

Fatal Substances: Apurinã's Dangers, Movement and Kinship

Pirjo Kristiina Virtanen

University of Helsinki, Finland

Abstract: Through continuous patterns of travel when hunting, visiting other settlements, trekking and foraging, the Arawak-speaking Apurinã of southwestern Amazonia are able to access resources, new power and skills, and knowledge about other beings. In the course of the trips, however, certain trees, stones and types of earth formation are approached with the utmost caution as the spirits of these places may afflict the unwary with their invisible poisonous arrows, causing illnesses or even deaths, if not removed by shamanic skills. Similar illnesses are also related to moiety food taboos, a danger which highlights the crucial elements of kinship construction among the Apurinã. Yet immobility can also be dangerous as stability can make the body ill and decrease its stamina and strength. This article shows that it is not only co-residence that produces kin; movement also contributes to community-building. Encounters with other beings contribute to establishing selfhood and kin territory, as well as making allies. The centrality of movement in Apurinã experiences is also discussed as an element leading to the dominant position of Arawakan peoples in the history of southwestern Amazonia.

Keywords: movement; kinship; illness; non-humans; Apurinã; Arawak; Amazonia; Brazil.

Resumen: Por medio de patrones continuos de viaje debidos a la caza, las visitas de otros asentamientos, y a las excursiones y búsquedas, el grupo arawak de los apurinã del suroeste amazónico logra acceder a recursos, poderes, habilidades y conocimientos sobre otros seres. A lo largo de sus viajes, sin embargo, ciertos árboles, piedras y tipos de espíritus y sitios son aproximados con máxima precaución, pues los espíritus de estos lugares pueden afligir a los incautos con sus flechas venenosas invisibles. Si no son retiradas con la intervención de técnicas chamánicas, pueden causar enfermedades o incluso la muerte. Aflicciones similares también están relacionadas a tabúes alimenticios que resaltan elementos cruciales de la construcción del parentesco entre los apurinã. Sin embargo, la inmovilidad también puede ser peligrosa, pues la estabilidad puede enfermar al cuerpo y amenguar su vigor y fuerza. Este artículo muestra que el parentesco no se basa solo en la coresidencia, sino que el movimiento también contribuye a la construcción de la comunidad. Los encuentros con otros seres contribuyen no solo a establecer la identidad y el territorio, sino también la producción de aliados. La centralidad del movimiento entre los apurinã también se discute aquí como un elemento relacionado con la posición dominante de los pueblos arawak en la historia del suroeste amazónico.

Palabras Clave: movilidad; parentesco; enfermedad; no-humanos; apurinã; arawak; Amazonía; Brasil.



INDIANA 32 (2015): 85-103
ISSN 0341-8642

© Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz

The Apurinã Indians living in the forest environment of southwestern Amazonia are familiar with trekking long distances and travelling by water. At the same time they are cautious that their movements in the proximity of certain powerful animal, tree, landscape formations or other spirit subjectivities can cause fatal illnesses. Therefore, one needs to behave respectfully when in their vicinity. Similar kinds of illnesses are recognized when failing to follow restrictions associated with pregnancy or childhood. These illnesses, known as *mapitxiri*, also emerge if one consumes ‘wrong food’ that only the opposite Apurinã moiety can eat.

In this article¹ my aim is to look at immanence and the potentiality of fatal events that the Apurinã might experience and discuss why they are closely related to kinship and movement. Earlier anthropological literature has stressed conviviality and co-residence in settlements as important factors producing kinship in Amazonian native communities (Overing 2003; Overing & Passes 2000). Sharing food, for instance, as a form of sociality has been noted to produce kinship (Gow 1991; Lagrou 2001). Moreover, it has been argued that kinship is constructed from the web of relations as a continuous flow of immanent dangerous forms. In indigenous Amazonia, alterity is a necessary condition for identity production and the production of personhood (Vilaça 2002; Viveiros de Castro 1996, 2012). In this model, the fear of a break-up in relations with one’s own community of real humans is treated by certain alimentary restrictions, working and living together that produce similar bodies.

Here my point is to show how movement can also be an essential component in this dynamics of community-building. In the case of the Apurinã, movement is related to economic production, the marriage system, politics, and individual vitality as such. Through predatory types of relations the power of others is incorporated by some individuals, but those who cannot master the power of others are protected by specific rites while they are in a process of movement, as immobility would lead to separation from the community of the kin. The existential condition of potentially turning into the other is not only about the risk of breaking up communal relations, but also about the possibility of altering communal relationships through the interference of foreign subjectivity, something that would affect present and future generations.

The present-day Apurinã inhabit a large area on both sides of the Purus River, from the Tapauá tributary to the mouth of the Acre tributary. In historical records the Apurinã were situated on the Purus River all the way to the mouth of the Yaco River and on the right side of the Acre River (Métraux 1948). They are one of the rare indigenous

1 I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for the constructive comments, to Juan Javier Rivera for his kind invitation to participate in this volume, to the Academy of Finland and the University of Helsinki for supporting this research financially, Sidney Facundes, as well as to the Apurinã for taking me into their homes and families.

groups inhabiting such a large area. Another comparable group is the Yine (Piro), who now inhabit territories in Peru and Brazil.²

Today the Apurinã live in several indigenous territories, principally in the Brazilian state of Amazonas, along the central Purus River. The Arawak-speaking group self-identifies as *Pupŷkary*, and they are divided into two patrilineal cross-marrying moieties: *Xiwapurynyry* and *Meetymanety*. In the upper Purus, there is also a third moiety called *Kuarynery*, but it can be considered as a subgroup of *Meetymanety*. In recent years, the number of traditional cross-moiety marriages has dropped significantly, while marriages with non-Indians and other indigenous groups are increasing. According to the most recent statistics, there are approximately 8,000 Apurinã. They are fishing, hunting, and gathering communities who practice swidden agriculture, though a large number of the Apurinã live in urban environments or close to urban areas. I have worked mostly along the Tumiã River,³ which is situated about a three-day river journey from the closest urban area (Lábrea and Pauini).

In the following sections, I will first address the fear of lethal transformations due to altering the order of the moieties, and I will address the *mapitxiri* illness caused by consuming a substance belonging to the opposite moiety, and how these situations can be treated. This will lead to a discussion of the vulnerability of Apurinã when passing places of powerful spirits, and the protective rites related to movement. In the section to follow, I will discuss the centrality of movement in the Apurinã socio-cosmos by addressing the meshwork of paths, long-distance marriages, and the frequency with which the theme of movement appears in their myths. Then in a more historical perspective, I will examine the Arawak-peoples' travels in the upper and central Purus River region, because the way in which Apurinã's kinship and movement are related seems to open up new ways of understanding their leading role in the interactions between southwestern Amazonia and the Andes. Finally, I will conclude by discussing how movement, rather than just co-residence, produces kin, and plays an essential role in the community-building.

Moieties and *mapitxiri*

Mapitxiri is an illness healed only by shamans. It is described as an infection or like a wound causing everlasting pain in the body that can usually take years before it manifests itself. The pain (*katsyy*) might affect the back, the arms, or the ears and eventually can even lead to death. '*Mapitxiri* kills'. It is most often caused by 'food that one should not eat', concerning particularly certain animals depending on the person's moiety. The food taboos are followed along patrilineal lines, and babies are given food that their father

2 I have worked with a subgroup of the Yine in Brazil who identify themselves as the Manchineri (*Manxineru*).

3 Today, some 80 persons live in the indigenous territory of Tumiã.

eats. Because of exogamous marriages between the moieties, couples follow different dietary rules.

The members of the *Xiwapurynyry* (of all ages) avoid eating several types of fish and especially fowl, such as certain types of tinamous (*iũku*) or *uru* birds (*puturu*). The *Meetymanety* abstain from all sorts of porcine food, such as collared peccary (*miriti*), coati (*kapixi*), and certain types of fish. People of the Tumiá River explain that if the *Xiwapurynyry* eats an *uru* bird, they will have a tapping or prickling sensation in the lower back, while certain fishes cause a biting pain on the side of the lower back, and *mambaque* initiates a pain in the ears. In a similar way, if a *Meetymanety* eats collared peccary or a coati, s/he starts to have pain in the lower back. Not being attentive to one's food can also make predators follow the person or s/he will start hearing sounds and voices when nothing is present. One may also start behaving like the animal and begin to lose one's mind. They become *mapitxiri-ta*, or in other words crazy. Among the stories of these kinds of incidents is a *Meetymanety* woman who almost burned herself because she ate coati while her husband was away. She started to light a fire and just walked into it. A similar incident was reported by a *Xiwapurynyry* woman who told how her *Meetymanety* uncle ate collared peccary and started to make noises in his throat like a pig. He told the others, "Let's all eat smoked peccary!" After four days he died. His body was bloody by then, because he had rolled on the ground.

As seen in the previous examples, the social order was in danger, because by eating the same food, everybody in the community came under the same influence. For kin relations it is typical that they generate relations through difference, as Strathern (2011) has argued. For instance, my relation to the husband of my sister is different from my relation to my sister.

For the Apuriná, the kin relations include several differences, and they have rich kin terminology, but the principal division is to the moieties, which is in fact equal to cross cousins and siblings/parallel cousins. People from the same moiety can be called 'sister'/'brother' or 'parallel cousin' (*itharu/ithary*). In fact, for the Apuriná, their own moieties create relatedness to a far greater extent than the places where people would share everyday practices. Even when I said to a *Meetymanety* girl in a village I visited for the first time that I did not eat pork, she happily replied that she had found her *itharu*, (parallel) cousin, meaning that I was considered as her kin. Eating collared peccary was one of her food taboos, and this determined her interspecies relations. For her, our bodies were similarly vulnerable, and consequently there was a kinship relation between us, even if for most of the time there was physical distance. Moieties and their interspecies relations can thus create relatedness between peoples over large distances.

When the protection of maintaining the differences and similarities among the Apuriná breaks down, the individual can start to suffer from *mapitxiri* illness. It can occur due to wrong food, as explained, but it can also be due to marriage between the

moieties. In general, in the Apurinã view, illness is a substance, a sort of injection that starts in the body to reformulate social relations and thus persons. In its metaphysical form it is like small stones (*isuruke*) or spirit arrows that have to be removed in order to reconstruct a person's proper humanity. Even tooth ache is considered to be a stone which causes the pain.

In previous literature concerning the taxonomy of Amazonian native conceptions of illnesses, these illnesses are often presented as the result of aggressive spirits taking over a person. This is usually said to occur at the point when one becomes frightened, or cannot control one's emotions, or because of jealousy, feelings of disgust, or irresponsibility related to gender-related roles (Garnelo & Buchillet 2006; Overing 1989; Pollock 1996). In this view, certain substances are released in a person and they change the person's behaviour. The same applies to the Apurinã, as the illnesses are like small stones transmitted by non-humans and by their aggressions towards people who do not follow the rules of their moiety. As Pollock (1996) has pointed out, illnesses can be understood within the context of constructing personhood, because they usually make people less caring or less intimate in relation to other people, distancing them from their community.

The same logic applies to the use of medicines. As substances they change the relation between a person and a foreign essence (small stone), and thus the medicines have transformative powers. For the Apurinã, their medicines protect them in their interactions with harmful entities. Herbal baths and plants taken, digested or consumed can avoid harmful relationships and create new ones that will defend people. *Awiri* snuff is their most common medicine, and is even used by children.⁴ Medicines are similar foods that are considered to make people's bodies similar to each other (see also Hugh-Jones 1993; Londoño Sulkin 2012).

In the Apurinã view, illnesses are entities that can be removed, replaced, and sent away. Their shamans (*mjyty*) can negotiate the dangerous impact of those spirits which are causing illnesses. Apurinã shamans usually inhale *awiri* snuff or chew coca leaves, *katsupary*,⁵ certain type of vine, mixed with ashes of bark of a tree in their healing rituals in order to enable to diagnose the cause of illness and to establish whether witchcraft has been used against the person they are treating. Alternatively, shamans place the *awiri* snuff in their palms and depending on its emerging forms receive answers for healing. Dreaming is also a source of shamanic knowledge, and the world of spirits is generally

4 Likewise, *ayahuasca* is given to children among the Manchineri in order for mothers to influence the thinking of their children (Virtanen 2012: 91).

5 *Katsupary* and *awiri* are also used by other community members, though much less so in the case of the former. Coca leaves are largely used in the highlands of South America and in western Amazonia, for instance by the Ashaninka.

introduced to children from an early age (Virtanen 2015). When the cause of illness is found, the shaman cures it by sucking or pulling it away and then blowing it far away.

There are currently very few people who the Apuriná consider shamans. That can be understood from the context of the repressive politics towards the indigenous peoples in the region (see e.g. Iglesias 2008).⁶ Since the number of shamans is less today than was the case earlier, the body pains caused by spirits, Apuriná say, are difficult to cure. Consequently, people try to follow their food taboos carefully, in order to avoid *mapitxiri*, as well as practice different types of rites when travelling or moving around, in order to protect their children's health.

The Apuriná shaman's powers (*ithapara*) have in fact a very similar metaphysical form as illnesses: small stones (*isuruke*), which are regionally known as *arapani*. Shamanic stones are received most commonly from chiefs (*awite*) of big tree spirits, jaguars and boas during shamanic initiation.⁷ This is an example of predatory incorporation of powers from the outside, by a person who can master and control the power of others (Fausto 1999; Viveiros de Castro 1992). And when a shaman wants, he can place the shamanic stones in a snuff inhaler, a *mexikana*, and blow them away to cause witchcraft. As noted earlier, shamans and even ordinary persons can master spirit aggressions through witchcraft and diverse sorcery techniques (Whitehead & Wright 2004; Buchillet 1995).

If narrations of body pains because of *mapitxiri* are common, so are the stories on recovery from them. A *Xiwapurynyry* woman explained that she had severe pain in her leg for a long time and eventually she could only drag herself around. She had decided to visit a shaman, who lived by another river, because the leg had become so painful. The woman also explained how her brother and sister-in-law had accompanied her. They had been very afraid to travel as the people in another Apuriná village might even kill them because they were strangers. They did not have close kin ties in that village, and they did not know for instance what kind of food they eat. But the woman explained that they were relieved that they were received well. The shaman finally discovered that it was food she had eaten that had caused her illness: so it was *mapitxiri*. With the help of *awiri* snuff and by sucking out her illness he managed to remove it. He could not, however, remove everything, and asked the woman to come again. The shaman had emphasized that the woman should not eat *jatuarana* – fish forbidden to *Xiwapurynyry*. I see this as a reminder of the woman's moiety, as well as her place and relationship to her kin.

⁶ This kind of political and cultural atmosphere has also affected the willingness of many Apuriná to speak in their native language to their children.

⁷ The shaman can also pass his/her *arapani* to other persons.

The moral education associated with *mapitxiri* is closely related to the Apurinã marriage system. One night in the Tumiã village a middle aged *Xiwapurynyry* man explained how his parents had told him from a young age that he should marry a woman who does not eat pork (from the *Meetymanety* moiety). At one time he wanted to marry a girl from his own moiety, but his parents told him that their children might be born with some health problems. He consequently left the girl. However, the man admitted that he had not been attentive about all the foods he had eaten in his life. He confessed with a low voice, "I will now say in front of my parents [who were present] that I have eaten food that was not meant for me, which my parents had taught me". He explained then that, therefore, he had all sorts of pain in his body, mainly in his back and arms. This kind of witnessing produced social order and relatedness between certain actors. In fact, according to the Apurinã, if a person tells others immediately afterwards that s/he has secretly eaten a wrong food, nothing would happen.

Mapitxiri illness is caused because one does not respect differences between kin, and this is subsequently signalled by a dangerous transformation in one's human nature when one is taken over by non-human forces and thus one begins to exhibit foreign behavior. This is precisely what Viveiros de Castro (2012) tells us about fear in the native Amazonian communities being effectively about the anxiety of losing one's human perspective. He points to an ethnographic example from Joana Miller's work on the Nambikwara and their ornaments that safeguard them from the powers of non-humans, which would lead to the Nambikwara breaking relations with their kin and becoming lost.

For the Apurinã, in a similar fashion their two moieties protect them from becoming *mapitxiri-ta* (crazy, lost), by positioning themselves clearly, according to their moiety, in the web of human and non-humans actors. Even if their diets are dissimilar, they construct Apurinã personhood and avoid illnesses which would break their intimate relations with their kin (Pollock 1996). As we have seen, the human social relations that are maintained are also concerned with non-human elements (principally avoidance of eating porcine animals and fowl). These social relations produce certain types of bodies, protecting vulnerable individuals so that they can carry out everyday practices: working, convivial living, and taking care of others. Misfortune in human relations is always linked to the non-human world, because people incorporate power from non-human entities (such as from the plants used for *awiri* snuff). In human-animal relations, the powers of non-human forces can be tamed and incorporated within certain limits (Viveiros de Castro 1992, 2012),⁸ as also shown in the case of the Apurinã shaman's powers. In the next section I will discuss in more detail protective rites related to travel and movement.

8 The incorporation of powers also occurs in a similar fashion in human-to-human relations (Virtanen 2009).

Forming Apurinã subjects

Among the Apurinã, *moriche* palm trees (*Mauritia flexuosa*), *buritiranas* (*Mauritiella martiana*), *murmurus* (*Astrocaryum murumuru*), and *tabocas* (*Guadua*) are approached with the utmost caution and respect. All trees with spines in general are to be avoided. They are associated with dangerous transformations, similar to the *mapitxiri* illnesses. Earth formations, such as pitches and holes in the ground are also thought to be places of monstrous beings, such as giant fish or other giants, who may pull people into them, where they will remain forever. Likewise, the Apurinã should avoid stones from the rivers, which are occasionally found. If one sleeps next to these stones, the Apurinã say that one hears the voices of spirits or other people. These non-humans most commonly shoot invisible arrows, transmitting to the people substances fateful to the body, though cures are possible, as explained in the previous section.

Attentiveness to these matters is fundamental in taking care of children who have not yet reached puberty. For instance, when one enters a forest for the first time with a baby, one has to inform its non-humans being that here is my child who is my kin. Then the forest spirits will not regard the newly arriving person as a stranger. In turn, small children should not pass close to specific earth formations or certain other powerful entities. If they do, the spirits of these non-humans would draw in the child.

For children, who are still forming their subjectivity, several protective rites are performed. When starting out on a journey, contact with a protective herb is required by stepping into it or rubbing it into the baby's body. Furthermore, when movement assumes the form of water travel, a small boat from a piece of bark or leaf is prepared and placed in the river in order for baby's spirit (*isanyka*) to travel safely. Among these protecting rites is also dropping breast milk to the river. The baby might otherwise create a fatal relatedness to overly foreign subjectivities. Should this happen, only shamans can heal the bodily illnesses that would follow, as explained in the previous section.

Couvade practices include restrictions for parents and the baby. Among other things, babies should not eat a big fish, such as a *pirarã* (see also Virtanen 2012), because that could cause lethal transformations. Children also should refrain from having a bath after dark due to wandering spirits, or having too much sun. Many mothers said that they continued to follow all these rules with their daughters even after they had passed their first menstruation, but were not yet married. As discussed in earlier literature, these avoidances and protections can be seen as enhancing the relatedness of the community members.

On the other hand, relatedness with master spirits is necessary in order to have an abundance of game and fish, and to produce healthy persons, and therefore they are called to *kyynyry* festivities (also known as *xingané*). The main character in the festivity is the chief of the *buriti* palm tree (*Mauritia flexuosa*). The power of this otherwise avoided

entity is carefully handled, and the leaves of this palm are carried by the men during the ritual and in the ritual dances. The following arrival and departure of several other non-humans require among other things chanting and consumption of *awiri* snuff, and these interactions can be led only by certain experienced and trained persons. The relations now reconstructed reject substances that would prove fatal in humans' everyday relations. Eventually, the powers of the welcomed and departed non-humans recreate the positions and relationships between different beings in the socio-cosmos.

Harmful interactions with spirit subjectivities are said not to affect non-Apurinã persons, because 'their blood is different'. One is reminded here of an earlier discussion about the construction of bodies by social practices such as eating and caring, which make the bodies of non-Indians and Indians dissimilar in the Amazon (Gow 1991; Vilaça 2005). In the Apurinã's view, blood contains and carries all the substances they have consumed, encompassing their food and natural medicine and turning them into the kind of people they are. Blood as a substance has been noted as a vital aspect of life (Belaunde 2005). The shamans are also told to place their *arapani* shamanic stones in their veins in order to be given strength by them.⁹

Today intermarriages between the Apurinã and non-natives are not uncommon. Children from these 'mixed-blood' marriages often continue to follow the protective rites and rules to avoid transformative spirits. However, the children of a non-Apurinã father are allowed to eat all types of food, but in such cases the patrilineal line of moieties is broken. In fact, marriages with non-natives can create different alliances with the outside, as well as different opportunities and challenges for future generations, including both novel human-environment engagements and human-to-human relations.

In the next section, we will consider how the power of Apurinã sub-group allies was built upon over a distance by means of marriage, travels, and visits.

Kinship and mobility

The Apurinã seek out their marriage partners mostly from their own community, then from communities living along the rivers nearby, but they can also travel long distances to find a spouse from an opposing moiety. However, following the traditional way, many Apurinã still look for a spouse from the opposite moiety and travel to other tributaries to find them. These meetings may also take place in the nearest urban areas to where the Apurinã from various indigenous territories come to make purchases or receive health assistance.

9 On the other hand, blood as a substance itself exposes things and endangers them when in the wrong place. Therefore, women who menstruate are often secluded (Belaunde 2006), as the blood substance has to be controlled. Menstrual blood threatens hunters or other activities that involve relations with animal and plant spirits, because it is a powerful medium.

Apurinā society at large is spread along various tributaries. An elderly woman who lived by the Tumiá River explained that in the past they hardly travelled by the main river (Purus), because travelling by land was faster and safer, and because one could hide better from enemy groups. Today the situation is different because of the smaller number of indigenous groups and the existence of new transport technology. Motorboats are often used along the main rivers when travelling to urban centres, which are usually situated next to the main rivers.

In many historical records the Apurinā have been pictured as riverside people, but my ethnographic studies have shown that their settlements have in fact been along smaller tributaries and sometimes even inland. Mobility between different settlements has occurred and still occurs mainly by terrestrial paths. Rivers are also actively used, though not the main ones. The mobility of the Apurinā in the Central Purus has been extensive and is related to hunting, visits, extracting forest resources, festivities, and general matters of economy. The combination of land and water routes both connected and reconnected the inhabitants in the region and even other regions. In fact, Apurinā's circulation by land provides a different image of their mobility. The female elder from Tumiá showed me an extensive web of routes connecting several tributaries of the Purus River where the Apurinā are settled. In this meshwork, the Tumiá River was connected by various paths to nearby tributaries, which likewise provided various paths leading to the next tributary. As I will explain later, these movements were instrumental in connecting subgroups, *wakurus*, and such movements were an essential method for them to exercise power.

In general, the Apurinā moieties were often categorized according to different ways of moving: the *Meetymanety* abstaining from the animals that can move on legs and the *Xiwapurynyry* from animals that have wings. These classifications seem essentially to be formed by beings which do not use limbs to move and those which walk. The combination of these two types of movement is also typical for the Apurinā: fluvial travelling and trekking. And here we see how these two types of movement are united in a micro social unity of a couple and their everyday practices.

Several Apurinā family histories are concerned with dislocations. Families often move to new locations, and many families would often relate themselves to the various places where they had lived. When I travelled by river with the Tumiá River Apurinā, they kept on identifying anthropogenic forests places where their relatives had lived. A great number of these migrations are caused by internal conflicts, but mostly by voluntary decisions. When travelling by the Tumiá River with Apurinās, they often point to anthropogenic forest where they or their relatives have lived, and refer to past events.

Planted vegetation holds special implications for relatives who had made their homes in particular places, and often these places were on the site of previous settlements. In fact, Apurinã's forest management seems to be connected to their previous use of gardens and swidden crops. Their mobility is thus essentially linked to the ways in which they understand their knowledge, ecological actions, and history (Ingold 2009; Rival 2002).

Even if travelling and moving are vital for the construction of kinship, they cause danger both for those who move, as discussed in the previous section, but also for those who stay. When I listened to Apurinã myths, I noticed that they were often about movement leading to permanent transformations in social relations with the community. The narrations would frequently describe the same process: during the absence of a kin member, usually a husband who went off hunting or went to collect forest resources, his wife who would stay behind, and entered into a very close relationship with a non-human being, usually an animal. This points precisely to the lack of the human perspective as discussed by many Amazonianists (McCallum 1996; Vilaça 2002, 2005). In one Apurinã myth, for example, a wife started to carry vine of *uxi* fruit (*Endopleura uchi*) for a tapir and had a sexual relation with the animal while her husband was away hunting. When the husband finds out about this, the relation between the man and his wife ends, and the wife dies at the end of the narrative. Very similarly, another Apurinã myth I was told concerns a woman who becomes transformed into a bird because of the long absence of her husband.

These myths define how to be a proper spouse and a human being who maintains convivial relations with one's kin. On the other hand, there are several myths about immobility and stillness that separate people from their kin. Immobility does not only make one's body ill, but also decreases the body's stamina, and thus places distance between kin. Those who are lazy are regarded as entities who bring weakness to the community. Similarly, the *Manchineri* with whom I have worked told me a story about a man who was a liar and never brought any game back from the forest. No woman wanted to be with him.

I suggest that continuous displacements, travels, and returns, such as hunting, visiting other places, trekking and foraging, are important elements of Apurinã's construction of personhood and kinship. Its reverse, immobility, excludes one from the community. Movement is a central and ambiguous theme in Apurinã narrations.¹⁰ When looking at this theme, it becomes evident that movement is at once an essential element for the wellbeing of the community and a potential threat to its social order.

Movement and how it is related to other human beings is an important element in Apurinã society. Kinship plays a much bigger role in Apurinã myths than stress laid on being different to other indigenous groups. Even one of the Apurinã origin myths on

¹⁰ The same is true for *Manchineri* myths.

the birth of the culture hero Tsurá¹¹ occurs in the territory of closely-knit communities of people, rather than narrating about migration to new places, as would be the case in other parts of Amazonia, as for example is the case in north-western Arawaks (Vidal 2000; Zucchi 2002). There are different variations of Tsurá's birth, but the general line tells that two women start their journey looking for a safe place. They climb up a *genipap* tree and start looking for their kin. They walk, meeting some animals, such as a curassow and an agouti, who are referred to by kinship terms. After some events and additional escapes, one of the women, Iakuneru, becomes pregnant and when enemies kill her, Tsurá emerges from her belly. Even if the enemy mentioned often refers to an Apurinã group, the myth is more concerned with events between other actors.

For the Apurinã, the *Kaxarari* is almost the only group appearing in their oral history, besides the aggressive Apurinã subgroups, of which some are even said to be cannibals. Subgroups – the *wakurus* of the Apurinã – get mentioned far more often, even if today the Apurinã rarely know to which *wakuru* they belong or their parents belonged (see also Facundes 2000; Schiel 2004). The same is evident in the oral histories of the Manchineri, another Arawak-speaking group with whom I have worked in southwestern Amazonia. This absence of subgroups in the myths and oral histories can be contrasted with indigenous groups in northwest and central Amazonia, where myths are essentially about other indigenous groups and the formation and hierarchical relations of clans (Lévi-Strauss 1964; Vidal 2000, 2003; Zucchi 2002).

For me, this non-differentiation from other groups is largely a consequence of the fact that Apurinã inhabited (and still inhabit) a large area and their relations to other groups are quite formalized. Alterity of animals and other types of subgroups, for example, which tends to be marginal with other indigenous groups, is far more prominent with the Apurinã. The main issue in their myths is relatedness between kin. Moiety diet rules, too, are concerned with difference and with kin relations (Strathern 2011). On the other hand, in relations concerning beings very different from 'us' (the Apurinã), such as other groups (for instance the Panoans or Andeans), the similarity between 'us' would indeed be stressed. Ethnicity generates relations through similarity, maintains Strathern (2011). But these similarities between 'our' group or subgroups or differences to those of others, and the process of creating community's cultural borders, is not what Apurinã myths primarily focus on. The myths are more about differences bringing people together as insiders. We will next look at the interactions between the Apurinã communities in different tributaries in the larger historical perspective of southwestern Amazonia.

11 The story of the birth of the culture hero Tslatu is very similar among the Manchineri, another Arawak-speaking indigenous group.

Southwestern Arawaks connecting the Lowlands and Highlands of South America?

The centrality of mobility in between the Apurinã subgroups also fit well with the argument that in pre-Columbian times the Arawak had an extensive road system and dominated the region by means of trade (Hornborg 2005). In fact, the Apurinã's network of paths connecting tributaries far from the main river (the Purus River) is quite similar to the *terra firme* road system connecting the monumental domesticated landscapes, known as geoglyphs, of the Upper Purus River. These sites are geometric in structure, and the roads and paths often form an essential part of their design. They date from 3,000 years ago and were in operation until the 14th century. Until today, over 400 monumental landscapes have been identified in the Brazilian states of Acre, Amazonas and Rondônia, and also in northern Bolivia (Saunaluoma 2013; Schaan, Ranzi & Pärssinen 2008). They are mostly situated on the tributaries of the main rivers.

Ongoing research about the earthwork sites in the Upper Purus area suggests that the sites were ceremonial centres, especially because of their fine geometric forms and the ceremonial ceramics found there, while few signs indicate that these were residential areas (Saunaluoma & Virtanen 2015; see also Virtanen 2011). People had to travel to these signposted sacred areas. The roads connecting different geometric designs indicate a systematic interaction between the people who visited, used, and temporarily inhabited the sites. The practical uses of the roads and paths connecting the sites may have been many, such as enabling access to necessary resources, trade, or even offering escape in a strategic defence.¹² This meshwork of paths allowed for the mobility, thus building political alliances, enabling access to new power, skills, knowledge, exchange of tradable goods, all of which may have affected the art and social processes of the many peoples in Southwestern Amazon before the arrival of the first colonizers (which in the region took place relatively late compared to other areas).

The network connecting the monumental earthworks may have been so extensive that the people using the site could have had well-established contacts with the Mojos area of Bolivia, and places where many pre-Inca societies lived (the Tiwanaku and Wari, for instance). It is already known that the pre-Inca had contacts with Lowland South America and that the upper Purus region was an important area for trade routes, and thus the contact zone for long-distance exchanges of art and prestigious objects, such as feather headdresses (Schreiber 1992; Janusek 2008). Both pre-Columbian Tiwanaku and Wari cultures developed extensive road networks. In Xingu in Central Amazonia, archaeologists have also identified elaborate systems of roads that connected villages to

12 Castelo Branco (1950: 44-45) mentions the paths of the Kaxinawa's villages as a strategic defense resource for escape.

natural resources (e.g. Heckenberger et al. 2008), but in southwestern Amazonia they have only been identified in northern Bolivia, Llanos de Mojos (Erickson 2009).

In the central Purus, it would seem that before the arrival of non-Indians, Apurinã's trade was concentrated within their subgroups, even if there were instances of endo-war causes. A good exchange system and communication network over a wide area was based on the Apurinã's distribution along various tributaries and intensive mobility between them. Labre (1872: 22) mentions that the indigenous people of the Purus region exchanged, among other things, latex, oil and cocoa, for tools, hooks, and beads among other things.

The neighbouring Manchineri – settled in the upper Purus, along with other Yine groups – seem to be more active in trade with other groups than the Apurinã. According to Manchineri, when they traded with other groups, they travelled through the forests to their villages. They also had a system of terrestrial routes that led them to the territories of their subgroups and their exchange partners (Labre 1872). The routes used by the two Arawak groups give a much broader view of trade in the region including connections to other rivers and river systems. In general, Yine (Piro) are known in historical records as individuals who navigated the Urubamba, Tambo, and Ucayali Rivers in large canoes. It is also mentioned that the Piro of the Tambo and Urubamba Rivers continuously used the entrances to the Ucayali, Urubamba and Purus Rivers (Church 1904: 602). These rivers have been identified as their area of dominance (Steward & Métraux 1948: 536). It is also argued that, because the Piro were merchants in this area, the Inca also wanted to cooperate with them, and the Inca Empire made some inroads into the Amazon, the Ucayali, Tambo, Madre de Dios and Beni Rivers. The Piro controlled trade in the upper and central Ucayali, and that is why the Inca tried to have them as their allies (Siiriäinen & Pärssinen 2001).¹³

The centrality of movement in the oral history of the southwestern Arawaks also corresponds to the possibility that they were the historical mediators between the Lowlands and Highland South America. Or possibly the present-day Arawaks of the region have inherited the roads of prehistoric peoples who constructed the monumental landscapes in the vicinity of the Purus River.

Discussion

This article has drawn on Amazonianists' observations about the immanence of fear and the production of humanity in the Amazonian native communities. Earlier studies have emphasized how real humanness is produced from the web of relations by social process (Gow 1991; Lagrou 2001; Overing 2003). For the Apurinã, fear is especially

13 According to Siiriäinen & Pärssinen (2001), in Las Piedras, which has connections to Beni and Madre de Dios, there still remain the ruins of a castle built by the Inca in collaboration with the Piro (Yine).

related to moving in the areas of animal, plant or other spirits as well as obeying moiety morality. At the same time, mobility contributes to social relationships by continuous returns (from hunting, fishing, and so forth) to the kin, and form weighty processes of sociality similarly to proximity, eating, and living together (see also Virtanen 2012, forthcoming). For the Apurinā, mobility and kinship are thus closely interconnected: Mobility contributes to the vitality of a society, especially in terms of economies, marriage practices, and ecological relations benefitting the former swidden plantations. For both women and men it is essential to reproduce their ease of movement, while at the same time remembering one's own community. Apurinā's (protective) rites and way of travelling aim to ensure this kind of proper humanness, which involve communal interactions as well as boundaries set between humans and non-humans.

For the Apurinā, communal life is both about staying vital through movement and about taking care of one's relatives and adding to communal production by one's travels. It is not only co-residence that produces kin, but managing the balance between those who move and those who do remain immobile. Continuous pattern of travels and movement constitute one of the most essential elements in the cosmology of the Apurinā; such movement is related to their construction of personhood, community, and kinship.

Because movement is an important cultural category, it is also a persistent theme in Apurinā myths and the conception of illnesses. The main issue in the myths is precisely the ambiguity of moving and proper relations between kin. As Turner (1988) has pointed out, myths are fetishizations of the social production of society and history. The Apurinā myths are on the one hand fetishizations of the fear of becoming transformed into non-humans while one's kin are absent, but on the other, separation from one's kin may occur also because of immobility. Illnesses are caused by substances, namely tree, animal, and spirit subjectivities that start to move beyond their usual area and thus harm people. On the other hand, they offer powers when invited to appropriate rituals and these powers can be used by shamans for transformative purposes to restructure the socio-cosmos.

In the large area of central and upper Purus, the Apurinā have been much more mobile than we tend to assume indigenous communities today are. We now have a fuller picture of their past and present movements in their socio-cosmos, including existing contacts and meshwork of routes. Overall, the Apurinā may have been among the most important actors in passing ideas, objects, and resources between the Andes and the Lowlands in the past. Similarly, the contemporary interactions between villages, cities, and territories should be seen in terms of continuity rather than a rupture.

References cited

- Belaunde, Luisa Elvira
 2005 *El recuerdo de Luna: género, sangre y memoria entre los pueblos amazónicos*. Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (UNMSM).
 2006 The strength of thoughts, the stench of blood: Amazonian hematology and gender. *Tipiti* 4(1/2): 129-152. <<http://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti/vol4/iss1/7>> (15.12.2015).
- Buchillet, Dominique
 1995 Perles de verre, parures de blancs et “pots de paludisme”: épidémiologie et représentations Desana des maladies infectieuses (Rio Negro, Brésil). *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 81: 181-206. <http://www.persee.fr/doc/jsa_0037-9174_1995_num_81_1_1588> (15.12.2015).
- Castelo Branco, José Moreira Brandão
 1950 O gentio acreano. *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* 207: 3-78.
- Church, George Earl
 1904 The Acre territory and the Caoutchouc region of south-western Amazonia. *The Geographical Journal* 23(5): 596-613. <<http://www.banrepcultural.org/sites/default/files/brblaa975137.pdf>> (15.12.2015).
- Facundes, Sidney S.
 2000 *The language of the Apurinã people of Brazil (Maipure/Arawak)*. PhD dissertation, University of New York, Buffalo.
- Fausto, Carlos
 1999 Of enemies and pets: Warfare and shamanism in Amazonia. *American Ethnologist* 26(4): 933-956. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/647238>> (15.12.2015).
- Erickson, Clark L.
 2009 Agency, causeways, canals, and the landscapes of everyday life in the Bolivian Amazon. In: Snead, James E. , Clark L. Erickson & J. Andrew Darling (eds.): *Landscapes of movements. Trails, paths, and roads in anthropological perspective*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 204-231.
- Garnelo, Luiza & Domique Buchillet
 2006 Taxonomias das doenças entre os índios baniwa (arawak) e desana (tukano oriental) do alto rio Negro (Brasil). *Horizontes Antropológicos* 26: 231-260. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0104-71832006000200010>> (15.12.2015).
- Gow, Peter
 1991 *Of mixed blood. Kinship and history in Peruvian Amazonia*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Heckenberger, Michael J., Christian J. Russell, Carlos Fausto, Joshua R. Toney, Morgan J. Schmidt, Edithe Pereira, Bruna Franchetto & Afukaka Kuikuro
 2008 Pre-Columbian urbanism, anthropogenic landscapes, and the future of the Amazon. *Science* 321: 1214-1217.
- Hornborg, Alf
 2005 Ethnogenesis, regional integration, and ecology in prehistoric Amazonia. Toward a system perspective. *Current Anthropology* 46(4): 589-607. <http://www.keg.lu.se/en/sites/keg.lu.se/en/files/_alf1.pdf> (15.12.2015).
- Indiana 32 (2015): 85-103

- Hugh-Jones, Stephen
 1993 "Food" and "drugs" in northwest Amazonia. In: Hladik, Claude Marcel, Annette Hladik, Olga F. Linares, H el ene Pagezy, Alison Semple & Malcolm Hadley (eds.): *Tropical forests, people and food: Biocultural interactions and applications to development*. Man and the biosphere series, 13. Paris: Unesco, 533-548.
- Iglesias, Marcelo Piedrafitra
 2008 *Os Kaxinaw  de Felizardo : correrias, trabalho e civiliza o no Alto Juru *. PhD dissertation, Universidade Federal de Rio De Janeiro. <<http://livros01.livrosgratis.com.br/cp064338.pdf>> (15.12.2015).
- Ingold, Tim
 2009 Against space: Place, movement, knowledge. In: Kirby, Peter Wynn (ed.): *Boundless worlds. An anthropological approach to movement*. New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 29-43.
- Janusek, John W.
 2008 *Ancient Tiwanaku*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Labre, A. R. P.
 1872 *Rio Purus, noticia*. Maranh o: M. F. V. Pires. <http://www.uft.edu.br/neai/file/rio_purus.pdf> (15.12.2015).
- Lagrou, Elsj  Maria
 2001 Identidade e alteridade a partir da perspectiva kaxinawa. In: Esterci, Neide, Peter Henry Fry, Mirian Goldenberg & Beatriz Maria Al sia de Heredia (eds.): *Fazendo antropologia no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: DP & A Editora, 93-128.
- L vi-Strauss, Claude
 1964 *Mythologiques: le cru et le cuit*. Paris: Plon.
- Londo o Sulkin, Carlos
 2012 *People of substance. An ethnography of morality in the Columbian Amazon*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- McCallum, Cecilia
 1996 The body that knows: From Cashinahua epistemology to a medical anthropology of lowland South America. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 10(3): 347-372.
- M traux, Alfred
 1948 Tribes of the Juru -Purus basins. In: Steward, Julian H. (ed.): *Handbook of South American Indians: The tropical forest tribes*, Vol. 3. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution of American Ethnology, 657-686.
- Overing, Joanna
 1989 Styles of manhood: An Amazonian contrast in tranquility and violence. In: Howell, Signe & Roy Willis (eds.): *Societies at peace: Anthropological perspectives*. London/New York: Routledge, 79-99.
 2003 In praise of the everyday: Trust and the art of social living in an Amazonian community. *Ethnos* 68(3): 293-316.
- Overing, Joanna & Passes, Allan (eds.)
 2000 *The anthropology of love and anger. The aesthetics of conviviality in native Amazonia*. London/New York: Routledge.

- Pollock, Donald
1996 Personhood and illness among the Kulina. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 10(3): 319-241.
- Rival, Laura M.
2002 *Trekking through history. The Huaorani of Amazonian Ecuador*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Saunaluoma, Sanna
2013 *Pre-Columbian earthwork sites in the frontier region between Brazil and Bolivia, southwestern Amazon*. PhD dissertation, University of Helsinki. <https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/40907/saunaluoma_dissertation.pdf> (15.12.2015).
- Saunaluoma, Sanna & Pirjo Kristiina Virtanen
2015 Variable models for social organization of monumental earthworks in upper Purus, southwestern Amazonia: Archaeological and ethnographic perspectives. *Tipiti. Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 13(1): 23-43. <<http://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1196&context=tipiti>> (15.12.2015).
- Schaan, Denise, Alceu Ranzi & Martti Pärssinen (eds.)
2008 *Arqueologia da Amazônia ocidental: os geoglifos do Acre*. Belém: Editora Universitária Universidade Federal do Pará (EDUFPA).
- Schiel, Juliana
2004 *Tronco Velho. Histórias Apurinã*. PhD dissertation, Universidade Estadual de Campinas.
- Schreiber, Katharina J.
1992 *Wari imperialism in Middle Horizon Peru*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Museum of Anthropology.
- Siiriäinen, Ari & Pärssinen, Martti
2001 The Amazonian interests of the Inca state (Tawantinsuyu). *Baessler-Archiv* 49: 45-78.
- Strathern, Marilyn
2011 Binary license. *Common Knowledge* 17(1): 87-103.
- Steward, Julian H. & Métraux, Alfred
1948 Tribes of the Peruvian and Ecuadorian Montaña. In: Steward, Julian H. (ed.): *Handbook of South American Indians: The Tropical Forest Tribes*, Vol. 3. Washington: Smithsonian Institution of American Ethnology, 535-656.
- Turner, Terence
1988 Commentary: Ethno-ethnohistory: Myth and history in native South American representations of contact with Western society. In: Hill, Jonathan D. (ed.): *Rethinking history and myth*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 235-281.
- Vidal, Silvia
2000 Kuwé Duwákalumi: The Arawak sacred routes of migration, trade, and resistance. *Ethnohistory* 47(3-4): 635-667.
2003 The Arawak-speaking groups of northwestern Amazonia: Amerindian cartography as a way of preserving and interpreting the past. In: Whitehead, Neil L. (ed.): *Histories and historicities in Amazonia*. Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 33-58.

- Vilaça, Aparecida
 2002 Making kin out of others in Amazonia. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 8: 347-365.
 2005 Chronically unstable bodies: Reflections on Amazonian corporealities. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 11(3): 445-464.
- Virtanen, Pirjo Kristiina
 2009 New interethnic relations and native perceptions of human-to-human relations in Brazilian Amazonia. *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 14(2): 332-354.
 2011 Constancy in continuity: Native oral history, iconography and the earthworks of the upper Purus. In: Hornborg, Alf & Jonathan D. Hill (eds.): *Ethnicity in Ancient Amazonia: Reconstructing past identities from archaeology, linguistics, and ethnohistory*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado., 279-298.
 2012 *Indigenous youth in Brazilian Amazonia: Changing lived worlds*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
 2015 "I Turn into a pink dolphin" – Apurinã youth, awiri, and encounters with the unseen. In: Feldman-Barrett, Christine Jacqueline (ed.): *Lost histories of youth culture*. New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 105-122.
 forthcoming Relational centers in the Amazonian landscape of movement. In: Gregorič Bon, Nataša & Jaka Repič (eds.): *Moving places – movement and spatial constructions*. New York: Berghahn.
- Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo
 1992 *From the enemy's point of view: Humanity and divinity in an Amazonian society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
 1996 Os pronomes cosmológicos e o perspectivismo Ameríndio. *Mana. Estudos de Antropologia Social* 2(2): 115-144. <<http://www.scielo.br/pdf/mana/v2n2/v2n2a05.pdf>> (15.12.2015).
 2012 Immanence and fear. Stranger-events and subjects in Amazonia. *Hau* 2(1): 27-43. <<http://www.haujournal.org/index.php/hau/article/view/hau2.1.003/99>> (15.12.2015).
- Whitehead, Neil L. & Wright, Robin
 2004 *Darkness and secrecy. The anthropology of assault, sorcery and witchcraft in Amazonia*. Durham/London: Duke.
- Zucchi, Alberta
 2002 A new model of the northern Arawakan expansion. In: Hill, Jonathan D. & Fernando Santos-Granero (eds.): *Comparative Arawakan histories. Rethinking language family and culture area in Amazonia*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 223-247.

