

Introduction

During the first months of fieldwork in the Itaquai River, I would spend my evenings crafting questions to put to my hosts. Riddled with the grammatical mistakes and naïvetés of a beginner, these questions helped me learn the Kanamari language and served as a sort of dress rehearsal for future fieldwork, when I hoped my fluency would improve. One day, a man told me that the chiefs of old were very large and beautiful, and they never aged or fell ill. That night, I strung together the following admittedly shoddy question: “How were the bodies of long-ago chiefs?”

One of the first Kanamari words I learned was *-warah*, which I initially understood to mean “owner” but which, it soon became clear to me, also meant “chief.” There is nothing particularly exceptional about this. In numerous Amazonian languages, the chief is called an “owner” or an “owner of people” or some similar composite phrase. Thus, the Carib cognates *entú* (Trio) and *oto* (Kuikuro) designate both the owner of things and of the village, thereby coming to mean “chief” (Heckenberger 2005; Brightman 2007: 83–84). In Panoan languages, chiefs are typically designated by words that mean “owner” or “master,” such as the Kaxinawá *ibo* or the Marubo *ivo* (McCallum 2001: 33, 111–112; Cesarino 2016). The Kanamari *-warah* seemed to be a further interesting example of a common semantic feature of Amazonian languages.

Secure in my translation for “chief,” I scanned my limited vocabulary for a word for “body.” I initially considered *tyon*, which more accurately refers to the “torso.” In the end, I settled on *boroh*, which I had heard applied to the corpses

of dead animals. I assumed that it also meant “body,” much as we use “body” to mean “corpse.” Although I had doubts about its syntax, I was confident my question would be understood.

The next day, I tried it out on Poroya, my Kanamari grandfather. Like all Kanamari, he was highly tolerant of my linguistic errors and always did his best to infer my intended meaning. My question about ancient chiefs, however, was incomprehensible to him. Disappointed at my failure, I surrendered and repeated the question in Portuguese. Poroya had worked for over two decades with Brazilian rubber tappers and loggers, so he spoke Portuguese better than most Kanamari. He told me that my question made no sense because the word *boroh* only means “corpse,” and a corpse is a corpse, whether a chief’s or a commoner’s. The correct word for “(living) body,” he explained, is *-warah*. I thought we were talking past each other. I already knew that *-warah* designated the “chief,” and I had just learned that *boroh* means “corpse.” What I needed to know was the Kanamari word for “body.” Poroya, who had a knack for diagnosing my perplexities, explained the Kanamari “body” to me by saying, in Portuguese, that “our body is our owner and our chief” (*nosso corpo é nosso dono e nosso chefe*). I later learned that it is impossible to say this phrase as such in the Kanamari language, since all the nouns would translate as *-warah*. Nor would such a sentence be able to distinguish semantic roles, because “body,” “owner,” and “chief” are imperfect glosses for what, in the Kanamari language, is one concept. Indeed, the sudden shift from the plural “our” to the singular “body is...” was an indication that more than synonymy was at stake.

What Poroya told me was disconcerting. How could one word mean both “body” and “owner”? Had I misheard or misinterpreted something? As my initial unease subsided, I gradually came to realize that my research had found its course via an ill-formed question and the implications of its startling reply. Although this brought me a measure of anxiety, I took comfort in the fact that my predicament was the lot of the ethnographer. Evans-Pritchard, perhaps the finest ethnographer in the history of the social sciences, once wrote:

[A]s every experienced fieldworker knows, the most difficult task in anthropological fieldwork is to determine the meanings of a few key words, upon an understanding of which the success of the whole investigation depends; and they can only be determined by the anthropologist himself learning to use the words correctly in his converse with the natives. (Evans-Pritchard 1962: 80)

Evans-Pritchard did not mean that anthropologists should be linguists, although he certainly knew that anthropology is a kind of translation (Evans-Pritchard 1962: 61–63; 1969). What he meant is that, during the course of our fieldwork, we learn certain words that so thoroughly defamiliarize our own vocabulary and so pressingly demand that we adjust our beliefs and expectations that we are compelled to anchor our research in their meanings and commit ourselves to exploring their consequences. These words can only be learned by directly engaging with the language and the people who speak it over a long period of time. Evans-Pritchard was conceding that our ethnographies often hinge on a fleeting moment in which we learn the meaning of a word, but these moments will remain missed opportunities for ethnographers who do not then take the time to map out all of their consequences through careful ethnographic investigation.

Exploring the contexts when the Kanamari use the term *-warah*, I gradually discovered that it is structured by a specific relation. The bond between a chief and his followers, it turned out, was only one possible actualization of a much more ample schema for producing persons and the relations between them. The convergence of the “owner” and the “body” was a first clue that I was dealing with a concept that circumscribed kinship in some way, considering what I knew of the Amazonian stress on the production of similar bodies as a mechanism for creating and propagating kinship relations.¹ Indeed, it became clear to me over time that *-warah* was the cornerstone upon which Kanamari notions of kinship were built. A number of questions immediately followed: Who can become a *-warah* of whom, when, and under what conditions? What effect does the *-warah* have on the process of kinship? How is an “owner” equally a “body”? What does it mean to be an owner of kinship?

This book is an ethnography of the Kanamari that shows how the “social fabrication of kinship” (Vilaça 2002: 354) is dependent on a bond of ownership at once elementary and indispensable. If kinship is everywhere “the mutuality of being” (Sahlins 2013), then, for the Kanamari, mutuality is preceded by dependency. If we can speak of a “principle of kinship amity” (Fortes 1969), then kinship amity here is preceded by ownership asymmetry. By the notion of precedence, I refer to two related facts: first, in terms of the life cycle, people are

1. The literature on the Amazonian body is immense. I draw attention to studies that focus on processes that create similar bodies of kinspeople, which are then distinguished from the bodies of other peoples or beings. For a few examples, see Seeger, DaMatta, and Viveiros de Castro (1979); Gow (1991); McCallum (1998); Overing (1999, 2003); and Vilaça (2002).

initially embedded in relations of ownership before being distributed in other relationships; and second, in terms of Kanamari conceptions of kinship, ownership is a precondition of and for mutuality. Ownership generates the space within which the intersubjective qualities of kinship are lived; there are no kinship relations that are not derived from ties of ownership.

Since I cannot discuss all of the ways in which ownership determines kinship in this book, I limit myself to how kinship is articulated through the distinction between two ways of distributing food. One means is through the unidirectional provisioning of food (or of the means for its production or acquisition), which I call “feeding.” Among the Kanamari, “feeding” (*ayub-man*) is a relation that generates an “owner” and a “body” (*-warah*) and implies the unilateral dependence of the fed person on the feeder. The other means is through food sharing between people who can produce food themselves, which I call “commensality.” Commensality is always associated with the marital relationship, since “only married people control the crucial resources which make production possible” (Gow 1989: 572). However, it also characterizes relations between coresident adults—relations that are created or rearranged by the marital tie. For the Kanamari, “commensality” (*da-wihnin-pu*) is a relation between productive persons and implies the reciprocal interdependence of those commensal with each other. Feeding, in sum, involves the differential capacity of one party to provide for another, while commensality involves different but complementary contributions toward food production, distribution, and consumption.

The lexical distinctions the Kanamari recognize, along with their implied relational structures, are not facets of an absolute classificatory grid. Kanamari relations cannot be exhausted by inclusion within one relational orientation or the other. Rather, the distinction between feeding and commensality provides a means for the Kanamari to speak about their relations, the development of these relations through time, and the conditions under which their relations emerge and thrive. What the distinction establishes is this: where relations of commensality are identified, they can be traced back to relations of feeding; where kinship persists, it does so within the purview of an owner.

OWNERSHIP

The issues I explore in this book derive from my experience with the Kanamari, but they draw me into a comparative investigation of the Amazonian “owner” or

“master.” Most Amazonian languages have a word that designates an “owner” of certain beings or things: owners of animal and plant species, paths, outcrops, villages, people, and so forth. The owner always projects a relation of “ownership,” typically characterized by an asymmetrical bond involving control, protection, dependency, and care. This bond is often expressed in an idiom of filiation, specifically in terms of the parent–child relation, although it interconnects in complex and ethnographically variable ways with native conceptions of kinship (Fausto 2012b [2008]).

Though long identified as a “classical theme” in Amazonian anthropology (Viveiros de Castro 1992: 345–356), “ownership” has not obtained the same degree of comparative generality or theoretical yield as other classical themes. Until the start of the twenty-first century, discussions of ownership were basically limited to ethnographic works that described the figures known as the “Owners,” “Masters,” “Fathers,” or “Mothers” of animals, typically characterized as monstrous or hyperbolic forms of the species over which they have control, and with which, in many cases, they establish relations of filiation (e.g., Murphy 1958: 13–17; Fock 1963: 26–32; Weiss 1972: 162). Most of these studies paid scant attention to the relational schema sustaining these figures, focusing instead on interactions between the masters of animals and humans. In some ethnographic contexts, such as the upper Rio Negro and the Andean piedmont, shamans must negotiate with the masters of animals to release their progeny to human hunters (Weiss 1975: 263–264). Occasionally, this release of animals for human consumption must be paid back in human souls, which inserts the negotiations between shamans and the masters of animals within a cosmic cycle of exchanges (e.g., Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971: 80–86; 1996: 82–99). Rather than investigating the vertical relations that bind the masters of animals to their “children,” ethnographies have traditionally privileged the horizontal relations of transspecific diplomacy—that is, those between two shamans, one an animal or spirit, the other human.

The prominence given to symmetrical relations between peers at the expense of the asymmetrical relations between masters and their creatures is revealing. As Fausto (2012b: 29) points out, one of the factors that inhibited more robust comparative studies of mastery relations is precisely the recurrent and ingrained image of Amazonia as a province of equality and symmetry, particularly when contrasted to the Andes, Mesoamerica, or the Old World. This image led to an almost exclusive emphasis on horizontal relations, including those internal to local groups, where we find a philosophy of social life marked by informality

and the absence of regulating social structures or coercion (Overing 1993, 2003; Overing and Passes 2000), as well as those external to local groups, where symmetrical ties between different collectivities, typically formulated in the idiom of symmetrical or “potential” affinity, structure supralocal systems (Viveiros de Castro and Fausto 1993; Viveiros de Castro 1993, 2001). As a result, mastery was demoted to a subsidiary role, whether by theoretical approaches that stressed the “conviviality” of the everyday as an antidote to the grand Western narratives of society (see C. Gordon 2014: 97–98 for a critique), or by “exchangist” approaches strongly influenced by structuralism (see Fausto 2012a: 172–176 for a critique).

Obscured by these two “analytical styles” (Viveiros de Castro 1996), mastery was prevented from developing into a central theme in the anthropology of indigenous Amazonia (see Penfield 2015: 101–103). This was despite the fact that ethnographies continued to describe a profusion of “Masters,” increasingly emphasizing their relational quality and hinting at their potential to afford deeper insights into indigenous societies than previously imagined (Seeger 1981: 181–182; Chaumeil 1983: 76–88; Descola 1994a: 257–260). A conceptual impasse nonetheless persisted in preventing mastery from being treated as a sociocosmological operator in its own right.

This neglect is being amply redressed in the twenty-first century, which has seen the expansion and refinement of studies of ownership and mastery in Amazonia.² Nonetheless, the contemporary salience of asymmetrical relations does not derive directly from the pioneering descriptions of the “masters of animals,” which seem to have been confined to the margins of Amazonian anthropology.³ An intellectual genealogy of how ownership became a privileged

2. See, for example, Fausto (1999, 2007, 2012a, 2012b); Bonilla (2005, 2007, 2009, 2016); Lima (2005: 75–129); Djup (2007); Kohn (2007, 2013); Grotti (2009, 2012, 2013); Sztutman (2009, 2012); Brightman (2010); Cesarino (2010, 2016); Costa (2010, 2013, 2016a); Hirtzel (2010); Guerreiro (2011, 2012); Maizza (2011, 2014); Walker (2012, 2013); Rodgers (2013); C. Gordon (2014); Brightman, Fausto, and Grotti (2015); Garcia (2015); Guzmán-Gallegos (2015); Penfield (2015, 2017); and Cretton Pereira (2016). Not all of these anthropologists adopt the language of “ownership” and “mastery,” but all discuss comparable ethnographical phenomena.

3. A number of recent studies have begun to redress this relative sidelining of the once prominent theme of the animal masters (see Daillant 2003: 302–306; Djup 2007; Kohn 2007, 2013; Oakdale 2008; Hirtzel 2010). Gonçalves (2001: 340–344) provides a pioneering study of the filial relations that exist between animal species among the Pirahã, anticipating descriptions of the incompatibility of filiation and predatory relations that are developed in Chapter One of this book.

vantage point for interpreting regional ethnology would probably start with the studies of warfare prevalent in the 1980s and 1990s. While warfare had once been mostly studied as a form of symmetrical exchange—as an exchange of “aggressions,” “souls,” or “lives”—it became increasingly clear that Amazonian warfare operated in disequilibrium. A death never restored a state of balance but, rather, projected violence into the future as further deaths were envisaged and planned (e.g., Journet 1995: 184–189). Hence, Fausto (1999: 935–936; 2012a: 172–181) proposed that reciprocity, which restores equilibrium, should be distinguished from warfare predation, which determines the direction in which a relation between two subjects becomes resolved: “When predatory interaction is established between two persons . . . a metarelation is created in which one of them occupies the agent position and the other occupies the patient position” (Fausto 2007: 513; see also Fausto 2012a: 304–307; Viveiros de Castro 1992: 278). This relation typically involves the patient’s incorporation by the agent, who becomes affected or magnified by the assimilation of some capacity extracted from an enemy (Taylor 1985: 160; Viveiros de Castro 2002). Warfare thus always contained a residual element that resisted any easy assimilation to symmetrical schemes. Indeed, this fact had already been observed by Carneiro da Cunha and Viveiros de Castro (1986) apropos of the infinite and projective character of revenge. But it was, above all, through a focus on the relationship between the killer and his victim, and between the captor and his captive, that Amazonian ethnology began to conceptualize mastery as a relational schema.⁴

FAMILIARIZING PREDATION AND METAFILIATION

Carlos Fausto’s research, conducted in the 1980s and 1990s among the Parakanã, a Tupi-Guarani-speaking people of the Xingu-Tocantins interfluvium in the Brazilian state of Pará, was decisive in articulating warfare predation with hunting and shamanism through a focus on how captives and victims become familiarized:

4. See, for instance, studies of Tupinambá ritual anthropophagy (Viveiros de Castro 1992; Sztutman 2012), Ikpeng (Txicão) hunting, warfare, and adoption (Menget 1988; Rodgers 2013), Jivaro and Mundurucu headhunting (Taylor 1985; Menget 1993), and Nivacle scalp-taking (Sterpin 1993), among others.

[A]lthough we can indeed speak of a symbolic economy of predation (Viveiros de Castro 1993), we also need to develop its complement, which is not a theory of balanced reciprocity, but rather of the asymmetric relations of the father/son or master/pet kind. . . . Predation is one moment in the process of producing persons of which familiarization is another. We cannot understand the meaning of Amerindian warfare through its reduction to the symmetric relations of exchange, but we may succeed through the construction of a *model of the asymmetric relations of control and protection*. (Fausto 2012a: 229–230, original emphasis)

Fausto (1999) coins the expression “familiarizing predation” to describe the relational structure that transforms external predation into internal familiarization. The notion of familiarizing predation frames the process through which powerful others become incorporated and contained, and predatory activity redounds in a bond of control. Furthermore, it enables this transformation by converting the affinal nature of predatory interaction (Viveiros de Castro 1993) into the consanguineal nature of familiarization. The structure has a high degree of generality, characterizing not only warfare (the bond between killer and victim or captive) but also shamanism (shaman and familiar spirit) and hunting (master and pet). Indeed, the latter sphere furnishes the model relation, as evinced in the widespread Amazonian practice of feeding and raising—in a word, familiarizing—infant animals captured during the hunt.

Philippe Erikson (1987) had already drawn attention to the prominence of the familiarization of infant animals captured during hunting. However, he developed the theme in a different direction, suggesting that the consumption of wild animals leads to a conceptual malaise insofar as it violates the ethics of reciprocity upon which indigenous moral philosophy rests. Pets thus “serve as an intellectual counterweight to prey” (Erikson 2000: 16; see also Vander Velden 2012a: 133–135), the familiarization and nurture of pets operating as a means of resolving the “cognitive dissonance” inherent in hunting (see also Erikson 1988, 2011).

The idea of hunting as a source of conceptual malaise was criticized by Philippe Descola (1994b, 1998), who, following Haudricourt (1962), highlighted the close correlation between the treatment of humans and animals in Amazonia. He showed how both the game animal and the enemy are figures of alterity and, given the generic and encompassing quality of affinal relations in Amazonia, are consequently identified with affines. Their counterparts, pets and

captive children, are in turn identified with consanguinity as they become incorporated as the “children” of their captors. This homology:

game animal : pet :: enemy : captive children :: affine : consanguine

provided the basis for Fausto’s model of the passage from symmetrical affinity to asymmetrical consanguinity in kinship, warfare, and shamanism, focusing on the internal movement of the conversion of predation into familiarization, i.e., the passage from the symmetrical opposition of brothers-in-law/enemies/spirits to the asymmetrical relation between parents and adoptive children, captor and captive, shaman and familiar spirit (Fausto 1999, 2012a).

In his original elaboration of the theory of familiarizing predation, Fausto (1999) proposed “adoptive filiation” as the complement of symmetrical affinity, the vertical counterpart to the predominantly horizontal mode of apprehending the articulation between kinship and other domains. Relations of real or symbolic control are modeled as a form of adoption, which gives prominence to the elective character of these relations in comparison with the apparent spontaneity of nonadoptive filiation (see Santos-Granero 2009: 192–195). More recently, Fausto has generalized the concept of adoptive filiation as *metafiliation*, a basic operator of indigenous sociocosmologies that, like symmetrical affinity (or meta-affinity; see Taylor 2000: 312), is intensive and transspecific, with the crucial element being adoption rather than the vertical transmission of substances (Fausto 2012b: 40–41).

This study of Kanamari feeding and ownership develops these insights and contributes to the current outpouring of research on “ownership” relations in Amazonia. Five aspects of Kanamari ethnography are of particular interest to this discussion. First, the Kanamari have a single word which applies to the “owner,” the “body,” and the “chief” alike. Second, the Kanamari clearly link the ownership relation to feeding or provisioning, thereby foregrounding an aspect of ownership relations that is always present in Amazonia but which may not always be so salient. Third, the mutual determination of feeding and ownership underscores the centrality of the elective or adoptive character of the ensuing relations. This allows us to investigate actual filiation as a relationship modeled on adoptive filiation rather than vice versa (as examined in Chapter Three). Fourth, all kinship relations are derived from ownership relations, both ontogenetically (as one moves through the life cycle) and phylogenetically (as a basic structural condition). Finally, the ownership relation is conveyed through an imagery of containment: to feed is to contain what is fed; to be fed is to be put into relation with an owner.

THE KANAMARI

The Kanamari are a Katukina-speaking people who trace their origin to the middle course of the Juruá River in the western part of the Brazilian state of Amazonas. Although they worked in rubber extraction and logging during the first half of the twentieth century, today most are engaged in a mixed subsistence economy based on swidden horticulture, the gathering of wild or semidomesticated fruits, fishing, and hunting. A few are also employed by government agencies or as schoolteachers. A 2010 census gives their population as 3,167 people, most of whom live on the tributaries of both banks of the middle Juruá (their traditional lands) or in neighboring river basins. They are situated in the midst of various Arawan-speaking people to the south and southeast, particularly the Kulina of the Juruá, and Panoan-speaking peoples to the north and west, notably the Kaxinawá, Marubo, and Matis. Their most numerous neighbors, however, are the nonindigenous foreigners, the “whites,”⁵ who inhabit towns and hamlets located near Kanamari villages, such as Atalaia do Norte and Eirunepé (see map in Figure 1).

The Katukina language family was first identified in the 1920s by the French priest Constant Tastevin, who visited the Kanamari intermittently from 1905 to 1924, and by the ethnologist Paul Rivet (Rivet 1920; Rivet and Tastevin 1921; see also Verneau 1921). The Katukina family was initially divided into four languages: Kanamari, Biá River Katukina, Tsohon-dyapa, and Katawixi. The latter language is now extinct, although Tastevin obtained a vocabulary in the early twentieth century, which suggests that Katawixi was significantly different from the three surviving languages. According to studies by the linguists Francisco

5. I am using the terms “white people” or “whites” as a literal translation of the Portuguese term *brancos*, the label used by the Kanamari (and most indigenous people of Brazil) to refer to all nonindigenous people in Brazil, regardless of the color of their skin, heritage, or racialized identity. In their own language, the Kanamari call the “whites” *kariwa*, a word of Tupian origin that serves as a category of contrast for nonindigenous peoples. Although it bears no relation to the Kanamari word for the color white (*paranin*), they unanimously translate *kariwa* into Portuguese as *brancos*, i.e., “the whites,” which is thus an all-purpose term for “nonindigenous Brazilians.” Although the term “whites” may appear exclusionary, ignoring the rich diversity of Brazilians, it does serve as an implicit recognition of which group exercises dominance in Brazil, where the distribution of social, political, and economic power among different racialized groups is still severely unequal.

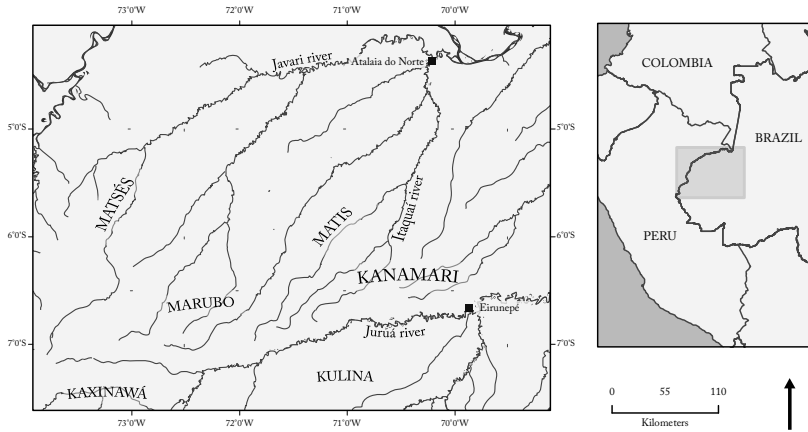


Figure 1. Location of the Kanamari and their neighbors.

Queixalós and Zoraide dos Anjos (Queixalós 2005; Queixalós and dos Anjos 2006; dos Anjos 2012), the three extant Katukina variants are best described as dialects of a single language, which they call “Katukina-Kanamari.”⁶ Although Katukina remains one of the lesser-known language families of Amazonia (Urban 1992: 98), recent studies have hypothesized its inclusion in a macro-family with the Harakambut languages of the Madre de Díos in Peru (Adelaar 2000, 2007) and the Arawan languages of the Juruá-Purus (Jolkesky 2011).

Tastevin provided the first ethnographic descriptions of the Kanamari, although many of his observations remain unpublished (Tastevin n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c, 1911, 1919). A few scattered reports on the Kanamari were produced in the mid-twentieth century (e.g., J. C. Carvalho 1955; Da Costa 1972), but modern ethnographic fieldwork only got underway in the mid-1980s. Reesink (1993) studied Kanamari mythology, Neves (1996) focused on their history and interactions with the Brazilian state, M. Carvalho (2002) explored their history, ritual, and shamanism, and Labiak (2007) studied the ritual complex known as *Warapikom*. Jérémy Deturche (2009, 2012, 2015; Deturche and Domingues

6. The *Tsobon-dyapa* (also *Tsobom-dyapa*, *Tsobonwak-dyapa*, “Toucan-dyapa”) were an “uncontacted” people of the Jutai-Jandiatuba interfluvium, most (perhaps all) of whom established permanent contact with the Kanamari of the Jutai in the 1980s. We know very little about them, although the Kanamari claim to understand the *Tsobon-dyapa* speech (an understanding likely strengthened by prolonged language contact with the Jutai variant of Katukina-Kanamari).

Hoffman 2016) has carried out extensive fieldwork among the Biá River Katukina and has produced comparative studies of Katukina speakers.

My own fieldwork began in 2002 and has focused mostly on history, myth, and social organization (Costa 2007, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2016a, 2016b, 2017). I have carried out a total of twenty months of fieldwork among the Kanamari. The bulk of my research was carried out during eighteen months in Kanamari villages between 2002 and 2006. I undertook subsequent short visits in 2009 and 2015. All of my research took place along the upper course of the Itaquai River in the Vale do Javari Indigenous Reservation. The Itaquai is not a tributary of the Juruá, although its upper reaches are accessible over land from the northern tributaries on the left bank of the middle Juruá. This area has been used as a hunting ground by the Kanamari since time immemorial, although they only established more permanent settlements in the region in the early twentieth century following growing pressure on their traditional lands. Although I refer to “the Kanamari” in this book, the reader should bear in mind that my ethnography has a more restricted remit.

The outstanding feature of Kanamari ethnography in regional comparisons are the named, endogamous, and geographically circumscribed social units that make up their society. All of these units receive a totemic name composed of the name of an animal species followed by the suffix *-dyapa*. These, in turn, are associated with a specific river basin, typically (albeit not exclusively) a tributary of the Juruá River (see Chapter Four). The Kanamari have always affirmed that these units married endogamously in the past (i.e., marriages occurred exclusively within the subgroup), although the earliest available ethnographic descriptions registered the existence of marriages between people of different subgroups (Tastevin n.d.a). However, the Kanamari are unanimous in describing intersubgroup marriages in negative terms and as an unfortunate consequence of postcontact interference in their society (e.g., Carvalho 2002: 101; Costa 2009: 165–169).

Tastevin originally called the *-dyapa* units “totemic clans,” although subsequent studies have avoided the rigid implications of the anthropological literature on clans by employing more neutral terms such as “people” or “subgroup” (e.g., Carvalho 2002: 87–106; Labiak 2007: 58–67). Far from being a unique social institution, the *-dyapa* are a Kanamari variant of a social morphology that, in slightly different forms, can be found among many of their Arawan- and Panoan-speaking neighbors on the Juruá and Purus Rivers. Ethnographers sometimes refer to these entities as “named groups” (Lorrain 1994: 136–139),

“named subgroups” (F. Gordon 2006), or “autonomous units” (Aparício 2011a). Although many ethnographic descriptions of these units exist, the most extensive comparative studies have been carried out by Aparício (2011a, 2011b, 2013, 2015: 75–99) and Calávia Saez (2013, 2016). I shall follow the convention adopted by most studies of Kanamari *-dyapa* units and refer to them as “subgroups.”

The composition, internal structure, and history of Kanamari subgroups will be described in Chapter Four. Subgroups are vital to any study of how Kanamari ownership determines kin relations, since they are the exclusive units of kinship in their society. All people in a subgroup are considered kinspeople (*-wihinin*) to each other, and ideally no one outside the subgroup is a kinsperson. Hence they are the largest units in which feeding and commensality are articulated.

FEEDING AND COMMENSALITY IN AMAZONIA

The distinction between feeding and commensality has mostly gone unnoticed in ethnographies of lowland South American societies. It is difficult to make any general claim as to why this may be so, since ethnographers might not distinguish between them for any of a number of diverging reasons. One reason may be that the distinction is not recognized by the people being described, in which case there is nothing more to be said. However, we cannot ascertain from the available ethnography how common it is for indigenous languages to register a lexical distinction between the verbs “to feed” (i.e., to provide food for those who would not otherwise have access to it) and “to eat together” (i.e., to share food with people who are capable of contributing to quotidian meals), much less whether this distinction is indicative of different relational orientations. Nonetheless, some ethnographers note similar, if not exactly identical, lexical contrasts. The Aweti of the Xingu, for example, distinguish between *-poj*, “to give food to a baby or a domestic animal,” and *mokat’u*, “to make an adult eat” (Vanzolini 2015: 166). This distinction plays an important role in Aweti understandings of kinship and sorcery.

Another possible reason for the analytical invisibility of the distinction is that it may be tangential to the ethnographer’s main object of study, in which case it may well be justified. The latter would seem to explain Pierre Déléage’s (2009: 119–120) inclusion of “commensality” as one of the basic semantic traits of the Sharanahua category of *ifo*, “owner.” The examples of commensality he

adduces are of children and pets being fed by their *ifó*, i.e., their parents or owners. In the case of owner–pet relations, he claims that “domesticating’ an animal is above all (perhaps no more than) giving it food while it is small, so that it may grow accustomed to its human owners” (Déléage 2009: 119). In these relations, the familiarity of the pet for its owner is generated (“genesis” being another of the basic traits of the *ifó* category) as a unilateral dependency, since the pet has been removed from the relations that constituted it in the wild and transferred to an interspecific relation in which only an *ifó* can maintain it alive. This is surely different from the interdependence that characterizes relations between productive adults in Sharanahua society (see Siskind 1973: 83–88). In Déléage’s usage, relations that express a unidirectional provisioning, which I would term “feeding,” are called “commensality.” Since his research was not focused on the effects of different modalities of distributing and consuming food, there is no reason to question his usage any further.

When feeding and commensality are distinguished as different ways of relating to others, there remains a tendency to dissolve the asymmetry of feeding into the symmetry of commensality as an all-purpose *dispositif* for creating, sustaining, and perpetuating kinship ties. In Cecilia McCallum’s ethnography of the Kaxinawá, for example, feeding is defined as a basic operator of kinship relations: “The principal means of ‘making kinship’ . . . is the act of feeding” (McCallum 1990: 416–417). The Kaxinawá equate the concept of feeding with generosity. They produce kinship by being generous to others, just as they unmake kinship by refusing such generosity. To be “generous” or “kind” is to be *dua**pa*. The root of this word, *dua*, also composes the term *dua va-*, which McCallum glosses as “making oneself responsible for a person” and which has the wider meaning of “to help, to satisfy a desire, to treat well, to look after, to domesticate.” It is not restricted to the intrahuman domain, since *dua va-* is also used to describe the process of familiarizing a wild animal, of making it into a pet. As McCallum synthesizes, “this conflation of meanings indicates the active nature of being *dua**pa*. Feeding well and looking after is a process that makes someone or some animal closer, more like oneself, kin” (McCallum 2001: 76).

The prototypical model for feeding is the parental relation. Parents look after their children, just as generous men and woman look after others, which means ensuring that they are well provided for. The chief, in turn, is a “summation and intensification of the notion of adult person” (McCallum 2001: 70), a magnified father to the community, just as his wife is a magnified mother. According to

the Kaxinawá chief Elias, “In this way you become a leader. Feeding people is becoming a leader, whereas a miserly man, who eats alone, can never become a leader” (in McCallum 2001: 69).

The Kaxinawá term that McCallum translates as “leader” is *xanen ibu*.⁷ We have already encountered *ibu* at the start of this book, where I noted that it is one of many cognates of the Panoan words for “owner,” of which the Sharana-hua *ifo* just discussed is a further example. The term *ibu* can also be used to designate “parents,” and, McCallum adds, it “encompasses both possession and legitimate authority.” This is an integral aspect of the Kaxinawá notion of the person, which is accumulative and encompassing. Things that are owned are parts of the person who owns them. Food and things are owned absolutely, while land involves “connotations of ownership.” However, McCallum claims that “something of this attitude spills over into the relationship between parents and children; but relations between people are in no way comparable to relations between persons and things” (McCallum 2001: 92).⁸

In an ethnographic setting where ownership is a relation integral to persons, McCallum nonetheless claims that it is unsuitable for describing interrelations between them. As Brightman (2010: 152) observes, this hesitant epistemology of ownership is not confirmed by her ethnography of the Kaxinawá. There is little doubt that relations of feeding generate and sustain *ibu* as a filial bond. Parents are owners of the children they feed, and these children are an integral part of them; chiefs are owners of the people they feed, calling them “my children,” and it is the ownership (through feeding) of many people that magnifies the chief into an amplified “father.” Feeding generates ownership, so if feeding

7. McCallum sometimes translates *xanen ibu* as “true leader” (e.g., McCallum 2001: 68), and sometimes states that a “true leader” is a *xanen ibu kaya* (e.g., McCallum 2001: 109). Kensinger (1995: 177) adds, “Any man who exercises leadership is called *xanen ibu*. Varying degrees of headmanship are recognized, thus *xanen ibu ewapa*, ‘large headman,’ and *xanen ibu pishta*, ‘little headman.’”

8. After making this assertion, McCallum proceeds to explain that when a person dies, her possessions are destroyed, a practice common throughout Amazonia, where even houses may be destroyed and entire villages abandoned after the death of certain people, typically chiefs or shamans (Rivière 1984: 28; Turner 2009). The same applies to ownership of people, where the relations between the living and dead are what have to be dissolved, as McCallum (1999) has shown for the Kaxinawá (see also Taylor 1993; Vilaça 2000; Conklin 2001a; Oakdale 2001). In former slave-holding indigenous lowland South American societies, slaves were some times buried alive with their deceased owners (see Jabin 2016: 463–482).

is the principle means of making kinship among the Kaxinawá, then ownership is the basic kinship relation.

In what is one of the finest ethnographic description of commensality in Amazonia, McCallum (2001: 96–108) shows how commensality is a relation between productive men and women—how, in fact, collective meals are events in which gender distinctions are created or made evident, as men and women display their interdependence on each other by eating together the food that each one makes available. However, this mutual interdependence between productive adults is shown to be underscored by the chief’s capacity to feed his children:

The meal is not only valuable because it makes the body; it also stands for the making of this world, inhabited by living kin, people who are really human. When men eat the food a woman serves them, or when visitors eat the food their hosts provide, their hunger and desire are satisfied. They have been respected, treated as kin should properly be treated. The selflessness and generosity of feeding the visitors is only paralleled in the feeding of their children. This is why leaders must feed the village as “parents” (i.e., “owners”) of the villagers. Feeding is the ideal work of kinship and most especially of parenthood. When a male leader addresses his people as “My Children” (*En Bakebu*), he should not only be speaking metaphorically. As Elias told me, he should also be speaking the truth. (McCallum 2001: 108)

By not drawing out the implications of the difference between feeding and commensality, McCallum equates chiefly feeding with the commensality that he thereby makes possible. Yet adult men and women who produce food for each other and eat together are involved in different relations from parents who feed their children, even if they may ultimately be interconnected. These different modalities of relating to others and their articulation have evident effects on native conceptions of kinship.⁹

9. McCallum recognizes as much when she alludes to Gow’s distinction between “relations of caring” (i.e., feeding, the “parental” tie) and “relations of demand” (i.e., commensality, relations through marriage). These relations are kept distinct among the Piro, although they tend to be less clearly opposed among the Kaxinawá (McCallum 1990: 417). However, the fact that they are not clearly opposed does not necessarily mean that they collapse into each other, as her own ethnography makes evident. I would argue that we must draw out the implications of these

I am well aware that by framing my discussion exclusively in terms of how Amazonian anthropology has treated (or not treated) the distinction between feeding and commensality, I risk misrepresenting a very complex and multifaceted subject. The literature on the role of food in kinship is, of course, practically coterminous with the anthropology of kinship itself. Whether it symbolizes, constitutes, or defines kinship relations, food has always been a central aspect of kinship studies. Much of this literature, at least its more contemporary iterations, is concerned with how food is related to local conceptions of “substance,” including blood, flesh, semen, and milk (see Carsten 1995, 2001; Lambert 2000: 83–85). Anthropologists have also produced many studies of “substance” in Amazonia, offering excellent descriptions of how food creates consubstantiality (e.g., Conklin 2001a: 115–122; Storrie 2003; Uzendoski 2004). In this book, however, I am less concerned with the substantive aspects of food than with how feeding and commensality are “relational modes” (Descola 2013: Chapter 13), that is, essential means of engaging others. In this sense, in Kanamari usage, “[feeding and commensality are] applied to actions that from an English-speaking perspective do not involve taking in food in any immediate sense,” to adapt what Marilyn Strathern has said of “eating” in Amazonia and Melanesia (Strathern 2012: 3; see also Vilaça 2002: 352; Bamford 2004; Fausto and Costa 2013). In contrast to studies that reveal how food transforms bodily substance, which seldom need to justify the alimentary language that they adduce, Kanamari ethnography forces us to ask why feeding and commensality should be the terms through which social acts are apprehended and interpreted and, consequently, how they are simultaneously capable of charting the content and extent of kinship relations. While acknowledging that consubstantiality created through food sharing is a common feature of Amazonian societies, this book turns to how the different ways of producing and transferring food, as well as the means of its production, create the conditions for kinship relations to thrive.

KINSHIP

For the purposes of this book, “kinship” defines two overlapping qualities that the Kanamari consider integral to the relations between those who are

differential relational forms, however slightly they be distinguished, in order to understand how they are intertwined.

“kinspeople” (*-wihnin*) to each other. The first is coresidence. Amazonian anthropology has long recognized the centrality of coresidence in determining kinship relations throughout the region. Peter Rivière’s pioneering ethnography of the Carib-speaking Trio of Suriname noted that genealogical connection and coresidence coincide in native conceptions of kinship, a pattern he later showed to be common throughout the Guianas (Rivière 1969: 63–65, 1984: 40–41; see also Overing 1993: 55). Although the convergence of genealogy and coresidence in this region could be explained by the prevalence of small, dispersed settlements and a preference for village endogamy, studies from other parts of Amazonia have tended to confirm that the pattern is widespread, defining kinship in contexts in which atomization gives way to denser settlements and more intense interactions with different varieties of foreigners (Gow 1991: 162–167; Viveiros de Castro 1993: 171–177; McCallum 2001: 75–88; Vilaça 2002: 352–353). Coresidence is always about sharing intimate space, working together, mutual care, and, in some cases, a consubstantiality created through commensality (Rival 1998, 2002: 109–112; Vilaça 2002: 352). What defines kinship in the “generative cultures” of lowland South America (Overing 1999) is thus living and eating in close proximity, established in a social environment in which a stress on the informal and mundane aspects of daily life affords a degree of leeway in defining who is or is not a kinsperson, when, and in what context.

For the Kanamari, “coresidence” is expressed in the idea of *-wihnin to*, “to live together with kin.” Coresidence may refer to joint residence in a single village, where it typically defines “true [close] kin” (*-wihnin tam*) in opposition to “distant kin” (*-wihnin parara*). But coresidence can also delineate joint residence within a subgroup, where people inhabit different villages in the same river basin. Coresidence defines relations between people with whom nonritual interactions are ongoing.

Equally basic to Kanamari ideas of kinship is the concept of *ityonin-tikok*, “to know the land.” This is the Kanamari variant of a commonly reported native Amazonian concept often rendered (by anthropologists) as a “state of communal well-being.” Analogous terms from other Amerindian peoples are sometimes translated as “living well,” “good life,” “tranquility,” or “conviviality” (e.g., Overing and Passes 2000; Belaunde 2001; Overing 2003). *Ityonin-tikok* and *-wihnin to* are mutually determined. People who “know the land” are those who live together harmoniously through “love” (*wu*), “beauty” (*bak*), and “happiness” (*nobak*). *Ityonin-tikok* is a complex concept, immersed in a complex ethics

of social life, which would require a different study to elucidate. In this book, I therefore take *ityonin-tikok* to be synonymous with one of its facets, “affection” or “love” (see Lepri 2005: 714).

How ownership determines kinship will be explored through a study of feeding and commensality, as well as their articulation with, and impact on, coresidence and affection/love. Much of my discussion will focus on feeding (provisioning), since it seems to me that this is the piece of the puzzle that has largely been overlooked in investigations of the Amazonian “alimentary structures of kinship,”¹⁰ which have privileged predation (and cannibalism) and commensality (distribution and sharing). For the Kanamari, feeding is the means for transforming predatory relations external to the subgroup into kinship relations internal to it, as manifest through commensality. It therefore places native conceptions of ownership right at the heart of the quintessentially Amazonian project of “making kin out of others” (Vilaça 2002).

THE BOOK

This book is therefore about how feeding and ownership are features of meta-filiation, a relational schema that has received less attention from Amazonianists than the mutualism of commensality or the symmetry of potential affinity. As such, it has certain limitations, two of which I should make explicit before proceeding.

First, by stressing the vertical relations of meta-filiation, the horizontal relations of meta-affinity are pushed into the background. This is an intentional move. The aim is not to stress meta-filiation at the expense of meta-affinity but, rather, to draw attention to an axis of Amazonian social life that tends to be downplayed in regional syntheses. Meta-affinal relations are discussed in Chapters Four and Five, where I show how they interconnect with feeding and ownership. On the whole, however, this book pays less attention to these relations than I have done so elsewhere (Costa 2007).

Second, the book focuses on the act of feeding and the relations and categories that it generates, to the detriment of its complementary terms—namely, the fed or the dependent. Of course, I shall have much to say about how feeding

10. A pun from Claude Meillassoux, although I use it with a different intention (see Fajans 1993; Viveiros de Castro 1993: 185).

generates dependence and how the agency of the feeder is augmented by the containment of the fed. I also discuss the danger posed by the spirits who come to be fed by shamans (Chapter One) and, likewise, that of newborns who come to be fed by their mothers (Chapter Three). Indeed, precisely because these others are dangerous, they must be fed and hence controlled for Kanamari life to become possible. By focusing on how this agency is overturned by the acts of the feeder, I describe how feeding is able to contain the power of what was previously a predatory agent, and which now becomes relatively passive vis-à-vis the feeder.

Nonetheless, I realize that my stress on the capacities of the feeder over the fed may give the impression that the objects of the feeding relations are truly passive, witless reactants to the desires of others. This possibly differentiates this book from other Amazonian ethnographies that show how the “weapons of the weak” (Scott 1987) are themselves effective, predatory engagements with powerful others. The material most relevant to the present discussion is Bonilla’s ethnographic studies (2005, 2007, 2009, 2016) of the Arawan-speaking Paumari of the Purus, situated just to the south of the Kanamari. Bonilla claims that, for the Paumari, subjection to another is not a surrendering of volition to a master but, rather, a variant of ontological predation. It is more like a parasitism, a “micropredation” of the master by its pet, than a containment of the pet by a master. This predatory subversion of ownership is evident in Paumari interactions with local white bosses. The Paumari term for themselves, *pamoari*, designates the client in a relation of subjection or commercial exchange with a boss (*kariva*). Collectively, to be human is to be subjected to others. However, in concrete engagements with specific white bosses, the Paumari may intentionally place themselves further in their service as their “employees” (*bonai abono*): “the employee is in a sense located one step ahead in terms of commitment to the boss, *and vice versa*” (Bonilla 2016: 117, emphasis added). This commitment forces the boss—who is otherwise a dangerous predator—to engage with the Paumari as a provider of goods and care.¹¹ Paumari thus pre-empt the bosses’

11. A similar point had been made by Santos-Granero (1986b: 120) in his discussion of the asymmetrical love of the *cornesha* priests of the Amuesha for their followers:

By establishing that the holders of power should be loving and generous providers, who should give more, and more essential things, than they receive from their followers, the Amuesha set limits to their power and provide the moral framework to ensure equality within hierarchy. This is achieved by representing the powerful ones as the “loving ones” and as “the ones who

predation of them by demanding a kind of forceful provisioning that “becomes a specific ideal mode of predation exercised by a client–employee who only obtains and never pays or works . . . annulling the temporality and distance presumed by the debt and therefore neutralizing his or her own subjection” (Bonilla 2016: 120).¹²

Here Bonilla is stressing a salient point concerning the strategies and artifices available to those “subjected” to others, who should not be conceived as merely passive objects of the agency of the (relatively) powerful (see also Rival 1996; Walker 2013; Penfield 2017). However, the Kanamari place more stress on the capacity of providers to provide than on the agency of those who receive care to demand. It is as though the Paumari and the Kanamari stress complementary perspectives on the ownership relation—a possibility that can only be investigated after further developments in the comparative ethnology of the Juruá–Purus. As an ethnography of the Kanamari, this book accordingly focuses on the owner more than on the owned, without thereby claiming that this is how an ethnography of Amazonian ownership must necessarily proceed.

Chapter One describes the Kanamari concept of feeding and the dependence that it generates. This relation is first presented in general terms before being investigated specifically in relation to pet keeping and shamanism. These are contexts in which Fausto identified “familiarizing predation” as an integrative mechanism, capable of uniting predation with the production of kinship. The chapter contributes to Fausto’s theory by showing how feeding articulates predation and familiarization. However, it also argues that, when the spotlight is

serve,” while the less powerful ones are seen as the “loved ones” and the “ones who are served.” This process could be defined as one of inversion of hierarchy by which the powerful appear as (and are expected to be) “servants” of the less powerful. (Santos-Granero 1986b: 120)

12. Other recent studies have similarly stressed how asymmetrical relations do not annul the agency of those who appear to be submitted to others. Killick (2011: 354–365), for instance, shows how Asheninka relations with whites bosses (*patrones*) allow the former to manipulate the latter against each other as a means for furthering their own interests. Penfield (2015: Chapter 4) has reinterpreted the asymmetrical relations between the Sanema and the Ye’kwana, traditionally described as relations in which the former are servants of the latter (see Ramos 1980: Chapter 1), as a form of predation, or “parasitic extraction,” whereby the Sanema are able to acquire desired Western goods without the burdens of reciprocity. See Ferguson (2013) on the theoretical issues involved in actively seeking out subordination as a means for acquiring goods and services from others.

placed on feeding rather than on predation and/or familiarization, pet keeping and shamanism are actually less similar than they first appear.

In Chapter Two, the discussion shifts from feeding to the categories that feeding generates. This entails a discussion of the Kanamari concept of the *-warah*, which I propose to translate as “body-owner.” The chapter considers what sort of figure the body-owner is and how the ideas of ownership it implies differ from other kinds of possessive relations.

Chapter Three explores the mother–child bond, which is also a relation between a feeder and someone fed, a body-owner and a dependent. In alignment with recent work, my argument is that relations of filiation are made possible by the conversion of predatory relations into kinship. But while Amazonian anthropology typically identifies the perinatal practices known generally as “the couvade” as the factors responsible for this conversion, I argue that, for the Kanamari at least, the couvade is purely negative, seeking only to protect parents (and other adults) from the emergence of a new existence. Thus, rather than the couvade, it is the feeding relation that initiates the process of making kinship between mother and child (and hence between coresidents). By demonstrating this link, I also intend to show how, in Amazonia, filiation is always an adoptive filiation, even when it is “natural” (Taylor 2015: 140).

Chapter Four discusses the feeding relation at a regional and historical level. It shows how the structure of Kanamari historical narratives—a tripartite schema of periodization well known to ethnographers of southwestern Amazonia—defines the role of feeding as it transitions between distinct historical epochs. The chapter examines how feeding operates in the Kanamari conception of their subgroups and of their relations with the Brazilian state. It thus defines the widest spheres in which feeding is capable of creating a space for kinship relations to thrive.

Having spent most of the book describing how feeding relations can generate commensality and kinship, Chapter Five turns to the cosmological preconditions for these relations. Through a study of myth and ritual, I show how the Kanamari world is created by the emergence of feeding from generalized predation. What is unique about Kanamari cosmology is how the movement from predation to kinship unfolds within a structure in which relations of (body-) ownership remain constant. In other words, feeding intercedes as a mediating term within a structure that pre-exists it.

The conclusion reviews the implications of my arguments for anthropological theories of Amazonian kinship.