

**Los rituales de orekotón y los aguinaldos pemón – el sistema de la apropiación en la música Pemón (Gran Sabana/Venezuela)**  
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**The Rituals of Orekotón and the Aguinaldos Pemón – the System of Appropriation in Pemón music (Gran Sabana/Venezuela)**

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### Resumen

Con la ayuda de dos ejemplos se ilustra la apropiación musical del sistema Pemón. El proceso es caracterizado por la transformación de la música exterior en su función de “influnciar” la estructura y la cosmología de un pueblo indígena, que vive en la región de la Gran Sabana, entre Venezuela, Brasil y Guyana.

Primero analizaremos un canto que tiene su origen probablemente con misioneros anglicanos y que en el año 1911 fue grabado por el antropólogo alemán Theodor Koch-Grünberg entre los Taurepán (Pemón) con el título “areruya”. Hoy en día los cantos de areruya y también del cho'chiman formaron los rituales de orekotón que reflejan la identidad de una gran parte de este grupo indígena. El segundo ejemplo trata el tema de los aguinaldos pemón y resalta las similitudes de la apropiación y transformación reciente de los aguinaldos venezolanos a aguinaldos pemón. Es un proceso fundamental en la cosmología Pemón, que está caracterizada por la interacción de humanos y no-humanos. Este punto de vista sirve para entender claramente porque la apropiación de la música de los “intrusos” (los no-Pemón) es necesaria para contactar las agencias de espíritus de ellos y aumentar su propia fuerza espiritual.

### Resumo

Com a ajuda de dois exemplos buscaremos ilustrar o sistema de apropriação musical Pemón. O processo é caracterizado pela transformação da música oriunda do exterior, exercendo sua função de “influnciar” a estrutura e a cosmologia deste povo indígena, que vive na região de Gran Sabana, nas fronteiras entre Venezuela, Guiana e Brasil.

Em primeiro lugar analisaremos um canto originário dos missionários anglicanos, gravado pelo antropólogo alemão Theodor Koch-Grünberg em 1911 entre os Taurepán (Pemón), sob o título de “areruya”. Atualmente os cantos de “areruya” e também os de “cho'chiman” constituíram os rituais de Orekotón, responsáveis por refletir a identidade de grande parte deste povo indígena. Como segundo exemplo, analisaremos o tema dos aguinaldos pemón destacando as semelhanças da apropriação e transformação recente dos aguinaldos venezolanos a aguinaldos pemón. Este é um processo fundamentado na cosmologia Pemón, que se caracteriza pela interação entre humanos e não-humanos. Este ponto de vista serve para entender claramente porque a apropriação da música dos intrusos (os não-Pemón) é um processo necessário para estabelecer contato com as agências dos espíritos deles e aumentar sua própria força espiritual.

### Summary

With the help of two examples the system of appropriation in Pemón music will be discussed. The process is characterized by the transformation of the outside music and its function to “influence” the sound structure as well as the cosmology of an Amerindian group, located in Gran Sabana between Venezuela, Brazil, and Guyana. First a song will be analyzed which has its origin in influences of Anglican missionaries. It was recorded with the title “Areruya” by a German anthropologist named Theodor Koch-Grünberg in 1911 among the Taurepán (Pemón). Actually, the songs of “Areruya” and also “Cho'chiman” formed the rituals of Orekotón. They reflect the identity of a large number of people belonging to these this Amerindian group. A second example illustrates the theme of aguinaldo pemón, emphasizing similarities of recent appropriation and transformation of Venezuelan aguinaldos into aguinaldos pemón. The process has its motif in Pemón cosmology which is characterized by the interaction between humans and non-humans. This point of view is instrumental in understanding why an appropriation of the intruders' music (no-Pemón) is necessary to contact the spiritual agencies of the others to strengthen their own spiritual force.

The influence of Akawaio English Mission is almost imperceptible because they never had a diocese here at Roraima. Neither Selemelá nor his people have any understanding of Christianity. They know only some orations, a “mixtum compositum” of Indio and English, but without understanding the content. One day I was startled in the early morning thinking I was having hallucinations. In the house of a neighbor someone was singing “Heil dir im Siegerkranz”. Naturally, it is an ecclesiastical song translated into Indio language with the same melody of “God save the king”. (Theodor Koch Grünberg, 1917:114)

The experience of Koch-Grünberg<sup>1</sup> indicates the peculiarity of a musical system of different groups summarized under the names of Pemón and Kapón. Both belong to the large group of Carib speakers. The language group of Pemón are the Taurepán, located on the border between Venezuela and Brazil, next to the Arekuna who live on the borders between Venezuela and Guyana. The third group, the Kamarakoto, can be found around Auyan Tepuy nearby to the “Represa de Guri” (fig. 1). The Kapón people are the Akawaio and Patamona located in Guyana and northern Brazil. Finally, the Makuxí need to be mentioned. They are Carib speakers as well and settled in northern Brazil on the borders of Venezuela and Guyana. All Amerindian people in these area are in inter-ethnic contact, ignoring national construction of borders.



<sup>1</sup> Theodor Koch-Grünberg, a German anthropologist and linguist, recorded 86 wax cylinders during his expeditions in the years from 1903 to 1905 (Río Negro) and from 1911 to 1913 (Roraima). They are archived in the Berlin Phonogramm Archiv. All results from his second expedition to Venezuela, in the years between 1911 and 1913 are published in five volumes with the title: "Vom Roroima zum Orinoco" (1916-1928).

Fig. 1: Map of the region where the three countries meet, including localization of Amerindian cultures

The article approaches to sound which structures Orekotón rituals<sup>2</sup> and the musical genre of “Aguinaldo Pemón”. Therefore, the role of these neighbors of Pemón people and their musical interactions need to be considered because Pemón people were not directly impacted by western influences. Akawaio and Makuxí Amerindians, due to their contact to Anglican missionaries, served as cultural transmitters of knowledge between missionaries and Pemón speakers.

The main hypothesis is that musical appropriation is a necessary process inside of the Pemón musical system as it can be observed or heard during the last hundred years. For that reason two examples of comparison serve to discuss the formulated idea. The first one deals with the phenomena of appropriation inside the Areruya genre, and the second demonstrates the transformation and adaptation of Venezuelan Aguinaldo into the genre of Aguinaldo Pemón.

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<sup>2</sup> Orekotón rituals are Areruya and Cho'chiman (Lewy 2011, 2012). Both rituals have a similar sound structure. Participants and leaders defines themselves as Orekok (singular) or Orekotón (plural). The term includes all agents like Christian spirits of Wakü Pata (paradise). Originally the word derives from “Holy Ghost” (Armellada 2007:141) what Akawaios adapted in their language (Orekok). Pemón people are defining the origen of the term to Akawaio people.

## An orekotón ritual - Areruya

The German anthropologist Theodor Koch-Grünberg visited the circum-Roraima people in 1911. Between several recordings the wax cylinders 41-43 are found.

... the melodies are popular English songs (Scottish or Irish). The adaptation to Indian habit given in the example (T.26) is limited probably to the big delay, the descend of the strength to pianissimo together with the pitch, and the dissolution of the deepest tone (a) in diminutive time values.

The image displays two columns of musical notation. The left column, representing cylinder 41, consists of eight staves (A through D') with lyrics in Portuguese: 'pa ya by by and by', 'yo by and', 'by and by by andby', 'Je sús', 'sen da kö', 'yo by and', and 'Kris to da'. The right column shows a comparison with a 1862 English song, with lyrics 'There's a land that is fairer than day, the sweet by and by'. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings (a, b, c, b<sup>1</sup>, c<sup>1</sup>, b<sup>2</sup>, d, e, b<sup>3</sup>, d<sup>1</sup>, b<sup>4</sup>, e, d).

Fig. 2 (left): cylinder 41 – Areruya of Taurepán, recording: Thodor Koch-Grünberg (Brazil) 1911, number of Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv: VII\_W\_2797\_K\_GR\_BRASILIEN\_41, (right): Musical notation of the J.P. Webster song 1862: “There's a land that is fairer than day, the sweet by and by”, <http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk>

During my first field research in La Gran Sabana between 2005 and 2007 Taurepán specialists listened to cylinder 41. The result was more surprising to me than to them when they identified the original of that song very quickly. It was written by J.P Webster in 1862 with the name “There's a land that is fairer than day,” also known as “The sweet by and by.”

Koch-Grünberg listened to a melody of a song he recommended as the hymn of the German empire which was sung in an Amerindian language. The lyrics of the Areruya (cylinder 41) do not have any fixed language but represent sound symbols. Intelligible fragments like “by and by” demonstrate a strategy of imitating the English language, which most Amerindian people at that time did not understand. The question which comes up here is: For what reason does Taurepán imitate that time the songs of Anglican missionaries? The first intention attempt of an answer would be to point to musical influence which displaces the “old” Amerindian musical system. This vision was formulated by Theodor Koch-Grünberg and Erich Moritz von Hornbostel when they implicated a contamination of the Amerindian culture<sup>3</sup>.

One hundred years later it is fortunate that Koch-Grünberg's recordings are an elemental part of the Pemón musical system with their typical characters. To understand the process of influences, appropriation and finally transformation to the Pemón musical system, it is necessary to analyze Pemón cosmology.

The reference for transformation or, better, to say the increase of Pemón Multiverse (Lewy 2012) is the new definition of shaman as “Ipukenak”<sup>4</sup>.

Butt Colson defines the origin of Areruya in the years around 1880. There was an important event which is described by her informant King George about the founder of Areruya named Pichiwön<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Hornbostel wrote his complains about the “European influence contaminating Pemón musical system” as it is audible in Areruya in a letter to Theodor Koch-Grünberg (Mendivil 2006:37).

<sup>4</sup> The term “Ipukenak” has different meanings. On one hand it is a “wise man”, who knows the magic formulas Taren. In this context, it is important to notice that a shaman has a higher position as all “wise men”. An Ipukenak knows some kinds of interaction with the spiritual worlds, but only a shaman can manage all. On the other hand the word “Ipukenak” is used as leader of the Areruya and Cho'chiman rituals. He does not need to demonstrate a special relation with a Christian spirit like the prophets. In the beginning of the rituals a lot of shamans turned into prophets or Ipukenak. Finally, every prophet is always a leader in an Orekotón ritual.

<sup>5</sup> Other names are: “Bichiwung, Pichiwung, Bisiwung o Pisiwung”. His English names are: “Idam, Dam o Idang” (Butt 1960:69). Among the Makuxí is was known as: “Chiwön” (Butt Colson 1985:111).

He [Pichiwön] certainly became dissatisfied with the teaching and suspected that the white people were deceiving him by not giving him the 'strength' which they had received from God and by not enabling him 'to see' and take God's words immediately and for himself. (Butt 1960:74)<sup>6</sup>

Pichiwön was a Makuxí shaman who had contact for the first time with agents from Christian paradise (*wakü pata*). At the beginning the misunderstanding between the missionaries and Pichiwön needs to be mentioned. The missionaries were not satisfied with Pichiwön as a Christian because of his attachment to animistic practice. Pichiwön was bored by Christian doctrines, as Anglicans were not able to explain their kind of interaction with their spirits in a way he could understand.

The missionaries understood the question of Pichiwön for the “way to God” from their point of view of categorization which defined it as a “way of living” respective to Christian ethics. Pichiwön as a shaman had a completely different understanding based on his power. In shaman ritual the connection between the distinct worlds of different spirits is built with the *liane* (*kapeyenkumá(x)pe*, Koch-Grünberg 1923: 204) symbolizing the “way”. The missionaries were not able to answer Pichiwön and he felt “fooled” (Butt 1960:74). For this reason Pichiwön tried to contact the world of Christian spirits with his own capacities. Butt (1960:74) transcribed different discourses about that initial contact between Pichiwön and God, and how Pichiwön created *Areruya* ritual, which was transmitted by Makuxí and Akawaio to Taurepán and later to the Arekuna and Kamarakoto people.

The most important point here is the use of the missionaries' songs to build up a connection to the world of the Christian spirits. Amerindians needed to imitate missionaries' language, and it was not important if they or other Amerindian groups were able to understand that language, but Christian spirits should hear their songs.

The interaction between humans and non-humans in general is defined by special sounds which create a trans-specific communication. Every part of the different worlds, such as animals, spirits of the mountains and waters, has its own musical structure which represents identity. The unity of the lyrics and their intonation is not separable. The new interaction between the shaman and the Christian spirits at this time was denoted by a new sound appropriated first by shamans like Pichiwön.

In figure 2 (left) the situation in 1911 is shown when Koch-Grünberg recorded wax cylinder number 41. The rising melody in the beginning of each musical phrase refers to similarities

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<sup>6</sup> Original version is in English, which was translated into Spanish.

between the two versions. The motifs a and c of the original resembles to e and f of Koch-Grünberg's recordings, motif e (original, fig. 2, right) to c<sup>1</sup> (cylinder 41, fig. 2, left) and motif f (original) to c (cylinder 41). Another reference is the rise of pitch at the final positions in some phrases or motifs. Similarities are audible between motif b of the original and some variations of Koch-Grünberg's recordings, motifs b<sup>1</sup>- b<sup>4</sup>. Comparisons between phrase D of cylinder 41 and phrase C of the original by Webster demonstrate the relatedness of musical characters. The position of the phrases is coincident inside of both songs. The only exception is the rise up to the tone e in the original, respectively corresponding to the tone c in Koch-Grünberg's recordings. Other resemblance of phrases can be confirmed between phrase E of cylinder 41 and phrase A of Webster's song. Phrase F of cylinder 41 relates to phrase D of the original as well.

## *orekotón - Ritual*

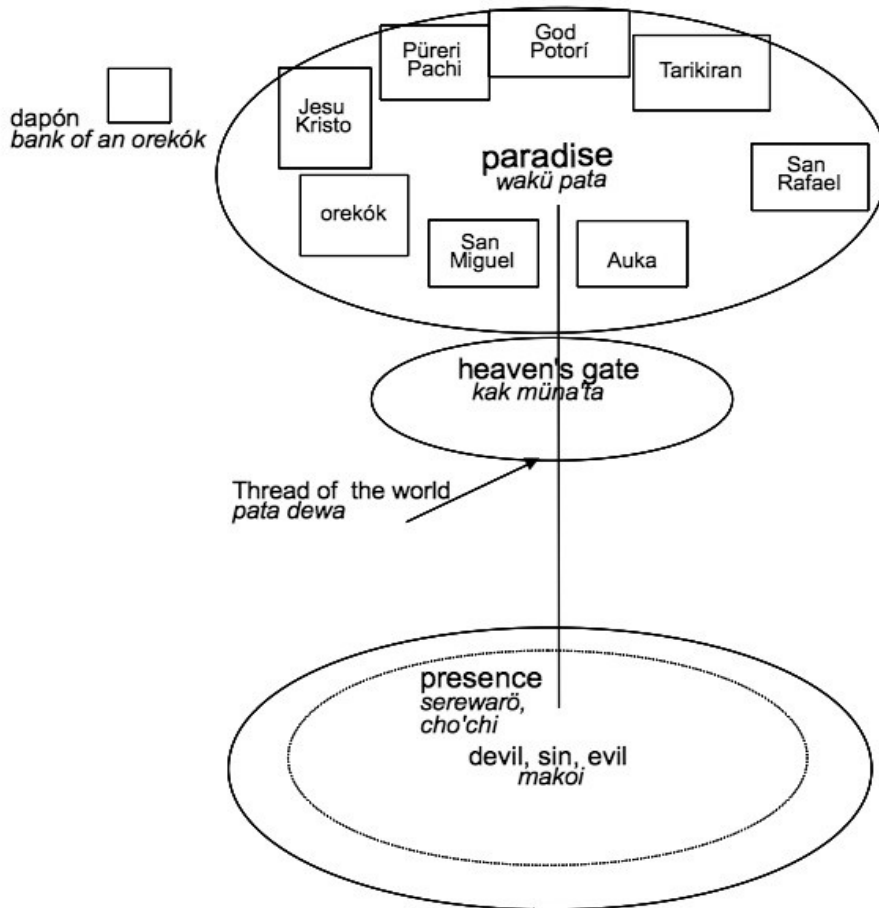


Fig.3: cosmology of Orekotón rituals (Areruya, Cho'chiman)

The changes from the original to the Areruya song of cylinder 41 illustrate clearly a first step of adaption into the Pemón musical system. A system, which needs to be described by some general characteristics. The rituals of Areruya and Cho'chiman take one-and-a-half up to five hours. Both rituals are cycle dances which can be divided into five ritual phases. The first phase is an introduction in which the Ipukenak starts singing and dancing. In the second phase all participants start dancing clockwise. In this ritual phase the “thread of the world” (Pata Dewa) is constructed, which is similar to the liane in the healing ritual of the shaman (Lewy 2012). In the third phase participants start “jumping”. Hopping from one foot to the other until



they are hidden by their “Dapón”, a virtual seat or bench, which every participant owns in paradise (Wakü Pata, fig.3). The messengers like Jesús, San Francisco de Asís or San Miguel bring this “bench” to every participant along the “thread of the world” to the ritual place named Cho'chi<sup>7</sup>. It is represented as a space titled “here and now” (Serewarö). In the moment in which the Dapón (bench) is delivered by the messengers of the paradise to every person who is “jumping” the spirit of the dancer goes up to “Heaven's gate” (Kak Müna'ta). This ritual action is symbolized by the fourth phase. For an outside observer the moment is perceived as trance. The women fall down or need to hold themselves on the pillar in the middle of the Cho'chi. The fifth phase is the final one characterized by the returning of the spirit back into the bodies of all participants from the “Heaven's gate” back to “here and now”. In all phases the ritual leader and the majority of participants are singing. It needs to be stressed here that the ritual is defined by singing and dancing. In general, each performance is sequenced by all of the phases in its choreography and songs.

I recorded both rituals of Areruya and Cho'chiman two times. Some general characteristics can be deduced when all of these recordings are compared.

Every ritual contains from 25 to 40 songs. The songs are fixed. The general structure of the majority of songs is from two to three musical phrases (A, B, C). A song takes between one to ten minutes which depends on the repetition of the periods. One period is subdivided into two or four melodic phrases repeated regularly or irregularly. The majority of phrase repetitions are a period of AABC in Areruya rituals and AB in Cho'chiman rituals (fig. 4)<sup>8</sup>. Every melodic phrase (AB, ABC, ABCD) is generated by two syntagmas (a, a<sup>1</sup>) representing the intoned text. As noticed before, lyrics and melody cannot be analyzed separately. Bringing both levels together we find different forms of parallelism through repetition.

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<sup>7</sup> The term “Cho'chi” is adapted from “church” (English). It is a typical oval Pemón house.

<sup>8</sup> 95 songs has been analyzed. There is a difference between Areruya and Cho'chiman (Lewy 2011).

A

a b

1. A re ru ya ku pü pök In che ru u wi ko

B

a<sup>1</sup> b

1. A re ru ya ku pü pök In che ru u wi ko

C

a<sup>1</sup> b<sup>1</sup>

1. A re ru ya ku pü pök In che ru u wi ko

Fig. 4: Song number 21 of Areruya, recorded in San Luis de Awarkay, Arekuna, 2006 (Areruya kupüpök incheru uwiko/ The angel produces Areruya, beloved brothers. (Lewy Appendix 2, 2011:107, musical parallelism, classification system I)

Chor

A

a\* a\*

1. nai wi nö e se ne dan u wi ko nai wi nö e se ne dan u wi ko  
2. ö rü wi nö e se ne dan u wi ko ö rü wi nö e se ne dan u wi ko

r.F.

B

b b<sup>1</sup>

3. In che rü ku ye ra ma pök man In che rü ku ye ra ma pök man

C

b<sup>2</sup> b<sup>1</sup>

3. In che rü ku ye ra ma pök man In che rü ku ye ra ma pök man

D

b<sup>2</sup> b<sup>3</sup>

3. In che rü ku ye ra ma pök man In che rü ku ye ra ma pök man

Fig. 5: Song number 23 of Areruya, recorded in San Luis de Awarkay, Arekuna, 2006, (1. Nai winö esenedan uwiko?/ My brother, do I see me next to darkness?/2. Ö rü winö esenedan uwiko?/ My brother, do I see me next to evil?/ 3. Incheru kuyeramapök man./ The angel takes care of me. (Lewy Appendix 2, 2011:109, classification system II)

Two classes of general sound structure need to be mentioned. The first one contains all songs characterized by four or five text lines repeated in every musical phrase as it can be seen in figure 4. The second class comprises songs where one text line is sung in only one musical phrase. Mostly, every text line appears in the fixed musical phrase A and the others are repeated in B and/or C (fig. 5). There also exists a third class which can be categorized as the exception of these typical classes by a free combination of subphrases (and their syntagmas). These songs are performed only by ritual leaders and it is not necessary to receive special training before singing in the choir.

There are songs in which a syntagma of phrase A appears again in Phrase B. Here we can resume a parallelism on the textual level. In figure 4 at subphrase b: "Incheru uwiko" (angel/brother) another form of parallelism can be found with the musical dimension. Here we can notice a "musical parallelism", because not only the textual level of the syntagma is the same, even its intonation (subphrase) is. Most songs have that feature, which clarifies why analysis needs to be done at the textual and the musical levels together. These difference produces more technical terms to approach the phenomena as "text line" and "syntagma" refer to the textual level, "phrase" and "subphrase" to the musical one. But these terms bring more differentiation to light. For example if a syntagma is intoned with the same melody the denomination will be the same one, like b in A and B. If the melody of the syntagma (b) changes it needs to be denoted as b<sup>1</sup> in phrase C (fig. 4).

Phrase A is sung two times in most songs. It includes the highest tone of the used scale and introduces the participants to the syntagmas which are varied and combined melodically. The process can be heard in phrase B. The final phrase C with the final motif (b<sup>1</sup>) is characterized by the repetition of the reference tone, which is always the deepest one. Phrase B is the variation phrase and C and/or D the final phrase. In the majorities of all songs the phrase B, C and D are more repeated than phrase A. Therefore, characteristics of verse and refrain can be found. But the frequent repetitions of all phrases provoke the trance.

So one song is defined by the repetitions of phrases, which generate a period. The repetitions of the periods, for instance, 6 times (AABCD, AABCDBCD, AABCDBCD, AABCDBCBCD, AABCDBCD, AABCDBCDBCD), form a song which is followed by the next one with five or more periods, and so on.

The emotion of the first four ritual phases produces pitch rising from song to song interacting with increasing the musical tempo until the final ritual phase. At the end the pitch descends

around starting position and the pace slows down as well. The Ipukenak decides rhythm when accentuated with his left foot in every step stomping the bottom of the Cho'chi, which can be classified as a two-quarter time from western perspective.

Going back to the process of appropriation in comparison of Webster's song and Koch-Grünberg's recording a very typical Pemón transformation can be found. The highest tone of the scale which is in phrase D in the original was newly positioned at the beginning of the song, now in phrase A (cylinder 41, fig. 2, left).

During the last hundred years the performance of Areruya and Cho'chiman was transformed into the traditional system as it is seen in comparison of cylinder 41 and the recent songs (fig. 4, 5). The sound and dance structures of the traditional genres like Parishara and Tukuik<sup>9</sup> are very similar to the ones found in Areruya and Cho'chiman sound and dance structure between 2005 and 2010 (Lewy 2011). So these structures of Areruya and Cho'chiman were adapted from Parishara and Tukuik.

Finally, it can be said that the kind of appropriation realized by the first shamans was a strategy using the songs and their function to contact the agency of Christian spirits. Therefore, the process of transformation and adaption was only a question of time. The origin can be found in the logic of composition of songs practiced by shamans who are the “prophets” and/or “Ipukenak” today. Before studying the idea in depth another new musical phenomena needs to be considered – the “Aguinaldo Pemón”.

### **The Aguinaldo Pemón**

I started field research in Christmas 2005 in Kavanayén. The inhabitants of Kavanayén are mostly Arekuna, but there are Kamarakoto, Taurepán and even descendants of Makuxí. One of my first impressions was of the houses of the community. They were built of Sabana stones after the example of a Catholic mission, and I assumed a strong influence of the Catholic church in Amerindian life in general.

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<sup>9</sup> The songs and dances of Parichara and Tukuik are part of the traditional Pemón music system. The Parishara was a hunting ritual used to attract peccaries and tapirs. The Tukuik was performed before fishing. Both dances were part of inter-ethnic festivities. The Areruya dance is very similar to Parishara. A reason why Koch-Grünberg (1917:107) classified Areruya as a simple “caricature of Parishara”.

Another point of this first impression was the mass of Aguinaldos held in throughout Venezuela during Christmas time. There are two important genres of Venezuelan Aguinaldos. One is the “Aguinaldo de Parranda”, and the other one is “Aguinaldo Religioso”. The first subgroup refers more to themes about the context of Christmas like the preparation of food or the reunion of the family. The other subgroup deals with topics more about the birth of Jesus. The name of the genre differs in the different areas of the country, so Aguinaldos are also found in categories like: “Cantos de Nochebuena, Villancicos, Romances, Décimas, Plegaria del Niño, or Alabanzas” (Guilarte 1998:34). The name is defined by the lyrics. Here it should be noted that musical practice of Aguinaldos was used by academic composers as Vicente Emilio Sojo and his genre of polyphonic Aguinaldo. Rhythmical structure is next to five-eight time and six-eight time the two-four time (one triplet and two eighths). There is no typical harmony found which could define a Aguinaldo genre. Only the six-eight time rhythm corresponds to the Aguinaldos played in Lara. General melodic characteristics are syncopation, polyphony, third parallels, and call and response. Musical instruments are Pandereta, Tambora Criolla, Furruco, Charrasca, and Chineco. Chordophones are the Cinco (guitar with five string), the Tiple (guitar with 12 strings), and the Cuatro (guitar with four strings, fig. 6) (Guilarte 1998:35).

It was not a surprise to find the mass of Aguinaldos in Kavanayén practiced between the 16<sup>th</sup> of December until the 25<sup>th</sup> of December. It starts early in the morning at 6.30 am during the week and at 8 am on the weekend. The mass of Aguinaldos is sequenced by songs defining the phases of church service. The children from kindergarten started singing at the first mass on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December. The repertoire contained typical Venezuelan Aguinaldos like “La Jornada (din, din, din)” or “La Luz de Israel”. The little children were accompanied by a group of 15-year-old adolescents. In the morning they always played in the morning the Tambor Criolla, Furruco, and Charasco for all of the singing school children (fig. 6). The group leader of the musicians was Nestor Pérez. I was introduced to him and his whole family during my stay at Kavanayén. His grandfather knows all typical songs like Parishara, Tukuik, and Marik as well as Cho'chiman. His father plays all the entire repertoire of Aguinaldo Pemón.



Fig. 6: Children with instruments for mass of Aguinaldos, Cuatro (left), Furruco (centre), Tambor Criolla and Charrasca (right).

The selection of Aguinaldos and work assignments for the church service, like the lecturer for petition or the offering of the sacrifices, was under the responsibility of the teachers in cooperation with the Catholic priests. The majority of songs in their collection were Venezuelan Aguinaldos like “Los Peces en el Río”, “La Jornada”, and “La Luz que me guía”. The first exception was the Aguinaldo “Kristo ro kinda” I recorded on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December. The first idea that came into my mind was that Catholic missionaries have possibly translated Venezuelan Aguinaldos from Spanish to the Pemón language. But missionaries themselves rejected my question and assured me these songs are Aguinaldos in Pemón which they accepted and integrated into the church service. On the following days, the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of December, the school children of Tercero up to Sexto Grado were singing only Aguinaldo Pemón. From 20<sup>th</sup> of December to 23<sup>th</sup> of december From December 20-23 the repertoire changed again. The teachers of the older classes of Primer Año until Tercer Año decided to intone only Venezuelan Aguinaldos. The school choir, named Choral Kavanayén, sang only the Spanish language songs. Aguinaldos like “Las Campañas”, “A ti cantamos”, or “Miramos al Cielo” sounded in the little mission church.

The highlight of every mass of Aguinaldos is on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of December. On those symbolic days the Orekotón are responsible for their repertoire of Aguinaldos.

At that time the same people of the Areruya and Cho'chiman rituals sang their Aguinaldos in the Catholic church. Diego Pérez played his Cuatro, which was the only instrument sounding at the mass of Aguinaldos on December 24 at midnight and on the 25th at 8 am and 2 pm as well.

Unfortunately, I was not able to participate in the last mass because at the same time when that Diego was singing his Aguinaldos in the mission church I needed to record my first Cho'chiman with his father, the Ipukenak Raimundo Pérez.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of May, 2006 I understood the kind of appropriation of Aguinaldos in the Orektoón rituals when I recorded my first Areruya in San Luis de Awarkay. It is a community located half an hour by car from Kavanayén (fig. 1). So here it needs to be noticed that Aguinaldos Pemón are played during the whole year as a part of the ritual.



Fig. 7: Diego Pérez sings Aguinaldo Pemón with one of his sons (Cuatro), Kavanayén 2005.

The Areruya starts with Aguinaldos Pemón. Two participants play Cuatros looking to the wall of the Cho'chi. They turn their backs to the other participants because the sound is only addressed to the Christian spirits of Wakü Pata (paradise, fig. 3). A brother of the ritual leader plays the Maraca (rattle). While the third Aguinaldo is playing the Ipukenak and his wife start foot washing with every participant. It is a process which takes about 15 minutes while the whole time an Aguinaldo Pemón is played. Later on the Ipukenak's wife starts dancing alone suddenly. She jumps from one foot to the other as it is practiced in the third ritual phase, and

then she changes fast to the fourth phase, falling into a trance. She was receiving her Dapón (bench) during the first phase of the Areruya ritual due to the sound of Aguinaldos Pemón. She was hidden so hard by her Dapón that she fell down and needed to be saved by her daughter who touched her very gently. Her daughter has the gift to tranquilize participants whose soul/spirit cannot return to the body, a very dangerous state for the affected person. Finally, the spirit of her mother came back and she was able to participate in the upcoming phase of the whole Areruya ritual. After a little break all participants start singing and dancing Areruya, which is not accompanied by any musical instruments.

Diego informed me that the Aguinaldos Pemón have been part of the ritual for forty years. The prophet Lucencia, whom he tenderly called “our grandmother,” implemented that musical genre into the rituals of Areruya and Cho'chiman because her personal agent San Miguel has transmitted her all songs to her first vision.

This prophet Lucencia is very known in the academic literature. The anthropologist David Thomas (1976:20) describes in detail her vision and her “San Miguel cult”. But neither Kersten<sup>10</sup> (1988:102) nor I have found such a “cult” with that name. There is a Cho'chiman which is called “San Miguel” because the majority of the songs were transmitted by that messenger from the paradise (Wakü Pata) to Lucencia. A lot of songs from that time are part of the repertoire to this day.

The system of composition has its origin in the interaction with the world of Christian spirits. Diego told me that he is not a prophet but he has the gift of memorizing music. Sometimes it happens that a prophet like Antonio, whom I met in 2007 in Kavanayén, is hidden by his Dapón (bench) very strongly. So his spirit goes up to Heaven's gate (Kak Mūnat'ta) and stays there longer than usual. In that case the prophet is sleeping in the Cho'chi. It is part of prophetization as well because the other participants do not know if he is dying or if he will wake up again. Usually, his soul/spirit is returning to his body and he wakes up again bringing new information from his agent, such as new laws of living and information to heal persons who told him their diseases<sup>11</sup> before. Of most importance are the new songs of the agency. In the phase of waking up Diego is always waiting next to him because the prophet starts singing

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<sup>10</sup> Marten Kersten (1988) realized a field research in 1985 in Kavanayén. I looked for the “San-Miguel cult” as it was described by David Thomas (1976). Kersten collected information about an Ipukenak named Ramón, and he changed the name into “San-Ramon cult”. Both “cults” do not exist. San Miguel was the agent of Lucencia and Ramón who sent songs and other information to them.

<sup>11</sup> I met the prophet Antonio during my field research in Kavanayén. He worked as a healer and transmitted new songs from his personal agent San Francisco de Asís to Orekotón community.



after being awakened. If there is no recording equipment Diego searches for the harmonies to accompany him on his Cuatro. The new songs are very important for the Orekotón community and will be practiced in every upcoming ritual.

It needs to be differentiated between Venezuelan Aguinaldos and Aguinaldos Pemón in Kavanayén. The first genre is performed only at Christmas time in the context of the mass of Catholic church and as part of some events. Next to the mass little “competitions of Aguinaldos” are organized and the songs are played in the restaurant for tourists. The Aguinaldos Pemón are played in those competitions as well, but only by Orekotón members, who are any people who like to sing those songs, because an idea of exclusion is not practiced by Orekotón. On the other hand it is important to say that separation is more frequently by Pemón groups who aim to keep a distance from their “old” culture or at least to Orekotón rituals. But the Orekotón community is quite strong in Kavanayén and San Luis de Awarkay.

The mass of Aguinaldos shows clearly this separation. Some teachers do not sing Aguinaldos Pemón while others do. Those who sing with their children are part of the Orekotón community, and those who do not prefer the Venezuelan Aguinaldo genre.

The sound structure of Aguinaldos Pemón has a lot of similarities of appropriation as we have seen in the Areruya songs. In the first example, it is clearly audible that the sound structure is oriented on Venezuelan Aguinaldo. The song of the group “Un Solo Pueblo” (composition Luis Mariano Rivera 1979) with the name “La Matica” was appropriated by Pemón (fig. 8). Figure 9 makes a comparison possible. The six verses of the original version are reduced to two text lines as it is common in Pemón musical system. The last subphrase contains a transposition by one octave. The Aguinaldo Pemón “Chiakarö rö” (fig.8) is performed at both events, meaning during the mass of Aguinaldos as well as in the first and fifth phases of Areruya and Cho'chiman ritual. The last subphrase still reflects the process of appropriation. The rising melody at the end is atypical for the Pemón musical system. So it can be realized that transformation happens step by step as we have seen in the case of cylinder 41 which reflects a phase of adaption as well. Figure 10 shows a typical Aguinaldo Pemón after this process of adaption. It can be categorized in the musical classification system I as in case of figure 4, the Areruya song. Two text lines are sung in two musical phrases (AB). In the second phrase (B) the themes are varied and end at the tone of reference. Both phrases are repeated to generate a typical period (1.ABAB 2.AB 1.ABAB). In that case phrase A is not sung two times but every text line (as in 1. and/or 2.) sounds one or two times in every phrase (AB) cre-

ating one period. In the recording made in 2007 in San Rafael de Kamoirán (fig. 10) during the first phase of Cho'chiman every period was repeated for eight times which generates the complete song of an Aguinaldo Pemón. The final ending of every song and the beginning of the next one is defined by handclaps in the ritual. It is not an applause but a sound marker for a change.

The playing of the Cuatro and the Maracas in Oreктоón rituals is new and taken from the practice of Venezuelan Aguinaldos. The accompanying of Cuatro is characterized by a harmonic cadence (tonic, subdominant, dominant).

The lyrics reflect the cosmology of the Oreктоón rituals. The song “Chiakarö rö” (fig. 9) is sung by children during the mass of Aguinaldos, because it fits more in a Catholic context than other Aguinaldo Pemón. The song “Airörö pe man” (fig. 10) shows a typical text sung in Areruya and Cho'chiman. The “end of the world” is a general theme of Oreктоón cosmology. The colonization in the last hundred years in Gran Sabana by the Venezuelan society symbolized by the monetarist world is responsible for the idea that to practice such a ritual to have guaranteed a “place” (Dapón) in paradise. Only people who dance, pray, and sing Areruya, Cho'chiman and Aguinaldo Pemón will receive that place for their soul/spirit after the “end of the world”.



Fig. 8: “La matica”, Venezuelan Aguinaldo of the group “Un Solo Pueblo” (composition Luis Mariano Rivera 1979)

A musical score for two parts, A and B, in a single system. Part A is on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. It contains two phrases: 'a' (No so tros vi vi mos ba jo) and 'b' (la ma ti ca). Part B is on a bass clef staff with the same key signature and time signature. It contains two phrases: 'c' (Ve ra no con e lla y(e)lla ver de ci ta) and 'd' (No so tros vi vi mos ba jo la ma ti ca). The lyrics are written below the notes.

Fig. 9: “Chiakarö rö” Aguinaldo Pemón, appropriated song of “La matica”, mass of Aguinaldos, Kavanayén, 2005, (1. Chiakarö rö auchin pe Jesús da'rö./There is always joy with Jesús /2. da'rö autökonpa, wakü pata dau./so you go with him to paradise.

A musical score for two parts, A and B, in a single system. Part A is on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. It contains two phrases: 'a' (1. ai rö pe man ai rö pe man se nük po na) and 'b' (2. pü re ma tök ko ne ka tök tau re sús da). Part B is on a bass clef staff with the same key signature and time signature. It contains two phrases: 'a¹' (1. ai rö pe man ai rö pe man se nük po na) and 'b¹' (2. pü re ma tök ko ne ka tök tau re sús da). The lyrics are written below the notes.

Fig. 10: “Airörö pe man” Aguinaldo Pemón, recorded as part of Cho'chiman, San Rafael de Kamoirán, 2007, (1. Airörö pe man senük pona./The end of the world comes to that place./ 2. Epürematök! Ekonekatök! Taure Jesús da./ Pray! Transform yourself! Says Jesús.

### The necessary of musical appropriation

During my field research in Kavanayén I participated in the preparation for the event - the “competition of Aguinaldos”. I noticed that the groups were using the sound equipment to listen to the CD’s of known bands like “Un Solo Pueblo” in order to learn the songs by means of imitation and repetition. It is obvious that the Venezuelan style of Aguinaldos entered Gran Sabana and Pemón territory due to media communication in the 1970’s. The prophet Lucencia not only had a vision but an interior audition (hearing voices) as well that all prophets had and still have. The phenomenon of audition produces discourses about prophetization.

After the prophet Ramón awoke from a trance he had the capacity to play the Cuatro, although he was not able to do so before his contact experience of contact with the agency of Christian spirits.

Lucencia and Ramón were the first prophets singing Agualdos Pemón to connect the world of “here and now” (Serewarö) with the paradise (Wakü Pata, fig. 3). It was necessary because Pemón needed this contact with the spirits of the Creole society. Since the 1970’s more Venezuelan people come as tourists every year to the Gran Sabana. The contact and the economic pressure increases every year as well. The transformation of the songs to proper Pemón was necessary for Amerindian identity to remain distinct from non-Orekotón (which includes all other Amerindians, Creoles, Mestizos, etc.). It guaranteed the direct connection to paradise, the place of Christian spirits where the souls/spirits of all Ipukenak who pass away by physically are alive as well.

The Anglican missionaries brought songs which represented their spirits. The Venezuelans have their representative to contact the world of the paradise as well. This representation is the Agualdo played only at Christmas. It is a time where the quality of contact is higher than in the rest of the year. Another reason is the wish to incorporate the special capacities of spirits from the Venezuelan world like José Gregorio Hernández (1864-1919). In the whole country the wizards of Maria Lionza are in contact with that spirit to do operations and heal patients. The Pemón community of Mapauri is famous for their healer, a relative of the prophet Lucencia who has dealt with José Gregorio for several years.

Finally, motivation and strategy of appropriation is part of the Pemón musical system which is more characterized by its function than any esthetics in a western sense. This function is the interaction between the human and nonhuman worlds. In earlier times the hunters used the songs of tapir and peccaries to attract them (Lewy 2011). The transformation of social life of the Amerindian people, the change from hunting in the Sabana to receive money, made it necessary to contact the spirits of the invaders. Hundred of years before the influence of the Catholic church, started and these spirits were appropriated in the Pemón religion system. The songs of Agualdos are a recent evidence of that process. The transformation of the appropriated sound structures into the Pemón musical system and the change from imitation of the English language to an intelligible language reflects the cosmology of Orekotón rituals and illustrates specific cultural continuity which cannot be described as “syncretism” when Orekotón rituals are discussed.

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