

ABSTRACT

Sonic relations: *kagutu* male flutes and *tolo* female songs among the Kuikuro

Bruna Franchetto (UFRJ, Brazil)

Tommaso Montagnani (EHESS, France)

Six hundred Kuikuro live in 6 villages along the southern tributaries of the Xingu river, Southern Amazonia. They speak one variants of the Carib language spoken in the region known as Upper Xingu, a regional multilingual and multiethnic system, where other genetically distinct languages are spoken. The Upper Xingu Carib language is one of the two southern branches of the Carib family. Linguistic documentation has been improved during a DOBES project (2001-2006); since 2003, the documentation of today 15 already existing rituals is being done by the Kuikuro themselves with non-indigenous researchers as consultants. Our research combine linguistic, musical and ethnographic documentation and description. This presentation concerns the relation between the *kagutu* flutes sacred music, played exclusively by men, and the *tolo* songs, sung exclusively by women.

Kagutu is a native word as the same time for one of the Kuikuro main rituals, the music played during this ritual and the name of the instrument used by master flutists during the ceremony. An important taboo is associated to these flutes: their vision is strictly forbidden to women. Nevertheless, women hold a very important role during the *kagutu* ritual, listening from their houses to the music coming from the *kwakutu* (the man's house). *Kagutu* music is the voice of *itseke*, spirit-animals. According to the myth about its origin, *kagutu* music was the chant of *itseke* who sung the sacred melodies with their own voice. The myth tells how humans once heard the spirits singing *kagutu*, learned it and started to execute it in their own village. In the myth, a young woman, kidnapped by an *itseke*, was the first human to hear *kagutu* music sung by the spirits, although, withdrawn to her kidnapper's house, she never sees the *itseke* singing. During the ritual, *kagutu* flutes reproduce the names of the *itseke*; the instrument is considered able to imitate the voice of the spirits and to say their names, making audible their sonic presence among the humans. Women learn most of the sacred music of the flutes and also have a repertoire of songs, called *tolo*, based on the same melodies. These songs are all in the Upper Xingu Carib language and are said to be originally Carib (Kalapalo). *Tolo* songs are said to 'imitate' (*hũ*) *kagutu*. However, some crucial differences between them must be focussed and analysed. The origin of *kagutu* is told in a shamanistic and mythical way; the *tolo* origin is told as a women's historical enterprise. On the level of their cultural value, *kagutu* music is sacred and dangerous, *tolo* songs are prophane and joyful; when women sing on and for their lovers, deceit and irony are emotionally and cognitively outstanding features. *Kagutu* ritual is private, closed and realized mainly in the darkness; *tolo* is coral and executed in public and open spaces. *Kagutu* music is a huge repertoire of 10 suites, each one including from 15 to 45 pieces, and only few musicians are able to learn and execute it in its totality. *Tolo* songs have their master singers, but they are widespread among the women much more than *kagutu* among men.

At the level of their musical structure, we must distinguish between the general structure of the piece and the melodic shapes of the musical phrases. The structure of *tolo* songs is in most cases more complex than that of the corresponding *kagutu* piece: new material is introduced in the *tolo* version, as well as *tolo* songs are usually longer and more developed than the corresponding *kagutu* pieces: these developments are due mainly to the required adjustment to the structure of a lyric poem. If we look to the microstructure of *kagutu* and *tolo* pieces, we see that melodic shape change in the vocal version in order to reach a perfect adjustment to words and verses of the *tolo* lyrics.

Sound is a crucial link between humans and spirits but also between male and female social domains. *Kagutu* and *tolo* form a trans-ritual system in which a relation between spirits, men and women is established. While *kagutu* music is conceived as a faithful and subordinate reproduction of *itseke* songs by men, *tolo* songs, by means/through their creative poetic and musical power, approach women to *itseke* in a kind of competitive relation with them.