performance so that the overhearer is let off the hook and no response is required (Goffman 1976). It is *as if* the overhears had never been informed. Yet, the information is dispersed, and its reach may be far. Despite the use of nuance and indirection, information conveyed in the *kaya basa* will be communicated throughout the community. The final audience is likely to be the most indirect recipients of the information conveyed: the community members who are *not* present.

Although wailing forms in South America have been considered monologic, a closer examination of the *kaya basa* shows it to be both intertextually dialogic, as well as overtly

dialogic in its communicative and linguistic structure, with named addresses, multiple voices,

quotations, and the production of a collective text resulting from the inputs of various

participants (Mannheim and Van Fleet 1998; Feld 1984, 1982).[19]

In the *kaya basa* mutable participant frameworks are shaped in the interactive play of

the performance. The roles of participants vis-à-vis the talk are in flux, blurring monologic

and dialogic forms. A situation can change from a paired encounter, which may be called a

"dialogue," to a monologic autobiographical form, with unacknowledged spectators; or to one

in which onlookers actively participate in the production of a song. In the transition from

"monologue" to "dialogue" to "fugue," the addressee is referred to in the second person, but a

former "onlooker" may become an addressee at any point or may become a part of the

subject matter, conveyed by the singer to an apparently unspecified audience. The switch

creates a participation framework into which former "overhearers" are invited to participate

in the discourse and former performers or addressees may become spectators.

Women, Language and Society: The Production of Community in the Northwest

Amazon

Ethnologists of the northwest Amazon readily recognize the shared cultural system of

the region, yet neglect to relate this phenomenon to theoretical considerations of the role of

speech in the formation of common ground in and through conversation, characterized by

diversity in codes. In the northwest Amazon that which constitutes the speech community is

an *organization* of diverse linguistic repertoires in which each code indexes a social group

and thereby the relationship of that group, and the speakers of that group, to all others (see

Irvine 1989). Each linguistic variety performs a social function, indexing group membership

and kinship within a unified cultural system in which language is a primary icon of identity

(Jackson 1974). Gradations between varieties are backgrounded as each code is considered to

be discreet and its speakers members of mutually exclusive groups, marked by linguistic

performance. Although these relations reflect to some extent genetic proximities between codes, the named Eastern Tukanoan varieties that are regarded as commensurate with a putative descent lines are considered by speakers to be sharply bounded.

Each code may be said to be linguistically autonomous insofar as the properties of a code can be described independently; however, the speakers of any code are functionally and socially interdependent. Linguistic performance may be usefully viewed as a form of role specialization in which linguistic variety marks membership in a particular social group, thus defining the relationship of that group (and individual) to all others. Together, the repertoire of codes operates in one overarching communicative system in which each code is a unit in a mosaic of diverse linguistic varieties. Distinctions between codes produce a configuration of boundaries and distinctions internal to the community, but external to the language group, determining insideness and outsideness.

Linguistic exogamy lies at the heart of this interdependency, serving to generate the normative conditions in which no monolingual group can exist or reproduce itself without another. Rules of linguistic exogamy designate some language groups to sibling status and others to in-law status. Sociability and community cut across the separations between language groups, as no conjugal group, no local group, and few activity groups consist of speakers of single language group.

This systematic variation cannot be explained by historical contingencies alone, since linguistic diversity in the northwest Amazon is maintained in spite of historical and demographic challenges to it. The difference between codes *per se* is highly valued and maintained for the social meanings that adhere to it.

Despite the use of different speech varieties in this ritual context, a common "speech culture" is produced and maintained in which semantic fields, values, and performative norms are shared. An agreed upon set of principles, portraying the collaborative nature of

speech, (and corresponding to a "common ground"), is explicitly and performatively displayed. In this framework, linguistic differentiation, maintained through loyalty to the language of one's patriline, is countered by shared experience of a single speech act that permits structured, organized participation in and by different linguistic codes. In this complex loci of speech acts, a speech culture is produced.

Conclusion

In *Why Suya Sing*, Seeger writes: "The Suya sang because singing was an essential way of articulating the experiences of their lives with the processes of their society" (Seeger 1987:128). Tukanoan women's songs add yet another dimension to the concept of articulation through musical genre. Through their songs they effectively articulate not just their own experiences to the processes of society, but also the complex forms of connectivities and separations among different social entities. By exchanging songs, and in this way, "exchanging" equivalent but pointedly different word streams in different linguistic codes, the songs articulate in several senses the individuals and the groups they stand for.

The role of Tukanoan women as links connecting social groups is nowhere more apparent than in the wept texts. When two sibs or language groups come together, as at an exchange ceremony, "otherness" is bridged but not negated. The exchange itself foregrounds the exclusiveness of some Tukanoan social groups, such as the sib, while it dramatizes the position of women vis à vis the rest of society, particularly their own kin and the kin of their husbands and children. The shared sentiments among women of outsideness is transformed through the performative process into a ritually demarcated community of "outsiders."

On the one hand, a singer's performance signals difference, and a number of accompanying properties, such as isolation. These are communicated firstly through the language in which the singer communicates and secondly through semantic choices intended to point to isolation. On another level, the ritual process articulates performers through the
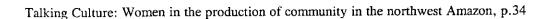
participation process, and through a number of shared conventions, including: reciprocal address forms, common refrains in different linguistic codes, common narrative devices, common evocative goals, as well as a number of other shared conventions governing the music-language relationship.

The synthesis of the two levels -- the first isolation, and the second sociability -- results in a performative and social peak that I choose to call empathy. Solidarity, manifest most explicitly in the cry, is accomplished through language and the commonality of meanings in spite of a multiplicity of codes. Texted weeping, a stylized form of language imitative of crying evokes the natural cry. The signal that empathy, a social and linguistic meeting, has been achieved, is in the climactic breaking moment when the listeners cry. The goal of the *kaya basa* performance, as stated in conversation and in song, is to bring the audience to weep. This underscores Urban's key point that wailing is the purest form of sociability (1991).

Notes

[1]. In the Wanano terms and texts which follow, I have utilized the orthographic symbol ' to indicate a glottal stop, h an aspiration, and u, a high, front vowel, similar to the German *umlaut*.

[2]. The alternate spellings, Uanano, and Guanano, for the *lingua geral* name are also found in the literature. The Tukano name, by which the group identifies itself, is Kotira. I have chosen to use the term Wanano on the basis of convention established in the anthropological literature.

[3]. The Kubeo (Cubeo) (Goldman 1963), Makuna (Ärhem 1981, 1989), and Arapaço (Chernela 1988b, 1989) are exceptions to the pattern of linguistic exogamy.

[4]. The result is a set of equivalences in which father-language is social and outside; mother-language is private and inside.

[5]. However, when a woman and her husband visit her natal village it is his speech that becomes the alternant, marked variety.

[6]. In transcribing Wanano and other Eastern Tukanoan languages, I use the letter *k* to indicate a velar stop (the k-sound in the English word "key"). The same sound is represented in written Portuguese and Spanish by the letters *c* or *q*, as in the Portuguese and Spanish tocar and toque. I use the letter k to portray this sound, so that I may follow it with an h to indicate an aspiration. I reserve "ch" for the palatalized, voiceless alveolar affricate, in common Wanano usage. This sound is represented in Spanish and English by the same orthography, as shown in the Spanish coche and the English chilly.

[7]. Original tape recordings are deposited in the ethnomusicology archives of the University of Indiana. Five texts are published in Chernela 1988a and 1993.

[8]. The suffixes *-aro* and *-a* indicate singular and plural respectively.

[9]. Since these are highly predictable, they may not be listened to with the same degree of attention that innovative texts receive.

[10]. Singers do sometimes sing in the language of the listener, especially as

festivities and drink intensify and rules relax. I am, however, interested here in the

strategies used to create linkages without breaking the rules of linguistic loyalty, and

therefore limit the discussion to those cases.

[11]. For a discussion of framing, see Goffman 1974.

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