

The Documentation of Yurakaré

The Project

The DoBeS-Yurakaré Project ran from **June 2006 until July 2011**. It was hosted at the Language and Cognition group at the **MPI for Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen** (Netherlands), with the support of Prof. Stephen C. Levinson. The team members are:

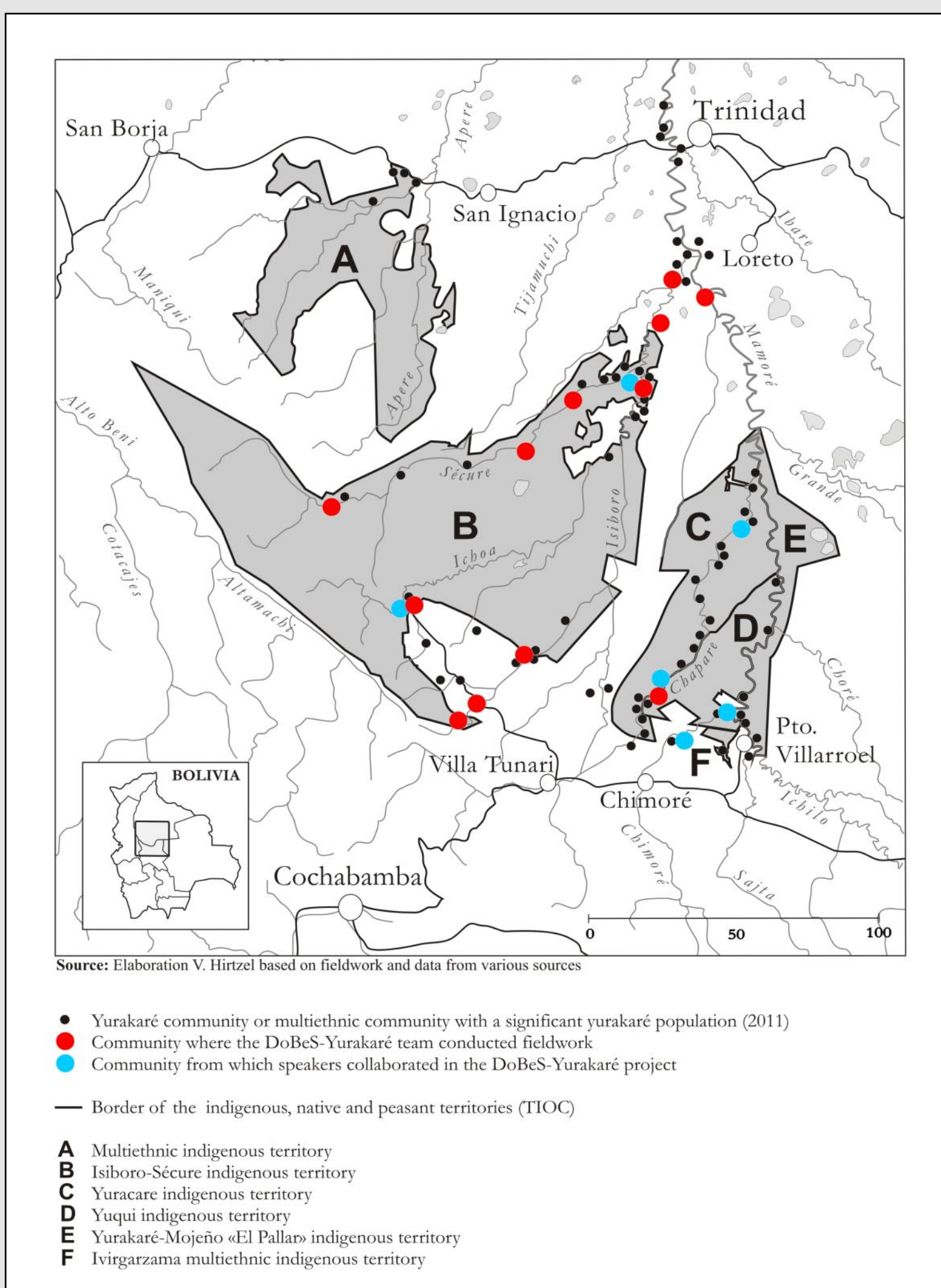
- » **Rik van Gijn** (linguist, Universität Zürich, former head of the project)
- » **Vincent Hirtzel** (anthropologist, EREA -Centre Enseignement et Recherche en Ethnologie Amérindienne- Paris, former postdoctoral researcher in the project)
- » **Sonja Gipper** (linguist, Universität zu Köln, former PhD student in the project)
- » **Jeremías Ballivián Torrico** (native speaker of Yurakaré, chairperson of the indigenous organization CPITCO, former head of the team of transcribers and translators)



The data collected by the documentation project are handed over to the speech community at a workshop in Chimoré, Bolivia (June 13, 2010).

The People and their Language

The Yurakaré people live in the Andean foothill area in **Central Bolivia**. Their villages are spread out across a relatively large area, which makes it difficult to obtain an accurate number of speakers. We estimate that a number of **around 2.000 speakers** is realistic. Despite this relatively high number of speakers, Yurakaré is **endangered** because of a severe break in intergenerational transmission. In most villages, children do not acquire the language any longer. **Spanish, the dominant language** of the country, is becoming more and more important in Yurakaré everyday life. Most Yurakaré speakers are bilingual in Yurakaré and Spanish. The Yurakaré language is genetically **unclassified** because no genetic links to any of the neighboring languages could be established so far.



The villages of the Yurakaré are spread out across a large area. The documentation team conducted fieldwork in 12 Yurakaré communities.



The Archive

The DoBeS-Yurakaré Archive consists of around **600 hours of video and audio data**. All of the data were **transcribed and translated to Spanish** by a team of native speakers headed by Jeremías Ballivián Torrico.



A Yurakaré family in the community of San Pablo del Isiboro.

The data represent a broad range of genres and types of information, including:

- » Elicitation sessions about lexicon and grammar
- » Mythological narratives, many of them in different versions
- » Natural conversations
- » Life histories
- » Procedural descriptions, e.g. about traditional food production and other aspects of Yurakaré life
- » Descriptions of ritual practices, such as the *wëwëti* mourning chants and the *shilata* dances
- » Public events such as religious celebrations, national holidays, soccer matches, village meetings, workshops organized by the DoBeS team
- » Data from other researchers working on Yurakaré



A typical Yurakaré dwelling in the Isiboro-Sécure area.

Data Access for the Speech Community

In 2010, we organized two workshops in Bolivia where the data collected by the DoBeS team were officially handed over to the Yurakaré speech community. The participants were delegates from the Yurakaré speech community, representatives of all relevant indigenous organizations, and the members of the DoBeS-documentation team. Four hard drives containing all the data were given to different indigenous organizations representing the Yurakaré. This makes it possible for **all speakers of Yurakaré to access the data** at their representative organization.



A break in intergenerational transmission: Yurakaré is endangered because children do not learn to speak the language any longer.

PhD Thesis Completed

Gipper, Sonja. 2011. Evidentiality and intersubjectivity in Yurakaré: An interactional account. PhD Thesis, Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen. Nijmegen: MPI Series in Psycholinguistics.

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<http://www.mpi.nl/DOBES/projects/yurakare>