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"THE INKA'S SONG EMANATES FROM MY TONGUE": LEARNING AND PERFORMING SHIPIBO CURING SONGS

Introduction: Amazonian Cosmologies and Music[1]

"…nihuen queyoa seneman / Incabotibi senenibi joyoni / shoquitibi joyoni…" [2]

"…having completely eliminated the stench / together with all the Incas we will form a perfect line / dancing seesaw in a line…"

When Senen Bita, an elderly Shipibo-Konibo[3] *médico*, started to sing, a hush fell over the assembled family members, and the

[1] A draft version of this paper was presented by the author at the 39th World Conference of the ICTM in Vienna, July 5-11, 2007 with the title: "The Inca's Song Emanates from my Tongue: Composition vs. Oral Tradition in Western Amazonian Curing Songs". The fieldwork I conducted in the Peruvian Amazon was facilitated by grants from the University of Vienna, an employment at the British Centre of Pucallpa and finally a 'DOC' grant from the Austrian Academy of Sciences. The Vienna Phonogrammarchiv provided technical support and all my recordings are archived there. I would like to thank Gerhard Kubik, Elke Mader, Bruno Illius, Fernando Santos-Granero, Anthony Seeger, María Cortez Mondragón and Dale A. Olsen for our fruitful discussions regarding the topics treated here. I would also like to thank Paul Bergmans and Yvonne Schaffler for helping with constructive critics on earlier drafts of the manuscript, and Martina Koegeler for correcting it. Finally, I express my deep gratitude to the native communities on the Ucayali river.

[2] Passage from a curing song by the highly esteemed, deceased Neten Huitá, *cit. in* Illius (1987: 322). Illius translates into German: "Wenn der »nihue« weggeschafft ist,/werde ich mich mit den Inkas/zusammen in eine Reihe stellen/und in einer Reihe mit ihnen langsam tanzen". Translation to English by the author.

[3] The Shipibo-Konibo (henceforth Shipibo) are a pano-speaking indigenous group living mainly along the Ucayali River in the peruvian lowlands. They number up to 50.000, and besides people still living in subsistence in more remote communities, the majority has adopted a modernized lifestyle, some of them li-

young man who had come to consult the healer. Senen Bita had drunk a psychoactive plant preparation called *ayawaska*[4], or *nishi* in Shipibo language, about half an hour ago. As people fell silent, the omnipresent nighttime orchestra of rainforest animal sounds provided the acoustical backdrop for Senen Bita's voice. He sang about plants and animals, calling upon them, and about opening worlds in heavenly light. Soon his voice changed to an impressive falsetto, at exact pitches, reminding me, the European listener, of a well trained opera soprano. In his lyrics, he mentioned the *inka* people. *Inka* doctors and *inka* nurses worked in their hospital on a shining metal apparatus. The *inka* people were singing and dancing, and later, Senen Bita explained that he had imitated the *inka*s' songs, and that they were essentially powerful *médicos*. They would be able to cure the young man who was dozing in front of the healer.

Nowadays, the importance of singing in Amazonian indigenous and some mestizo societies is not to be questioned anymore. Numerous studies within the past thirty years have specifically dealt with singing for power. Seeger (1987) describes music performance as the very foundation of the social construction and worldview of the Suyá group in central Brazil. Likewise, Hill (1992, 1993) analyzes the meaning of ritual chants in Venezuelan Wakuénai societies. More recently, Olsen (1996) indicates the importance of singing in his book on the Venezuelan Warao, subtitled "Song People of the Rain Forest". The influence of singing on individual and social identity as well as health among South American tropical forest cultures is an established fact and a growing issue in both anthropology and ethnomusicology. In the Brazilian Amazon, for example, Menezes Bastos and some of his students (Piedade 2004, 2013, among others), have been intensively researching the role of

(3) ving from tourism, others from logging; many young people are studying in the town of Pucallpa or in Lima. For more details on the Shipibo see Illius (1987, 1999) and Brabec de Mori (2015).

4 *Ayawaska* is a liquid obtained from cooking at least two plants together for several hours, usually the *ayawaska* vine (Banisteriopsis caapi) and leaves of *chakruna* (Psychotria viridis). The resulting concentrated brew is then ingested, producing hallucinogenic effects, broadly described in the literature, see Labate and Araújo (2004). About its history, see Brabec de Mori (2011), for its use outside of the rainforests Labate and Jungaberle (2011).

music in selected societies. Menezes Bastos (2004: 5) explains "that music occupies a privileged space among the indigenous societies in the South American lowlands, being one of the most important keys to sociability and having strong connections to the cosmology and philosophy of the groups in the region" (author's translation). This was elaborated further in the more recent volume edited by Brabec de Mori, Lewy and García (2015). Within the Peruvian Amazon, vocal forms in the context of healing and sorcery have been treated as important factors in lowland groups' cosmologies and especially in "ayahuasca shamanism" (see Dobkin de Rios and Katz 1975, Luna 1986, 1992 on urban mestizo populations, Brown 1986 on the Shuar, Illius 1987 and Tournon 1991 on the Shipibo-Konibo, Townsley 1993 on the Yaminawa, Whitten and Whitten 1998 on the Naporuna; Gow 2001 on the Yine, among others).

The idea of amerindian perspectivism (Viveiros de Castro 1992, 1997; Lima 1999) is based upon an animistic perception of the cosmos as attributed to Amazonian indigenous societies by many authors (Baer 1994, Gow 2001, Descola 1992, 2005). Every language group and even many families or individuals in the Amazon basin perceive their world in a very specific or individual way. According to perspectivism, the world is perceived differently from different points of view. Although this seems obvious, a basic animistic construct assumes that animals, plants and geographic entities like rivers, lakes or mountains[5] are supposed to also perceive the world actively. From their perspective and with their consciousness, these non-humans perceive the world like human beings would do and consider themselves to be human beings. This means that within every society of non-humans, these entities perceive themselves as the main agents in their world, just as we human beings do. Each perspective on the world, from each society (human and non-human), thus constitutes a perspective on the world which does

[5] In Western Amazonia, geographical entities are mentioned to a lesser extent than in Andean highland cultures. However, some highland entities, e.g. the *Huaringa* lakes, are well known in the lowland area, and the Asháninka and Yanesha people also know many geographical entities (Santos-Granero 2004). Viveiros de Castro (1997) and Lima (1999) mainly refer to human-animal relationships, but Viveiros de Castro (1997: 102) indicates "…that in Western Amazonian cultures […] the personification of plants seems not to be less important than [the personification] of animals" (author's translation).

not necessarily appear similar to others. With this concept, many different "natures" emerge, which can be subsumed as "multinaturalism" (Viveiros de Castro 1997: 106-107). Descola (1992) and Lima (1999), among others, explain how social relationships between humans and non-humans are made possible. It is mainly the task of specialized "shamans" to relate and coordinate between these multiple natures and manifold societies.

How this concept can be implemented in music research is shown for example by Uzendoski *et al.* (2005), who analyze the relations of female Naporuna singers with animals and spirits from a perspectivistic point of view. In many passages of their song lyrics, the singers refer to animal qualities or identify themselves with animals. The authors show that music performance can be powerful in many different contexts. Therefore, they apply the term "shamanic practice" (Uzendoski *et al.* 2005: 657-658). "Shamanic" and related terms are established in anthropological literature and the authors use it in accordance with the common definition: they connect the term to communication with non-humans and to the area of medicine, as they recount that "shamanic actions often elicit counter-responses from rival shamans or spirits (Whitehead and Wright 2004); women's songs are part of this field of relations, thought to influence life, death, sickness, and health" (Uzendoski *et al.* 2005: 658).

I remain hesitant in using the term "shamanism" and related vocabulary because of its manifold popular connotations, its etic imposition on, and lack of precise meaning within the described Western Amazonian indigenous societies[6]. Using an appropriate emic term is fairly impossible, as, for example, curing specialists are often addressed with technical names (Shipibo *yobé*, for instance, denotes both the specialist as well as the objects he is working with, in that case magical darts). Most indigenous people on the Ucayali river use the Spanish term *médico* to generally address such curing or inflicting specialists and *curar* for describing their action. Within this context, *medicina* is used to designate the whole complex of indigenous (and mestizo) transformative concepts, in-

[6] For a profound critic on the presumed universal applicability of "shaman"-related terminology see Martínez González (2009).

cluding the treatment (*tratamiento*) of physical, psychological, social and cultural problems.

This nevertheless reinterpreted and laden terminology around *medicina* bears some advantages compared to "shamanism": it is closer to native discourse, as most curing specialists self-identify as *médicos* (while almost exclusively those who work with tourists call themselves *chamanes*). Additionally, it carries less romantic images, and finally, it includes a certain intentionality: *medicina* is connected to transforming a condition which is perceived as negative towards a more desirable condition and it always includes the *purpose* of curing. Therefore, I prefer to use the term *medicina* rather than "shamanism". However, there is also a drawback: treatment and curing (*curación*) are meant to correct conditions which are regarded negative (e.g. illnesses, sorcery, or bad luck) but also have a dangerous aspect, because inflicting and sorcery techniques are likewise included in *medicina*[7]. One has to keep in mind that these reinterpreted terms regarding *medicina* have a strictly positive meaning in Western society, but an ambivalent one in Amazonia: *curar* means "to heal" as well as "to bewitch" (cf. Whitehead and Wright 2004, Brabec de Mori 2009).

The medical songs or curing songs performed by Western Amazonian specialist *médico*s reveal richness in musical structures, lyrics, performance and contextual implications. Their performance is related to many topics, such as mechanisms of efficiency, associations with the indigenous cosmos, and history (mythology), group identity, as well as the individual singer's identity, communication between the living and the dead, and many more.

Aims and Methods

In this article, I will focus on the processes of learning how to sing – that is, of acquiring curing songs – as well as on the musical

[7] Although this seems paradoxical, a person who hires a sorcerer to harm somebody, would probably perceive his current condition (e.g. feeling envy all day long) worse than the condition she or he would wish to obtain (e.g. feeling superior to the victim). Furthermore, much of the inflicting is undertaken in "defense", as a part of the curing of sorcery, when the damage (*daño*) has to be redirected to the original caster.

phenomena occurring during the current performance. The native people's communication with beings surrounding them is tightly bound to regarding these as self-reflecting, more or less intelligent agents. As I will show, musical learning and performance addresses such non-humans. A closer view on the singer's subject positionality during the iteration of musical structures of curing songs can help to understand the role non-humans play in Shipibo *medicina* and further on, in the Shipibo "lived world" (Gow 2001: 26).

In order to unfold my argument, I will first embark on a cultural analysis of the contexts, origins, and functions of the songs. Doing so, I will mainly refer to what the singers themselves told me about their art. These indigenous explanations provide a synthesis of my field research in the region. The fieldwork was conducted mainly from an intracultural point of view, combined with interethnic comparative data (cf. Kubik 2004: 53-60). The cultural analysis will include indigenous terminology with regards to cosmology and musical phenomena, an exploration of the ontological status of a "song", and a detailed description of how the singers are supposed to acquire their songs from non-humans. Thereafter, I am going to present and analyze four Shipibo curing songs. Their melodic form, excerpts from their lyrics, and their performance modalities will be compared. Discussing the similarities and differences between these songs, I seek to explore if an analysis of performance could shed more light on the songs' meaning than an analysis of their form[8].

Curing Songs, Contexts and Terminology

Throughout Western Amazonia, a specialized medicinal technique is highly popular today, *ayawaska* drinking. "Ayahuasca shamanism" is growing in popularity, not only because of the propaganda (sometimes involuntarily) caused by visitors and anthropologists publishing about the phenomenon and finding approval in Western "neo-shamanic" or esoteric scenes, but also within the

[8] It is not the aim of the present paper to give any psychological, medical or other scientific explanation on the effectiveness of the mentioned curing songs or other indigenous medical concepts.

local population. In many cases curing events and the corresponding songs are performed while the *médico* is under the influence of *ayawaska*. The performance of curing songs, however, is not necessarily connected to the ingestion of the drug. In all the indigenous societies I visited in the field, curing songs are regarded to be efficient also if sung without the influence of any drug, and also in daylight (*ayawaska* drinking always takes place during night-time). Furthermore, efficiency is also assumed when songs are whistled, and the *médico* only mentally pronouncing the words or lyrics (cf. Olsen 1996: 259-260 on the Warao *hoa* songs). In Shipibo everyday life, the performance of curing songs (sung or whistled) occurs without the use of *ayawaska* as often as during *ayawaska* sessions. The four examples I present in this paper were sung under *ayawaska* influence. Both *médicos* who sang the examples declared that "singing is easier" (*más facil se canta*) when inebriate.

In Shipibo curing sessions, songs from three native genres are most frequently used. Although each Shipibo singer may present a proper terminology, which could differ from the one used here, the following categories are understood by all and accepted by most Shipibo individuals: *mashá* are repetitive songs with a thriving four-beat rhythm usually performed at drinking feasts with a round-dance performance; *bewá* are songs in a slower rhythm that can be sung alone, in small groups, at festivities or in private contexts; and *ikaro* are performed in a style more unusual to Shipibo aesthetics, with a salient pulse and often ascending and descending melodic lines. There are more genres outside the curing complex, like *shiro bewá* (joking songs), *nawarin* (a specific dance), *ai ikά* (female rite of passage songs), and many more. However, performances of songs other than the *mashá*, *bewá* or *ikaro* type is extremely rare in the medical context. The *ikaro* genre, on the other hand, is never performed outside a curing context. This is interesting, because throughout the Peruvian lowlands mainly mestizos, but also many indigenous people, use this term to refer to any song related to the ingestion of *ayawaska* in order to cure (cf. Luna 1986: 90f and 1992, Bustos 2008, among others). However, most Shipibo people use this term only for a certain formal song category which can also be performed without *ayawaska* ingestion,

though exclusively within a curing context. Usually, *ikaro* songs are performed for certain purposes. For example, to retrieve a "lost soul", an *ikaro manchari* (Shipibo *ratetaki ikáʼ*) can be performed. Love magic can be applied by singing *warmikara* (Sh. *nexati*). For defensive actions, in order to protect oneself or a client from attacks by enemy *médicos*, songs called *arkana* (Sh. *paanati*) can be sung. Sorcery can finally be achieved by performing *shitana* songs (Sh. *yotoai* or *boman*)[9].

In order to analyze the ontological status of a "song", we first have to take a look at the Shipibo understanding of what a "song" is, as compared to "singing". It appears that the traditional European ideas of "singing" as an ability and "the song" as (a part of) knowledge cannot be found in deeper analysis of Shipibo concepts[10].

"Singing" (as an activity) cannot be translated exactly into Shipibo language. Usually, the following terms are applied: *bewati*, *iti*, and *bewá onanti*. The most adequate term for "singing" seems to be *bewati*, literally meaning "to do *bewá*", "to do song". This verb is related to the noun *bewá*, which however denotes a certain kind of song. Thus, it excludes for example "singing *mashá*-type songs",

[9] In the present paper I give four examples performed by two closely related Shipibo singers. An intercultural comparison of seven performances of the same *ikaro* form was undertaken elsewhere (Brabec de Mori 2011). There it appears that the similarities and differences in performance between different indigenous groups do not differ significantly from the similarities and differences observed here in the two brothers' performances.

[10] For the terms mentioned in the following paragraph, the dictionary by Loriot *et al.* (1993) indicates: p. 108: "*behuá s. behuacan* 1: canción […] 2: himno 3: música […] *béhuati v. i. behuaa*: cantar"; p. 251: "*mashátiti v. i. mashática*: hacer una marcha típica acompañada de una ronda"; p. 207: *"iti v. i. icá* 1: ser: estar [without reference to singing]"; p. 301-302: "*onánti v.t. onana* 1: saber: entender […] 2: conocer […] 3: aprender"; p. 97: "*átipanti* v.i. y v.t. *átipana* del quech. *atipay*, *atipan* poder: poder". One can see that the ILV's missionaries who edited this dictionary did not spend much energy in contextualizing these terms. They translated them in a way favourable for their purposes, thus equating the indigenous and European concepts. The ILV had most influence on the Spanish discourse among Shipibo people because of their monopoly on *educación bilingüe* (cf. Illius 1999: 63-66). Usually, translation problems occur, when Shipibo *médicos* talk in Spanish about their apprenticeship and the origins of their "songs" using the terms as introduced by the ILV. I could understand these concepts only when the *médicos* talked to me in their own language which I had then learned.

which consequently is expressed with *masháiti*, "to do *mashá*". In native discourse, *bewati* (or *masháiti* or *ikarai*) is seldom used but usually substituted with *iti*, a modal verb for intransitive processes, such as "to be" or "to do" (depends on context). "I am going to be/stay over there" and "I am going to sing over there" are both expressed correctly with *eara oa ibanon*. Another possible way to translate "singing" (as an ability) is *bewá onanti*. This is usually employed in contexts like saying "she or he has learned singing," *janra bewá onanke*, although it literally means "she or he knows a set of *bewá*-type songs". Finally, "she or he can sing" can be expressed with *janra bewai atipanke*, but this means literally "she or he is now able or willing to sing a *bewá*-type song". Therefore, "singing" in Shipibo etymology is neither defined as the process of producing a song nor as an ability. It signifies the knowledge of a set of songs. "Singing" is knowledge, not an ability. Consequently, "the song" (*bewá, mashá, ikaro*) is understood by Shipibo not as an abstract piece of repertoire. It signifies the one and only manifestation of "singing", that is a current and actual performance.

Acquiring Curing Songs

Bearing in mind these terminological issues it becomes clear that an investigation of transmission concepts cannot be easily undertaken by asking some questions in Spanish. Unlike drinking songs or love songs, for example, curing songs are not only learned by listening and singing along at parties or with grandparents. *Médicos* usually mention two processes of learning: most singers explain that they learned singing (along with other medical techniques) from a teacher, say, their father, uncle, etc.[11], that is, by oral and aural tradition. They tell that they accompanied the teachers during their curing practice, and when songs were involved, they sang along in unison, thus internalizing the teachers' song repertoire.

[11] I use masculine terms with respect to the *médicos* because about 92 % of practitioners are males: 47 men and 4 women who practice or have practiced as *médicos* appear in my field recordings. Women embark on equally important duties in medical contexts, but are almost never involved in the role of a *médica* as described in the present survey. However, female practice of *ayawaska* drinking and corresponding singing is growing in modern Shipibo society (see Brabec de Mori 2014).

Some *médicos* also declare that they were self-taught, that they learned their art without guidance by any human teacher. However, often in the same instant, most *médicos* categorically present a second transmission concept: They insist that they received the songs from spiritual beings, in particular from plants' animating forces (the "mothers", *madres* of plants or plant people). Mostly this transmission takes place in dreams or provoked visionary experience. When performing, so they tell, they perceive these beings who are also singing, and the *médicos* imitate their music.

This seemingly paradoxical observation is well known among Amazonian and South American people. Practitioners of indigenous medicine or sorcery often refer to certain spiritual or mythological entities as their teachers or sources of knowledge and power; see for example Schaffler (2009: 289-293) for *servidores* in the Dominican Republic or Olsen (1996: 197) for the Warao *bahanarotu*). This phenomenon is usually viewed as a legitimation strategy. Wörrle investigates this strategy in the Ecuadorian highlands and concludes that the healers use cultural prefabricates ("kulturelle Fertigteile", Wörrle 2002: 101) to legitimate their knowledge to their patients and peers, because it seems that it is not sufficient to have learned the techniques from human teachers. This is a common and possibly valid explanation for such paradoxical views on learning. However, in my point of view, it can be promising to consider such transmission concepts more literally, because further insights into indigenous concepts of learning and performing as well as the role of the teaching entities could be gained by this. Learning to sing is a process embedded in a cosmos which allows bodily transformations as well as active consciousness among and social relationships with non-human agents. I suggest that singing not only reproduces and explains this cosmos for the listeners, but also takes part in recreating and shaping this cosmos through "correct" (*jakon*) performance.

In most of the cases, Western Amazonian *médicos* undergo some years of training defined by "diets" (*dietas*, *samá*). Such a diet consists of long retreats into the forest or in closed houses. Therefore, the *médico*-to-be intentionally gets in contact with non-humans, mainly by ingesting extracts. Usually vegetal preparations serve this

purpose, but sometimes also substances obtained from animals or artificial products like perfumes are used. With the proper preparation ingested, he has to obey certain dietary restrictions for a while – weeks, months, or years – depending on the length he must "diet", which is determined by the chosen preparation, the family tradition, and his purpose[12].

The apprentice, for his "vegetal way of life" during the diet, is expected to dream, have visions in waking hours, and to hear, see or feel some presence of or messages from the beings around him[13]. The student shall learn to perceive the world from a different point of view. Indigenous perspectivism (Viveiros de Castro 1997) indicates that animal or plant species and geographic entities are regarded to perceive themselves as humans with human consciousness. Human beings like us, in their perception, may appear either as their predators, their prey, or something more neutral. The apprentice has to deal, for example, with the ingested plant's animating forces. In the regional Spanish language, the term "mother" is used to refer to these forces, for example *la madre del toé* (the Brugmansia's mother). The word *jonibo* (persons, people) used in Shipibo language underlines more precisely that these non-humans, within their perception, understand themselves as persons, like the *kanachiari jonibo* (Brugmansia people). During his diet, the student contacts these people. Within his dreams or visions, he is being transformed into one of them, in order to learn their techniques and songs from within their point of view. He learns how they behave, how they perceive the world, how they perceive other people (especially humans like us), how they are able to manipulate people and finally how they sing. After accomplishing his dieting period, he is supposed to be able to recognize

[12] The complex around the diet has been described to some extent in almost every publication about Western Amazonian peoples, for instance see Illius (1987), Tournon (2002) or LeClerc (2003) on the Shipibo-Konibo, Luna (1986) on the mestizo population, Frank (1994) on the Kakataibo, among others. Although with different peoples, groups, families and individuals many particularities can be observed, the fact of application, the durations, the overall modalities as well as expected results are fairly constant in the Peruvian lowlands.

[13] Among the Shipibo, *ayawaska* or other psychoactive substances are usually not ingested during a diet.

and contact these *jonibo* at will. In fact, he applies an "anthropological" method: he conducts fieldwork with participant observation (e.g., among the *xooná jonibo*, the Ficus people).

One can distinguish different sources of knowledge, or different teaching instances, as perceived by Shipibo *médicos*: Plants and the plant *jonibo* are most often used and contacted for didactic reasons. However, the plant *jonibo* may also provide contact with other beings. The term *yoshin* (demon, spirit) generally denotes beings that do not manifest directly within the daily human perspective, for instance forest ogres, carriers of certain diseases, and underwater or cloud inhabitants. *Yoshin* is understood more negatively, which may be due to missionary influence. The animating forces of animals and inanimate beings like rivers or mountains may be addressed with both *jonibo* or *yoshin*, depending on the individual. Also inanimate instances may be contacted, even artifacts, as one can "diet" *gasolina*, "diet black magic books" or even "diet the bible". However, the main source of knowledge is still accessed via plant "dieting".

A *médico* may also study among other human beings. *Médicos* sometimes visit neighboring or more distant societies for extensive spans of time. There they live and work among these different indigenous or mestizo people, learning with and from them in a way very similar to "dieting" plants. Very prominent sources of knowledge are legendary human beings who, as my research associates indicated, did not join the common human surroundings, but choose to live on their own in distant past[14]. Among these are the *chaikoni jonibo*, people who share the lifestyle that today's Shipibo attribute to their forefathers, a highly ideologized, "correct" indigenous behavior (cf. Illius 1987: 133-135). The *inka* also pertain to this faction, as they are not thought as related to any living Quechua-speaking population. They represent the pre-Columbian Quechua elite who, as Shipibo understand it, retired to remote places to hide from the invading Spaniards and waiting for their

[14] The phenomenon of people once living together with humans and then, during the course of history, retiring into "magically protected" lands can be observed in many societies and was called "the Fairy Syndrome" by Evelyne Puchegger-Ebner; personal communication, 2007; see also Brabec de Mori (forthcoming).

time to fulfill the *reconquista*[15]. Both *chaikoni* and *inka* are regarded very powerful *médicos*. There are certain plants one may "diet" to gain contact with these legendary humans. The *inka* are understood as especially highly "civilized" people who maintain a complete medical system with hospitals, doctors and pharmacies within their hideouts. In many Shipibo songs, these *inka jonibo* are frequently mentioned as indicators of intraethnic correctness. Their leader, who is referred to as "the *inka*" is regarded a cultural hero and is sometimes also mentioned synonymous with the Christian God. *Non rios inka*, "our God Inka" is commonly mentioned in nostalgic songs as the one who taught cultural values long time ago.

When a Shipibo singer describes a village and its surroundings with sung verses like *inkan mai masenen*, "on the Inka's land", a close relationship between Shipibo and legendary *inka* is indicated. In song, even Shipibo people themselves may be compared to *inka*, for example, *inkan koros ponyaman* literally means "inka's cross arms", and is understood metaphorically as a strong Shipibo man who embraces a woman[16]. One can derive from such poetic metaphors that the *inka* indicate intraculturally relevant behavior and can be used synonymously with correctly behaving Shipibo people. Many Shipibo individuals interpret their "nation" being descendant of the *inka*[17]. However, in the context of curing song apprenticeship, the *inka jonibo* are understood to live in their own world aspect (perspective, *kano*) and resemble a high reputation as instances of power and knowledge.

When I use the term "perspective" to denote the topological position of non-humans (like the plant *jonibo* or the legendary *inka*), I do so because there are clear connections to be drawn. Viveiros

[15] Throughout Western Amazonia, the *inka* is regarded a cultural hero in most indigenous groups' historic understanding. See for example Weiss (1975) on the Asháninka (Campa), Illius (1987, 1999) on the Shipibo-Konibo, Frank (1994) on the Kakataibo (Uni), among others. The topic of an forthcoming *reconquista*, triggered by *inkas* issuing forth from their hideouts is also common among tupí-speaking populations (Ochoa Abaurre 2002).

[16] These lines are taken from my recordings, archived under files D 5427, D 5230 and D 5334 at the Vienna Phonogrammarchiv.

[17] This is most obvious in the well known story about the Shipibo *diluvio*, translated for example in Roe (1982: 49-50) or Bertrand-Ricoveri (2010), and also appearing in my recordings D 5461 and D 5549.

de Castro formulated the concepts of perspectivism and multinaturalism in Portuguese, in a European language. Rather surprisingly, Shipibo language also knows two terms to explain these concepts: the more technically oriented *kano*, which I translate with "perspective" and the ontological *niwe*, which I translate as "multi-nature". *Kano* is a prominent word in Shipibo curing songs. It is commonly circumscribed by Shipibo *médicos* as the "way" (*bai*), the "light" (*nete*), or the "air around" or "atmosphere" (*niwe*) which is constructed or reconstructed by the *médicos* during curing sessions. It denotes the perception and acting space, a world aspect, a landscape inhabited by humans, demons, animals, plants, mountains, angels, or other entities. *Kano* denotes a technical aspect; this is the medium the *medico* is working in and working with. The term *kano* can be used as a noun as well as an intransitive (*kanoai*) or transitive verb (*kanotai*). If the singer is creating a way, a world or a landscape to visualize or to put things into order, he does *kanoai*. If an entity is disturbing or influencing the patient or the singer (as for trying to get "attached", *naikia*), this entity does *kanotai*. The danger of getting "attached" to a demon (*yoshin*) is constituted by a process of transgression: the *yoshin* forces the patient into its own world aspect (*niwe*), transforming the patient into a *yoshin*, and thus causing illness, madness or death (cf. Lima 1999: 123-4).

The other prominent term is *niwe*, which denotes the ontological aspect of perspectivism, the respective "nature". Usually translated as "wind", "air", "aura", or "individual essence" (Illius 1992: 63), it bears a manifold significance. Illius analyzes the aspects of *niwe* in different contexts, especially in curing, where it can be viewed as a medium of influence carried by powerful beings. The manifestation of *kanotai* (when a malevolent entity has been getting "attached" to a person) can be perceived when the patient's *niwe* shows certain qualities of the involved entity (Illius 1992: 67-70). This influence can be removed with specific techniques including certain songs (Illius 1992: 71-5). However, *niwe* is also used to describe the ontological sphere around any being. The "nature" around the *xooná jonibo*, for example, their surroundings as perceived by themselves within their perspective, can be called their *niwe* (*xooná niwe*).

In a group discussion[18], three Shipibo singers explained the structure of the world in terms highly congruent with Viveiros de Castro's multinaturalism and perspectivism (without any suggestions from myself). They tried to make clear that every species of plants, animals, and spirits resides in an own world aspect. They stated that these were *not* different worlds (*netema riki*). The appropriate term in Shipibo was *niwe*. There is a *niwe* wherein the respective peoples and spirits dwell, like on their own "planet" (*planeta*, which they correspondingly derive as a synonym for *niwe* and which they do not understand astronomically).

An apprentice who has finally completed subsequent diets (and therefore is acknowledged as a *médico* by his peers) is considered to be able to "switch" perspectives at will. In his songs, he can summon the corresponding entities, enter into their *niwe* (nature, surroundings) and thus transform into one of them intentionally. He then perceives the world from within these entities' *kano* (perspective). When performing a curing song for a patient, a *médico* sings in a doubled perspective, thus manipulating his own subject positionality. Within, for example, the *inka*'s perspective (*inkan kanon*) he sings along with the *inka* people (which only he is able to see and hear). According to many *médicos*, the *inka*'s song, as perceived within the *inka*s' *kano*, "sounds" more beautiful than any human song. Anyway, the entities' song "sounds" different than the song the *médico* performs simultaneously in the human perspective. Within this human perspective, he can be seen and heard by others, and appears as the singing *médico*, attending his patient. The song appears as a "bodily-exterior manifestation of [...] knowledge and power" (Gow 2001: 144). This parallel concept of song performance (among the Yine) is explained in detail by Gow (2001: 144-52)[19].

[18] Recorded interview D 5576.

[19] Parallelisms are considered beautiful in Shipibo aesthetics and poetics, as was shown by Illius (1999: 161). Shipibo singing *médicos* consider themselves parallel beings, partly human and partly non-human, who simultaneously exist in two landscapes while performing their curing sessions. The songs they produce are considered human songs and non-human music at the same time. Most *médicos* are healing specialists who also might inflict disorders by the same means.

Alternative Ways of Acquiring Songs

It may happen that the Shipibo singer, while performing a curing song, is thrown out of his proper perspective by malevolent forces, most likely by enemy *médicos*[20]. It frequently occurs during curing sessions that the singer is attacked and he may defend himself with corresponding songs (*arkana* or *paanati*). In fact, *médicos* in the Western Amazon are *always* attacked by other *médicos* with malevolent intentions, and the curing *médico* himself is *never* the aggressor. Here we can see another important and qualifying aspect depending on the chosen position of the subject between various *médicos* and patients. While curing sorcery, despite one's purpose of healing, one will involuntarily be positioned as "aggressor" when redirecting the inflicted damage (*daño*). If the aggressor is more powerful than the defending *médico*, who therefore is unable to repel the attack, the defending *médico* will stop singing, his voice dying down to humming, whispering or whistling before it ends. This is considered to be very dangerous. In the worst case the enemy may capture the *médico*'s song. This actually *is* the worst case, because being deprived of "his song", the *medico* will fall ill, cannot defend himself against other aggressors and sooner or later will die if he is not cured by a peer. In the case of being cured, the *médico* in charge of healing him then retrieves his song, by the means of another battle. The non-human entities contacted by the *médicos* are not expected to actively take on one's side or another's. They are regarded amoral beings, who do not care about struggles, misunderstandings and reciprocal violence among human *médicos*.

Consequently, the defending *médico*, if unsuccessful, is deprived of his song. Probably he still remembers a certain corpus of musical structures he has learned from his father, for example. Although he can still sing these songs, he is no longer able to perform properly. He is no longer able to contact and imitate the corresponding

[20] The *médicos* are engaged in a permanent micro-war among themselves. This struggle is an implicit phenomenon in Amazonian curing and appears in different manifestations in various cultural settings; see the volume edited by Whitehead and Wright (2004). This phenomenon can be seen as a (fairly violent) regulatory mechanism in order to maintain an equilibrium of power in a society based on reciprocity of alimentation, sexuality and, of course, violence.

non-human entities anymore in order to "charge his song" with meaning and power.

Now the victorious enemy has obtained the ability to contact these particular entities. The capturer, in turn, may perform the musical forms which *he* had learned from his teacher, within his "school" or tradition. But now the capturer is able to "charge" his performances with the captured meaning and power, singing in a style similar to that of his victim. It is often mentioned by *médicos* that they can detect an evil sorcerer (which depends on the point of view) because he does not sing his "own" songs, but seems to "imitate" the songs of other *médicos*.

"The song", in this definition as an ability to contact certain allies, is understood by Shipibo and other Western Amazonian societies as if it were an "organ" of the *médico*'s body. Beside "his song", a powerful *médico* may also have an "organ" for storing magical darts (*virote*, *yobé*) within his chest, which is called *mariri* in Quechua, and *kenyon* in Shipibo (see Brown 2006, Chaumeil 1998 for the high importance of dart warfare in the northern Peruvian and Ecuadorian rainforests). Such organs are acquired through diets, and people who do not accomplish the corresponding diets do not have such organs at their disposal. These organs are susceptible to illness, much like a liver or stomach. Any *médico* can suffer from "a distortion of my song" (*Mi canto está torcido*) or from "a dislocation of my darts" (*Mis virote no estan en su sitio*). Such disorders may be cured by diets, but if they are caused by a competing *médico*'s attack, the problem should be brought before a sympathizing or related *médico* in order to be cured.

This leads to yet another method of acquiring such organs (like songs or *mariri*). A teacher, usually old, tired or aware of approaching his end, may surrender these organs voluntarily to his apprentice or a related peer. The organ, that is the ability to sing properly, is then held by the apprentice, and the teacher who gave it up, lost it for good. We can see that among the Shipibo, knowledge and power, as manifested in the ability to sing proper curing songs, can be acquired, but also lost, much like an object.

Example Songs and Musical Analysis

During my fieldwork with the Shipibo, I recorded 57 curing sessions, along with dozens curing songs sung in a simulative setting, and I attended many curing sessions without making recordings. It became obvious to me, after analyzing these songs and experiences, that many *médicos* were singing in very similar ways. Some of them apparently sang the same songs as others, often even with similar lyrics. I was able to verify this assumption by transcribing and comparing various performances of curing songs. Especially the *ikaro* category caught my eye, because the comparison of my transcriptions reveal that only a few different structural patterns exist within this category, which are performed by Shipibo, but also by Yine, Kukama, Naporuna and mestizo *médicos*.

The remainder of this article is devoted to the analysis of four *ikaro* performances, sung by the Shipibo *médicos* and brothers Gilberto and Benjamín Mahua and recorded on different occasions. The singers told me that they both had learned singing from their father and their two older brothers, who were also *médicos*. Among the Shipibo, family tradition is one of the vital factors for becoming a *médico*, as seen by their learning processes.

I transcribed the pieces in common five-line staff notation, because my purpose is to show and compare the melodic progress in the four examples. I refrain from the use of extended diacritics, because any notation would be insufficient to describe the whole performance in satisfying accuracy. On the contrary, I will try to gain advantage of this discrepancy to underline the differences that emerge from analyzing the transcription and the performance.

The first two examples, presented here as figures 1 and 2, were performed for the purpose of soul retrieval, known as *manchari*. Figures 3 and 4, on the other hand, refer to songs performed for love magic, known as *warmikara*. Each song is fairly long, between six and twenty minutes. The present transcriptions show only one sequence which is repeated various times to form the entire song. These repetitions usually reveal minor variations in phrasing and thereafter in the length of each sequence. The lyrics are different in each sequence, although references to lines which were already sung, as well as repeated phrases and parallelisms, often occur.

First I would like to point out some similarities between these examples[21]. To facilitate comparison, I have marked several processes alphabetically. As I remark in the following sentences, each process appears in all the examples:

1) Process A marks the sequences' introductory phrases, with higher pitch than the rest, usually repeated, and after four or five beats presenting a very salient interval of a rising third.

2) Process B indicates a rapidly descending line from high (A) to low pitch (C). The process includes one to three text phrases and descends by 15, 17 or 19 semitones.

3) Process C is characterized by a series of phrases sung in very low pitch, connecting B with D.

4) Process D marks a secondary melodic-dynamic peak that mostly shows structural similarities with A and B in a short and less intense way. D may repeatedly appear during E, usually becoming less salient towards the end.

5) Process E marks a melodic-dynamic flattening out towards the sequences' ending.

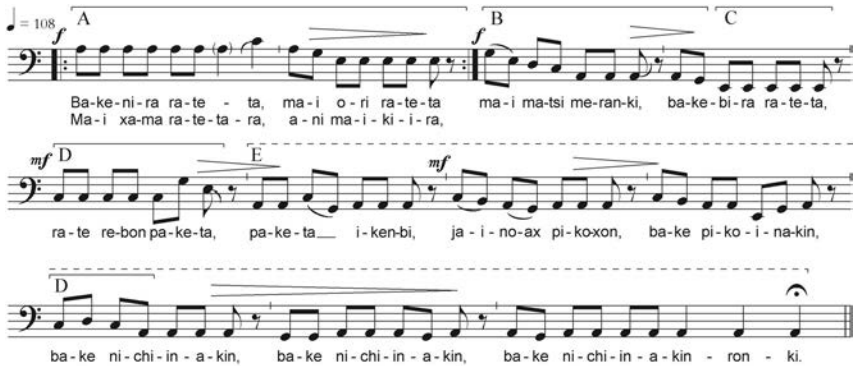

Fig. 1: The manchari *song by Gilberto, 2006. Transcription by the author, recording archived at the Vienna Phonogrammarchiv (D 5569).*

[21] Within the musical corpus I recorded in the field, three different forms of *ikaro* appear to be in use. The examples shown here stem from the same form, which is most often applied. This *ikaro* form has been in use for at least 45 years, because Lucas (1970) presents a transcription of a "doctor's song", recorded by Donald Lathrap in 1964, revealing a congruent melodic line at exactly the same pitch as our fourth example. Lucas comments "Both Shipibo and Conibo medicine men use the song, however, and both men and women use it. Each medicine man or woman uses his own words, but all the words are generally alike" (Lucas 1970: 160).

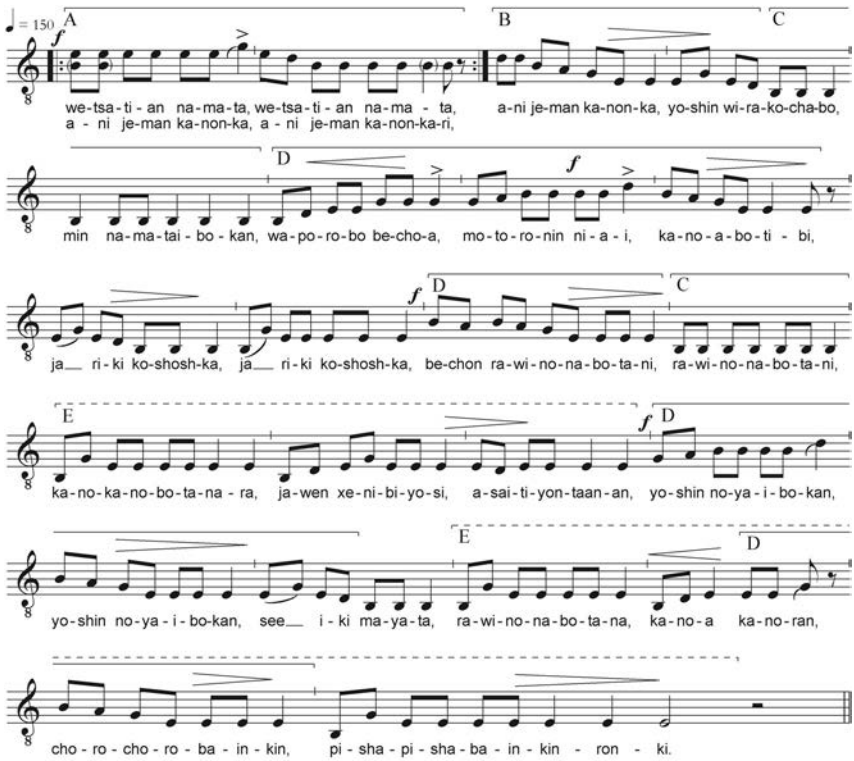

Fig. 2: The manchari *song by Benjamin, 2004. Transcription by the author, recording archived at the Vienna Phonogrammarchiv (D 5253).*

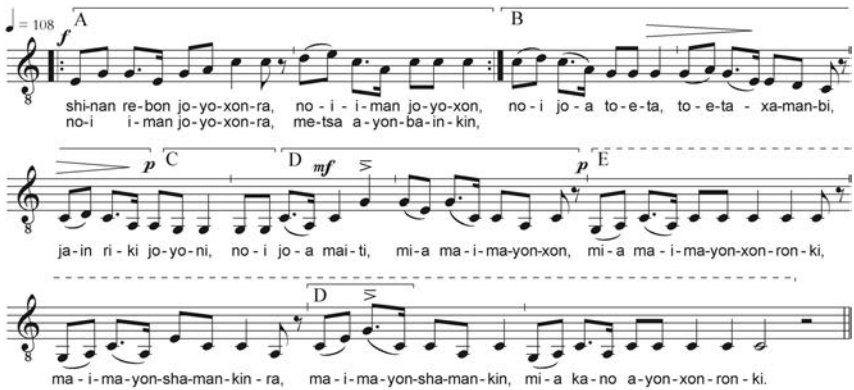

Fig. 3: The warmikara *song by Gilberto, 2006. Transcription by the author, recording archived at the Vienna Phonogrammarchiv (D 5590).*

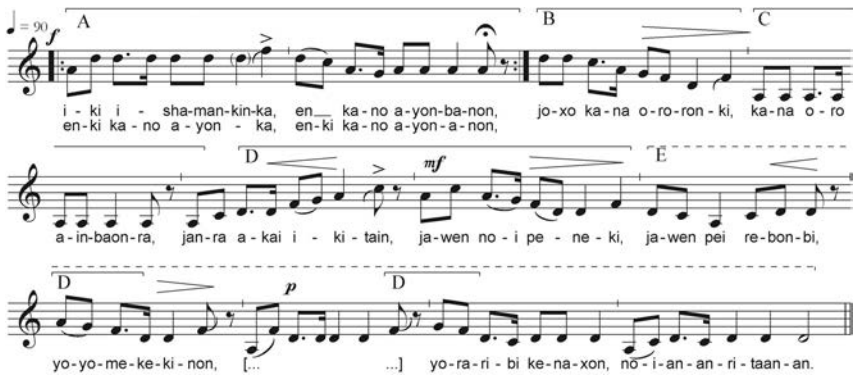

Fig. 4: The warmikara *song by Benjamín, 2006. Transcription by the author, recording archived at the Vienna Phonogrammarchiv (D 5579)*

Despite these similarities in the melodic progress, there are important differences between the four examples: first, the pitch is different. The interpretations start at *a*, e^1, *e* and a^1 respectively and, for comparison, the melodic peak in process A lies at c^1, g^1, e^1 and f^2. Second, the *tempi* at 108, 150 and 90 bpm are fairly different. Third, there are some rhythmic differences. Both *manchari* performances are almost constantly sung in a four-beat phrase structure. Gilberto's *warmikara* introduces also some five-beat phrases and Benjamín's *warmikara* is altogether based upon five-beat phrases. Both *warmikara* performances apply dotted notes, which do not appear in the *manchari*.

The differences, some of which cannot be read from the transcriptions, however, appear to be more important. These differences emerge from the context, say, the purpose of singing for each example, and some performance modalities which cannot be shown in the figures. The first *manchari*, sung by Gilberto [*Fig.* 1], was performed for the purpose of curing a baby who had suffered *raté* (shock), etiologically understood as the loss of a part of her soul[22]. Gilberto performed in a hollow and low voice, in slight staccato phrasing, gradually accelerating the tempo during the performance.

[22] Shock (Spanish *susto*) as an etiology for disorder is very common all over South America.

The second *manchari*, sung by Benjamín [*Fig.* 2], was also performed etiologically for the purpose of retrieving a soul, although it was addressed to an adult woman, who had been bewitched by a malign *médico*. As an effect of this bewitchment, parts of her personality had been captured by demons (*yoshin*), in particular by pink river dolphins (*koshoshka*, Sotalia pallida). The singer performed the song in very high tempo, with intense nasalization, and applying falsetto voice during higher-pitched passages.

The third example, a *warmikara* sung by Gilberto [*Fig.* 3], was performed to provide good luck to a male patient, in particular to enhance his attractiveness towards other people, especially women. His singing style suggested movement, as if thought for dancing along. His phrasing (marked by dotted notes in the transcription) along with his relatively slow but steady meter, provided a feeling of solemnity to the performance. Also, he altered the melodic line, especially in process A. "Rounding off" a melodic line by inserting smaller intervals and applying legatos, for example, is very common in love magic songs, as can also be observed with the next example.

The other *warmikara* song [*Fig.* 4] was again performed by Benjamín. His male patient had been left by his wife, who abandoned him and their five children. Benjamín found out that the woman had been the victim of sorcery, and with this song, Benjamín tried to re-connect her feelings (*shinan*) to her husband. Therefore, he summoned a set of colorful birds, which are considered messengers for lovers. Benjamín's style is characterized by an extremely high-pitched falsetto with little nasalization, and slow tempo. Alike Gilberto in the preceding example, he also altered the melodic line by applying many legatos and glissandos.

As one can read from these descriptions, the singing style, including timbre, voice modulation, pronunciation, and certain changes in phrasing differ in all the examples. These stylistic aspects cause all of the above four examples (transcribed in *Fig.* 1-4) to sound extremely different when listened to. For me, it took a long time while recording, listening, consulting with singers and transcribing, to recognize that melodically, these four examples are based upon the same *ikaro* form. However, despite the similarity

of the melodic structure (or the structuring material for the *ikaro* form) in all four examples, the resulting sound in the actual performance is very different, effected by changing pitch, phrasing, tempo and timbre.

Lyrics and Meaning

Each curing song has its lyrics. Kichwa, mestizo and Kukama *médicos* often include a minimum of texts in their songs, applying vocables to form the lines, like "nana-nay-na-nay-nana"[23]. Shipibo curing songs, however, have meaningful, well pronounced phrases throughout. For most curing purposes, there are basic phrases and terms in use which may be sung in very similar succession by different *médicos*. These basic or standard phrases are learned and internalized by singing along or listening to a teacher or another *médico*.

In the transcribed sequence of Gilberto's soul retrieval *manchari* (*Fig. 1*), most texts are based upon such basic phrases. He described that the child suffered her shock (*bakebira rateta*) in the cold beneath the earth (*mai matsi meranki*, indicating that a dead person caused the shock), that she fell down because of this (*raté rebon paketa*) and that the singer will get her out of there (*jainoax pikoxon*).

When performing for the purpose of curing, the singer will be exposed to perceptions from within the summoned entities' *kano*, that is, from within their perspective. Applying what the singer learned during his diets, he is able to manipulate his position between the patient and the illnesses' cause. Therefore, the singer is supposed to have access to distinct sources of knowledge. His perceptions are not shared with the patients or listeners. Most *médicos* report that usually, the entities sing or play music within their *kano*. With their song, they transport a certain meaning to the *médico*. The *médico* then translates this meaning into human language in his song's lyrics. Benjamín's soul retrieval *manchari* (*Fig. 2*) pro-

[23] Bustos (2008: 225) indicates that such syllables "involved the intention of calling and invoking the spirits that bring the medicine into the ceremony, and to invite them to a ritual dance in the place".

vides a good example of this: his female patient did not tell the *médico* about the bewitchment she had suffered. In his song's words, Benjamín explained many things about the content of a certain dream the woman repeatedly had years ago. Listening to the recording, the patient confirmed that her memories of these dreams were congruent to the details mentioned by Benjamín. In the following song text excerpt, it becomes clear how the singer verbalizes his current perceptions:

Line	**Shipibo text**	**English translation** (*by the author)*
1	wetsatian namata (2x)	[You] sometimes dreamt,
2	ani jeman kanonka(ri) (3x)	[that you found yourself within] a big city *kano*,
3	yoshin wirakochabo	where whiteman-demons [dwelled].
4	min namataibokan	[That is what] your dreams are like:
5	waporobo bechoa	great steamboats floating,
6	motoronin niai	driven by their motor's power,
7	kanoabotibi	[dominated] all the *kano*.
8	ja riki koshoshka (2x)	These are the [pink] river dolphins,
9	bechon rawinonabotani	interlacing [like the river's] waves,
10	rawinonabotani	splashing into each other,
11	kanokanobotanara	intertwining their *kano*.
12	jawen xenibiyosi	The dolphin's disgusting fat
13	asaitiyontaanan	[was] converted into oil. Then
14	yoshin noyaibokan (2x)	the demons take off flying,
15	see iki mayata	a whirling multitude, causing tingling,
16	rawinonabotana	they pass by each other,
17	kanoa kanoran	[like weaving] their *kano*.
18	chorochorobainkin	we go on, loosening [their] ties,
19	pishapishabainkinronki	we go on, detaching [them], so it is told.

Only the last two phrases (lines 18-19) of the above transliteration fit into standard, basic text lines. The rest (and a large part of the entire song) is based upon the singing *médico*'s current observations. He verbalizes the woman's dream memories and puts them into order. With his task of verbalization, the dream obtains a cul-

turally determined significance. In this case the singer first explains that the "white man/pink dolphin-people" had been summoned to harm the poor woman (lines 3-8)[24]. Then he mentions the dolphins' fat (lines 12-13) which was applied in order to bewitch. Many dolphins fly (underwater!) and whirl around, causing a specific tingling in the patient's extremities, a symptom interpreted as typical for this kind of bewitchment (line 15). The whole passage describes that the dolphin-demons *koshoshka yoshinbo* are "attaching" (*naikiai*) their *kano* to the patient's *kano*, intertwining them, and advancing into the patient's body (lines 11 and 17). With the last two phrases (lines 18-19), the singer utters his most important statement that despite the *yoshin*'s advances, he will "detach" them again. Thereby he uses plural forms (indicated by the suffix *-kin-*) which refer to him together with his spiritual allies. He also applies the narrative marker *-ronki* ("so it is told") to suggest a "historical inevitability" (Illius 1999: 246) of his treatment. Benjamín, with his lyrics, tells that his patient was repeatedly dreaming that she would find herself within the dolphin's nature, their *niwe*, where the dolphins themselves appear as humans driving motorboats and steam vessels. The dolphin-people interwove their *kano* with the patient's *kano*, so that the woman would appear to the healer as affected by the dolphin's *niwe* (cf. Illius 1992: 69). In this case, a malevolent man had smeared dolphin's oil on the woman's body, such initiating the dolphin's activity (*kanotai*) to transform the woman into one of them. Benjamín's song was aimed at eliminating this influence, at detaching the woman's body from the dolphin's *niwe*.

The lyrics in the transcribed sequences (*Fig. 3 and 4*) of the love magic (*warmikara*) performances are closer to standard phrases. They describe beautiful things: Gilberto mentions a love magnet (*noi iman*), a blossoming flower of love (*noi joa toeta*), and a love-

[24] *Wirakocha* is a reinterpretation of an Inca deity. Shipibo-Konibo today use the term to denote white people, especially those well dressed and with lots of money, power and servants (*patrones, funcionarios*). The *koshoshka* is the pink river dolphin, considered a very dangerous animal that may seduce women and drive them mad. River dolphins appear in their kano as white people in elegant, plain clothes. In that case, *wirakocha* refers to the *koshoshka* themselves in their human appearance. These references are used in this song to explain why the woman had repeatedly dreamt of being surrounded and persecuted by elegantly dressed white people.

flower-crown (*noi joa maiti*). He calls upon a plant entity, *noi waste* (Cyperus sp.), which is commonly used as love remedy by Shipibo people. Likewise, Benjamín invokes the yellow and blue macaw bird (Ara Ararauna), anthropomorph as a golden woman (*kana oro ainbaonra*) because of the bird's gleaming breast (*jawen noi peneki*). These items are being applied, "attached" to the patients to increase their attractiveness. Here we encounter a more positive, controlled interpretation of "attaching", due to the *médicos*' intentions.

The Performance

Finally, I will treat the interaction between the received structures of sound and the positionality adopted by the *médico* in the moment of its iteration. Rethinking the modalities of acquiring curing songs as shown above within the contexts of an actual performance, it appears that the seemingly paradoxical explanation of the *médicos* does not lack sense. It should be clear by now, that any *médico* who learned a certain melodic progress and basic lyrics by singing along with a teacher, can thereafter perform this melodic and textual structures in highly individual ways. Comparing various performances, one can observe that the same melody may sound very different. One *médico* may change his singing style not only with different patients, but also within the same curing sessions, sometimes even within one song (e.g. by shifting his voice to falsetto and singing one octave higher than before). However, the singing style is highly dependant on the individual and the situation.

Olsen (1996: 159) explains how voice masking is used by Warao *wisiratu* healers during the processes of transformation they undergo in curing rituals. In the Western Amazonian context, exemplified here by the Mahua brothers, voice masking is also used, but on a more individual level. Gilberto masks his voice only slightly or not at all, while his elder brother often changes his timbre and pitch, playing with his impressive vocal range (in my recordings, four octaves between 48.5 Hz and 771 Hz) and various articulation instruments like roughness, throat singing, nasalization, variable onset, and extreme dynamics. Benjamín is regarded *rao tapon* (base of the remedy) who transforms into a spiritual being

(*yoshinai*) during his night-time sessions, manifest through his changing voice. Benjamín sometimes indicates his transformation with certain masked sounds, but unlike in Olsen's examples, Benjamín's voice masking indicates the transformed state rather than the process of transforming. Many Shipibo *médicos* indicated that when they were in contact with powerful benevolent entities, their voice would change into high-pitched falsetto, which is the most common form of voice masking among the Shipibo *médicos*. In addition, individual singers dispose of individual styles as was shown in the examples.

Therefore, we can see that the transmission of melodies and basic phrases takes place between teachers and students, but the choice of the singing style and the actual lyrics occurs at the very moment of the song's performance. If a *médico* expresses that, for example, "the *inka* people taught me the song" *inkabaonra ea bewá onamake*, he does not refer to melodies or words, but to an actual performance which is – because of his prior accomplished diets – inspired or even dictated by one or more spiritual *inka jonibo*. He perceives and imitates these entities during the curing session. The performing *médico* simultaneously exists in his curing session, surrounded by human audience, and within the *kano* of the summoned *inka*, for example, who likewise surround him. However, only he is able to see both "landscapes" simultaneously, or to switch between them at will.

The current performance defines the curing song and it includes: (i) The patient's problem which requires a certain entity, for example, the *inka*, to be contacted. (ii) The *inka jonibo* perform from within *their* perspective, and the singer imitates and serves as an "*inka* convert". (iii) From the *human* perspective the singer performs an – orally transmitted – human song. (iv) This human song transports the meaning of the *inka*s' song in its style and lyrics. Therefore, the *médico* may "imitate" the singing entities he encounters, but not by literally singing along with them, but by masking his voice to meet the entities' style. The masked voice is an indicator for transformation. A *médico* who performs in a masked voice has entered a non-human *niwe* and is actually transformed into one of the corresponding non-human agents.

Consequently, curing songs do not necessarily sound well or beautiful in Shipibo aesthetic understanding. There are not only positive entities imitated, but also dangerous ones. In both *manchari* performances, for instance, the singers did neither summon nor imitate healing spirits but rather the malign forces that caused the symptoms. Gilberto, with his hollow staccato voice, "mimicked the shock": he found out that the baby was in danger because she had encountered a dead person, and the spirit of the dead (*mawa yoshin*) took a part of the child's personality into its *kano*, "attaching" the baby to the dead. Thus, Gilberto summoned the dead, masking the voice of the *mawa yoshin*. Likewise, Benjamín "cheated" on the dangerous dolphin people with his masked singing style, infiltrating their *kano*, summoning them together and then – starting a different song – sending them off to their "home". Gilberto told me that one has to know the exact name of the causer of the illness to be able to summon and unfasten it[25].

The orally transmitted musical structures and basic lyrics are spontaneously co-composed by the singer and his summoned entities, in every single and unique situation. The entities contribute to the meaning, thus surpassing the meaning of the basic lyrics. They also contribute to the curing power which the singer translates into style and sound. The resulting performance depends on the specific entities he contacts in order to cure an individual patient, facing certain problems within this curing situation. Within any specific curing session, there are many factors determining which musical structure is chosen by the human *médico* and in which style the *inka jonibo*, or other entities, transport their meaning. We can differentiate, for example, the relations the *médico* has with the entities, the history of the patient, the patient's relations to spiritual entities, or if any competing *médicos* may be involved in the disorder's etiology (sorcery).

[25] These techniques of "cheating on the spirits" (*yoshin paranai*) both singers explained to me in these terms. Illius (1987: 54-61) describes a curing session involving *ayawaska* ingestion, where this "cheating" is also elucidated. Olsen (1996) describes related techniques among the Warao, specifying the naming and sending off of malevolent forces (see also Olsen 2008: 347, 353). The whole topic of summoning dead, demons or other malevolent forces also uncover the ambiguity in Amazonian curing: a *médico* can use this technique and a specific song performance for curing the patient, but he could also inflict damage by the same means.

The co-composition of orally transmitted musical structures and standard lyrics (related to the human *médico*) combined with techniques of magical manipulation depending on the situation (related to entities) creates a certain sound, a certain content, a certain atmosphere. Exactly this unique result is the proper curing song for the situation where it is applied. The *médico* knows in the instant of performing which choice to take to provide success. If something during the performance goes wrong, it will fail as a curing song. This concept of instantly knowing is called "human certainty principle (HCP)" by Koen (2008: 95): "The HCP is not only implicated when the cause of healing is unknown or mysterious, but also can be consciously engaged to facilitate healing and the transformation of the self." Later on, he explains that "the HCP is exploited in diverse practices of traditional healing, where the conscious attention and intention of both healer and patient are directed toward a spiritual or mystical dimension to create a specific healing effect" (Koen 2008: 95-96). This concept helps to understand the immanent nature of the actual performance, providing meaning to both healer and patient, as occurring in a successful curing session among Shipibo *médicos* and probably among other specialists in the Western Amazon who work with curing songs. Any applied curing song is unique, defined by its unique performance. A researcher will never have the chance to keep the situation constant in order to obtain the same (or very similar) interpretation of the orally transmitted musical structure. A treatment for a person with a *susto* (shock, *manchari*) syndrome will be very different from any other *susto* treatment. This is why I have chosen two *manchari* (*susto*) and two *warmikara* (love magic) songs as examples in this paper.

Conclusions

In this article, I embarked on an analysis of how curing songs in the Shipibo lived world are understood, acquired and performed. Therefore, the modalities of learning such songs and an analysis of respective Shipibo terminology were presented. Further on, four excerpts from different curing songs were compared in both their form – which appeared similar – and their fairly different functions.

Based upon these examples, performance modalities were explored and the songs were found to be a result of a spontaneous co-composition process involving both the singer and non-human entities. A curing song is at the same time based upon orally transmitted structures and a meaning and/or power which originated from non-human entities and is transported through the singer to the human patient via the resulting sound in the instant of its performance. That is, curing songs are by definition both orally transmitted and composed spontaneously – if not, they are just like any song and will not "work". The efficiency of the songs, in other words if the performance succeeds or fails, depends more on function than on form: the musical structure is learned from teachers, similar to how drinking songs are learned, for example. The "charging with power" by the means of contacting non-human agents makes a particular performance a curing song. This ability can be obtained through diets. It can also be transmitted from a teacher to an apprentice (with the teacher thus losing the ability to cure). Finally, it can be captured by an enemy *médico* (and the victim again loses the ability to cure).

Considering the results of both the cultural and the musical analysis, it appears that the nature of subjectivity itself within Shipibo society (and perhaps that of other Amazonian groups) is interwoven with learning and performing music. The parallel concept of the singers' presence in two different world aspects and communicating with humans and non-humans at the same time helps to understand how a subject can manipulate his or her own position inside a multi-natural cosmos.

The involvement of non-human agents in song transmission and performance provides further insights into Shipibo conceptualizations of the cosmos. These ideas can be described in perspectivist terms according to Viveiros de Castro (1997). By delving more deeply into the concepts of curing song performance, it appears not only that perspectivist ideas are present in Shipibo praxis, but that there even exist fairly exact terms to denote the concepts of "perspective" (*kano*) and "multi-nature" (*niwe*) within Shipibo etymology and topology.

The combination of a cultural and a musical analysis allowed me to phrase some concepts which were already addressed in prior publications together with ethnographic data I obtained in my fieldwork into a more concise picture of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity in the Shipibo lived world. This includes bodily difference (the songs as organ), transformation (the singer switching perspectives), acquiring and losing power via capturing and surrendering, and especially contact and communication with non-humans. We can see that also in Shipibo society, music performance is a constitutive element of reality, (re)creating and manipulating the very structures of a body, of a social group and of its interconnectedness with nature and the supernatural. This goes well with the statements by Menezes Bastos (2004) and Seeger (1987) quoted in the introduction to this article and shows that the importance of singing in Shipibo society can be compared to its importance among the "Song People", as Olsen (1996) denotes the Venezulean Warao.

Finally, I would like to point out that the different positionalities of the singer are rather signaled via elements of performance than via formal song categories. With that, I want to show how musical analysis of live performances together with transcribed texts can lead to significant insights about the nature of subjectivity and consciousness itself. In the present case, the Shipibo singers intentionally alter their mode of perception by ingesting *ayawaska* and/or by performing songs in a culturally significant way. In both cases, they perceive non-humans which they allow a certain control over their behavior. Although one cannot speak of "possession", the singers perceive themselves as being transformed into non-human beings (and are perceived as such by their peers). It depends on the situation, which non-human agent is masked by the singer, and these can be plants, animals or legendary human beings like the *chaikoni jonibo* or the culturally highly relevant legendary *inka*. Unfortunately, the *inka*'s song that emanates from a singer's tongue can only be perceived as a certain style in the singer's performance; the *inka*'s song, as heard by the *médico*, will probably never be recorded, transcribed and compared for further evidence.

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