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Worthless Movement: Agricultural Regression and Mobility

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Worthless Movement: Agricultural Regression and Mobility

Abstract

Theories of agricultural regression have questioned the standard view that Amazonian foraging represents an ancient adaptation to regional environments by demonstrating that contemporary foragers are former agriculturalists whose historical trajectory led to the adoption of a foraging subsistence strategy. Recent studies have further shown that Amazonian foraging is not an adaptation to a pristine environment, but an engagement with tracts of forest that have been transformed by former agriculturalists. These theories, however, explain the historical process of agricultural loss through an investigation of contemporary foragers or trekkers, as if a certain subsistence strategies and mobile patterns were the inevitable outcome of this history. Through an analysis of the Katukina speaking Kanamari of western Amazonia, this article argues that agricultural loss and increased mobility can occur in the absence of foraging, by comparing Kanamari pre-contact agriculture with their involvement in the economy of the Amazonian rubber boom. Furthermore, it is argued that the Kanamari theory of mobility, which is indissoluble from their conceptions of the relationship between body and soul, is the only framework that adequately accounts for their historical shift from agriculture and greater sedentism to loss of agriculture and heightened mobility.

As teorias da regressão agrícola questionam uma interpretação do forrageio na Amazônia enquanto adaptação antiga ao meio ambiente, ao demonstrar que caçadores e coletores contemporâneos são ex-agricultores cuja trajetória histórica levou à adoção de uma estratégia de subsistência com base no forrageio. Estudos recentes mostraram ainda que o forrageio amazônico não é uma adaptação a um meio ambiente imutável, mas, ao invés disso, um engajamento com florestas secundárias, que resultam das atividades de ex-agricultores. Estas teorias, no entanto, traçam o processo histórico da perda de agricultura e da alteração de padrões de mobilidade através de uma investigação de sociedades caçadoras e coletoras, como se certas estratégias de subsistência e padrões de mobilidade fossem o resultado inevitável da história. Por meio de uma análise dos Kanamari, povo de língua Katukina da Amazônia ocidental, este artigo argumenta que a perda da agricultura e um aumento de mobilidade podem ocorrer na ausência do forrageio, através de uma comparação entre as práticas agrícolas dos Kanamari antes do contato e seu envolvimento na economia da borracha. Argumenta-se, ainda, que a teoria kanamari da mobilidade, que é indissociável de suas concepções da relação entre corpo e alma, é o único quadro que permite dar conta de sua mudança histórica da agricultura e do sedentarismo para a perda do cultivo e a mobilidade crescente.

Worthless Movement: Agricultural Regression and Mobility

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INTRODUCTION

In 1905 the French missionary Constant Tastevin arrived in the town of Tefé, on the confluence of the Amazon and the Juruá River. At this time, the Juruá was still divided into a number of rubber tapping estates, even though the pinnacle of the first Amazonian rubber boom had subsided, and Tastevin was able to establish contacts with some Kanamari Amerindians who lived in the vicinity of nearby estates, close to the town of Eirunepé (then called São Felipe) in the middle Juruá. In the early 1920's he began to travel towards more distant Kanamari villages, located on a number of tributaries of both banks of the Juruá.

Tastevin was impressed by the size of Kanamari gardens and the variety of crops that they cultivated, favorably comparing them to those of neighboring Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (Tastevin n.d.: 59). Furthermore, although their techniques of swidden cultivation were no different from those of adjacent peoples, he suggested that, in the past, they may have had a system for storing surplus maize in granaries throughout the year (ibid: 61). He also notes, however, that although Kanamari gardens were large, their proximity to the non-Indigenous population involved in the rubber economy, and their incipient reliance on these people for certain crops, was leading to a situation in which Kanamari gardens were becoming insufficient for their subsistence needs.

In 1972 Sebastião Amâncio da Costa, an employee of the Brazilian Indian Affairs Agency (FUNAI), came into contact with a group of Kanamari in the upper Itaquai River. He found the Kanamari completely dependent on the non-Indigenous population, for whom they worked in conditions of slavery, in a manner no different from that of the debt-peonage relations that characterize Amazonian extractive economies. The Kanamari had no gardens and they wandered from estate to estate, and into regions where extraction was carried out, in a seemingly random manner (Da Costa 1972). Tastevin's prediction, it seems, had come true: in as little

as fifty years the Kanamari had ceased to make gardens altogether, coming to rely on their neighbors for crops that they had previously cultivated.

This article will trace the history of Kanamari agricultural loss, involvement in the rubber economy and changing patterns of mobility. My argument is that the changes that the Kanamari underwent need to be understood in the context of their conceptions of subsistence and mobility, and that this requires us to relate mobility to their theory of the person. I am concerned with the broad contours of a history that is typically labeled 'regressive' in the regional literature (e.g. Balée 1992), in which an horticultural population ceases to cultivate crops and alters its rate of mobility, but the details of Kanamari history and ethnography offer important deviations from predominant views of similar historical processes. These deviations concern not only the trajectory of Kanamari history, but also how they constitute these changes through the relationship between their concepts of body and soul.

The Kanamari are roughly 1,600 Katukina speaking people, most of whom inhabit the tributaries of the middle course of the Juruá River, in Brazilian western Amazonia. The Juruá River is the axis of Kanamari territory, but they claim to not have inhabited the banks of the Juruá itself in the distant past, settling instead on the tributaries that feed the main channel. Of the Amerindian peoples who presently inhabit the Juruá River basin, Katukina speakers were probably the earliest settlers (Verneau 1921: 257, Porro 1996: 26), being later followed by Panoan and Arawan speaking groups. In the late 19th century, the territory of the Kanamari was invaded by non-Indigenous foreigners involved in the rubber economy, a process that, as can be inferred in the contrasting descriptions of Tastevin and da Costa, had drastic effects on their livelihood, not least of which on the size, extent and variety of their gardens.

In relating a specific historical process to Kanamari notions of the person, I will revisit two classic themes of Amazonian anthropology that are rarely analyzed in light of each other: the relationship between body and soul and theories of agricultural regression. While the former theme is a hallmark of studies of Amazonian societies, being a cornerstone in the process that Rivière (1993) has labeled the 'Amerindianization' of anthropological concepts, the latter is a turning point in Amazonian cultural ecology, which marks a shift from the hypothesis that Amazonian foragers represent a Pleistocene adaptation to resource-poor environments to the view that they are former agriculturalists who were forced to abandon crop cultivation in the wake of native strife, warfare and colonization. In spite of recent reconciliations and calls for a holistic approach to the relationship between culture and ecology in Amazonia (e.g. Rival 2009a),

these interpretations of Amerindians have always been at odds and remain, on the whole, as incommensurable as the worlds that they describe (see Viveiros de Castro 1996).

It is not the aim of this article to propose a new synthesis or to straddle a middle ground between these two perspectives. Although there is much to be commended in such an undertaking, my juxtaposition of apparently irreconcilable themes in Kanamari ethnography underscores a more modest aim. I intend to contribute to the growing dissatisfaction with some aspects of models of agricultural regression through a study of changing patterns of mobility and the abandonment of agriculture by the Kanamari in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While I thus describe a process that is analogous to that described by proponents of models of agricultural regression, Kanamari history and ethnography allow me to question certain teleological assumptions prevalent in these studies and their general reluctance to account for Amerindian perceptions of and reasons for the changes that they describe. I will first outline some of the most important contributions of models of agricultural regression and situate them in relation to Kanamari ethnography. I will then describe Kanamari social organization, gardens and patterns of mobility during two different periods: that preceding sustained contact with the non-Indigenous population and that immediately following it. Finally, I will contrast the ways in which the Kanamari perceive their livelihood in each of these periods by focusing on how each one articulates with Indigenous concepts of body and soul. In the conclusion I will highlight some lessons from Kanamari ethnography that may bear on other reconstructions of changes that are often characterized as 'agricultural regression'.

AGRICULTURAL REGRESSION AND THE KANAMARI

The hypothesis that high mobility and foraging are the result of a regression from greater sedentism and horticulture has a distinguished history in the study of South American societies. Early work criticized the formerly dominant view that Amazonian foraging¹ was evidence of an ancient, archaic substratum of Amazonian cultures (Steward 1948). Against this interpretation, it was argued that contemporary foragers had ceased to practice horticulture and that the loss of agriculture was equivalent to a process of cultural 'devolution', in which important features of a way of life were abandoned, resulting in a corresponding move towards a more simple and apparently archaic level of socio-cultural complexity (Lévi-Strauss 1958; Lathrap 1968; Martin 1969; Clastres 1972: 85-6).

Not only was this loss involutive, it was also seen to be the result of the application of a negative exogenous force upon a given Indigenous group: Lévi-Strauss (1958), for example, postulated that the pseudo-archaism of the Nambikwara was not an endogenous adaptation to the savannah environment of central Brazil, but the result of Indigenous warfare which forced them out of their former territories to the north and into a less resource-rich region.

If early studies were limited to specific historical or ecological contexts, the recent work of anthropologists adopting a historical ecology approach has transformed 'agricultural regression' into an interpretative framework which establishes parameters within which agricultural loss, and the corresponding adoption of foraging, can be understood (Balée 1992; 1998). In what concerns the nature of the exogenous force that acts upon horticultural societies, historical ecology has been important in establishing the devastating impacts of depopulation following from colonial expansion as the primary trigger for agricultural regression in post-conquest times. This historical process, however, does not occur in an atemporal environmental vacuum. Shifts in subsistence strategies and mobility must be understood not as an adaptation to immutable ecosystems, but rather as an adaptation to environments that have been altered by the activities of former or contemporary agriculturalists (Balée 1988: 48).

Just as the shift from agriculture to foraging depends upon prior modifications of the Amazonian environment by agriculturalists for its feasibility, so is the process a gradual loss of botanical knowledge, since foraging societies not only lack agriculture but also have fewer uses for plants (c.f. Rival 2009b). This loss is apprehended in the linguistic subtraction of lexemes for domesticated plants in the vocabulary of foragers who have undergone agricultural regression, and in their reduced uses for wild or semi-domesticated plants. Foraging is therefore still a sort of cultural devolution that involves important losses, but it occurs gradually in anthropogenic ecosystems, rather than in a virgin rainforest (Balée 1994: 166-203).²

Although a historical ecology approach has polished our view of both Amazonian environments and the historical relationship between horticulture and foraging, it relies on two lingering assumptions which it shares with previous installments of the agricultural regression hypothesis. First, it affirms that agricultural regression results from an exogenous force that acts upon horticultural societies and imposes foraging or trekking strategies. Various authors have criticized this over determination of Amerindian political dynamics by external forces, questioning the prevalence of post-conquest factors over and above processes that were

internal to specific societies and which may have pre-dated contact or been more or less independent of it (Fausto 2001; Rival 2002). These studies have been important in showing how foraging and trekking are not determined by the impacts of contact, but rather emerge as possible subsistence strategies put into effect by historical agents within a range of cultural choices in the context of interaction with exogenous forces. However, since these criticisms engage with the agricultural regression literature through the ethnographies of societies who are (or were) foragers and trekkers, they do not account for instances in which agricultural practices are lost but in which subsistence and mobile strategies do not shift towards what is expected for either foraging or trekking.

Second, increased mobility is seen to be indelibly tied to subsistence strategies, such that a specific degree of mobility or sedentism requires either foraging or horticulture. This point that has also been challenged, particularly in discussions concerning the quantitative weight of complementary modes of subsistence in correlation with degrees of sedentism and mobility (see Kent 1989). Yet these challenges appear to reproduce a further implicit claim, namely that horticulture or foraging (or some combination of the two) are the only possible modes of subsistence.

It is the uniformity of these two assumptions—their historical and geographical constancy and predictability throughout the Amazonian landscape—that I intend to question through an analysis of Kanamari history. Even a brief summary of Kanamari ethnography, however, suggests that they may not be a good case study for agricultural regression as the term has come to be used in the literature. By their own accounts, the Kanamari were never exclusively or even predominantly hunters and gatherers. At present, they practice a mixed economy based on the cultivation of various crops, their staple being sweet manioc. Their traditional subsistence pattern is fairly typical of ‘Amazonian hunter-horticulturalists’ (Descola 1992: 115) in that they cultivate, hunt and gather, but culturally value hunting over other activities, regardless of the relative nutritional weight of food production and gathering. Their mobile patterns were also typical in that short trekking periods were interspersed with longer moments of sedentary village life. The first contact that they established with the non-Indigenous population occurred in the latter half of the nineteenth century, although they did not maintain regular contacts until the early 1920’s, in the interim between the two Amazonian rubber booms. These contacts greatly increased mobile patterns and led the Kanamari to all but abandon agriculture, but not, as a result, to adopt a foraging lifestyle. Instead, it gradually gave rise to a pattern in which the Kanamari ceased to work in gardens to work, instead, in the rubber camps, and in which a part of their

wages was paid in agricultural produce—in many cases in quantities of sweet manioc, the exact same staple that had previously dominated their gardens.

The fact that at no known historical moment can the Kanamari be classified as foragers may appear to preclude the categorization of their history as being an example of agricultural regression. It seems to me, however, that theories of agricultural regression usually suffer from what Peter Gow (2001: 294) has qualified as ‘presentism’, which asserts ‘the totalizing functional integration ... between the lived world studied and whatever it is that analysts assume to be the most important features of its present historical circumstances’. Starting with societies that at present rely mostly or exclusively on foraging and that display more intense patterns of mobility than the majority of horticulturalist Amazonian societies, they then proceed to reconstruct the history that led to the adoption of a foraging lifestyle in the process of their retreat from more powerful neighbors, particularly non-Indigenous populations. Increased mobility and hunting and gathering thus come to be isolated as features in need of explanation and, furthermore, as features that go hand-in-hand, following from an Indigenous strategy of retreat which, it is implicitly assumed, is the only suitable reaction to the tragedies of colonization.

Basing themselves on the assumption that the effects of contact lead to retreat because this was the historical strategy of those that now forage, agricultural regression theories often fall into circular arguments that I intend to avoid through two considerations. First, I will question the association between the effects of contact, increasing mobility and subsistence strategies by discussing an ethnographic example in which increased mobility, but not foraging, follows from contact. Second, in so doing, I will follow recent studies of agricultural regression that shift emphasis away from subsistence towards other factors, namely mobility (Lee and Daly 1999: 12-3). This requires that mobility be understood according to Indigenous conceptualizations of differential forms of moving—for which Kanamari views of the relationship between body and soul will act as a guide.

KANAMARI SUBGROUPS

I will begin with a description of Kanamari social organization in the period preceding sustained contact with non-Indigenous peoples in the second half of the nineteenth century. I have elsewhere described Kanamari social organization in detail (Costa 2007; forthcoming) and I will here focus

on those aspects that affect mobility and gardens. Although I describe a form of social organization that, in its details, is largely defunct, I will use the ethnographic present to highlight the continuing pertinence of this model of society for understanding the Kanamari (see Costa 2007), except in those instances where specific historical configurations are discussed.

Kanamari is not a traditional auto-designation and the most comprehensive term for all speakers of Katukina-languages is *tukuna*, which means ‘person’ and which, for the Kanamari of today, includes all Katukina-speaking peoples. The main division that the Kanamari recognize within the broad category *tukuna* is that between the members of different kin units that I will call ‘subgroups’. These are named, endogamous and geographically circumscribed, mostly to the tributaries of either bank of the middle course of the Juruá River. Their names are invariably formed by that of an animal followed by the suffix *-dyapa*. Each *-dyapa* inhabits a river basin that is a tributary of the Juruá, and they are therefore separated over land by the watershed between them, while being connected by the Juruá river’s main channel.

The subgroup is the largest sociological unit that the Kanamari explicitly recognize. Each subgroup is internally organized through the concept of the *-warah*. The word refers to the living body of humans, animals and some plants, but it also means ‘owner’ or ‘master’, and I will therefore gloss it as ‘body-owner’. The body-owner takes on different characteristics depending on context, but it always means both ‘body’ and ‘owner’ simultaneously. What varies is the form that it assumes, which is dependent on the scale in which it is apprehended and on the scale of events. Within the subgroup, ‘body-owner’ can normally refer to two levels of chieftaincy and to the body of individuals, each position indexing greater or lesser levels of inclusiveness, and its meaning is dependent on what activities are being carried out. In order to discuss these activities, we must first understand how the body-owner both integrates and de-totalizes it into its constituent parts.

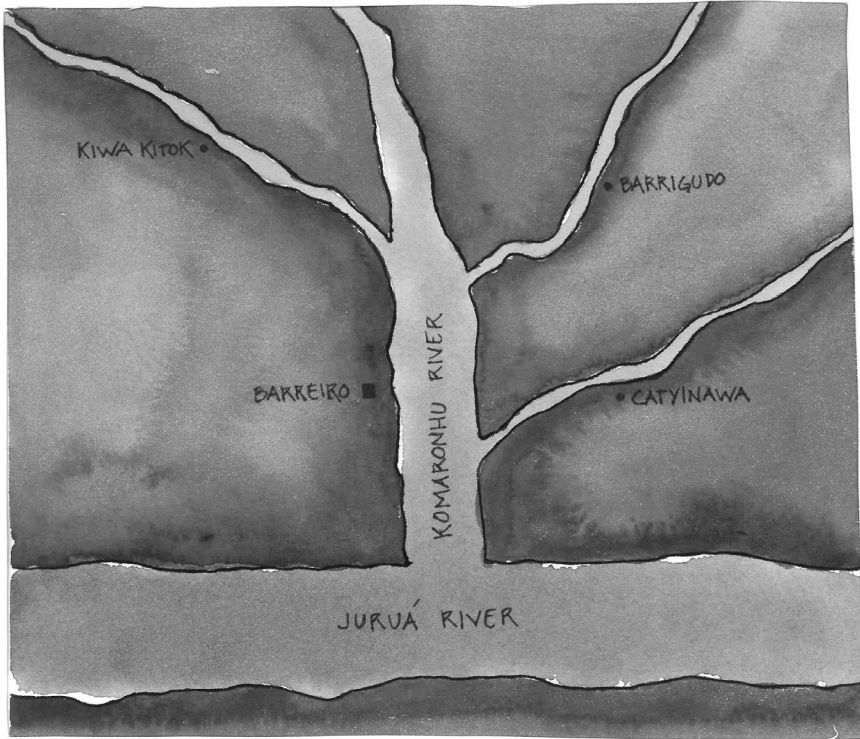
All of the Kanamari of a single subgroup inhabit the same river basin and are ‘kin’ (*-wihmim*) to each other. The subgroup is the limit of kinship: beyond it there are only ritual partnerships and relations of enmity, avoidance and strangeness. In other words, the members of a subgroup exhaust any given person’s universe of kin, and relations that extend beyond the physical constraints of a subgroup’s river basin are framed in non-kinship idioms, ranging from the more or less peaceful and familiar through avoidance and violence to the postulation of a putative or hypothetical existence, since the Kanamari will predict (and name) a number of possible subgroups without knowing exactly where they may live and never having

met anyone claiming to be of that subgroup. Regardless of the type of relationship established between any two subgroups, all of them are ideally constituted through the same invariant structure that establishes a series of logical correspondences between them, even when actual contacts are absent.

Since each subgroup is always situated in a single river basin, any given subgroup and the river basin in which it dwells are homologous. In this way, the name of the tributary, followed by *-warah*, 'body-owner', is synonymous with the name of the subgroup. The *Bin-dyapa* (Curassow-*dyapa*), for example, used to inhabit the Komaronhu (São Vicente) River, a tributary of the left bank of the middle Juruá. The names *Bin-dyapa* and *Komaronhu-warah* thus both express the same people, social unit and geographical area. However, if we focus on the relationships and spatial patterning of settlements within each river basin/subgroup, we see that certain sociological distinctions are reflected in the dendritic hydrology of the river basin. Map 1 shows the settlements that existed in the Komaronhu River during the 1910's and 1920's. The map is schematic, based on a reconstruction of past settlements with the help of two *Bin-dyapa* men, but it nonetheless reveals some of the broad distinctions that exist within a subgroup.³ I reproduce it here as an example of the spatial patterning of settlements within all subgroups.

The main tributary of the river basin has a single settlement (called Barreiro), the main architectural feature of which is the longhouse (*bak nyanim*). The Kanamari do not inhabit the interior of the longhouse: although they spend a large part of the day resting within it, they sleep in small clusters of temporary shelters known as *dyaniobak* ('açai palm [*Euterpe oleracea*] type of house') built in its vicinity. The longhouse was thereby reserved for daytime affairs, and also for certain rituals which were held within it. There was only a single more permanent 'house' (*bak*) built near the longhouse, which was that of the subgroup chief and his family, who were the only people to reside for the whole of the year in the main tributary of a river basin. The subgroup chief is always a man in the 'elder' (*kidarak*) category, though not necessarily the eldest man, and he is the personification of the subgroup. Correspondingly, all of the inhabitants of the subgroup refer to its chief as *i-warah*, 'my body-owner' and he calls them 'my people' (*atya tukuna*). His person establishes the political extent of the subgroup just as the river basin sets its physical extent, and his name, followed by *-warah*, is a third way of referring to the subgroup as a whole.

Each of the smaller streams that feed the main tributary of a river basin are also settled. They have no longhouse, but instead villages composed of a varying number of houses. As there is no Kanamari word for what I call



Map 1. Schematic map of the Komaronhu River of the *Bin-dyapa*, c. 1920

village, the name of the stream followed by ‘body-owner’ designates the totality of its inhabitants. Furthermore, all of the inhabitants of a stream call a single man *i-warah*, ‘my body-owner’. Thus while everyone in a subgroup calls one man who lives near the longhouse in the main tributary of the basin ‘our body-owner’, those people who dwell in the same stream also call another man, whom I will label ‘village chief’, through the same expression. There is thus one sub-group chief, but as many village chiefs as there are settled streams within a river basin. In Map 1, these villages are Kiwa Kitok, Barrigudo and Catyinawa.

The one subgroup chief thus fractions into a variable number of village chiefs, just as the one tributary divides into a number of streams and the one longhouse into a number of villages. This fractioning introduces important kinship differences within the river basin/subgroup. All of the people who co-reside, for at least a part of the year, in the same stream and who recognize the same village chief by referring to him as ‘my body-owner’ are ‘true kin’ (*-wihnim tam*) to each other. The village chief, for his part, calls all of the inhabitants of his stream ‘my people’ (*atya tukuna*). Any two people who reside in different streams within the same river basin

are, ideally, 'distant kin' (*-wibnim parara*; also: 'spread out kin'). Marriage should be between distant kin: that is they should be exogamous to the stream/village but remain endogamous to the river basin/subgroup. People who live in different streams may be 'distant kin', but they are still included within the wider category of 'kin' (*-wibnim*) because, within a river basin, there is a longhouse on the main tributary in the vicinity of which dwells a man whom everyone, regardless of the village they live in, calls 'my body-owner'.

The *-warah*, that I have glossed as 'body-owner', thus establishes a series of sociological distinctions within a definite territory that are expressed in kinship relations, settlement pattern and levels of chieftainship and which are mapped on to the dendritic pattern of rivers. Yet *-warah*, as I noted above, also refers to the living body of individuals. I will return to this definition shortly, but first I must describe Kanamari gardens and contrast patterns of mobility in the period preceding contact and that immediately following it.

KANAMARI PRE-CONTACT GARDENS

The difference between the level of the subgroup and that of the village also creates a distinction between two types of garden. The garden that surrounds a longhouse is known as the 'large garden' (*baohnim nyanim*) and the subgroup chief can sometimes be referred to as the 'large garden-body-owner' (*baohnim nyanim-warah*). Insofar as he personifies the subgroup, however, it is not his property but is available to all the members of the subgroup, who work collectively towards maintaining it. 'Owning' the large garden is thus not an aspect of dominium, but rather of the leadership and care that is required to ensure the upkeep of the garden, and of the ability to encourage people who do not always reside in the vicinity of the longhouse to vest their time and energy in its productivity. This is marked during ritual moments of agglomeration around the longhouse, when game meat and manioc drink is plentiful and everyone contributes towards garden work through the subgroup chief's initiative. Although some villages and, occasionally, smaller family units have their own plots within the large garden—thereby dividing the single subgroup plot into the less inclusive units that compose the subgroup—there is no injunction against anyone from the subgroup harvesting reasonable amounts of crop from any section of the garden, although it is expected that they later replant crops that they take. This almost constant and steady amount of work in a single garden that belongs to the subgroup chief and, through

him, to the subgroup, leads the Kanamari to say that productivity of the large garden is 'unending' (*hawak nyo'imtu*).

Each village also had at least one garden, known simple as *baohnim*, 'garden'. The establishment of a new village is coterminous with the identification of a suitable garden plot, an act which falls to the village chief. To be more exact, whosoever selects a future garden site and successfully organizes work towards clearing the garden will be village chief. For this reason, the village chief is said to be 'he who starts the garden' (*baohnim makoni-yan*). Although the chief chooses the site and encourages people to settle with him, it is cleared collectively and sub-divided, such that each household or segment of a household has their own plot within the communal village garden. This creates more clear-cut divisions within the village garden than within the large garden, although here, too, the garden acts as a physical space that integrates separate households. This is expressed through the village chief, who is not only the body-owner of his coresidents, but also of the garden (*baohnim-warah*).

These gardens are separate, but interdependent. According to my informants, the village gardens depend on the large garden for their existence, since many of the crops that are grown in the former are selected from varieties in the latter. A village chief who has just chosen a new village and garden site will spend much time in the longhouse with his people, as they will depend on the large garden's continuing productivity to feed themselves while their own plots remain unproductive and while they select the crop varieties they will plant in their new village. The longhouse's large garden is thus the condition for the rearranging of villages within the river basin, since it ensures that, if the latter disintegrate, people will not starve. They are always able to move to the longhouse and to depend on its garden until a new village is established. Furthermore, it ensures that, although the subgroup chief and his family are the only year-long residents of the longhouse, they are almost never alone, since a fluctuating number of different people will always be present in the longhouse with them, ensuring that some people are always available to work in the large garden.

We do not have any type of quantitative data on pre-contact Kanamari gardens, but we do have an idea of the variety of crops cultivated. The staple of Kanamari gardens was sweet manioc, which is both an integral part of meals and the main ingredient in the production of manioc drink and beer. The earliest descriptions that we have of gardens, however, note the diversity of crops that the Kanamari planted. Although these observations concern a period in which the penetration of the rubber economy was already being felt, they pre-date the period in which the Kanamari had abandoned or greatly reduced cultivation, which I estimate to have been

in the early 1930's. Tastevin, for example, who lived with the Kanamari intermittently from 1910 to 1925, observes the following:

Here are the plants that they cultivate: first of all, sweet manioc, maize, of which they have a very tender and yellow variety, taros, of which they know three varieties that provide them with a thinner tuber than the potato, yams, the winged yams of the Tupi, pineapples in great quantities, different varieties of bananas which they know of since long before the arrival of the *civilisés* (Tastevin n.d.: 59, my translation)

Further on he also notes the presence of papaya and sugar cane, as well as a variety of peppers, poisons and plants for medicinal use. More importantly, he notes the extensive number of *Bactris* palms, which were said to "be planted in a corner of their gardens" (*ibid.*) and whose fruits, which ripened in January, were the cause for agglomeration around the longhouse and important feasts. In fact, according to my informants, these *Bactris* palms were planted in gardens, particularly in the large garden. The large garden may have been 'unending', but it was not physically fixed in a given site for a very long period of time. Every five years or so, as is typical of swidden cultivation throughout Amazonia, the garden tended to expand and contract into areas of secondary forest around it as new swiddens were begun. Due to the time that *Bactris* palms took to mature, fruiting palms tended to concentrate in the periphery of the large garden, either in the 'old (i.e. abandoned) gardens' (*baohnim kidak*) just beyond it or in the 'fallows' (*baohnim padya*, lit: 'empty gardens') that characterize most of the forest around a subgroup's tributary. *Bactris* palms were therefore a feature of areas in which cultivation was less intense or non-existent, and they were elements in a gradient of less cultivated, yet still productive secondary forest in the zone surrounding active gardens. In fact, as the name for 'fallows' implies, these tracts were not considered to be 'forest' (*ityonim*), but rather 'empty gardens' (*baohnim padya*), i.e. gardens in which no further planting was taking place. These empty gardens were more conspicuous and abundant along the main tributary of a subgroup, where generations of Kanamari had established longhouses, than in the village streams, where settlements were small, short-lived and constantly shifting. *Bactris* palms along a river basin's main tributary were therefore, like the large garden, said to be 'unending'.

MOVEMENT OF BODY-OWNERS

Before the impacts of colonial expansion on Kanamari social organization, movement occurred through the coordinates of the structure

just described. Movement, of course, must be understood in conjunction with moments of repose, with which it is indissolubly and dynamically articulated. I would like to focus on three such articulations, all of which are evident in Kanamari descriptions of their own dislocations in space, and which are also confirmed in the very earliest ethnographic observations on the Kanamari carried out by Father Constant Tastevin between 1910 and 1925 (Tastevin n.d.).

Kanamari mobile patterns are not easily correlated with seasonal variations, such that to each season there corresponds a movement of dispersal or aggregation involving the occupation of different ecosystems. The Kanamari divide the year into a rainy season (*hidyiwa*, 'flooding') and a dry season (*oporu*, 'dryness', i.e. relative drought), but both are characterized by conflicting centrifugal and centripetal pulls, even if these are not of the same nature. Although subsistence and ritual activities thus vary according to the seasons, and these have an evident impact on ways of organizing society, they do not globally divide the Kanamari into different ecosystems nor do they force them into mutually exclusive moments of agglomeration and dispersal. I will therefore focus less on seasonal specificities than on the way that movement implies social forms that are dependent on different intervals of the body-owner, which arranges and coordinates activity. In other words, in all of the movements that I will describe people move in conformity to a body-owner which initiates and organizes mobility.

Within the context of this mobility, the decision for when to move and where to go is always taken by someone who occupies the body-owner position, or who, in so making a decision, comes to act as one. Mobility is typically initiated through a discursive practice that establishes the body-owner and those that will accompany him. The body-owner will say that he will go towards someone or some place through a phrase such as *X na tatam adu wabo*, "I will go towards X". 'X' can be the name of a person, a subgroup, a village, a longhouse or a known place in the forest, such as a favored hunting or fishing ground. Once his intentions have been made clear, a group of people will follow him by proclaiming that they will *Y na iwana adu wa bo, X na tatam*, 'I will follow Y, towards X', where 'Y' is the name of a family head, a village chief or a subgroup chief, for example,⁴ and X is the name of the same place or person that the body-owner intends to travel towards. Mobility is thus framed in the following way: a group of people follow a body-owner, who is the only person to explicitly state that he *intends* to move towards a particular locality or person. It is his intention that initiates movement, and the will of his followers becomes a reflection of his own will to travel. I will describe this dynamic in three different scales of movement.

In the description of social organization above, the village emerged as the minimal sociological instance of the body-owner, but the first movement that I will describe concerns smaller, nuclear family units that temporarily break away from the village. This occurs mostly during the dry season, when villages disperse on small hunting, fishing and gathering expeditions and in search of river turtle eggs. The body-owner that initiates this movement is the head of a family, who, in the context of these treks, acts as a body-owner in relation to his wife and his children. The latter move in whatever direction a body-owner wants them to go: families can travel to the headwaters of small streams, the main course of a subgroup's tributaries, neighboring river basins, longhouses and even, eventually, to the Juruá itself. The trekking party does not, therefore, remain isolated from contact with people moving in other directions or those staying still. Not only do small trekking party's meet, they also travel through villages, longhouses and, after the mid-nineteenth century, rubber storehouses and tapping camps.

These treks away from more permanent settlements rarely last for longer than two months. The main physical feature associated with them are the small *dyaniobak* huts that the Kanamari build during their travels, the same shelters which they build in the vicinity of a longhouse during periods of agglomeration. These huts act as base camps from which daily expeditions leave and to which they return and they function as beacons away from the village from which body-owners coordinate food procurement and from which new movements are organized.

The second type of movement that I am concerned with articulates villages in streams to the longhouse on a subgroup's main tributary. Movement of this type can occur throughout the year: it almost invariably occurs when the peach palm begins to ripen, at the start of the rainy season, but it is also a feature of dry season sociability, when whole villages travel to the longhouse in order to perform certain increase rituals that ensure the regeneration of game animals and forest fruits. In these instances, the focus of movement is on the position of the village chief, the body-owner charged with moving his village to the longhouse. The longhouse, which has a fluctuating population, suddenly fills up with all of the members of a subgroup, as people throughout the river basin move towards it in synchrony with their village chiefs in order to hold feasts and perform rituals.

The final type of movement I will consider is the movement of a subgroup in the direction of another subgroup. This occurs during a ritual gathering called *Hori*, which is both the name of the gathering and of a ceramic horn that guests sound as they approach the longhouse of the

hosts. *Hori* are initiated by subgroup chiefs, and in fact they depend on a specific, symmetrical relationship established between two subgroup chiefs, indexed by the reciprocal term *-tawari*. Since subgroup chiefs are body-owners of their river basins, and since their names therefore subsume all of the other members of their subgroup, this relationship becomes generalized to the members of the two subgroups, who also come to reciprocally call each other *-tawari*. This means that although the *-tawari* relation is established between subgroup chiefs, once it is established all of the male members of a subgroup become *-tawari* to each other.⁵ *Hori* are thus conceived of as visits between two collective bodies personified in their chiefs. In fact, the ceramic horns are said to be owned by the subgroup chiefs, and the journey from one river basin to the other is said to be ‘following the subgroup chief’s horn (*hori*)’. These journeys are, by the Kanamari’s standards, massive affairs, requiring the accumulation of food surplus, the coordination of a large number of people and the preparation of many canoes, which often travel in a flotilla. The subgroup body-owner thereby moves his people in conformity to his will and in the direction of another river basin; their actions in preparing for the journey are echoes of the chief’s desire to hold a *hori* gathering with a given subgroup.

What these three examples of movement show is that, in their traditional conception of mobility, the Kanamari always move—on every scale and in every direction—with and through a body-owner. Whether movement concerns dispersal from villages, agglomeration around a longhouse or inter-subgroup rituals, it is contained by and conducted in the will of another, within a relationship in which some people submit themselves to the volition of a body-owner.

THE RUBBER BOOM

This structure and its corresponding patterns of mobility began to be eroded in the late nineteenth century with the arrival of the first ‘whites’ (*kariwa*) to venture into the Juruá. Although itinerant merchants traveled through the Juruá as early as the 1850’s, they play no part in Kanamari discourse on their past. As far as the Kanamari are concerned, the first whites that ever went through the Juruá were rubber bosses, who partitioned the Juruá into a number of estates, and the tappers who worked for them.

It is not my aim to offer a history of Kanamari involvement with the Amazonian rubber economy, a theme that I have investigated in another study (Costa 2007). For present purposes, I intend to briefly trace the way that the rubber boom impacted on patterns of mobility and gardens.

My argument is that the rubber boom subtracted the body-owner from Kanamari social organization, and that this gave rise to markedly different ways of moving through the landscape, to new settlements patterns and changes in subsistence strategies. As I have suggested, the effects of this process are similar to what has elsewhere been described as agricultural regression, in which horticultural populations cease to produce food and intensify mobility. However, I will show that, in the Kanamari case, changes in mobile patterns that follow from contact did not result in the adoption of foraging strategies. It is too often assumed that retreat is the only adequate response to the encroachment of Indigenous lands following contact—or at least that this is the only response that guarantees some degree of autonomy for the Amerindian people whose lands are invaded. We know, however, that contact was not a single, uniform event, but rather a long and drawn out process which is still underway in many parts of Amazonia, and also that this contact is interpreted in different ways by Amerindian societies. It follows that we cannot assume a single strategy for dealing with it.⁶

By the late 1920's, following an increase in the influx of Brazilians involved in the rubber economy, the Kanamari began to tap rubber from *Hevea* trees. Initially, rubber bosses, tappers and their estates were treated as being logically equivalent to Kanamari subgroups and organized through an analogous structure, and they were accommodated within the prevailing patterns of interactions between subgroups. In this scheme, *Hevea* was traded for western goods in *Hori*-like gatherings: the Kanamari tapped rubber, which they gave to chiefs who exchanged them at storehouse with the bosses, in a similar way to how *Hori* gatherings between different subgroups were organized. Western merchandise was then distributed within the subgroup by the subgroup chief. By the middle of the 1930's, however, a series of events and changing relationship patterns undid this initial arrangement, and the Kanamari began to work directly for bosses, tapping *Hevea* trees of their own accord and by-passing their chiefs in dyadic exchanges with rubber tappers and bosses.

The first of these events was the death of a number of subgroup chiefs, notably those of the Squirrel Monkey-*dyapa* and the Curassow-*dyapa*, sometime during the late 1920's or early 1930's. The death of subgroup chiefs traditionally resulted in two possibilities: either a suitable successor was found; or else the subgroup disbanded and moved towards other river basins, inhabited by other subgroups, eventually making themselves, through co-residence, into members of that subgroup (Costa 2007: 68-69). However, in the mid-1930's, no new subgroup chief was established, and people began to drift away from their river basins not towards other

subgroups, who were also undergoing their own changes, but rather towards rubber tapping camps. This movement occurred in an arbitrary manner, based on contingent relationships between certain Kanamari and certain non-Indigenous people, resulting, in effect, in the fragmentation of the subgroup. It was not a movement that occurred through higher-level body-owners within a contained pattern of mobility, but rather a series of *ad hoc* dislocations, sometimes across great distances, involving the whims of individuals and sometimes their families in the context of dyadic relationships with invading foreigners. The Kanamari refer to this fragmentation as a 'scattering' (*ino-na*), implying movement that was not collectively aligned, but individually negotiated.

Second, the fact that people from different subgroups began to move at roughly the same time towards the non-Indigenous population, led to a novel predicament: the Kanamari began to co-reside with non-Kanamari and people from different subgroups began to co-reside with each other, whereas before they were only meant to have met in the movement of body-owners, particularly in the *Hori* held between different subgroups. This co-residence with non-kin resulted in the dissolution of subgroup endogamy as people began to marry across subgroup and body-owner distinctions.

Third, rubber bosses and tappers actively undermined the influence and precedence of Kanamari subgroup and village chiefs among those subgroups in which these still existed. Since it soon became clear that the Kanamari were both a cheap source of labor and people with a knowledge of the region, the success of rubber bosses and tappers came to depend on their ability to get the Kanamari, and other Amerindians, involved in the rubber economy. Tastevin describes how, in the 1930's, the whites caused rivalries within the subgroups and often appointed their own chief, one who would not be contrary to work in rubber tapping. As a result of this, various subgroups fissioned, with some Kanamari remaining with the original subgroup chief and others following the new one, often traveling with rubber tappers to distant territories (Tastevin n.d.: 107). Some of these migrations were quite monumental, such as the one that took some Squirrel Monkey-*dyapa* to live in the Javari River, an area both distant and unconnected to the Juruá basin (see Costa 2007: 133-134).

Fourth, in their efforts at securing Kanamari labor, rubber tappers also discouraged Indigenous crop cultivation. Initially, the Kanamari did not completely cease to make gardens, but these became precarious, smaller, more scarce and restricted to members of some subgroups. Increasing patterns of mobility also made it more difficult to maintain gardens for any stretch of time. Furthermore, whenever new villages were established,

they tended to be built on the Juruá, in the midst of rubber estates, thus violating the previous injunction against establishing settlements on the banks of the Juruá and favoring dependence on the gardens surrounding rubber storehouses. However, the Kanamari did not, as a consequence, adopt a foraging lifestyle. Instead, due to their involvement with the rubber economy, the Kanamari came to depend on those crops that were grown in the gardens of non-indigenous invaders. In fact, garden produce became a part of their wages. The rubber economy relied on a labor force that worked in conditions of slavery, in which work never cancelled debts with bosses who, in turn, always paid tappers with foodstuffs and merchandise. The Kanamari thus moved between their traditional territory, tapping camps and storehouses, working and being paid in both western goods and agricultural crops, including sweet manioc, the staple of their former gardens.

This pattern was certainly consolidated by the late 1930's, but a decade earlier Tastevin had already noticed that Kanamari gardens were of insufficient size to feed their population, which obliged them to "... approach the Christians and to place themselves at their service in order to obtain, in exchange, manioc flour" (Tastevin n.d.: 59). By the mid-1930's, with the death of important subgroup chiefs, this pattern intensified rapidly, as villages and their gardens were all but abandoned and the Kanamari moved, in an *ad hoc* manner, towards a number of tapping camps and rubber storehouses. Work in the large gardens ceased completely by the early 1940's, and village gardens were eventually abandoned soon after that. The process was gradual, rather than abrupt, occurring at different times and in different rates for each subgroup and village, but by the mid-1950's at the latest the net result was the same: in the words of one Kanamari man, 'the gardens all ended' (*harwak nimbaktih baohnim*). As I noted in the introduction, the impacts of this agricultural loss was so great that in 1972, when a parcel of the population were contacted by FUNAI, the Kanamari completely lacked gardens and were dependent upon local settlers for access to crops (da Costa 1972: 7).⁷

Fifth, mobility was exacerbated by tensions that arose from the co-residence of Kanamari who, within the traditional settlement pattern, should not have been co-residing. Although it is likely that the period of initial sustained contact with the non-Indigenous population was followed by the spread of Western diseases to which the Kanamari had no immunity, from a Kanamari perspective their deteriorating health was the result of sorcery from other Kanamari. Disease thus led to further mobility, as people fled from sorcery, in one instance leading a group of Kanamari to undertake a vast journey through the whole stretch of the

Juruá, after which they crossed the Amazon River, finally settling in the lower Japurá, where their descendents still live (Neves 1996: 199-201). These movements were evasions of other Kanamari, but not of the non-Indigenous population, upon which they were increasingly dependent and for whom they continued to work.

Finally, the Kanamari never systematically adopted the rubber bosses as chiefs or their analogues, as occurred among certain neighboring peoples (see Bonilla 2007). The Kanamari did not collectively and consistently make rubber bosses into body-owners, nor did they collectively move in conformity to the desires of specific bosses. Although individual Kanamari did submit themselves to the bosses, and their movements were thus sometimes coordinated within the geography of the rubber economy, these submissions were rarely to a *single* boss for any length of time, but instead to a number of different bosses and tappers spread out over a large territory. In general, ordered mobility was replaced with haphazard movement, in which dyadic pairings were established, rearranged and dissolved, as people shifted between what remained of Kanamari villages and different rubber estates. This means that, although the Kanamari were always indebted to bosses, these debts were not channeled to a single boss, but instead were split into various conflicting debts among multiple bosses and tappers, which made mobility even more erratic and uncoordinated.⁸

In sum, Kanamari participation in the economy of the rubber boom, which is coterminous with the first sustained contact with non-Indigenous people, resulted in increased and erratic mobility which conflicted with the ordered movement of the preceding period. This mobility ultimately resulted in the abandonment of agriculture, in accordance with the predictions of models of agricultural regression, but not in the adoption of foraging. This is so because fleeing from non-Indigenous invaders is not the only strategy that is possible in moments of contact. The Kanamari first organized this contact in accordance with their own forms of social organization, only to see their strategy backfire and to be drawn into the rubber economy in ways that they could not have predicted.⁹

WORTHLESS MOVEMENT

The one adjective that the Kanamari consistently use when speaking of the time in which they worked in extractive economies is *dyaba*, 'worthless'. Although this may appear to be an adequate and obvious label for a period in which their traditional society was in disarray, in which they worked as slaves for an invading population and in which new diseases became

widespread, this is not what they mean. In fact, many Kanamari have fond memories of certain bosses or of aspects of the rubber boom even while they recognize its deleterious effects (see also Gow 1991: 62-71). The western goods that came their way became highly desired objects and their distribution fed back into Kanamari ideas of generosity and relations of care (see Costa 2007: 186-189). Furthermore, epidemics were not seen to result from contact with these new foreigners, or at least this is not what they emphasize today. Illness was, instead, the consequence of sorcery and strife between Kanamari who were non-kin to each other. What the Kanamari mean when they describe the rubber boom as worthless is simply that they moved constantly and in a disordered manner.

In this section I will consider Kanamari conceptions of movement. I do not intend for this discussion of Kanamari understandings of their mobility to be a more or less independent variable in relation to the 'hard' evidence for agricultural loss. Instead, I submit that these conceptualizations supply the only context in which both traditional and rubber boom patterns of Kanamari mobility can be apprehended. Indeed, cultural categories—particularly ethnobotanical classifications—have been a powerful tool for interpreting agricultural regression within the historical ecology approach (Balée 1994). As Rival (2006: S84) notes, however, Amerindian worlds include far more than a roster of botanical terms; they include, among a great many other aspects, a theory of mobility.

In order to understand why movement in the context of extractive economies is worthless, we need to return to the meaning of the word *-warah* that was not investigated above: the body of individuals and, particularly, its relationship to a concept that we can gloss as 'soul' (*-ikonanin*). The Kanamari theory of the relationship between body and soul is a kinetics that explains how a state of pure, disordered movement gives way to coordinated and intentional mobility associated with the body-owner. This passage from disordered movement to coordinated movement is the principle upon which the Kanamari body-owner rests and it is expressed both in mythical narratives that account for the form of the world and in Kanamari theories of birth and child rearing. I will briefly turn to these examples in order to situate Kanamari agricultural regression in light of their conceptualizations of movement.

The Kanamari do not have a myth that explicitly deals with the origin of subgroups and the body-owner, but rather a set of myths that explain how a world that was composed of dangerous movement is created through the containment of this movement in a process of speciation and the establishment of domains. Like most Amerindian mythologies, Kanamari myths 'speak of a state of being where bodies and names, souls

and affects, the I and the Other interpenetrate, submerged in the same pre-subjective milieu'. (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 483). Myths narrate a world where human and non-human characteristics permeate each other, guided by a regime of metamorphosis in which it is impossible to know if 'the mythic jaguar, to pick an example, is a block of human affects in the shape of a jaguar or a block of feline affects in the shape of a human' (Viveiros de Castro 2006: 323). In fact most myths narrate how discontinuity between species is produced and how different species, humans included, come to have specific bodies, definite attributes and to inhabit specific locales. As Fausto (2008: 339) notes, the post-mythical world that emerges from mythical flow is a world of multiple domains.

Kanamari myth further posits the erratic movement of everything: rivers flow in both directions, animals move through proto-human villages, açai palm trees have leaves that spin like helicopter blades, and the Panoan-speaking Amerindians, future enemies of the Kanamari, do not yet occupy their lands and move dangerously through every corner of world. The mythical process of inhibiting the transformation of beings is equivalent to a process of making them move (or not move) in a certain way. The Kanamari, for example, were created when Tamakori, the demiurge, caught the falling seeds of the *poro* palm (*Attalea butyracea*) on his back, thereby containing free-falling movement and preventing the seeds from scattering. Humans are thus created by making the disordered movement of seeds come to be restrained by Tamakori, who prevents multiple parts from scattering in every direction just as the body-owner contains a collectivity and moves it in conformity to his desires. A series of journeys that the demiurge then undertakes along the Juruá finally attenuates transformation and uncoordinated movement, instating a structured way of occupying the emerging landscape. Movement is thereby contained, and humans, who are divided into specific river basins, order their movement through levels of body-owners.

The mythical passage from disordered movement to ordered mobility is mirrored in the way that the body-owner of individuals is produced out of a generic soul that moves in all directions. Indeed, intense movement is one of the defining aspects of the Kanamari soul concept. Movement is already evident at the moment of birth, particularly through the presence of blood, which is a sensuous counterpart to the soul. For the Kanamari, newborns are virtually pure blood/soul, and they only have feeble, 'unripe' (*parah tu*) bodies. This means that their bodies are incapable of adequately containing the flow of blood, a condition that is already apparent in the womb. The Kanamari say that because children's bodies are unripe, blood flows from the fetus into the mother and then, during parturition, out of

her as lochia and post-partum hemorrhaging, which is considered to be evidence of the child's, and not the mother's, blood. Ordered, intravenous blood flow is thus posterior to the disordered extra-bodily bleeding that is manifest at birth. The random movement of blood needs to be actively curbed through acts of care and relations of feeding that are coterminous with the child's growth and learning, a process that not only makes her body capable of containing blood flow, but also makes her move in a specific way.

Humans have to act with intent in order to create kinship ties and, through these ties, to transform the volatile soul into individual body-owners, just as Tamakori had to undertake journeys in order to cease the erratic movement of the world. Yet the demiurge established the world through internal, asymmetrical distinctions within domains, among which are the differing levels of body-owners within subgroups confined to river basins—themselves distinguished by the different orders of the hydrology of streams and tributaries. Human kinship and bodies must therefore be made within specific asymmetrical coordinates: people make themselves kin to newborns and vice-versa by raising them within the body-owner structure, in the movement between *dyaniohak* huts, villages, gardens, fallows and longhouses, and in the *Hori* rituals that bring together subgroups. The body-owner structure requires that dangerously mobile souls be brought into the space of kinship during childbirth in order for it to perpetuate itself, but it is a machine for processing these souls into human persons and for prolonging kin relations by situating people within a given area and making them move in a certain way.

During the rubber boom, layers of body-owners were peeled away: the subgroup chief vanished, villages dwindled, relations with the exterior multiplied and mobile patterns changed. As a consequence, the Kanamari were unable to make themselves into kin by differentiating themselves from the backdrop of erratic movement. The rubber boom was a period in which the Kanamari were drawn back to the transformative and uncoordinated world from which they derive, both phylogenetically and ontogenetically. In effect, the rubber boom unmade Kanamari humanity, reestablishing a period in which body-owners were absent, people related to one another as souls and worthlessness reigned.

CONCLUSION

After 1972, following the effects of government policies that demarcated their lands and removed foreigners from it, the Kanamari have

again begun to make gardens and their mobility, although still intense, is now ordered and coordinated, as if the history of worthlessness had been organized into a transformation of the body-owner structure. This history, however, lies beyond the scope of this article (see Costa 2007) and, to conclude, I limit myself to drawing attention to three facts of Kanamari ethnography that carry more general implications for studies of agricultural regression.

First, the Kanamari example shows that increased mobility follows contact with the non-Indigenous population and that this mobility is accompanied by the abandonment of agriculture, as is predicted in prevailing models of agricultural regression. Recent studies have begun to question a simple correlation between loss of agriculture and increased mobility and foraging, insisting on the political and cultural choices involved in opting for different strategies in specific situations (e.g. Fausto 2001; Rival 2002). While these studies have been important in complexifying the model of agricultural regression, their criticisms should not lead us to swing the analytical pendulum to the other extreme and lose sight of the fact that, in many instances, exogenous forces led to increased mobility and that choice, where it occurs, may be subject to wider external constraints (see also Fausto 2001: 173-174).

Second, it is too often assumed that increased mobility and foraging must occur together. In other words, 'agricultural regression' means that, as cultigens are lost or forgotten, subsistence *must* shift towards a strategy based predominantly on hunting and gathering in landscapes that were transformed by former agriculturalists. This assumption is underscored by more silent hypotheses: that more powerful or warlike groups must be avoided and that the incommensurable tragedy that is the colonization of lowland South America—a tragedy that repeats itself over and over in massacres and epidemics that decimate native populations—must always have a single, unequivocal reaction based on retreat. It therefore postulates that those societies that maintain contact with more powerful populations do so because they have no choice, or only because they have been subjected to this contact. In the context of Western expansion, societies that do not retreat are seen to have been overrun by the colonial process, becoming appendages of the regional economy and constituting the lower rungs of a world system. While this is certainly true from a variety of perspectives, the hypothesis ignores the different ways that Amerindians conceptualize non-Indigenous foreigners and how these conceptualizations have changed historically. The Kanamari are an example of a population that did not retreat, but rather submerged itself into the colonial situation, intensifying mobility while depending on migrants into its lands for acquiring the

same crops that were planted in the period preceding contact. The price for this strategy may have been a generalized state of worthlessness, but it nonetheless enabled the long-term survival of the Kanamari. If the aim of recent criticisms of agricultural regression in lowland South America is that it must take into account the historical and cultural specificities of different peoples' diverging strategies, then the Kanamari, like the Huaorani studied by Rival (2002) and the Western Parakanã studied by Fausto (2001), add a further twist to the limits of the classic scheme.

It may be countered that 'agricultural regression', as the expression has come to be used, is simply irrelevant to Kanamari ethnography. While the Huaorani and the Western Parakanã are trekking or foraging societies that do not conform to the model of agricultural regression, the Kanamari are not now foragers, nor do they conceive of themselves as having subsisted exclusively by foraging in the past. Furthermore, unlike foragers their mobility was not guided by visits to rich tracts of secondary forest dotted around the landscape, but rather by their engagement with an exogenous economy that dotted the landscape with rich pockets of foreign people and goods. The amount of time in which they completely lacked agriculture varied, but generally covers a relatively short period from the late 1930's to the early 1970's. As a result, agricultural techniques were never forgotten, and crops never ceased to be important; they simply stopped being produced and came to be acquired through immersion in the regional economy.¹⁰ It is not my aim, however, to question the view that predominantly 'foraging' societies—that is, those that rely less on their own food production than the majority of Amazonians, and that display more intense and wide-ranging patterns of mobility—did, in fact, undergo processes that may be labeled 'agricultural regression'. Instead, what I intend to question is the teleological assumption that agricultural regression necessarily leads to a foraging subsistence strategy.

Finally, if our aim is to understand indigenous perceptions of change, then 'agricultural regression' does not seem to account for what the Kanamari consider important in their history. Although their history includes a period in which agriculture was lost and in which mobile patterns changed, it is not a regression to a state of sociocultural development that has any meaning in their conceptions of their own past. If the idea of 'regression' is to be of any significance for the Kanamari, then increased mobility and the lack of agriculture are regressions towards a state of being that is prior to the creation of distinct domains. The erratic movement that follows from this regression transforms the Kanamari from humans into souls, drawing the world back into the continuum of myth in which kinship is impossible and worthlessness is the measure of all relations. It

must therefore be apprehended as an ontological regression towards the pre-human condition from which humanity is derived, but towards which it must not return.

NOTES

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1. Although recent studies have tended to portray Amazonian foraging as '...a way of life, a way of organizing society and thinking about the world' (Rival 1999: 81), in this article I define it in the more typical sense of a subsistence strategy that relies more on hunting and gathering than on cultivated foods, and which implies a greater degree of mobility than is the norm for Amazonian hunter-horticulturalists. I therefore make no claims about the experience of foraging or the nature of the relationships that foragers establish amongst themselves, with others or with the environment.

2. See Rival (2006) for a review of historical ecology and some of its shortcomings. I should stress that Balée (1992) postulates the intermediate 'trekking' position, situated between horticulture and foraging, which is empirically observed in the continuum composed of the Tupi-Guarani speaking Ka'apor, Araweté and Guajá. Indeed, Balée's theory of agricultural regression is much more complex and refined than this short summary allows, and I am basically in agreement with it. I have therefore chosen to focus on those aspects of the theory from which Kanamari data diverge—not, it should be stressed, to state that the theory is false, but only that it is likely to be even more complex and less linear than prevailing schemes predict (see also Fausto 2001: 169-174).

3. The Kanamari always name river basins, their main channels, and their smaller tributaries, but settlements generally receive the name of the river or stream on which they are built. In what pertains to the Komaronhu river, the name of some settlements depicted are those given by the non-Indigenous population, or by neighboring Amerindian groups, while others are named after the river/stream in which they are situated.

4. Alternatively, the name 'Y' can be substituted by *i-warab*: 'my body-owner'.

5. These symmetrical, formal relationships between subgroups are always same-sex. The female equivalent to the male *-tawari* relationship is the *-tawaro* reciprocal bond, which creates non-kinship ties between the women of different subgroups, and which functions, *mutatis mutandis*, in the same way as the male *-tawari* tie. There is no unequivocal term to refer to cross-sex relationships between members of different subgroups.

6. In what follows I present a highly synoptic, simplified and linear history of Kanamari contact with the whites. It should be kept in mind that the abandonment of agriculture was not only gradual, but also occurred in different times and rates among the Kanamari of different subgroups (see Costa 2007). In fact, it is impossible to make a definitive statement such as ‘the Kanamari ceased to cultivate crops’, because ‘the Kanamari’ are not a single entity, but rather an exogenous name for a number of different subgroups, spread out over a very large area, whose contact histories varied, as did their reactions to contact. My narrative is thus an impoverished history of those subgroups that I know best; namely, the Squirrel Monkey-*dyapa*, the Curassow-*dyapa*, the Oropendola-*dyapa* and the Collared Peccary-*dyapa*.

7. Although I focus on ‘payments’ in agricultural produce within the context of debt-peonage relations, this was not the only means through which crops were obtained by the Kanamari. I briefly mention two others: agricultural produce could be obtained in exchange for game meat, and one Kanamari man I spoke to claimed to have worked for many years as the resident hunter for a rubber estate; and a recurring feature of Kanamari narratives concerning this time is the periodic theft of the gardens of rubber estates and, less often, of other Indigenous peoples. This interestingly makes the Kanamari similar to ‘foragers’ involved in a master-servant relationship in other parts of Amazonia, such as the Maku, who exchange ‘forest’ produce for crops and occasionally steal from their Tukano masters (Jackson 1983: 65; 154-158).

8. By exploring the life history of a single Kanamari man who lived through the rubber boom, Carvalho (2002: 60-1) offers an excellent example of the macro-movements that many Kanamari undertook. These movements between rubber estates need to be understood in the context of the micro-movements that constituted the to-and-fro of quotidian sociality, situated between villages, rubber camps and storehouses.

9. Although I am discussing Kanamari involvement with the rubber economy, we should not be fooled into viewing colonial expansion as an historical event with no known parallels. Indeed, it is clear that the strategy of the Kanamari—their submission to more powerful invaders at the price of the dissolution or rearrangement of their social relationships—replicates the strategies of numerous Amerindian groups faced with powerful Amerindian neighbors in the pre-contact period (see Santos-Granero 2009). The nature of the rubber boom and the relationships that it engendered made this submission disorganized and random, but we know that during other historical moments the Kanamari collectively and willingly entered into submissive relations with more powerful newcomers into their territory (see Costa 2007). These examples of submission are a historical acting out of the widespread Amazonian theme of familiarization and of the transformation of a relationship between predator and prey into one between master and pet (see Fausto 1999; 2008: 345-348) in which the pet position is not necessarily imposed, but rather sought out. Indeed, it is time that we start to temper the predatory schema that is prevalent in Amazonia (Viveiros de Castro 1993) by focusing not only on those societies that equate humanity with the predator position (e.g. Vilaça 1992), but also on those that identify themselves

with prey (e.g. Rival 2002). This conjunction sometimes allows for the predatory alterity of dangerous others to be attenuated by voluntary submission of prey, who thereby assume a pet position in relation to their predatory masters (see Bonilla 2007). As I have argued elsewhere, in the traditional model of Kanamari social relations both the predator and the prey position are internal to subgroups in which predatory masters familiarize their pet subjects—and in which they are persuaded to do so as a means to attenuate their inherently dangerous nature (Costa 2007, forthcoming).

10. Cultigens, however, were certainly lost in the period in which agriculture was not practiced. Although a discussion of the restoration of Kanamari gardening lies beyond the scope of this article, one aspect immediately stands out when Tastevin's description of the garden in the 1920's is compared to the present. Even though sweet manioc was the most important crop in both periods, Tastevin also observes the significance of maize in Kanamari gardens, and he praises the qualities of the Kanamari variety of maize in comparison to those of neighboring people, and notes their crucial role in ritual life (Tastevin n.d.: 59-61). Today, at least among the Kanamari whom I studied, maize is of very little importance, and it occupies no prominent place in their gardens or in the organization of their annual cycle. Furthermore, although they can name four different varieties of maize, the only variety that the Kanamari currently cultivate is of a type that was introduced into the region by the Brazilian government in the 1980's, and it is common to the gardens of their Indigenous and non-Indigenous neighbors.

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