

SONGS OF THE *REAHU*: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE YANOMAMI SONGS OF THE MARAUIÁ AND MATURACÁ RIVERS

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ABSTRACT

This article addresses the nocturnal chants called *amõamõu* of the Yanonami¹ groups of the Marauíá and Maturacá Rivers, which, together with the *praiái* dance, are used in the ritual feast of the dead—*reahu* in the Yanomami language. In order to determine the dynamics of the chants and their contexts in the establishment of social relations in the group, the theoretical-methodological basis followed the anthropology of performance, supported by fieldwork performed during the authors' PhD studies.

KEYWORDS
Anthropology; Chant;
Performance; Yanonami.

1. In this article, the term “Yanonami” (with “n” and “i”) refers to the linguistic subgroup of the Maturacá and Marauíá region. In turn, the term “Yanomami” (with “m” and “i”) represents the broader linguistic and cultural set that includes several subgroups, in line with the PhD thesis *O(s) Corpo(s) Kõkamõu: A performatividade do pajé-hekura Yanonami da região de Maturacá* (2009).

1. INTRODUCTION

For a long time, the elements associated with anthropological research were linked to very specific niches, such as social structures, kinship, clan political structures, mythologies, among others. Only a few decades ago other themes began to be incorporated into anthropology, among which music, dance, drawing, and performance art stand out. However, in recent years, these themes have been growing significantly in anthropology, given the increasing number of presentations of studies at events such as the Brazilian Anthropology Meeting (RBA) and the Mercosur Anthropology Meeting (RAM), and the release of bibliographic collections: *Antropologia e performance: ensaios NAPEDRA* (2013); *A terra do não-lugar: diálogos entre antropologia e performance* (2013); *Arte e Sociabilidades em Perspectivas Antropológicas* (2014); *Som e Etnografia* (2021); among others.

However, even with the growing interest of scholars, the anthropology of art and the anthropology of performance historically permeate our research fields in a transparent way, or we, ethnographers, make them invisible, since our affection for “classic” themes minimizes the possibility of addressing the major themes that guide the individuals with whom we intend to dialogue by an ethnographic encounter. This article is based on the authors’ fieldwork experiences with the Yanomami of the Marauiá and Maturacá Rivers.

Based on these experiences, the master’s thesis *Mito e Ethos entre os Yanomami de Xitipapiwei* (2010)² and the PhD thesis *O(s) corpo(s) Kōkamōu: a performatividade do shaman-hekura Yanonami da região de Maturacá* (2019)³. The research was initially based on fieldwork notes with classical categories, and considered participant observation, the study of myths, and the use of the Yanonami language. This resulted in *ad* external data that were far from the research objects, but represented important elements to understand the establishment of social relations among the Yanonami, especially in the prime of Yanonami life: the *reahu*, the ritual feast of the dead.

In order to “see, hear, and rewrite,” in line with Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira (1991), at least within a kind of reminiscence, the aspects that were once left aside return in this article as a central *locus* and with all the necessary protagonism for an anthropological reflection. Thus, this article focus on the *reahu* as the medium par excellence of *amōamōu* (nocturnal chants) practices, aiming to understand its dynamics and its context in the establishment of social relations among the Yanonami.

2. Master’s thesis defended in 2010 by Paulo Roberto de Souza, Graduate Program in Social Anthropology, Federal University of Amazonas.

3. PhD thesis defended in 2019 by Luiz Davi Vieira Gonçalves, Graduate Program in Social Anthropology, Federal University of Amazonas.

2. ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

The Yanomami people originated in the headwaters of the Orinoco River, located between the Parima Mountains and the Branco River in Venezuela—which, when it descends to the border with Brazilian, is called Negro River. The most likely hypothesis is that the group arose from ethnic isolation and that its internal differentiation began a few centuries ago. According to anthropologist Bruce Albert (1985), the Yanomami are a hunter-gatherer society inhabiting the tropical forest in the northern Amazon, totaling a contiguous area of 192,000 km². Although this area has a huge territorial extension, geological studies in the region show a terribly unsuitable soil for agriculture. In Brazil, this indigenous area is about 9,664,975 ha, or 96,650 km. This region also has important geographical features of Brazilian geology, such as the highest point in Brazil, Pico da Neblina, which was listed as Pico da Neblina National Park (Sousa 2010). Thus, the Yanomami are located on a double border: Brazil and Venezuela. In Brazil, they are divided into two states, Amazonas and Roraima, with a population of around 17,000 people, which are divided into about 238 villages. The Yanomami are the seventh most numerous population among Brazilian indigenous groups. Besides this territorial division, they are also divided into groups, which can be classified as *yaná*, *yanomamo*, *yanomai*, and *ninã* (Albert and Kopenawa 2015). These groups share the same cultural and material production and social structures, but they are distanced in linguistic aspects, on a scale of closeness, although fragile communication is possible between the most distant groups.

The Yanomami people can be considered, within a linguistic perspective, as a family from which it is possible to identify, according to Migliazza (1972), four main dialects: *Yanomam* (or *yanomama*, *yanomae*), *Sanema* (*sanumá* or even *sanima*), *Yanam* (or *ninam*), and, finally, *Yanomami* (or *yanomamo*). These numerous variations in spelling probably derive from the historical trajectory of contacts and research performed among the Yanomami by researchers, travelers and, above all, missionaries. (Sousa 2010, 19, our translation)

In the Amazon, the Yanomami are divided according to river channels: Marauiá River, Maiá River, Maturacá River, Padauari River, Demini River, Cauaburi River, Marari River, and more recently, Preto River and its respective tributaries. Currently, the Marauiá River and its tributaries border 18 *xaponopë* (villages). Each *xapono* (village) consists of family groups that occupy a common space called *yãno* or *yahi*. Although *xapono* and *yãno*

are sometimes placed as synonyms, the linguistic term *xapono* refers to all family nuclei, while *yãno* (or *yahi*)⁴ represents the family's living space.

Maturacá is located on the left bank of the Negro River and is bordered by the Ariabú and Maturacá Rivers, whose dark waters, after a few kilometers, mix with the clear waters of the Cauaburi River. The Cauaburi rises in the mountains on the border between Brazil and Venezuela, a region popularly known as *Cabeça do Cachorro* [Dog's Head], and almost its entire length is within Yanomami territory. Thus, the cartography of Maturacá includes five *xaponë* on the banks of the Maturacá and Ariabú Rivers: *xapono* Ariabú, *xapono* Maturacá, *xapono* União, *xapono* Maria Auxiliadora, and *xapono* Santa Maria. The region also has four *xaponopë*—Maiá, Inanbú, Aiarí, and Nazaré—distributed along the banks of the Cauaburi River and its tributaries (Gonçalves 2019).

Regarding the architecture of the *xapono*, the *yahi* are arranged to form a central circle called *mi ximorewë* (central courtyard). All *yahi* have their front facing the *mi ximorewë*. It is common to confuse the aspects of the *xaponopë* among the “Yanomami groups” and infer that the distribution of the Yanomami of Marauiá was, initially, influenced by the organization of the regional communities of the Negro River. Among the groups in Venezuela and some groups in Roraima, the *xapono* is a gigantic collective house, however, the *sanimá* and the Yanomami of the Marauiá and Maturacá Rivers do not adopt this communal house. We highlight the importance of this aspect, since this is the scenario where the *praiã* and *amõamõu* performances take place.

In the next section, we will address the aspects of the *reahu*, contextualizing and analyzing the elements, genres, and specifications of Yanomami chants.

3. REAHU, PRAIAI, AND AMÕAMÕU: THE GENRE OF CHANTS IN YANOMAMI CULTURE

Around 2007, one of the Yanomami *xapono*, on the Marauiá River, a tributary of the Negro River, was covered by a dense and dark atmosphere of death. The screams and gunshots denoted the last breaths of a Yanomami elder. But more than

4. These words are synonyms with terminological confusion. *Yahi* would be “house,” referring to the object itself: “*hei, yahi kë a!*” On the other hand, *yãno* would be equivalent to “home,” that is, it represents a subjective relationship between the individual and the space. However, the preferable and most productive term is “*hãto nahi*,” that is, the house where individuals live and usually sleep as a family.

that, it was the death of a *hekura*-shaman⁵. The cries and lamentations could be heard from miles away. As soon as the shaman died, the relatives start carrying wood for the mortuary fire, weaving the *matohi*⁶ with *ubi* leaves (*sp. Geonoma jussieuana*) and carving the pestle for use in pulverizing the *pei u pë* (bones) of the deceased. Throughout the night, they cried copiously. The next day, in the morning, the group of hunters went out for the *heniyemou* (a kind of collective hunt that closes the *reahu*). Even this morning, one could see the men carrying the *hekura*'s body in a hammock and depositing it on the already lit fire. As the flames consumed the body, the cries echoed in unison through the *xapono* and through the forest silenced by death. That same day, in the afternoon, a commotion could be heard in the *xapono* and, as soon as the shadow of death faded in the copious groans of the family members, a movement began: it was what they call *praiiai*, the dance that took place during the afternoon every day, as long as the *reahu* lasted. On one side of the *xapono* were all the men, painting and decorating themselves and talking to each other. They planned the *praiiai* performances. On the other side, out of sight of the men, were the women, also getting ready and beautifying themselves. Urucum, genipap, banana milk, feathers, down, adornments, feather earrings, and multicolored beads are the elements of this universe of ornamentation.

The dance was performed with rich ornamentation⁷, props, and body painting. Adult and young men officially take part in the dance, children are included at the learning level. There is no specific place to enter the central courtyard. Participants enter where they agree to gather. They enter in pairs, each going to the place opposite the other. Running or taking quick steps, the dancer pauses the trajectory at strategic points and, in this pause, they use a performance dance, imitating a heroic action, an animal, or even an everyday action, accompanied or not by short phrases. The women also enter in pairs and also make the stops, but unlike the

5. The translation for shaman in the Yanomami language, spoken by the Yanonami of Maturacá, is *hekura*, the same term used for spirits. We opted for the term from the Yanonami language and used "*hekura*-shaman" for shaman and "*hekura*-spirit" for spirits. In the plural, add *-pë* to get "*hekurapë*-spirits" and "*hekurapë*-shaman." Similarly, we used the word *hekuramou* instead of shamanism. In Roraima, they use the term *xapori*.

6. Small basket woven with *ubim* leaves (*sp. Geonoma deversa*) to store the ashes of a deceased relative.

7. The aesthetics of body painting in Yanonami rituals is another topic to be addressed, as the materials are not always conventional. They use grass, white clay, red clay, or they paint themselves completely and use the finest plumage to dry the grass harvested right on the spot, the most natural pigments, such as genipap, and even gouache paint bought for R\$ 2.50 in Santa Isabel do Rio Negro.

men's dance, they carry palm branches in the shape of a bow and shake them as they continue the trajectory. After everyone has finished, the groups come together, women and men, forming a single line of both sexes. The line of men walks towards the center of the courtyard and they form a circle. At this point, the women surround the men's circle and spread out, sometimes sitting right there on the rammed earth. In the men's circle, they shout and jump as high as they can, hand in hand, turn quickly to the right, and then stop abruptly. The participants spontaneously go to the center, one by one, and begin to chant, repeating the song in chorus. Amid screams and laughter, the *praiã* ends. Then they head to the river to clean up. In the evening, around 7 p.m., the *amõamõu* begins. The *amõamõu*, in turn, begins with the women, from the oldest to the youngest girls. As in the *praiã*, the *amõamõu* takes place in the courtyard. A large group is formed and a solo singer leads the way, conducting the chants, followed by the others in chorus. Total darkness, beams of light from flashlights, between conversations and laughter, sometimes, during the change of soloist, someone tells a funny fact or some "sexual fact," which causes laughter and everyone follows. It continues until around 11 p.m., ending the *amõa suwëpë*. The night break continued until 1 a.m.; at that time, youthful voices were heard calling to participate in the *amõa wãropë*. In addition to the beams of light from well-defined lanterns that cut through the smoke-laden air and early morning mist, there was also a young man carrying a bottle of coffee that he distributed during the singing. They sang until close to dawn. (Fieldwork notes, our translation)

This ethnographic excerpt shows three types of chants existing in Yanonami culture: the shamanic chant, *hekuramou*; the man's chant and the woman's chant, which belong to the category of the *amõamõu*; and the *himou*. The *hekuramou* is sung only by the *hekurapë*-shaman and, due to its shamanic characteristics and *sui generis* dynamics, this article will not address it, although we will mention it later. The *himou* is used during the *reahu*, the ritual feast of the dead, at the end of the osteophagic ritual (they eat the dust from the bones of the deceased in a banana porridge called *kurata u ki*), and functions as a kind of prelude for a group of *hamapë* (guests) from other *xapono* and other regions.

FIGURE 1
*Praiaí, Komixiwë
xapono, Marauiã
River (Santa Isabel
do Rio Negro,
Amazonas).*
Source: Mbo'esara
Esãã's collection.



4. THE CHAMICAL CENTRIC NICO: HEKURAMOU, A CONVERSATION WITH THE SPIRITS

Among the three aforementioned types of chants, the *hekuramou* has a specific dynamic and a different teleological object from the others. It is performed during healing sessions and also daily as a way of maintaining the balance of the world, preventing it from collapsing. It is also sung to communicate with the *hekurapë*-spirits⁸. A Yanonami *hekura*-shaman undergoes a long process of shamanic training, which lasts 12 years. During this training, he is guided by several shamans-*hekurapë* masters, learning to identify the *hekurapë*-spirits and negotiate the stages of sanity of patients. The process begins with the inhalation of *ẽpena* in small amounts. As the act of ingesting progresses in shamanic learning, the *epenamou* is intensified. As aforementioned, the *hekuramou* is performed with two objectives: to stabilize the patient's health and to serve as a support base for organizing the world.

The process begins collectively, with everyone sitting in the *upraa* (the house of shamanism)⁹. Using a *mokohiro* (tube for inhaling *ẽpena*), the substance is blown directly into the *hekura*-shaman's nostril. The shaman remains crouched while the blower, a little higher, makes the blowing movement. The effect of the entheogen is rapid. The *hekura*-shaman, crouching, goes into a trance and, little by little, his spirit comes into contact with another plane, and the dance begins at that moment. The mode and structure of the dance are not pre-established, each *hekura*-shaman

8. The *hekurapë* are described as small humanoid beings, about 25 cm tall, covered with brightly colored and multicolored *pauxi* (ornaments).

9. In some regions, *upraa* is given other names, such as *toxa*, for example.

and the spirit with which he comes into contact have their own performance. However, the *hekurapë*-shaman make a unique movement, with their arms open, as if they were in full flight. Already standing and dancing, the *hekurapë*-shaman talk to the *hekurapë*-spirits and they enter into a dialogue about the past, present, and future of the Yanonami people.

Music is a path that must be traveled to meet the spiritual beings. This path is not free of dangers and obstacles, which appears in the fight choreographies in which they perform attack and defense movements. (Montardo 2009, 68, our translation)



FIGURE 2

Hekuramou village,
Maturacá River.
Source: Luiz Davi
Vieira's collection.



FIGURE 3

Nocturnal
hekuramou,
Komixiwë xapono,
Marauiã River
(Santa Isabel
do Rio Negro,
Amazonas).
Source: Mbo'esara
Esãã's collection.

5. THE *AMŌAMŌU*: THE SONG OF THE NIGHT

The *amŏamŏu* is the song that most characterizes the *reahu*. Its dynamics are different from the others, not only in terms of productivity, but also in terms of semantics. The *amŏa* (song) can be defined according to the sex: *amŏa wāro* is the men's song, and *amŏa suwē* is the women's song. The Yanonami song has a kind of copyright, that is, it has an owner. Once it has been sung by someone other than its owner, this person feels morally obligated to give the author a bonus: *matohi*, which manifests itself by an object, usually a shirt, a pair of shorts, a *topē* (beads), among others. Everyone knows the songs and their respective owners, and they always say: "*hei Amoroko ke e!*" ("this is Amaro's song!"), "*kihi amŏa Hayata ke e!*" ("that is Hayata's song!"). The songs and their respective owners are known in the nearby villages.

The *amŏa* is sung during the *reahu* at the moment of the *amŏamŏu*, and the genre is marked both by time (time for women to sing/time for men to sing) and semantics (what men sing/what women sing). The content of the song will define its genre. In this respect, the compositions of the *amŏapē*¹⁰ have similar characteristics to Tibetan mantras, with short phrases and a diachronic musical scale. For the purposes of analysis, the translation of an *amŏa* can enable an anthropological study. But, at a level of semantic depth, the analysis of an *amŏa* will only be meaningful within its own locus, its own language, in line with Merriam (1964 and 1977).

To understand music as a product and a built structure, according to Merriam, it would be necessary to learn to understand the cultural concepts responsible for the production of these structures. Merriam characterized ethnomusicological research as "the study of music in culture" and, in the following decade, further accentuated the cultural paradigm, defining the research area as "the study of music as culture."

One fact that caught our attention was that the *amŏamou* is only performed at night, unlike *hekuramou* or *himou*. As aforementioned in the ethnographic introduction, the women sing in the first part of the evening: *mi titi ha suwēpē pē amŏamŏu pario* ("the women prepare the space for the men's chant").

10. Plural for "chant."

6. WHAT DO THE YANONAMI SING?

Yanonami chants have a relevant symbolic meaning that involves two dimensions: performance and action. In the field of ethnomusicology, Steven Feld (1984) states that musical performances allow the identification and analysis of expressions and their respective social structures, since dramatizations and musical representations provide a reading of social issues. One of the elements linked to the *amōamou* is, for example, marriage relationships. During the *reahu*, marriages are broken up, remade, and built.

The production of Yanonami chants leads us to a global dimension of man and his relationship with the society that surrounds him. We know that music is culturally learned, and this, according to Blacking (1973), promotes an artificial organization of sounds that also implies, in a certain way, an organization of communication symbols, which will place the individual of a given society in a state of interrelationship. It is interesting to think about this dynamics, since, if we understand Yanonami singing as a process and not just a product, we can understand the background, where the meanings of social life are constructed.

In the article *Dewey, Dilthey, and Drama: An Essay in the Anthropology of Experience*¹¹, Victor Turner, at the end of his analysis, points that ritual is the place where social experiences reverberate:

My argument has been that an anthropology of experience finds in certain recurrent forms of social experience—social dramas among them—sources of aesthetic form, including stage drama. But ritual and its progeny, notably the performance arts, derive from the subjunctive, liminal, reflexive, exploratory heart of social drama, where the structures of group experience ... are replicated, dismembered, re-membered, refashioned, and mutely or vocally made meaningful. (Turner 2005, 13)

In this sense, relating Victor Turner's theory with our data, singing is a fundamental driving force in Yanonami reality. From this perspective, Yanonami singing is in itself the manifestation of an event full of agency.

As an event, it is a singular manifestation: even if a song is reproduced, whether by the same singer or composer, that song will never be heard

11. Original text: Turner, Victor W. *Dewey, Dilthey, and Drama: An Essay in the Anthropology of Experience*. In: Turner, Victor W.; Bruner, Edward M. (eds). *The Anthropology of Experience*. Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois, p. 33-44, 1986.

in the same way¹². Thus, we can understand that Yanonami chants promote a relationship between performance (*prai'ai*) and event (*reahu*), and agency circulates between this binomial. The *amōamou* is then understood from the perspective of a triple frontier (performance, event, agency), which is responsible, according to Jonathan Hill (2014), for the process of musicalization in which an individual act becomes collective, that is, it creates a social space.

Therefore, Yanonami singing is at the same time an individual and collective social manifestation. Each Yanonami has its own chant (not everyone has one). The Yanonami chant is not an inspirational composition; it has its own dynamics and exists in itself as an interlocutory agency, manifesting itself in its interlocutor by a process that is both semiotic and dialogic.

The complex performative dimension of Yanonami is activated by the musicality that corresponds to the sound of the songs, the screams, groans, whistles, and sighs, which represent, for the *hekura*-shaman, events distant in time that only he can understand, in dialogue with his *hekurapë*-spirits. The chants of ritual performance, called *hekurapi amōapë* in the Yanonami language, originate from these beings who are impossible to be visualized by those who are not prepared. Therefore, they are sources of knowledge and represent vital importance in the Yanonami *xaponopë*.

According to the *hekurapë*-shamans interlocutors, as the *hekurapë*-spirits can transit in timeless cosmic spheres, in rituals, they address different topics, preventing and fighting diseases, telling stories of their ancestors, transmitting information from their *parimi* (god), among others. In this sense, we corroborate Erving Goffman (2011), who considers that speeches are constructed, since, for him, all people live in a world of social encounters and, in each contact, they use verbal and non-verbal patterns to express their opinion. Thus, the facade is constructed by a set of lines that can be defined as the social value that people claim for themselves from the line that others assume that they have assumed during a given contact. In this study, we have as an example the vocal performance of the *hekura*-shaman used to establish the dialogues necessary to meet the needs and objectives of each *hekura*-shaman present in the ritual.

According to Goffman (2011), the personal facade and the facade of others are rules of the group itself; thus, the definition of the situation determines

12. An experience in Maturacá in 2018, in the Yanonami area, during the classes of the Indigenous Degree, I was able to participate in an *amōamou*. With a cell phone, I recorded a song that caught my attention. The next day, I shared the recording with Yanonami from the *xapono* where I was and from other *xaponos* (Ariabú, Auxiliadora, and União) and asked them to transcribe what they heard, and, to my surprise, I got several versions of the same song.

how many feelings we should have for the established facade, compiling the lines and, consequently, the distribution of feelings. In this way, we understand the facade as a set of lines spread around in social gatherings. Moreover, when people are into the facade, they respond with confidence and conviction. In the *hekuramou*, this confidence and conviction is presented in the performance of the voices of the *hekurapë*- shamans, who use a diversified and rich vocal aesthetic resource during the performance. The *hekura*-spirit chant occurs as follows:

When he smells *ëpena*, when he starts singing with these *hecuras*, like sound (makes the sound), he opens the window up there like this window (points to a window), with the *hekurapë*, he opened there, they have houses with them, then he opens there, as it turns blue, it comes from above and enters here (points to the source) and enters here (points to the mouth), it enters here in the head and here in the tongue, it starts other types of chants, the *hekura* (shaman), he receives from this tape the songs that come from the *hekurapë*, it shines a lot, as if it were light, it becomes a beautiful blue, it comes down, from there it comes down, it comes down. (Cacique Antonio Lopes, translated by Claudio Figueiredo, February, 2017)

Therefore, the facade established in the ritual between the *hekura*-shaman and the *hekura*-spirit is maintained by the performance of the *hekura*-shaman. In this sense, we saw the performance as a virtuosic presentation that aims at interaction, in line with Richard Bauman in the article *Commentary: Foundations in performance* (2014).

Bauman (2014) highlights this virtuosic performance in the details of forms of communication, perspectives of style, textuality, alterities of gestures, timbres, pauses in breathing, grammatical parallelism, direct speech, metrical patterns, among other aspects culturally based on general modes of speaking.

Analyzing the performance of the *hekura*-shaman in the *hekuramou* from the perspective of Richard Bauman and Erving Goffman, we find both the virtuosic mode, with the empowered, shouted, light, soft lines, sung with melodies, and the order of interaction which is currently established by the *toxakësi* (ritual house), where performances are held daily in the *xaponopë* of the Maturacá and Marauíá Rivers. This is a spatial and social structure, an order of interaction in the domain of the joint presence of the performance ritual. In this sense, we present an example experienced by one of the authors of this article, Mbo'esara Esâîã, during a *reahu* in 2011 in the Tabuleiro *xapono*, in the Marauíá region:

Me: *Noriyë, weti naha kahëni ëhë amōa wa taprarema?* Young man: *Ya tapranomi!* Me: *Weti naha? Èhë tama?* Young man: *Awei ipayë, makui ya tapranomi. Yetuhami ya hirema. Kamiyë ya marōhamou tëhë amōani ware a nakarema. Kamani ware a kukema. Kamiyë ihe Kamani a amoamo-prarema, ihi ware a tapoma. Awei. Me: ihiriki!*¹³

The interesting aspect of the analysis of the young Yanonami's speech is that he used the verb *tapoma*, which comes from the verb *tapou* and means "to possess." Thus, the song possessed him, not the other way around. In the translation of the dialogue (in the footnote), we deliberately chose the verb "to stay." However, the verb "to stay" is "*kuo hea*." If we understand, in line with Jonathan Hill, that musicality is a discursive and therefore semiotic process, we will be able to perceive that composition is not about inspiration, but about a naturally disorganized process of signification of sounds (the sound, the noise, or the noise of music). This way of seeking from singing presents an otherness in which the boundaries between subject and object are completely diluted. A leaf falling to the ground, a feather swaying in the breeze, a twig creaking in the woods, the sound of a bird, and even the sound of footsteps heard outside the house are all agency-laden events. In these dialogic forms, alterities (person-person/person/person-thing) are reciprocally recognized in this game of discursive musicality.

From this perspective, we can reproduce Seeger when he wondered why the Kisêdjê sang, but rephrasing the question: "What do the Yanonami sing?" "When do they sing?" What they sing is what defines the boundaries of genre in Yanonami chants, not how they sing or why they sing. One *hekura* sings and the other listens to what he is singing. Listening to what is being sung opens the process of recognizing the *pei maïjo* that affects the patient. In the *amōamou*, singing, as a space for relationships, paves the way for the affinities of the spouses and for the establishment of alliances between families. *Amōa* chants not only refer to elements of nature (twigs, trees, plants, flowers, rivers, etc.), but also to spiritual entities (*hekura, xapori, hutukara*, etc.), household objects (*ara xina, pauxi, hātō*, etc.), animals (*xama, texō, ira, paxo*, etc.), and mythological beings (*aïjakōrariwë, texōriwë, omāwë*, etc.). Moreover, in this dynamic, the *himou* will determine what will be communicated to the *hama*¹⁴ and not how the *himou* will be performed. It is noteworthy that the relationship "that"

13. Me: Friend, how did you compose your song? Young man: I didn't compose it. Me: What do you mean? Isn't it yours? Young man: Yes, it is mine, but I didn't do it. I listened. It (the chant) called me when I was fishing. It "talked" to me. It quickly sang the song to me. Then it stayed with me. Did you understand? Me: Hmm, got it.

14. *Hama* is the visitor from distant lands (Venezuela or Roraima, for example).

refers to the symbolic production and meanings in musicality, but which interact with their respective performances.

Finally, it would be interesting and necessary to resume some native categories about the process of musicality in Yanonami culture and discuss how the musicalization of the world of life, in this culture, undergoes a process of image fixation. For Western culture, music reaches a dimension of feeling, an experience of intimate sensation (peace, tranquility, serenity, horror, hatred, euphoria) that borders on the “spiritual.” In the *amõamou*, the dimension that touches Yanonami humanity is imagistic¹⁵: the chant refers to an image, not to a feeling. Due to these characteristics, it is necessary to retrain our ability to see so that we can see what the Yanonami sing.

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15. This characteristic brings us back to the previous passage in which we mentioned the case of several versions of the same song. In theory, the yanonami chant is an image, and as an image it allows several points of view, as in a painting with several vanishing points to emphasize a visual object.

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