

The Play of Semiotic Repetition and Intertwined Semiotic Agency: Ba in the Reciprocal Singing of Chinese Mountain Song

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Since Silverstein's seminal works, Peircean semiotics has been an important theoretical tool in linguistic anthropology. Koyama emphasised that semiotics is an exploration of totality,¹ and as Enfield pointed out, the hallmark of semiotics is the inclusiveness that connects the various approaches to a phenomenon or chain of events within a totality that reveals the "already interconnected aspects of a single phenomenon" (Enfield 51–52).

Based on Kockelman's neo-Peircean semiotics, which incorporates agents into a Peircean semiotic framework, this paper analyses "Han'ge," a reciprocal song in Guizhou Province, China. Reciprocal singing is a form of performing art in which lyrics are attached to a fixed melody and sung to each other on the spot. This singing practice, also called antiphonal singing, is known to be practiced by various ethnic groups around the world, especially in East and Southeast Asia (Kajimaru, *From "Utagaki" to Reciprocal Singing*). However, as Jordania's large comparative work of chorus singing (Jordania), it is often confused with call and response choruses with fixed lyrics, and the actual nature of their interaction has not been well studied. In this paper, I will clarify the semiotic characteristics of Han'ge interactions and show how and what kind of agency works in the singing exchange. Along with that, this paper aims to not only exemplify but further complement the inclusiveness of neo-Peircean semiotics by critically incorporating the *ba* theory (especially the agency of *ba*) into the neo-Peircean semiotic framework. As will be discussed below, *ba* theory offers a perspective that neo-Peircean Semiotics overlooks, and which opens our eyes to the agency that the various elements involved in the "here and now" and the environment as a whole have over the agents that reside within it.

Note that the characteristics of linguistic anthropology, which follows Boas and incorporates semiotics, include totality, reflexivity, (internal) criticism, and history (Koyama 35). Since I have consistently conducted research in Japan and published my work in Japanese, this paper inevitably has a certain reflexivity and critical aspect². This paper is based on the premise of the "World-System of Anthropology" (and the World-System of Academic Thought) (Kuwayama), in which academic production is centered in the English-speaking world, while the various "World Anthropologies" (Ribeiro), including anthropologies in Asian languages such as Japanese, are placed at the periphery. By contextualising the academic discussions that have been carried out in Japanese while referring to discussions in English-speaking countries, the paper attempts to bring the academic context of Japanese into the academic world of English. In this way, this paper demonstrates the uniqueness of Asian Semiotics and recursively reveals the inclusiveness of Semiotics that incorporates this uniqueness.

Neo-Peircean Semiotics and Agency in the Semiotic Process

In a series of studies, linguistic anthropologist Paul Kockelman has developed a model of the semiotic process that could be called Neo-Peircean Semiotics³. Since Kockelman has developed Peirce's semiotics, building on his concepts and making an extremely wide-ranging argument for a general semiotic theory, I would like to summarise this argument to the extent necessary for this paper.

The most obvious difference between Kockelman's model and Peirce's semiotics is that Peirce established the ternary relationship of sign, object, and interpretant, whereas Kockelman proposed a quaternary relationship, adding agent as needed (Kockelman *Biosemiosis; Agent, Person, Subject, and Self*, and Enfield 39). According to Kockelman's

definition, agent is “any entity that can perceive such an index (any quality that is relatively perceivable to an agent) and project such a kind (any projected propensity to exhibit particular indices)” (*Agent, Person, Subject, and Self* 5). In addition to that, the agent can have ontological assumptions of the world that may change over time. And “such agents not only ontologise entities in the world, but they are also ontologised as entities in the world” (Kockelman *Semiotic Agency* 31). Then, with this agency, the agents select (intentionally or unintentionally) what interpretant to instigate for the sign⁴. This capability has flexibility (controlling, composing, and subprehending) and is constrained by accountability (being evaluated, being entitled, and being obligated) (Kockelman *Agency*, Enfield 110).

To briefly note the other components, in this framework, a sign is an event that an agent has sensed, an interpretant is an event that an agent instigated and which the sign gave rise to through the mediation of the agent, and an object is what sign stands for and what interpretant orients to. Simply put, the sign is the input to the agent, and the interpretant is the output of the agent. And as Kockelman said, given the relationship between the Object-Sign and between Interpretant-Object (which may be external to the Agent), the Agent-Interpretant relation makes sense in the context of the Sign-Agent relation (from the standpoint of the Agent).

As is well known, the interpretant is often the sign in the subsequent semiotic process, and this process proceeds in a temporal, logical, or causal chain. Let me explain this semiotic process chain based on the example used by Enfield (37). Suppose Bill and Jane are at home, and Bill sees dark clouds (S1) outside his window. Seeing this, Bill (A1) thinks it is going to rain (O1) and picks up an umbrella (I1). These Sign-Object-Agent-Interpretant consist of the first frame, and in the following frame, the Interpretant in the first frame (I1) becomes Sign. Jane (A2) sees Bill pick up the umbrella (S2), guesses that Bill is about to go out (O2), and asks, “Where are you going?” (I2).

As Kockelman (*Agent, Person, Subject, Self*) and Enfield said, first of all, a semiotic process corresponds to a particular event only because it is framed as such (and it is precisely such framing that is a selection). The example above shows a semiotic chain of two frames selected by two agents, Bill and Jane, and the linkage is I1/S2. In other words, the interpretant of the first frame is the sign of the following frame. The above Sign-Interpretant connections and frames are connected logically or causally and can be expanded simultaneously. The arrows below the frames indicate this flow.

In addition, Kockelman discusses how agencies are distributed in his work, *Semiotic Agency*. Kockelman explained this using velvet monkeys as an example (*Semiotic Agency* 26–27). First, a velvet monkey (A1) sees an eagle (O1) and raises its voice (S1) which becomes the iconic index of that eagle. Another velvet monkey (A2) hears it (S2(=I1)) and runs into the bushes (I2) to escape the eagle (O2(=O1)). In this example, we can say that the eagle is a derivative agent (A3). The two velvet monkeys in the example constitute a fourth agent (A4) with a single accountability for the eagle. Furthermore, the organism and environment (*envorganism*, such as natural selection) that make these interactions possible can also be regarded as an agent (A5).

Kockelman made a distinction between residence in the world (coherent ensembles of nonpropositional semiotic processes) and representations of the world (propositional semiotic processes). Residence in the world (e.g., interacting with others and meaning-in-the-world more generally) includes “heeding affordances, wielding instruments, undertaking actions, inhabiting roles, and fulfilling identities.” (*Agent, Person, Subject, Self* 3, 96) On the other hand, representations of the world relate to language and mind, including “speaking and thinking with propositional contents” (3). These two are “separated only for analytic and expository purposes. Taken together, as irreducibly interrelated, these semiotic modalities

constitute *meaning-in-the-world*" (96). In effect, these intertwine to form ontological assumptions, and the ontology is transformed through the semiotic process. The agency involved in the former is called a residential agency, and the agency involved in the latter is called a representational agency. The capacities of these two modes of the agency are shown in Table 1 and Table 2, respectively (*Semiotic Agency* 32–33).

Table 1. Residential Agency (*Semiotic Agency* 32)

- (1) Control the contexts (where and when) of one's behavior
- (2) Compose the contents (what and how) of one's behavior
- (3) Anticipate the Consequences (why and to what effect) of one's behavior

Table 2. Representational Agency (*Semiotic Agency* 33)

- (1) Determine Topics (of Representations)
- (2) Determine Foci (that Apply to such Topics)
- (3) Determine Arguments (that Lead to, or Follow from, such Topic-Focus Relations)

This is an overview of Kockelman's neo-Peircean semiotic framework as it relates to this paper. This framework is a deliberate addition of an agent to Peircean trichotomy, which makes it easier to focus on the motivating factors that drive the semiotic process. This has led to discussions of agents/agencies in *Semiotic Agency* and elsewhere. Nevertheless, there are two problems with Kockelman's discussion of agency.

The first one is about the distribution of agencies. In the case of *Distributed Agency*, the fourth agent is a team of velvet monkeys, while the fifth agent is an extremely huge and distant agency such as natural selection. Certainly, the velvet monkey would have gained the ability to take the actions mentioned in this case by natural selection, but there is too much distance between the fourth and fifth agents. Rather, it should be said that *ba* drives these monkeys.

Ba (and *basho*) is a vernacular word in Japanese that is close in meaning to "field" or "place" in English and is also one of the central concepts in the thought of Kitaro Nishida, who developed his own philosophy in Japan (Nishida), and a concept that Hiroshi Shimizu theorised independently as the *ba* theory, in resonance with *basho* in Nishida's philosophy (Shimizu, *Ba no Shiso; The Logic of Ba*)⁵. In recent years, this concept has been introduced to pragmatics by William Hanks et al. and Oka et al. While these terms are often used as keywords in Japanese anthropology as an extension of everyday vocabulary, Kajimaru et al. advocate applying *ba* along the lines of Nishida, Shimizu, and Hanks et al. to anthropological analysis.

Simply put, *ba* is a place that includes the self, others, and the physical environment surrounding the participants. It has agency over the agents who perform in it as restraint conditions and is created through the performance (Kajimaru et al. *Introduction: An Anthropology of Ba*). What is important about this concept is that it takes the state of self/other non-separation as its basis, from which the self and the other are separated. Hanks et al. refer to the former as *primary ba* and the latter as *secondary ba*. In pragmatics, it is often pointed out that the *ba*-centric perspective, which assumes a primary *ba*, is often used in Japanese, while in English, linguistic expressions are made from the ego-centric perspective in which the secondary *ba* is foregrounded⁶. Nevertheless, the concept of *ba* itself is not limited to Japanese culture but is applicable universally because it is related to human epistemology and ontology in general.

In accordance with Kockelman's framework, *ba* is supposed to be an agent that includes the situation in which the monkeys are moving, the monkey that finds the eagle (A1), the monkey that runs away after hearing the alarm call (A2), and the eagle (A3), as well as

the bushes where the monkeys run away. Natural selection, which Kockelman cites as the most comprehensive agent, should be the contextual, more distant agent that brings about this ba as an agent. Enfield's temporal or causal scale of reciprocity, enchrony (28–35), can also be regarded as driven by ba, an agent consisting of the people participating in the reciprocal action and the entire environment of the place.

The crucial point here is not to take the various agents in the ba only separately from the beginning (not to look only at the secondary ba) but to pay attention to the agent that drives them as a whole (but to pay attention to the existence of the primary ba). This in itself is precisely in line with the flexible conception of agency in neo-Peircean semiotics, which is not confined to the biological individual⁷. In this paper, the following analysis will clarify how the agency of ba supports the interaction of Han'ge.

Second, Kockelman has basically discussed only semiotic processes in the real world⁸. It has not dealt with theatrical practices that are performed in complete detachment from reality, or with semi-theatrical interactions in which the imaginary and real worlds are blended, as is the case with the singers of Han'ge.

Theatrical interaction is an interaction in which the participants stand on stage as entities with roles, status, and identities, or ontologies different from each other's everyday "real" identities, located in a world that is understood to be different from their real world. In general, theatrical performers behave according to a predetermined plot. Here, worldmaking may take place through various theatrical devices, gestures, and speeches, or it may be done almost exclusively through verbal utterances⁹. In the latter case, the performer creates a world on the spot by exerting residential agency, making a speech in a style that indicates that it is a play on the spot, but that world exists only in representational ways, and it is expected that a distinctive situation occurs in which the representative agency creates a behavior-in-the-world and residence-in-the-world. In addition, theatrical performances are different from everyday interactions in that there is a participant, the audience, who casts an evaluation of the performance from outside of the world.

In the ba theory introduced earlier, the following "improvisational drama model" of ba (Hanks et al. 66; *Ba no Shisou* 50–55; *The Logic of Ba*) was introduced to explain that ba and basho is an emergent social field of which it is a part.

Consider the improvisational troupe, who share a story line, but who individually start from indeterminate positions. It is not possible to predict what they will do or which aspects of the story line they will enact. Moreover, the actors are performing in front of, and addressing, an audience. Their enacted representation must respond to that audience's representation. (Hanks et al. 66)

Although ordinary theatrical performances are not as improvisational as this, they still allow the performers to have free agency and often demonstrate improvisation. Moreover, the improvisation is often not created by the performer alone, but by ba-as-an-agent that emerges in the interaction. This paper will examine how representative agency and residential agency are intertwined, and ba co-emerges with performance in Han'ge, which is close to the situation assumed by the improvisational drama model in ba theory.

Han'ge: Chinese Reciprocal Singing in Guizhou Province¹⁰

Han'ge, the subject of this paper, is one of the reciprocal songs sung in Guizhou Province, China. This is also generically called "Shan'ge" (Mountain Song) together with Buyi'ge, which is sung in the Buyi language. Since this song is sung in the Guizhou dialect, classified as southwestern Mandarin and the lingua franca in Guizhou Prefecture, it is performed by several



Photo 1. Luodian County 5th Mountain Song Stage (2008, photo by author).

ethnic groups, including the Han and the Buyi, mainly during the Chinese New Year and at housewarming celebrations. Male and female teams conduct the exchanges (often consisting of two people each). The stories of the songs are basically fixed, with “*Nian’ge*” (Year Song) sung as a song of preparation for the Chinese New Year and “*Qing’ge*” (Love Song), in which a man and a woman play a love game, which is the genre performed most often.¹¹

The singer of this song has a vast memory of formulaic lyrics, from which he or she selects the appropriate ones to respond to the lyrics sung by the counterpart and, in some cases, returns the song with a slight modification. Each region has a specific melody, and sometimes hours of sung conversation are exchanged accompanied by a single melody. The lyrics, for example, take the following form.¹²

(1) m15:

<i>he mei chang ge hao xin xian,</i>	It's very refreshing to sing with you, my sister,
<i>shou shou dou shi tai ai ke.</i>	Guests will love any of the songs.
<i>mei chang shi shou bu yong xiang,</i>	My sister doesn't even think to sing ten songs,
<i>wo chang yi shou xiang ban tian.</i>	I think half a day to sing a single verse.
<i>he mei chang ge hao kuan le,</i>	It's so delightful to sing with you, my sister,
<i>shou shou dou shi tai ai ge.</i>	This brother will love any of the songs.
<i>mei chang shi shou bu yong xiang,</i>	My sister doesn't even think to sing ten songs,
<i>wo chang yi shou dou bu he.</i>	I can't sing even one verse well.

As may be clear from this example, the Han’ge is designed for singing two lines in one melody line, and the boundaries of the lines are clearly delimited in the melody. The lyrics are one sentence (or verse) in two lines, and two of these lines together constitute one stanza. A single unit that corresponds with a conversational turn is composed of repeated stanzas with almost the same meaning and slightly different syllables. The second half stanza has the same meaning as the first half stanza and may be omitted by some singers. In the following examples, the second half stanza will be omitted.

The author conducted field research on reciprocal singing, including Han’ge, for a total of two years between 2004 and 2010. The case study presented here is from evidence collected during a Qing’ge singing session at a Chinese New Year event in Luodian County, Guizhou Province, on February 12, 2008 (Photo 1). In this case, as shown in the photo, two men and two women each form a team and sing to each other. The transcription was done with a local assistant and then confirmed by the male singers. The lines and other units in example (1) are notated in the same way that is commonly done by singers of Han’ge, including these men, when writing lyrics.

Interactive Rhetorical Songs and Semiotic Repetition in Han'ge

In this section, I would like to analyse the Han'ge interactions semiotically. First of all, Han'ge singers perform within the semiotic framework of role, status, and attitude. According to *Agent, Person, Subject, Self*, "a status is a (projected) propensity to signify, objectify, and interpret in particular ways," "(a) role (or index more generally) is any sign of this propensity," and "an attitude is another's response to, or interpretant of, a status by having perceived a role or index, itself often another status" (69). In the example here, singer A sings Han'ge (role), which indicates the status of "singer of Han'ge" as an object, to which singer B responds with Han'ge, thereby expressing the attitude that A is the person with whom he/she is in conversation (and B's song also expresses to A the status that B is the "singer of Han'ge").

As mentioned earlier, performance in Han'ge has a set storyline. In Qing'ge, it is the first song that celebrates the entire setting of the event. In this part of the song, rather than responding to the counterpart's song, each sings words of praise to the people who organised the event and the audience. Next, the singers sing to each other, "I'm not a good singer" and/or "Your singing is wonderful." In other words, a dialogue of mutual humility ensues. Example (1), sung by the male team, is such a lyric, and the following example is a response sung by the female team to (1).

(2) f15:

<i>ni men jiang lai wo dei ting,</i>	If you speak, I will listen,
<i>yue liang chu lai yue liang ming</i>	A moon coming up, a bright moon.
<i>xiang le san tian he liang ye,</i>	Three days and two nights of thinking,
<i>xiang le liang shou pei ni men.</i>	I will think of only two verses and offer them to you.

This song responds to (1) by saying, "I have to think long and hard to come up with a song to reply." This means that it denies (1) and expresses a humble stance, "I am not a good singer." The reply to (2) is (3).

(3) m16:

<i>san ke shan shu gong yi wo,</i>	Three cedar trees grow in one place,
<i>xia yu san nian bu tou jiao.</i>	(Because it grows densely) even if it rains for three years, the roots do not get wet.
<i>gui zhou chu ming da shu zi,</i>	While Guizhou is famous for its big trees,
<i>mei jia chu ming hao shan ge.</i>	My sister's house is famous for its good mountain songs.

The first half of this lyric is a metaphor for natural things, and the second half is in the form of a direct expression of what the metaphor means. Such rhetorical techniques are very common in Han'ge. And the meaning of (3) is summed up in the fourth line, "My sister's house is famous for its good mountain songs." In other words, the song negates (2) and compliments "You are a good singer." This is the same as (1).

As is evident in this case, the same semiotic framework is repeated in Han'ge while various rhetorical expressions are deployed. In the first frame, sign (S1) is a lyric praising the counterpart's song. The lyric in S1 is a role that indexes the status of the agent in the second frame (A2) who instigated S1, "singer of Han'ge," but in particular, it indexes one of the expected propensities of this status "being humble" as O1, and instigates the corresponding I1 as an attitude (or as the next role). The same thing takes place in Frame 2. Then, the semiotic process of the second frame becomes the input of the first frame again, resulting in the repetition of the semiotic process between these two frames. This semiotic repetition

allows Han'ge to last for hours without the story moving forward.

Residential and Representational Agency for making and dwelling in a Fictional World

In Qing'ge, the next step from here is the romantic exchange phase. The basic flow of romantic exchange is said to have six phases: (1) getting to know each other, (2) accompanying together, (3) becoming lovers, (4) promising to marry, (5) parting because the time has come, and (6) seeing the woman off as she leaves. Looking at the romantic exchange in phase (1) from Frame 1 (the female team's side), I2/S1 is basically the lyric "I am in love with my sister more than she is in love with me," O1 is the A1's inference that "A2 is hiding his true feelings," and I2/S1 is the lyric that implies "you are lying." In Frame 2 (the male side), O2 is the inference that "A1 doubts A2's words." Each inference entering O is based on the status of A1 and A2 (i.e., a normatively regimented semiotic process based on status is working behind the scenes here). Here, too, the same framework recurs, as in the previous section. And the romantic drama does not progress like in the previous section.¹³ In this example, it took two and a half hours from the beginning to progress to phase (2).¹⁴

How, then, do the singers exert their agency to create and behave in the world of the song in a way that fits with the plot and, at the same time, does not move forward too fast? To analyse this problem, let us look at an example that clearly shows that we have entered the phase of (2) accompanying together.

(4) m47

<i>xiang mei lian a!</i>	I want to accompany you, my sister!
<i>qu nian xiang mei dao jin nian.</i>	I fell in love with my sister last year and now this year.
<i>bushi jin nian de qi yi,</i>	I didn't fall in love this year,
<i>qu nian qi yi yao lai lian.</i>	I wanted to accompany you last year.

f47

<i>yi zhang pa zi wu chi chang,</i>	A turban is five feet long,
<i>pa zi chan mei mei chan lang.</i>	The turban wraps around your sister, and your sister wraps around you guys.
<i>qing ge chan mei bu chang jiu,</i>	My brother has not been wrapped around me for so long,
<i>mei zhe qing ge jiu jiu chang.</i>	The sister keeps the brother around for a long time.

Here, the male singer clearly states his¹⁵ wishes and offers. In fact, although he had already expressed his fondness for the counterpart earlier, he clearly expresses his hope and performatively indicates that the phase of the exchange has progressed. Next, it is stated that his fondness is not a frivolous one but one that he has harbored for a long time. The female singer, on the other hand, refutes this claim. She brings up a turban as a metaphor for a long thing (a turban is an ethnic garment worn daily by the middle-aged and elderly women of Buyi and other ethnic groups in Guizhou) and argues that the male singer has not been in love with her for that long and that he is holding the female singer back.

The singers first demonstrate their residential agency by singing to each other (and to their counterparts) in Han'ge style (melody and rhyme) on the stage of an event celebrating the Chinese New Year. This generates a new ba of reciprocal singing, in which the singers mutually have a different ontology from the everyday world. The clearest indices representing the heterogeneous ontology are "brother" and "sister." These terms are often used in China when a man and a woman in a particularly close relationship call each other, but since the singers are not particularly close in reality, the term indicates that they are here as participants with the status of "brother" and "sister" in their stage roles.

The ba works as a restraint condition, place of mutual induced fitting (Shimizu, *The Logic of Ba*), and dynamic stage of "improvisational drama." The male singer in the present case mentioned in an interview (conducted in Luodian County on 12 March 2008) that "you can't hear a good song unless both singers are good" and "a good interplay attracts the audience and creates a great atmosphere," which is an expression of the singer's perceived agency of ba. The agency of the ba keeps the singers singing Han'ge reciprocally in the stance and style analysed in the section above. Conversely, the ba is maintained by the coordinated performance of the singers.

However, the agency as a mode of residence in the world that the singer has in the Han'ge dialogues is actually almost absent. The singers cannot change the plot of the song, nor can they change the melody or rhyme.¹⁶ These are defined by the ba and by semiotic agents further behind the ba. Most of the lyrics are formulaic, and due to the complexity of the rhyming rules, entirely new lyrics are rarely sung. Han'ge lyrics are types, but depending on where and how they are sung, namely, by the singer's representational agency (i.e., determining topics, foci, and arguments), they are expressed as tokens by the associated residential agency. The singer's agency is almost limited to which lyrics to sing in response to the previous lyrics, and within this constraint, the singer acts as an agent. For example, in (4), the male singer sings, "I want to accompany you, my sister!" and leads to the next topic of the song as a representational agent. The following line defines the focus and clarifies the argument. In response, the female singer uses a metaphor (which is interpreted based on the preceding song) according to the topic and focus set by the preceding song and refutes the male singer by presenting a different argument for the previous male singer's song; and this continues afterwards.

As we have seen in detail here, the singers of Han'ge will present a representation based on the representation presented by the preceding songs. The very style of Han'ge that regiments representation supports the competition of representation as "simultaneously the source and shackle" of creativity (*Agent, Person, Subject, Self* 153).

Conclusion

From the analysis above, it became clear that from the neo-Peircean semiotics standpoint, the interaction of Han'ge is organised to repeat the same frame. As we saw in the analysis of case (4), there are some cases in which the phase of interaction progresses (i.e., the frame does not repeat itself but progresses), but the creativity of Han'ge lies in how it continues or does not continue the semiotic repetition, and what kind of token (i.e., concrete lyrics) is assigned as sign or interpretant.

By introducing the concept of ba, it was suggested that the inseparable terrain in the scene of Han'ge singing: the ba in the singing scene, affects singers who are deeply intertwined because they have been composing their songs interactively as a whole. Furthermore, the distinction between residential agency (or residence in the world) and representational agency (or representation of the world), the actions of singers as semiotic agents, was analysed. The singers' residential agency creates the ba that brings different ontology from their casual world, and their representational agency becomes the main agency which becomes the focal point of creation for the singers.

Finally, I would like to look again at the relationship between ba and the neo-Peircean semiotic framework. The concept of "ba" refers to the individual actors and their surrounding environment (what Kockelman calls *envorganism*), which manifests itself as an agent for the actors. This is based on the idea of ba theory, which first considers the elements (*kankei-shi*, in *The Logic of Ba* 28–32) that constitute envorganism as a single entity (primary

ba in Hanks et al.), and then, based on this premise, captures the relationships among the elements (secondary ba in Hanks et al.). Kockelman considers envorganism to be A5 (e.g., natural selection), while ba and basho indicate that envorganism should be located between A1-4 and A5 as a crucial agent. The interactions that the Han'ge singers develop, in which their songs semiotically intertwine with each other and the same frames are repeated, show that the very idea of ba theory should be incorporated into the analysis of semiotic agency. The paper also reveals that the concept of ba developed in Japan is not confined to Japan alone but is also valid for performances in China (and throughout the world (*An Anthropology of Ba*)). This is because ba (and basho) clearly conceptualise a semiotic agency that is often overlooked from a Western perspective. As demonstrated above, an Asian perspective can provide more granularity to the universal framework of semiotics. We hope that further various local academic perspectives will bring more nuance to the frameworks that have been developed in the English-speaking world.

Notes

- ¹ Koyama traced back to Alexander von Humboldt's cosmography and critically examined the development of American anthropology, especially linguistic anthropology, as "Thoughts on Totality" from the perspective of Peircean semiotics. In this context, he argues that semiotics was introduced into linguistic anthropology by Silverstein and others through Peirce's systematisation and the connection between semiotics and language, communication, and psychology by Roman Jakobson.
- ² Koyama harshly criticised the lack of reflexivity and reflexive criticism in Japanese anthropology and pointed out that this is the reason why linguistic anthropology has not been introduced in Japan (Koyama 88–129). Although Koyama's critique of Japanese anthropology tends to simplify and diminish the nuances of the work done by Japanese anthropologists, it is true that in Japan, until recently, there has been little reference to linguistic anthropology after the ethnography of communication, even in anthropological studies that deal with language and communication. However, this situation is rapidly changing, especially since the 2010s. For example, a textbook on linguistic anthropology dealing with topics in American linguistic anthropology since the ethnography of communication has been published in Japanese (Ide et al.), and in 2020, *the Japanese Journal of Cultural Anthropology* published its first Special Issue on Linguistic Anthropology, "Dynamics in the Indexical Process of Signification: Perspectives from Linguistic Anthropology" (Nawa).
- ³ This term is used by N. J. Enfield. Unless otherwise noted, the descriptions in this section are grounded in Kockelman (*Biosemiosis; Agent, Person, Subject, Self*) and Enfield (Chap. 4).
- ⁴ According to a study on Peirce, "(by) making the interpretant an essential component of the sign, Peirce avoids having to make meaning a function of the intention of the sign utterer" (de Waal 85). It may seem that Kockelman takes this risk by introducing "agent" into the original trichotomy, but he repeatedly emphasises in *Biosemiosis, Agent, Person, Subject, and Self* that his framework operates independently of intention, showing that the sign-interpretant relationship is not the same as the intention of the sign utterer.
- ⁵ Though *ba* and *basho* have very close meanings in Japanese, and sometimes Shimizu and Nishida use these two as synonyms, Shimizu basically distinguished *ba* and *basho* in significant ways. In *The logic of Ba*, as the translator summarises, he uses these two terms as follows: "*Basho* is used to indicate a physical environment, including all internal actors, i.e., there is no distinction between people in the environment and the environment itself. *Ba*, on the other hand, is a transcendent representation of the *basho* that acts as a

constraint on the activities of the actors within the *basho*" (9). In his explanation of the improvisational theater model, which will be explained later, in *Ba no Shiso*, Shimizu describes the relationship between *ba* and *basho* as follows: the ubiquitous realm of the self that rises (implicitly or explicitly) to the actor's awareness, or "stage," is the *ba*, and *basho* is the "theater" including not only the whole "stage" but also "audience," that is further outside of the stage, and effects on the *ba*'s dynamic life (50–51). I will mainly use *ba*, but it is important to note that the relationship between these two terms is the background of the term *ba*.

⁶ Although the Chinese language treated in this paper is considered to be somewhat similar to English, this paper does not discuss how Chinese, in general, can be conceived of in terms of the pragmatics of *ba*.

⁷ In *Semiotic Agency*, Kockelman defined an *individual* as "Any entity that can evince indices (to an agent) and thereby be a site to project kindedness (by that agent)." In another article, he noted that "individuals can be groups of people as well as parts of people; they can be people as well as things; and they can be unbounded, uncountable, and ethereal kinds of things as well as bounded, countable, and concrete kinds of things" (*Agent, Person, Subject, Self* 206).

⁸ In *Language, Culture, and Mind*, Kockelman analyses how the relationship between narrated and spoken events is linguistically encoded in Mayan records of mythological narratives. In this case, however, the narrator of the story is not acting as a character in the narrated event. Additionally, given that Chinese, the language with which this paper deals, does not have complex tenses and aspects such as Q'eqchi'-Maya, it is not possible to analyse it as Kockelman has done.

⁹ Epic singers, often studied in oral tradition studies, may fall into this category.

¹⁰ The description in this section is based on Kajimaru (*Ethnography of Mountain Song*).

¹¹ Such singing is often said to be a process in which young men and women sing together in love. This activity, of which there are many examples in China, is sometimes referred to as "Erotic Musical Activity" (Mu). However, the singers of the Han'ge discussed here are semi-professionals, and the exchanges are acting, not actual romance.

¹² Since there is no orthography for the Guizhou dialect and the phonological system of the lyrics is outside the scope of this paper's analysis, the original language notation of the lyrics is taken from the Chinese pinyin system, with the tone letters omitted for the sake of simplicity. The "m" in the examples stands for "male" and "f" for "female," and the numbers are the serial numbers of the turns sung by the respective singers. This exchange is initiated by the male singer so that, for example, the return to m1 is f1, and the return to f1 is m2. The entire dialogue cited in this paper is contained in Kajimaru (*Ethnography of Mountain Song*) with a Japanese translation.

¹³ Such a method of "having a story but not moving it forward" through semiotic repetition can also be found in the reciprocal songs of ethnic minorities in Yunnan Province. Using the reciprocal song of the Bai people as a major example, Okabe calls this characteristic way of reciprocal songs "the logic of sustaining reciprocal songs" and argues that it is supported by the (ideal) horizontal relationship between the singers.

¹⁴ This singing performance began shortly after 9:00 a.m. and was suspended by a lunch break two and a half hours later.

¹⁵ In this case, two people form a team and sing together. In Han'ge, both the male and female members basically use the singular form (i.e., the team is treated as a single person), so the singular is used here as well. Incidentally, the lyrics are basically composed by one of the two singers, while the other sings along with the main singer.

¹⁶ The Han'ge melody is directly related to the intelligibility of the lyrics; there is only one Han'ge melody per region, and the audience cannot understand the lyrics sung in other regions' melodies.

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