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REREADING A MUSICOLÓGICA KAMAYURÁ BY RAFAEL JOSÉ DE MENEZES BASTOS: 40 YEARS BEYOND AN ANTHROPOLOGY WITHOUT MUSIC AND A MUSICOLOGY WITHOUT HUMANS

The work by Rafael José de Menezes Bastos *A Musicológica Kamayurá* is about to complete its 40th anniversary.¹ Initially presented in October 1976 in the form of a master's dissertation on the Graduate Program in Social Anthropology at the University of Brasilia, supervised by Peter Silverwood-Cope, David Price and Roque de Barros Laraia,² it was first published in 1978 by the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) in a limited print run that quickly sold out. As Anthony

1. This review was produced in conjunction with the video *A Musicológica Kamayurá*, an interview granted to me by Professor Rafael José de Menezes Bastos.

2. Roque de Barros Laraia was the final supervisor of Menezes Bastos's dissertation and the person registered institutionally. However his work was begun under the joint supervision of Peter Silverwood-Cope and David Price, who were unable to accompany its development to the end after they left to work for FUNAI.

Seeger remarks, it then “circulated from hand-to-hand,” “safeguarded like treasure by those able to obtain their own copy” (Seeger 1999, p. 13). In 1999, the second edition of the book was published – according to Menezes Bastos, almost verbatim in relation to the first – by the publishing house of the Federal University of Santa Catarina, where he has been a professor since 1984.

A Musicológica Kamayurá proved to be the starting point for a body of research on the indigenous societies of Latin America and the Caribbean that now spans more than four decades, including both the ethnographic work of Menezes Bastos himself among the Kamayurá, and the work of his undergraduate and postgraduate students, including studies by Mello among the Wauja (1999, 2005), Piedade among the Wauja (2004) and the Ye’Pâ-Masa (1997), Lourenço among the Javaé (2009), Hoffmann among the Xokleng (2011), Loch also among the Xokleng (2004), Veras among the Matipú (2000), Gibram among the Kaingang (2012), Herbeta among the Kalankó (2005), Faust Ramos among the Kamayurá (2010), Almeida among the Yawalapíti (2012) and Lacerda among the Ashenĩka (2014).

In terms of Menezes Bastos’s own work, *Musicológica* focuses on understanding the act of speaking about music as a particular form of producing knowledge: in other words, it examines what the author defines as a metasystem, the verbal coverage of musical theory, the conceptualization of music and the production of musical categories. In subsequent works, however, Menezes Bastos explores music making itself. On this point I call attention to the recent publication of *A Festa da Jaguatirica* (Menezes Bastos 2013a), an adaptation of the author’s doctoral thesis. In this work, Menezes Bastos analyses the *Yawari* ritual, giving special attention to the question of the sequentiality of songs – and also song sequences – organized at an intersong level: in other words, the form in which “connections between respective components of the songs” are configured (Menezes Bastos 2013b, p. 297). In *Jaguatirica*, the author observes that pieces taken in isolation make little sense in the region since they are organized in large and complex suites, the study of which reveals “the coherence of much longer units, made up of many small pieces” (Seeger 2013a, p. 17). As Seeger points out, Menezes Bastos’s exploration of music sequencing comprises an innovative approach to our apprehension of the larger structures constituting the Xinguano ritual complex. *A Festa da Jaguatirica* also innovates by treating ritual and performance – and not just myth – as constituent elements of the Kamayurá cosmos.

Returning to *Musicológica*, though, the work is based on field research that lasted around five and a half months, carried out between 1969 and 1974,

during which time the author learnt to play the *awirare*, a pan flute used as an instrument for learning to play the large *uru'a* flutes of the *Kwaryp* funerary ritual. He also learnt to sing and play the *payeakãmity*, the shaman's rattle, and was able to accompany and record the female *Iamurikuma* ritual. At this point in his intellectual career, his attention was focused, as he himself states, on the "classification and nomenclature of musical things" (Menezes Bastos 1999a, p.18). *Musicológica* is thus a pioneering work in the development of an anthropological exploration of sound itself, since, as Seeger (1999) emphasizes, studies prior to his research had centred primarily on the appearance and movement of the performers.

In *Musicológica* Menezes Bastos sets out to demonstrate the importance of the auditory canal for the Kamayurá, stressing that the musical knowledge of this indigenous people is a cognitive system that, as such, is mainly constituted through the establishment of categories that "contrast with each other through distinctive traits and in conjunction delimit contrasting sets" (Menezes Bastos 1999a, p. 58). Hence the strong connection between *Musicológica* and Lévi-Straussian structuralism, especially the theoretical formulations developed in *The Savage Mind*, a link that can be detected even in the book's title, which directly indicates Menezes Bastos's interest in musical logic, while referencing the cycle of works by Lévi-Strauss entitled the *Mythologiques*, published from 1964 onwards. The relationship between *A Musicológica Kamayurá* and *The Savage Mind* (1962) can be perceived principally in the attention given by Menezes Bastos to the affective relationship with the world of sensible experience and the central role assumed by this relationship in knowledge construction. The author raises the question of the interdependence between what is perceptible and what is socially conceptualized – apprehended or contained in the form of concepts (Foucault 1999). In this sense, Menezes Bastos seeks to make evident the importance and recurrence of the discussions and attempts to conceptualize acoustic phenomena in everyday life and conversations of the Kamayurá, showing that the theory of music is not frozen in the purely musical but spreads through the acoustic universe.

As the author notes, unlike the form in which we perceive and treat sound, for the Kamayurá, sound is not something intangible and fleeting, but solid, concrete and three-dimensional. Based on the fact that a sound does not have just duration, pitch, timbre and intensity, but also consistency, density, extension and size – it may be large, small, hard, soft, concentrated or diffuse – the Kamayurá possess a specific glossary for treating and describing the acoustic universe. They have no problem describing an acoustic phenomenon given that:

it suffices to use the appropriate lexeme. Therefore, in order to refer to the sound – which I would have to describe either as ‘the result of crushing dry tree leaves between both hands or underfoot’, or simply reproduce, fetching some dry leaves to perform the task – the Kamayurá person does not need such juggling. Sufficiently, elegantly and parsimoniously, the label **iciririk** is applied and the problem resolved (Menezes Bastos 1999a, p. 142).

Recognizing the importance of how acoustic phenomena are conceptualized among the Kamayurá, as well as understanding the Kamayurá taxonomic structure –i.e. the elementary logical and classificatory principle, operating through ‘vertical inclusion’ and ‘horizontal contrast’(Menezes Bastos 1999a,p. 19) – the author focuses on the configuration of an axiological structure in which the senses themselves are classified and hierarchized within a scale of values. Menezes Bastos thus observes that our own senses – which in our culture are taken to be sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste – do not form part of a given psychobiological apparatus, but are culturally created and determined. Simultaneously what affects us in the world of experience will also orient our cultural constitution. It is this to and fro between experience and its classification, constituting how we perceive and create meaning in the world, which is the aspect that always drew my attention in this text and fascinated me. This question also returns to the author’s research agenda in later works, including in particular the article “Apùap world hearing: on the Kamayurá phono-auditory system and the anthropological concept of culture” (Menezes Bastos 1999c).

The musical logic studied in *Musicológica* does not just apply to musical phenomena, therefore, nor just acoustic phenomena. In fact it is a sociocultural logic, constitutive of the cosmos, since Kamayurá knowledge is largely based on acoustics. Here I would pick out the interesting equivalence traced by the author between musical categories and the indigenous conception of kinship. According to the Kamayurá, the child is constituted by a central core or substance (a soul) received from the father and its elaboration (as a body) by the mother. Just like children, music too is conceived in terms of a core and a periphery. At the very centre of the structure is the *maraka’yp*, the song, performed by mature and older women and men. On the periphery is the *awykytyte*, the ‘elaboration’ of the music, constituted by

onomatopoeias –the voices of animals, machines and other sounds – performed by youths and children.³Moreover, the author also notes how the execution of instruments by men, especially the flutes, indicates an attempt to create an equivalent to female menstruation. The prohibition on women seeing or touching the instruments is linked, therefore, to male solidarity in response to a feeling of disadvantage over the fact that it is women who create children in their wombs and give birth to them.

According to the author, the Kamayurá verb *anup*, which roughly means ‘to hear,’ implies the action of comprehending or understanding: “Someone who does not hear,” *nanuyte*, does not have a “good head,” “does not know how to think” (Menezes Bastos 1999a, p. 107) and is thus unable to communicate in society. Hearing is a mental not a mechanical process. The author cites the Kamayurá classification of the human hearing apparatus into three basic parts: *nami* ‘ears,’ *iapyaikwat* ‘ear canal’ and *iapy*, ‘inner ear,’ the first two being located outside the head and the latter inside, seemingly referring to what we call the brain, “doing something effectively related to *oyemõneto*, ‘to think’” (Menezes Bastos 1999a, p. 129). In this context, music provides fundamental support to paradigms like height, speed and duration. In the Kamayurá metasystem, the category *ihu* relates to sound. This category is divided into two subdomains: *2ihu*, used to refer to any flow of sound, and *ñe’eng*, which can be translated as language. In turn *ñe’eng*, or language, also divides into two subdomains: *2ñe-eng*, spoken language, and *maraka*, music. In Kamayurá cosmology, it is *ñe’eng*, language, whether spoken or music, that distinguishes

3. However, as the author pointed out to me on numerous occasions, including in the interview *A Musicológica Kamayurá*, conducted on March 18th 2015, there is no difference in importance in Kamayurá music between what happens at the ‘core’ (the substance) and what happens at the ‘periphery’ (its elaboration). Rereading this section of *Musicológica*, I recalled the more recent studies by Menezes Bastos of popular music (Menezes Bastos 1996, 1999b, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, among others). These studies are strongly grounded in a proposal to perceive and treat the circulation of musical genres between cosmopolitan cities and the provinces in terms of a local creative and dynamic appropriation, rather than in terms of influence. In so doing, the author shows the strong interdependence and constant feedback between the musicalities of the centre and the peripheries. This leads me to think that, perhaps, this insight concerning the constitution of musical genres is connected in some form to his experience among the Kamayurá and the discovery that what happens on the periphery is just as or even more important than what happens at the centre.

between the human and the non-human among natural beings – with the latter in turn opposed to supernatural and inexhaustible beings, the *mama'e*. Humans are thus special beings who speak and make music.

Setting out from Kamayurá axiology, the centrality of hearing in the construction of their world, as well as the importance of music in the constitution of this hearing, Menezes Bastos produces a critique, which he returns to and develops in future works (Menezes Bastos 1995, 2013a), of Ethnomusicology: that is, the “anthropologically-rooted western musicological tradition” (Menezes Bastos 1999a, p. 41). The author points out that since its beginnings in the nineteenth century, the discipline has been constituted through ethnocentric thought, characterized by verbal-visual primacy in the construction of the world and western knowledge. However, while in the western world the verb is perceived as a “translator of everything” (Menezes Bastos 1999a, p. 20) and spoken language is overvalued as the “model par excellence of language” (Menezes Bastos 1999, p. 48), human communications are in fact established through “many different channels and mediums” (Menezes Bastos 1999a, p. 244).

Hence the failure to relativize the verbal-visual predominance found in western perception – linked, above all, to the Hebraic and Greco-Roman historical matrices – ends up producing what the author identifies as an ethnomusicological dilemma, involving an antinomy between the acoustic and the non-acoustic, and between the planes of expression and content. In this dilemma, music is related to the plane of expression. The plane of content is treated as specific to non-acoustic systems like social organization, kinship, politics and economy (Menezes Bastos 1999a, p. 42). Consequently, ethnomusicological knowledge ends up becoming founded on the construction of music and culture as two differentiated domains, music being included in culture and taking on a merely projective or illustrative quality in relation to it. This, as the author points out, leads to “a definitive loss when it comes to its description as a system of communication, a language, especially atypical” (Menezes Bastos 1999a, p. 47).

In terms of comprehending the specificity and importance of music as a Kamayurá system of communication, it is important to note its centrality in ritual and the role of the ceremony as a Xinguano lingua franca. In *Musicológica*, the

author already introduces a question that he will proceed to explore in more detail in later works (Menezes Bastos 2001, 2013a, 2013b): namely that, in ritual, music performs a central and pivotal function between myth and dance, featherwork and body painting, constructing a bridge between myth at the entry to the system and the “mimetic embodiment of referents” (Menezes Bastos 1999, p. 53) at the exit. Music thus acts as a junction between the interior nature of mythocosmology and the exterior of dance, featherwork and body painting. It is music that translates myth, transforming “verb into body” (Menezes Bastos 1999a, p. 67). Hence it would appear to assume a fundamental role in the constitution of the Kamayurá body, which I think must also be directly related to the concreteness and consistency with which the Kamayurá perceive sound.

Finally, despite ritual not being a central topic in his first ethnography, the latter also raises a number of questions developed by the author in future studies of the subject, notably in his doctoral thesis (Menezes Bastos 2013a). One of the author’s most interesting insights –one of central importance to studies of the populations of the South America lowlands – is the perception and treatment of all the groups situated in the Upper Xingu as one large system, constituted by “a process of change of huge proportions” (Menezes Bastos 1999a, p. 34). This system is interconnected by ceremonies and the accompanying music as a focal point of communication and identity, and thus as the “language par excellence of Xinguanity” (Menezes Bastos 1999a, p. 34). In *Musicológica*, the author identifies ritual’s quality of articulating itself as “a lingua franca, untranslatable, intraculturally and directly, as language, something that is spoken”. It is thus “not for want or by chance that what the Xinguanos say to each other, they say, basically, by singing, playing, dancing” (Menezes Bastos 1999a, p. 20). Ritual thus codifies “Kamayurá culture and society in particular, Xinguan culture and society in general” (Menezes Bastos 1999a, p. 197). As the core of ritual, then, music is central to the very constitution of Xinguanity and the articulation of the communication system among the different peoples inhabiting the territory. Ritual, for its part, with its organizational function and cosmological genesis, also assumes a determinant role in the constitution of the Kamayurá musicological metasystem –a topic examined by Menezes Bastos in *A Festa da Jaguatirica* (2013a) – with the instruments themselves

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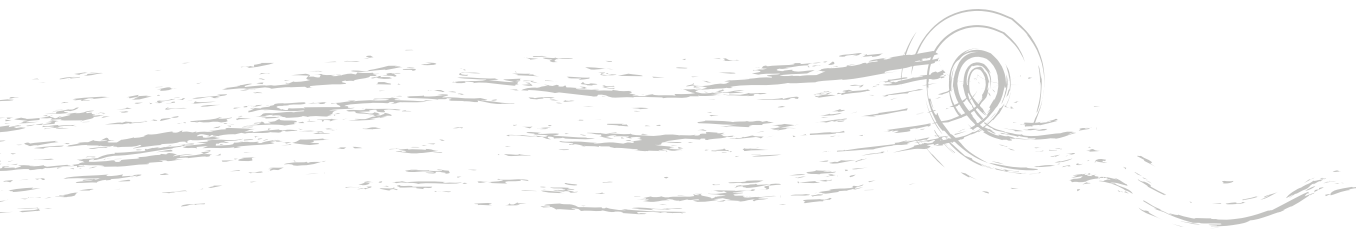
taking on the roles of agents and integral members of the ceremonies, some of them being utilized in specific rituals. Hence we can think of the metasystem –i.e. speaking about and conceptualizing Kamayurá music – as a system of ritual systems. In this sense, I perceive that today, keeping in mind the author’s later trajectory and works, we can read *A Musicológica Kamayurá* as a sustained exercise in abstraction that sets out not only from the emotional relation with the world of sensible experience, but also from its systemization and pre-conceptualization through the Kamayurá – and indeed Xinguano – ritual complex.



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