

Chapter Three

Becoming Matsigenka: Development of the Self

The concept of a social contract is not, apparently, unique to Locke and other Western thinkers. In South America the notion is commonly held that human beings must constrain their animal desires to enjoy the fruits of living together. The problem seems to be how to reconcile oneself to the fact that man is a solitary animal condemned to live in herds. (Roe 1982: 229-230)

From an ecocultural perspective the self is an organization of motivations, skills, knowledge, and expectations that enable an individual to do what must be done to ensure survival and reproduction under local conditions (Goldschmidt 1959; Johnson 1978: 120-21; Weisner 1996). The task for parents is to guide their children toward the kind of self organization they will need if they are to do well in the natural and cultural environments under which they must live as adults. For the Matsigenka this means adults who are not only able to live in nuclear family isolation for much of their lives, but who actually prefer to do so. The frustration of missionaries and schoolteachers who have failed to induce the Matsigenka to

subscribe to community-building efforts is dramatic evidence that the Matsigenka are happiest when they are free from intrusions and constraints arising from others' agendas.

The Matsigenka emphasis on the independence of individuals and nuclear families appears to violate the anthropological assumption that "individualism" is a western cultural bias, an egocentric outlook not replicated in the majority of the world's more sociocentric cultures, where individuals are seen as embedded in, if not inseparable from, the social nexus of family and community (d'Ans 1974: 346; Hsu 1972; Kurtz 1992: 101). This either/or, west-versus-the-rest dichotomy most likely underestimates the degree of individual autonomy and self-centeredness to be found in even the most sociocentric societies (Kuwayama 1989; Johnson 1995a: 459-60). Such a view, if applied to the Matsigenka, would correctly identify their deep sense of connection to family but completely miss their equally strong sense of individual selfhood, a culturally-constructed acknowledgement of individual willfulness and responsibility. Patterns of child care, cultural beliefs about how children develop, and cautionary tales about adult misbehavior all show that the management of willfulness--the threat of impulsive fulfillment of desires--is the central problem of Matsigenka social life.

The Matsigenka take for granted that each person is a center of spontaneous, impulsive desire, and that this must be respected in the growing child even as it is gradually brought under control. A more or less pure representation of the impulsive individual can be found in their Trickster figure. As described in general terms by Radin (1956: xxiii),

Trickster is at one and the same time creator and destroyer, giver and negator, he who dupes others and who is always duped himself. He wills nothing consciously. At all times he is constrained to behave as he does from impulses over which he has no control. He knows neither good nor evil

yet he is responsible for both. He possesses no values, yet through his actions all values come into being.

In Shima, the story of Tasorintsi, who created the good things on earth (Chapter 7), tells of a powerful being who as a child could transform the world. When frustrated, he turned his male cross-cousin into a rock and his female cross-cousin (his potential bride) into a tapir. He turned other cousins into monkey, deer, and finally armadillo. No reasons are given in the narrative for these acts, which are partly in response to thwarted wishes, and in part simply happen, kogapai (“without reason”). Shepard (1989) has translated a version of this tale he collected in the Rio Manu headwaters, from which I have prepared the following summary.

Kashibokani, The Self-Created One

Long ago lived the One Who Made Himself Grow, the Self-Created one. All alone and of his own power he germinated, sprouted and grew to the size of a small baby. A woman heard him crying in the forest and carried him home. But he could not be consoled by her breast or the manioc she offered him. She said, “Maybe I should just throw him in the river.” Then he spoke up, “Go ahead then, throw me in the river. But if you don’t throw me in the river, then someday you will be able to swim in the river and not drown.”

She proposed other means of killing him (fire, strangulation, clubbing, impaling, throwing off a cliff), but to each he responded with an appropriate threat. “Eh! Now what to do!” she cried. She poured a powerful tobacco mixture down his throat. He immediately fell asleep and in three days grew nearly to manhood. Now he could blow his magical, transformative breath. He blew it on his brothers, turning them into monkeys. He invited them all for beer and they had a grand feast, but when they left they climbed into the trees rather than go to their old homes. “So then, just go on home, my offspring,” he said. “But someday they shall kill us and eat us.” His sister, Irabatike, whispered softly, “Now everyone is turning into monkeys! That there brother of mine is blowing his breath and turning them all into monkeys!.... Soon he’ll exterminate all humankind.”

So she set some slippery bark near his defecation place in the forest and, when he was drunk, accompanied him there. He slipped on the bark and fell crashing over a cliff, Tserok! Betak! She called out to him,

“Brother, you have fallen such a long way! Are you alright?”

He moaned from below, “Yeah! I fell. You were bitter with me, and now I have fallen. But here I am, I’m alright.” She suggested he turn into a bird and fly back up. He did so but, when he got near the top he fell down again. She made many such suggestions but none did any good. So she told him to wait and she went to get his brothers-in-law, the armadillo brothers, to come help. Armadillo (etini) burrowed to where Yabireri was and asked him to walk with him. But Yabireri replied angrily, “I can’t walk. My sister got bitter with me, and made me fall. How am I supposed to go anywhere now? My sister got angry at me, and has broken me all to pieces.” So armadillo carried him on a long trek downstream.

A shaman came looking for Yabireri at the base of the cliff and found him gone. He followed their trail, found their old abandoned gardens, and stored the remnant maize and papaya seeds he found in them. Yabireri’s sister and the other armadillo brother caught up with the shaman near where Yabireri and armadillo were piling up rocks to block off the river and drown the whole world.

The sister and her two companions said, “What shall we do now? Maybe with that fire that is burning, we can burn him.” They stoked the fire and invited Yabireri to blow on it. He blew on it and as he whistled, lots of “flute players” (buimbuio birds) emerged whistling from the forest. The people asked, “What is that? I’ve never seen anything like that.” and Yabireri answered, “I don’t know myself. What could it be? I’ve never seen such a thing!” Yabireri continued whistling and blowing and thus created all sorts of species of birds and other animals.

One bird that emerged then was the big red-crested woodpecker (konkari), who asked, “Who is that?” The people answered, “That’s Kashibokani, The Self-Created One.” Woodpecker said, “Here is what you have to do with him, this Kashibokani: you pierce him, you pound a stick through him, you impale him through the head.”

The other armadillo-brother sharpened various staves of wood but none were strong enough to impale Kashibokani. Then Kashibokani created the chonta palm (kuri) for them. The brother sharpened a staff of kuri and it easily pierced Kashibokani. He pierced him through and through until he was securely bound, then carried him off to the edge of the sky, for the shaman had said, "You must carry Yabireri far, far away, and deposit him as far away as possible, so that the earth will not flip over and the sky not collapse any time soon. Because someday, as soon as Yabireri catches sight of people again, even if they are at a distance and there are only a couple of them left living, then the earth will flip over and the sky and the whole world will collapse."

Now all Yabirere's gardens turned wild, the two brothers turned into the nine-banded armadillo (etini) and the giant armadillo (kinteroni), and Yabireri's sister transformed into the hardwood tree, Irabatike [preferred in house manufacture as main posts]. Only the shaman arrived back home still human, saying, "See! Far away over there they have taken Yabireri and left him there bound and impaled, as far away as possible, so now maybe my offspring and descendants can live and prosper."

Thus human beings came to multiply and be numerous, like monkeys were numerous once long ago. They learned to use kuri, which had once been Yabireri's papaya, to make bows and arrowheads, and arrowcane, which had once been his maize, to make shafts. Now people let their arrows fly and shoot down lots of monkeys of all kinds, just as Yabireri said long ago.

This wonderful story concerns an infant who is a most powerful and autonomous being, capable of creating himself. Like Tricksters elsewhere, he transforms the world at a whim, without reason or morality, in this case by blowing his breath (the essence of life in Matsigenka terms). The trouble is, he does it without control, creating beasts even he has never heard of. In short, here we have a grandiose, virtually omnipotent being who has no parents, owes no one anything, and who has vast powers that he exercises impulsively, expanding the animal world--the world of impulsive beings--at the expense of humankind.

His sister recognizes the danger and immobilizes him, acting as a kind of pro-human or civilizing force opposing his out-of-control impulsiveness. When one armadillo brother leads Kashibokani to the end of the earth and they try to drown the whole world, the other armadillo brother impales and binds Kashibokani and carries him to the edge of the sky, the farthest point to which he can be removed. He must be kept as far away from humans as possible, because if he sees one, even at a distance, he will flip over the world and collapse the sky. As a last powerful act, Kashibokani creates a host of new creatures, including transforming his brothers-in-law into armadillos and his sister into the iravatike tree. His own gardens of maize and papaya are transformed into inedible wild plants, from which weapons will ultimately be forged for humans to use in hunting wild animals. Only the shaman is immune from these wild transformations. He returns home to oversee the revival of the human race, that does one day fulfill its destiny to eat the flesh of the monkeys that were once their bretheren.

This tale postulates the existence of a child-being so powerful and free from constraints that it could impulsively destroy humanity. This being grows itself, is willful and threatening even as an infant, and has an affinity to animals, especially monkeys. It is probably significant that this being is male, and that the controlling figure in the story--the one who immobilizes him and sets him up to be impaled and bound--is female, since the Matsigenka see men as inherently more violent and fearless in the wild than women. The message is that the grandiose, amoral, animal-like (“they-will-eat-us-someday”) Trickster child must be crippled, restrained, and taken as far away as possible if humans, with the help of their shamans, are to live here on this earth and gain mastery over animals. Still, the man-child has not been killed: he waits in the mouth of the sky for even the faintest of human contact that could re-activate him and destroy the world.

From the standpoint of child development, the story contains two opposing images. One is the image of the child as willful creature motivated to use its powers impulsively, self-centeredly, without reason and without regard for the consequences for other people. The other is of the controlling, civilizing force that beats and binds the willful creature in order to make the world safe for humans. Metaphorically, the tale of Kashibokani is about how families must tame the willful creature in each child in order for the family to survive and multiply.

Birth and Infancy

The Matsigenka believe that pregnancy is the result of sexual intercourse between a man and a woman, and that a single act of intercourse is sufficient to cause pregnancy. Even if she has had more than one partner, a woman is always believed to know who the father of her baby is.

They also believe that a demon can take the form of a spouse or lover and have intercourse with an unsuspecting man or woman. A man who has intercourse with such a demon invariably dies. A woman who sleeps with a demon may die immediately or in childbirth. If she survives the birth and discovers by her newborn's appearance that it is a demon-child, she will kill it. Hence, the desire for sex, whether with a marriage partner or a lover, always contains the possibility of spirit attack and death.

Although they recognize an herb, inchapari, which when brewed into a strong tea prevents a woman from ever conceiving or even having periods again, women do not generally practice birth-control. They say that a woman who does not want babies should not have sex. Pregnancies are usually welcomed as among the most desirable events in life. A woman

recognizes that she is pregnant when her period stops and when she feels the fetus growing inside her. She makes few changes in her life, pursuing her daily routine as before. Upon discovering she is pregnant, however, she will quickly wean her toddler, if she has one, and avoid certain foods, especially meat. Members of her immediate household are also expected to reduce or eliminate these foods in their diets.

Some pregnancies, perhaps as many as one or two in ten, are not welcomed. If a woman has lost her husband, or if she is still nursing a child much younger than three years of age, she may seek to terminate the pregnancy. Various herbs (potogo [Span. ojé, Ficus sp], igentiri, and seriavenkiki “hemorrhage sedge”) are taken as teas or compresses, believed to cause the fetus to rot or burn away and be aborted in a discharge of blood.

Whether or not a woman feels ready for the pregnancy, everyone knows that each pregnancy puts her life at risk. Many magical prohibitions should be observed. For example, Eva ate larvae (ponta) when pregnant, which she should not have done because ponta has a tough cocoon, and so her baby would be born with a tough placenta that could be dangerous to her and the baby.

Birth is generally a private affair involving the immediate household and perhaps one or two adult siblings from neighboring households. A rare exception to this rule allowed us to observe the birth of Estepania’s baby. Estepania, who was not married, lived with her brother, Julio, until she believed her labor to be beginning, when she came to stay with our next-door neighbors, Aretoro and Pororinta, who were not her kin. This was most likely intended to take advantage of Maestro’s modern health remedies and knowledge, as well as our own. This was her first child, and the Matsigenka recognize that first births are the most difficult.

Estepania spent her time quietly for a few days and, when the birth did not begin, returned home. She was back a few days later, however, and that night, while she sang during a rainstorm, I could tell she was in labor by the regular alteration between tense, high-pitched singing and slower, relaxed singing. The next day, Aretoro set up a horizontal pole in a shady spot, that she could hold onto and pull during her last contractions. After she removed her cushma, Pororinta massaged her and rubbed her belly (okoseamonkitakotakerira). She gave birth from a squatting position onto a plaited mat.

Fieldnote 9-16-72 - Estepania came to Aretoro's, next door to our house (she came to be near us? the river?) at 5:40 a.m. Others present: Aretoro, Pororinta, Oscar, Erisa, Maria, children. By 6:30 others have left, only Pororinta remains. Estepania assumes sitting posture, with legs straight out, raised on a mound of dirt made for her, on top of 2 mats, facing the river. Dressed in a cushma, she occasionally lies down resting hands on belly and head on pile of old cushmas.

7:50 a.m. she strips, washes in a large basin, downriver side of Aretoro's chicken house (protects her from our view). Her sitting position: a) faces river; b) faces away from community; c) gets morning sun. At 8:00 she packed up with Pororinta and Maria and moved up to Pedro's where Juana is. 8:15 Juana comes to river to wash rags. {Labor came only after a few days. Baby born 5:00 a.m. Sept 19, was left crying alone on shitatsi [mat] for at least 10 minutes (!).}

In most cases the procedure would be much the same. A woman's husband should be present to provide basic assistance, including sucking on her belly and preparing teas to hasten birth (herbs shinti and imere), and helping hold her in position so that the child is not harmed during birth. If her husband is not available, then other members of her extended family can help. A husband wants to help because he fears the loss of his mate in childbirth. With characteristic Matsigenka directness he asks, "Where will I get another wife if this one dies?"

As is common, the newborn infant was left alone on the mat while the mother was bathed and dressed. The baby was breathing but did not cry much, waving its arms and legs in the air and grimacing. After about ten minutes, Pororinta turned her attention to the baby, bringing a large bowl of water hot enough that even in the daytime shade it gave off visible steam. She bathed the baby by pouring a stream of hot water onto a part of it, causing it to cringe and cry. She would rub and clean off that portion of the body before repeating the maneuver at an adjacent place until the baby was completely washed. Then she swaddled it in cloth and gave it to its mother to hold.

The cultural meaning of bathing the infant in hot water is that it will strengthen it for the hard life ahead. The hot water bath for both mother and infant are instances of a larger pattern of using hot, nearly scalding, baths for anyone who has been exposed to danger, especially spiritual danger. In fact, a husband who has assisted at the birth should himself be given a hot bath to prevent the appearance on his skin of black or white spots (impatsatanakera), or the occurrence of cracked soles and heels on his feet (igarachate).

Even if a woman does not attempt abortion, this does not mean that she has no ambivalence toward the newborn. A small but significant proportion of women, again perhaps one in ten, contemplate killing their infants rather than raise them. Men may have attitudes in the matter, and may promote infanticide if they believe another man is the father, but it is primarily the woman's decision and her action. She may decide, for example, to kill her infant if it is a "bad" baby--that is, if it cannot be soothed. Estepania could not soothe her baby and, after several days, let it be known that she was thinking of killing it. Another woman said, "In that case, I'll take it." After a few more days, however, the volunteer returned the baby, admitting

that she could not soothe it either and that she did not want it. But this time Estepania kept the baby and was able to raise it.

In some cases, the infanticide is done on orders: Irima threw her baby in the river because her mother said, “I want you to work only for me.” Justina did the same because her co-wife, who was first wife, said, “you are my servant (nampiria), you can’t raise children, only I can.” Geronimo’s wife cut her infant daughter’s scalp in despair at having been recently abandoned by her husband, but after Ed Montgomery and I stiched her wound her mother kept her, and she was a healthy toddler in her mother’s company when I saw her again 18 months later. I know of two other infant deaths (Virima’s and Javier’s daughters’), described as accidental, where extramarital paternity may have been a factor in the deaths.

Often, relatives will not intervene in infanticide, regarding it as a mother’s prerogative. But sometimes one will speak up: “You are responsible, raise the child.” The general belief is that troublesome children should be bathed in hot water, not given up on. We did not hear specifically of deformed children and how they are dealt with, but babies believed to result from demon attacks are often described as ugly at birth (hairy or with monstrous features) and are killed. Twins (pitetacharira), however, are not regarded as bad or dangerous, and there were teenage female twins in Shimaa during our research (Lola and Teresa).

A number of cultural elements surrounding conception and childbirth illustrate the themes of autonomy and individualism. In the difficult choices of abortion and infanticide, the mother has the ultimate say and performs the act, even when her husband or parent tries to influence her decision. The exceptions to this, where senior women order dependent junior women to kill their babies, show the willfulness, or selfishness, of the senior women, who do not

want to lose control over the young women's labor. The observance of birth prohibitions, and the participants in the actual birthing, are restricted to the immediate household of the mother, or her closest relatives.

Leaving the newborn alone while attending the mother first is a complex act. In the most obvious sense, it acknowledges the mother's value and importance. But it also implies an attitude toward the infant: the cultural principle that the hot water bath strengthens the child is not unlike the aggressive slap on the bottom with which westerners greet their newborns, culturally constructed as a benevolent effort to "strengthen its lungs." In both cases, the "explanation" may mask some sadistic intent, perhaps involving envy, to let the newborn know, in effect, "you're not in the womb any more, kiddo!" Be that as it may, I have always felt that the Matsigenka pattern of leaving the infant alone after birth has an element of trusting to the baby's will to live, or at least of testing whether it has a will to live, before embracing it with a bath, swaddling, holding and nursing. It is the inaugural instance of a lifelong pattern of letting individuals alone and expecting them to communicate their needs before intervening.

In keeping with this principle, Matsigenka caretakers do not put the infant on any kind of schedule. They follow, instead, a subtle balancing act, responding to its signals but not trying to anticipate or regulate them. On the one hand, infants learn that their cries are quickly met with nurturance. The Matsigenka do not believe that crying is good for a child, but rather a sign of poor care. On the other hand, they do not anticipate or impose care, waiting for the child to signal its distress before responding.

New infants spend most of their time rather firmly swaddled and against their mothers' bodies, in a sling during the day, and by her side at night. When not, others hold them for

shorter periods, either to help mother out, or because they want to hold and cuddle the baby. Babies may also be left on a mat near the mother for an hour or so, to sleep or lie calmly awake, gurgling, waving and looking around.

While carrying them in the sling, mothers perpetually rock, pat and adjust their infants. If they cry, mothers first offer them the breast, then, if they cannot be consoled, check for soiling (mothers know quickly when their babies need to be cleaned, since they do not use diapers). If these tactics fail, a caretaker will bounce the baby, or gently swing from side to side. The longest I heard an infant under six months of age crying without receiving any attention was five minutes. Infants cry for much longer periods, but only in cases--usually illness--where efforts to soothe them have failed.

The following fieldnote, although it concerns a 21-month-old, captures well the general feel of early child care:

Fieldnote 06-20-80 - Mother is standing in front of the porch, slowly turning from side to side. The boy is very quiet, sort of hanging in the sling, not stirring at all. She stops swaying, he grabs haphazardly at her dress behind him, almost doozy with his mouth hanging open. She starts swaying very lightly and after a minute walks away. Earlier, I had seen another mother walking downstream with her son slung on her back. He dangled in a relaxed way, and she held his left foot with her left hand, massaging it gently, dropping it, massaging it again, as she walked.

Early Childhood

Swaddling, breastfeeding on demand, and constant holding provide a kind of transitional womb that eases the Matsigenka newborn into life in this world. The goal is children who are calm and contented. This means that their needs should be met, not that they should be

overindulged. After a few months, more is expected of an infant. Ordinary foods like manioc and banana begin to be offered the child, after being appropriately mashed and softened. It is considered very dangerous, however, to feed a small child any of the meats prohibited to pregnant women (and girls in puberty seclusion), because it can cause bloody diarrhea. The same danger exists if either parent eats proscribed meats in the baby's first month of life. There is a parallel here with the prohibition on eating howler monkey in the early stages of maize growth (Chapter 7). The parents of the child, like the man who planted the maize, will endanger its healthy growth by eating howler monkey and most other red meats: in the case of the maize, no seeds will form; in the case of the child, it will grow up lazy. But even later, as the child begins to eat the foods everyone else eats, red meat remains a serious concern. At most, small children should be given red meat in only very limited quantities, lest they grow up to be malcontents.

As the child grows, mother tests its ability to tolerate discomfort by letting it cry briefly-- if it calms down on its own, it will be left untended. The Matsigenka allow a gradually lengthening gap between the child's clamor and the caretaker's response. To this end, early toys are provided, like the bright orange inedible fruit of the mananeroki (Span. "tomate del monte", Solanum sp) that dangles from a string over the baby's mat, or a rattle sewn from nutshells and bright feathers attached to the shoulder of mother's cushma near the child's sling. These hold the child's interest and encourage playful reaching and batting.

The Matsigenka overtly do little to hasten a child's development. Their style is best described as a gradual raising of expectations. They do not cajole a child to rise up and toddle toward them, but they welcome her when she does. And later, when the toddler has become

more competent, if it is time to go somewhere, the caretaker will ignore the toddler's gesture to be picked up--arms upraised, eyes imploring, perhaps a whining "Unh! Unh!"--waiting instead to see if the toddler will get up and follow along without being carried. If the child refuses, or if after a few yards she stumbles and cries to be picked up, the caretaker will respond. Such small lessons, repeated continuously, apply a subtle pressure, conveying the message, "Let's see what self-reliance you are capable of today!"

Children two or three years old often respond to the invitation to walk along, but also continue to spend much of their time in their mother's sling, though fully capable of walking and running. They learn to ride in the sling astraddle mother's back, so that their faces are alongside hers, sharing her view over her shoulder as she walks along or converses with people. Or, they ride on her hip, legs now dangling down to her knee. They still consider the breast their own possession, reaching down into their mother's cushion and pulling the breast to their mouths like an ice cream cone, slurping while watching with interest the world around them.

Despite the generally peaceful pattern of childcare to this point, therefore, an underlying tension exists insofar as mother and other caretakers are testing the child's limits, expecting more and more self-reliance. The toddler may protest being left alone in the care of older siblings, but mother becomes increasingly indifferent. Since the games and activities of older children are inherently interesting to the toddler, the mini-tantrums that mark this transition are brief and not particularly disruptive. Sometimes the tension erupts as mothers impatiently jam their breasts into the mouths of crying toddlers or yell at them to be quiet.

As a toddler, a Matsigenka child is actually in great physical danger. Having what Fraiberg (1959) calls "a love affair with the world," toddlers engage in a ceaseless exploration

of their surroundings. But the natural world is harsh, unforgiving and close at hand. A toddler has little judgement and can wander into the fire or off the riverbank, can pick up a stinging insect or ingest lethal substances. For this reason limits are imposed on the toddler's freedom of movement. When working at home, mothers often tether their toddlers to a stake pounded into the floor. Like a leash, this keeps them from wandering into harm's way, the Matsigenka version of a playpen. In my observation, Matsigenka caretakers are cognitively able to maintain unbroken awareness of their toddlers even while engaged in tasks like weaving or peeling manioc. When her untethered toddler comes near some danger, a mother, apparently busy with something else, unerringly swoops down and lifts it away from the threat, holding it until it squirms its way out of her arms in its enthusiasm to resume exploration.

Matsigenka behavior during the second and third years of life approximates what Mahler et al (1975) call the rapprochement phase, although at a more developmentally leisurely pace than the timetable they provide for western children (Johnson 1981; cf. Weisner, et al 1996). The rapprochement child eagerly seeks to explore the world, but also now has the cognitive capacity to recognize the dangers of separation and exposure to nature. Hence, the child's desire for autonomous exploration generates anxiety in the child and a countervailing desire to return to the caretaker, to check in and receive reassurance of safety and connection. The Matsigenka take for granted that the child wants to be on its own, yet they have a realistic awareness of its limitations: the child is "free" to explore "safely." Parents and older siblings neither encourage nor resent the child's desire to separate: they seem quite neutrally to accept what the child wants as long as it does not put it in danger or make it impossible for the caretaker to complete other necessary tasks. When the child returns to caretaker for holding or

reassurance, it will be welcomed, though usually after some hesitation to test how much the child wants it--often the child returns to caretaker and touches her, then wanders off again after no apparent response by the caretaker.

A boy of 19 months is standing next to his mother, then approaches me as she comes near to see what I am doing. Several other children are around: the boy grabs an older boy's legs for a second, then goes to mother and hugs her legs, goes around behind her, comes out the other side and watches me, still holding her left leg with his right hand and leaning against her leg. The children run to the fire to pull out a roasting plantain, and the boy goes along to watch. His mother gets about five meters away, walking away from the house, when he turns and follows her. As she returns to the house, he holds her hand. Then he holds up both arms as if to be picked up; she does nothing and he turns away and rejoins the group of children near the fire. He sits with them picking at the plantain, while his mother remains nearby.

Compared to much parenting in the U.S., the Matsigenka have few battles for control between young children and parents: neither the dramatically yearning child trying to drag the caretaker here or there, nor the anxiously rushing caretaker crying, "No! Stop that! Get away from there!" I never saw struggles over feeding. Toddlers were free to wander among the participants at mealtime and beg bits of what they wanted; they would offer chewed bits of food to others and these gifts were generally accepted. If they dribbled or spilled food, it would be cleaned up. If they refused food, someone else would eat it and soon all the food would be gone. If by then they had decided they wanted some, too bad. Without evident anger, impatience, force-feeding or scolding, caretakers teach toddlers the value of food and its real scarcity (no refrigerators or pantries to raid on demand). Snacks are often made available

between meals and overnight, however, so the hungry toddler's wait to be fed is not usually overwhelming.

The Matsigenka allow very young children, even toddlers, to play with knives, machetes and other potentially harmful tools. I have seen a boy too young to walk peeling an orange with a machete. This kind of freedom allows children to acquire facility with tools from an early age, and is part of the general pattern of letting children explore their world even when it may expose them to some harm. Once I saw a toddler pick up a maiini ant (Grandiponera sp) and, before I could warn her, be stung with a poison perhaps comparable to that of a black widow spider-- she cried for hours and her hand was swollen for three days. The possibility always exists that this degree of freedom can be fatal: in Camaná in 1980 the beloved three-year-old son of Michael Baksh's adoptive family ate poisonous frog's eggs while his mother's back was turned and died within an hour (Baksh 1984: 336).

Behavioral observations show that one of the two main flows of social action in the household is directed from mothers to their own (not co-wives') children. The other is from husbands to their wives, but, whereas what a husband asks most of his wife is information, what a mother wants from her child is action (O. Johnson 1978: 239). Mothers issue commands to their young children frequently, asking them to do small useful tasks like picking up a spoon or chasing a chicken from the house. But children, especially toddlers, do not readily comply.

A small child learns responsibility primarily in interaction with his or her mother, gradually learning to comply with simple requests. At first it seemed to us that mothers were barking out angry commands to recalcitrant children, using a stern high-speed delivery. But familiarity with the people taught us that mothers were not angry, just persistent. They repeated

orders as often and in as peremptory a tone as needed to get compliance from children who they knew to be too young for ready obedience. The children, whose slowness to respond was tolerated by their parents, did not seem to resent being bossed around and often did comply eventually.

While mothers tend to request action from their children, children tend to request attention from their mothers. Small children especially ask their mothers to notice them, to see what they are doing--in short, to acknowledge them. But if mothers have to work at getting action from their children, children have to work even harder to get attention from their mothers. In fact, children comply with their mothers twice as often as mothers comply with their children. Still, mothers do comply with their children's requests more often than not, so the contrast between mothers and children must be viewed in context of the overall "supportiveness" of household interactions (O. Johnson 1978: 231).

The permissive, accommodating pattern of child care lasts into the third or fourth year, including breast-feeding, albeit with mother's increased reluctance. The level of expectations continues to rise. Toddlers are asked to fetch and carry; when they fail to comply they are repeatedly exhorted, but seldom punished. As more compliance is expected, it is more willingly given: older toddlers reliably carry bowls of water, fetch items and shoo chickens. Although children are rarely punished physically, threats certainly play a role in the increasing frequency of compliance. Standard phrases like "I will give you away," or "Jaguar will come and get you," although spoken lightly by caretakers, sow doubts in young children, judging by their frightened grins and ingratiating behavior when threatened. Stinging nettles, especially tanko, are kept along one wall of the house as threats occasionally implemented. As much as the Matsigenka

honor the child's free exploration and mastery of its environment, therefore, they are far from naively assuming that a child left to its own devices will naturally become compliant and responsible.

Overall, Matsigenka children of this age may be said to have a strong sense of entitlement. They enjoy both freedom and nurturance. Parents set expectations, but at levels young children can tolerate. I sometimes found them "bratty" according to my standards, but charmingly so. In this sense, Matsigenka child rearing approximates what Kohut (1977: 123-4) calls "optimum frustration:" the child's needs are met, but with a delay to see if the child can wait, or solve the problem itself (compare Winnicott 1965: 51-52). "Optimum frustration" does not imply no frustration: frustration is essential for growth, to encourage the child to explore the full extent of its capacities. It must be allowed to happen with a certain relentlessness on the caretaker's part. True, too much frustration is painful and may lead to excessive anger and mistrust. But too little frustration can lead to suffocating overprotectiveness and the possibility of what Kohut, tongue-in-cheek, calls a "pathological absence of paranoia" (Kohut 1977: 124).

Reflecting their sense of entitlement, toddlers firmly demand what they want. This becomes dramatically evident when the shock of a new pregnancy hits. The child, center of its universe and to a degree master of all it surveys, finds its gradual weaning suddenly completed and mother substantially less generous. The new pregnancy forces the issue: it is time for this child to get used to being self-reliant.

The child's response is a powerful outrage and rejection of the new order. It is at this point that Matsigenka children enter a temper-tantrum phase that consists of lengthy protests many times a day for periods of up to several months. Angry, especially at mother, for weaning

and for not picking up as often, the child rushes at her, threatens to hit her, picks up twigs and dirt and throws them at her, falls to the ground screaming, refuses to budge, engages in long dramatic wailing, and in general uses the limited means at its disposal to show its rage and desire to hurt the offending mother.

Small issues that previously would have been resolved quickly, like being refused an item of clothing or a toy, now seed storms of protest. Mostly harmless, the tantrum child can occasionally cause great damage, as when Apa (44 months old) “accidentally” set fire to his house while his father was working in his garden: the house and all possessions in it burned to ashes, a devastating loss. This happened a few months after his baby sister was born.

The family’s reaction to the tantrum phase is singular: with very few exceptions, family members go on about their business through the multiple tantrums without acknowledging them or responding in any way. Of course, everyone is affected, since it is impossible to ignore a weeping, screaming, agonistic child. But they remain calm and will even talk across the raging child when there is business to transact. Tantrum children in between outbursts may play with toys while whimpering and turning baleful eyes on mother. That these tantrums can last for a half-hour or more and be repeated throughout the day for weeks and months on end is a sign of the child’s entrenched sense of entitlement--of deserving to get what it wants and refusing to give in at this first real threat to its special position. Furthermore, since the family does not react angrily (rarely someone will snap, “Oh shut up!”), the child is allowed to protest more or less to its heart’s content.

In one instance I had come back to the Matsigenka after a four year absence to visit Michael Baksh in Camaná in 1980. As we sat going over his fieldnotes that first afternoon, I

noticed a four-year-old boy in a neighboring house wailing and making angry gestures. After about an hour of this, I asked Mike about the boy. “What boy?” he replied. He had become so used to his neighbor’s tantrums that he simply did not notice it going on as we worked. The boy had been throwing tantrums of several hours duration each day for six months and showed no sign of abandoning the effort. No one in his family or among the neighboring households took any notice of the child, and, once I recognized what was going on, I no longer noticed either.

The temper tantrum phase is a defining moment in Matsigenka child development, a fundamental separation when children learn with finality that:

1. they no longer command their caretakers;
2. they cannot intimidate and manipulate with tears (i.e., adults will no longer identify with the helpless child who needs to be cared for); and,
3. their loss and rage are their own business.

I believe the child’s main emotion during the temper tantrum phase is not fear but anger. Fear of being alone and vulnerable is certainly present. Although Matsigenka children know for the most part that they are loved, there is always the subterranean awareness that real children have been killed as babies (infanticide) because no one wanted or could stand them, and that older children have been given away as “servants” (nampiria) if their parents no longer wanted them.

But the main emotion is anger at the loss of privilege. Nothing I have observed of children during the tantrum phase or after suggests depression. Sadness, loss, anger, perhaps even mourning, but not the helplessness of depression. Between tantrum episodes, the child

seems perfectly normal, playing, helping around the house, participating in meals. And after the tantrums have passed, children seem remarkably calm and self-reliant. A four- or five-year-old, for example, while not yet ready to spend the whole day alone at home, can spend the entire day with a sibling only a few years its senior without seeing mother or father or other adult, yet not throw tantrums or express anxiety. And a seven-year-old can be left alone and trusted to watch over things, including younger siblings.

The following incident, concerning a seven-year-old boy, is an example of the degree to which children past the temper-tantrum phase are treated as essentially adult

Fieldnote 09-27-72 - Going by Antonio's house, we saw his son Raul sitting on the ground with a pool of blood 6 inches across in front of him, and his head bleeding. He was crying, but everyone else in the house was sitting around quietly minding their own business--including Maria and Antonio. After the bleeding stopped Maria washed the cut, which was not so serious. Raul was playing with his younger brother, the latter being the hunter and Raul being the jaguar. The hunter threw a rock at the jaguar and connected. This case may be evidence that children are permitted from an early age to have their bad moments and to take responsibility for their own foolishness, without over-protectiveness.

Key to understanding how autonomy and individualism are built into the development of the Matsigenka self is the cultural pattern of letting the child (and any individual) take the lead in expressing its desires. The "optimal frustration" tactic of waiting before complying with the child's demand, and of increasing the length of wait as the child gets older, is an elaboration of this basic pattern. It amounts to a kind of letting alone that at times exposes the child to risk as it freely explores itself and the world. But the emphasis on self-reliance takes place for the most part in a protective, nurturant context that builds confidence and a sense of entitlement whose

strength becomes evident in the temper tantrum phase. That the natural and cultural worlds will not always bend to the child's grandiose will is a lesson learned in the face of the indifference of loved ones to the agonized cries of the tantrum, and the background threats of abandonment and nettling by means of which the developing self is inexorably pushed toward compliance and generosity.

Late Childhood

Time allocation data show that children under age six spend most of their time in idleness, play, or being cared for (Chapter 6). In spite of increasing pressure to contribute to the household, their actual time in productive work remains very small, and differences between boys and girls in work contributions are difficult to discern. This pattern changes after the temper-tantrum phase is past, when children begin to spend more time under the direction of their same-sex parent. This means that girls begin to make significant contributions to the women's work of the household, learning the rudiments of spinning, food preparation, and child care. Boys begin to spend more time with their fathers, particularly in horticulture, where they explore the garden while their fathers work, helping from time to time in simple tasks like bringing more seed for planting or clearing rubbish to the edge of the garden.

Sons gradually grow away from their mother's sphere of influence as they adopt the male work patterns, although even after marriage they remain deferential and generous to their mothers. Daughters, however, remain in a close and somewhat child-like relationship with their mothers as long as they live in the same house. Unless they marry or have children, they will continue to eat from their mother's hearth, seek her advice, and follow her instructions. Orna

had only two adolescent daughters in her behavioral observations sample, but the data showed that in their interactions with their mothers, all their requests were for information, and most of these were requests for confirmation: “did I do this right?” (O. Johnson 1978: 255-56). This need for assurance is the persistence in a more mature form of the smaller child’s requests for mother’s attention.

A strong identification with the same-sex parent thus gains momentum during this period. Girls, learning work skills at their mother’s side, will remain close to mother for many years, possibly for a lifetime. With the matrilineal bias implicit in bride service, several households in Shima include mothers and grown daughters (Kasimira and Viviana [3], Rosa and Erena [3], Eva and Rosa [14], and Camila, Beatriz, and Maria Rosa [15]). These very close matrilineal bonds include a frank dependence by the daughter, who will continue to seek mother’s permission and advice even after she has children of her own.

A son’s identification with his father is also very strong. The Matsigenka sense of inheritance is largely a matter of what has been learned from the same-sex parent. When I asked men why they avoided this or that food, for example, they would respond, “Because my father didn’t eat it and I never learned how.” This refers to more than taste: it implies an ability to tolerate foods that might harm others. For example, when the Snell family got sick after eating a fish liver they had received from a Matsigenka woman, Betty Snell asked her why she didn’t warn them it could make them sick. The woman explained, “Well, it makes us sick too, but we thought you knew how to eat it!” Fundamental aspects of character are inherited individually--mother to daughter, father to son--much in the way the Matsigenka explain differences in ivenkiki by their direct lineage rather than their membership in a species or class

(Chapter 7)--that is to say, in Matsigenka terms, my nature comes to me not categorically, as a human or a male or a member of the Shima community, but as my father's son, from individual to individual.

As an example of the close link from father to son, when I asked Roberto about the work he was doing weeding Maestro's garden, he told me he was working for his father, Julio. Since Julio regularly worked for Maestro, Roberto saw himself as helping his father rather than working directly for Maestro. And, when Roberto had an offer of government-paid training for commerce, a meaningful economic opportunity, he refused on the ground that his father wanted him to build a house next door and marry his intended, a cross-cousin who had been raised in Roberto's household. Roberto was an excellent student and had a promising future in the emerging regional economy, but he strongly preferred to stay with his father and follow his traditional beliefs and practices. Once, when I asked Roberto which pair was closer, brother-brother or father-son, he replied, "Fathers and sons. Brothers are more likely to say bad things about each other."

To say that children learn from their parents is not to imply much in the way of instruction. Children are given freedom to watch and imitate parents with minimal interference. Orna and I, in trying to learn many elemental skills like cooking over an open fire or walking on mountain trails, received virtually no advice or instruction--people watched us flounder without showing us, "This is how you do it." The Matsigenka do not usually anticipate, or second-guess, the needs of others, but wait to be asked. This continues the childhood pattern of parents waiting to see how much a child wants something before it is given.

The gender separation of older children that intensifies through work with their same-sex parents comes to extend to social relations in general. When men and women form sex-segregated groups at a feast, for example, older boys join the men around their food pot, leaving the young boys with the women and girls. Owing to the general public separateness between male and female, I rarely observed sexual play among adults or children. Parents hide sex from children by saving it for private trips to their garden or clandestine late night love-making. But they say that from an early age children learn about sex and engage in sex play and intercourse in the bushes--having apparently learned modesty from their parents.

Boys range much farther from home than girls do. They may form wandering groups of perhaps two to four members who explore the safe trails near the settlement. They may be gone all day, feeding themselves from sugar cane in relatives' gardens and foraging wild fruits and insects. On one occasion,

fieldnote 06-29-80 - as I went to the river to bathe, I passed some boys burning a grassy slope near their house. There were no adult men around and the women were busy, so it appeared unsupervised. Most of the ground was moist and grassy, so they were burning patches of dry grass (that had been cut sometime before I arrived in Camaná), and there was little danger of the fire doing any damage (except to a chicken house nearby.) The two boys (aged ca. 8-10) had made firebrands from clumps of grass and were moving here and there spreading the fire. It was thus an excellent opportunity for them to learn to use fire like their fathers do, with little danger. The lack of supervision or interference by the women is significant evidence of autonomy, and perhaps also of the sexual division of labor.

Ideally, apart from gender differences, children should be treated equally within the family. This is probably the case in intact families, but not necessarily so in cases of remarriage

or adoption. The Matsigenka distinguish step-children (nagakore) and adopted children (nampiria) from full, or “true” (sanorira) offspring. A woman entering a new marriage may be uncomfortable bringing along her children from previous marriages, and so will foster them out to close relatives “while she settles in with her new husband” (O. Johnson 1978: 164). Since older children are an economic resource, parents do not have trouble placing children in foster care, and step-children often seek opportunities to leave their household before marriage and join a relative’s household.

The relationship between a caretaker and an adopted child is quite different. There is no pretense that the nampiria is offspring. Although adopted children are said ideally to be the same as true offspring, people do admit that they are expected to work more, and direct observations show that they work longer hours (O. Johnson 1978: 164). Adoption is a relationship conceived from the outset as a contract: the caretaker agrees to provide care and shelter, the nampiria agrees to provide labor while growing up, and to care for the elder partner in old age. Sometimes men adopt girls to grow up to become wives for them. Whatever genuine affection may arise between the two in the course of a lifetime, the master-servant aspect of the relationship is always clearly present.

Behaviorally, mothers and fathers have different styles of interaction with their children. In Orna Johnson’s (1978) videotape study, fathers initiate less interaction with their children but receive much higher rates of compliance than mothers do. This may be in part because fathers mainly requested information from their children, whereas mothers requested action, and it is easier to answer a question than to fetch and carry. But children seldom initiated requests of any sort with their fathers, and when they did, they were nearly always requests for information,

not the requests for attention directed toward their mothers; children on the videotapes were never observed to request action from their fathers. Children received a fair rate of compliance from their fathers, but at only about one-third the rate they complied with their fathers' requests.

As the overall pattern of interactions suggests, therefore, fathers are somewhat distant from their children, with mother being the behavioral link between the two. This pattern persists into adult life. Once, when I wanted to measure Aradino's house but did not know how to say so in Matsigenka, I asked his school-age daughter in Spanish; she then translated my request, not to Aradino, who was sitting right there, but to her mother, who relayed the message to Aradino, who then answered me directly. It is elements of behavior such as this, among other things, that lend a "matrilineal" cast to Matsigenka society. It would be most accurate to say, for example, that, when a girl marries and brings her husband into her home for a year or two of bride service, not that the groom is moving into her father's house but that she is remaining in her mother's household.

Puberty

Culturally, the transition from girl to woman is more clearly marked than that from boy to man. When a girl reaches puberty, she is secluded for a week nowadays (they say for much longer periods in the past). The purpose of this seclusion is to give her the opportunity to become light-skinned (out of the sun) and attractively plump. She is also instructed in the need for hard work and generosity to her husband.

Puberty seclusion is regarded as a particularly vulnerable time in her life, when a host of restrictions must be observed:

She must be completely shut up indoors, a wall of mats separating her from her family.

She must not see the sky, or she will get spots.

If she eats: etari (armored fish), her feet will crack (igarachate).

larvae (pagiri, ponta), her mouth will rot and become foul.

tinamou (kentsori), when she falls she will break her back (because kentsori has a soft back).

guan (kanari), she will get white hair.

currasow (tsamiri), she will get a red face.

peccary (shintori), she will have a difficult birth--her child will kill her.

fish with teeth, iratsikanakerora (bites her?). Toothless fish [materi, shima {“boquichico,” Pruchilodus nigricans}] are all right in small quantities).

minnow (shivaigi, [Span. “bojorque”]), later in life when she makes beer it will be dirty (shivaigi has teeth).

She should not eat everything she is given, but should give part back (pampuntapitsanavagetakempara) as a lesson in restraint/generosity.

These magical prohibitions are similar to those imposed on pregnant women. The greater number of them, as in pregnancy, guard against eating animal flesh (including fish and insects). As these prohibitions pertain to the scarcest and most desirable of all foods, this lesson in restraint prepares the young woman to be a careful manager of such resources later. It is also likely that the reduced consumption of animal fat and protein during pregnancy lowers birth weights and protects the mother, perhaps at the expense of the fetus. There may be some

cultural acknowledgement of this in the fear that if a pregnant woman eats the red meat of peccary, her baby will kill her during birth.

Although the earlier trauma of the temper-tantrum phase was a major watershed in Matsigenka child development, it did not have the effect of breaking the child's will. It did not force the child into submission, but rather recognized its passage into greater self-reliance, forever beyond the pampering of early childhood. There remain, therefore, the matters of teaching the child hard work, restraint, and generosity. It is not surprising that these are the lessons communicated in puberty seclusion, but boys must learn these lessons, too, and much of later childhood could be said to be devoted to such learning. Among the Matsigenka, it is slow learning at best. Children, even early adolescents, wait to be told what to do, and frequently dawdle and play away from the house. This may be one reason why they arrive early at the schoolhouse and stay late: at home they will be expected to work. And some learn faster than others: Felipe's son Hector often went fishing or hunting with a slingshot and provided small quantities of wild animal food to the family larder; by age 15 he had already started his first garden. His cross-cousin Jorge, however, was an easy-going but lazy boy of Hector's age, who during our first year of fieldwork resided in three separate households because people became irritated with his lack of contribution and asked him to move on. He knew his laziness was unacceptable to others but was avoiding change by trying out different relatives. For their part, the relatives were saying to one another, "I can't do anything with him, why don't you try?"

Although puberty is not identified by the Matsigenka as a period of particular stress, and we found little evidence of acting-out or even tension between adolescents and their parents, it is a time when Matsigenka autonomy and sense of entitlement confront the real lack of choices they face in carving out adult lives for themselves. Although the majority of people we knew had managed to find stable and apparently satisfying marriages, several young people faced tough, poignant situations.

For example, Erena was 15 in 1972. Her father had died many years earlier and her mother remarried Aradino. In November she began to hang around our house, doing chores and ingratiating herself. Orna was surprised and a bit uncomfortable with this sudden approach. Erena stayed overnight, sleeping first on the floor in the public area, then coming into our sleeping area for the rest of the night. We were about to explain to her the next day that she must go home when her mother Rosa arrived and attempted to drag her home by force. But Erena resisted and her mother abandoned the rather mild effort.

Erena lingered around our house and our neighbor's house (Aretoro). Not wanting to be caught in the middle of something we did not understand, we suggested to her that she should do as her parents asked, but when Rosa came in the evening to try to get her, Erena had fled and was standing in the middle of the Rio Kompiroshiato, up to her waist in water. Aretoro went out to fetch her, but she ran downstream to an island and hid in the dense foliage. Later that night, she went home.

As the story unfolded, Erena's behavior became explicable. Her stepfather, Aradino, had recently begun to stop calling her "daughter." This clearly indicated that he was attempting to redefine his kinship relationship to her to allow for marriage. At 45, Aradino was one of the oldest men in the community. Erena clearly did not like what was happening. Probably as a result, she wrote a love letter to the assistant schoolteacher, Antonio (a Matsigenka-Campa married man from the community of Picha). She said she would marry him if he would leave his wife. Erena's half-sister Irima saw the note and told Erena's mother.

Then the whole matter became public. Antonio's wife confronted Erena near the schoolhouse, and a crowd gathered. She berated Erena and told her she could not have her husband. Erena scowled and held her ground, but said little. She did not appear at all intimidated or ashamed. Aradino, meanwhile, complained to Maestro: "Is this what you teach our children in school?" Aradino, of course, with his designs on the girl, had his own axe to grind.

Erena made clear that she still desired the assistant schoolteacher as a mate, but he did not encourage the relationship and, shortly after, moved his family back to Picha. By 1974 she was married to Aradino and had borne him a son.

Erena was in a bind. She did not want to marry an old man who had been in a father relationship to her throughout her later childhood. She tried to escape. She hoped that we would provide a safe haven for her, and tried to win the handsome young schoolteacher's heart. She was not frightened or intimidated when her mother tried (cautiously) to use force to take her

home, or the schoolteacher's wife challenged her in public. She firmly, and at times angrily, stood her ground. But her options were few. Her "father" would not approve her marriage elsewhere, she would have to leave her mother in order to marry (an inappropriate, though possible, outcome). The assistant schoolteacher's salary and authority were a position of strength she hoped to use to extricate her from the bind she was in, but he refused to play. So her protest went for nought and she eventually accepted an outcome that, if not inevitable, was probably as much in her interest as the available alternatives.

In another case, Santiago was about 23 in 1972, married to Marina, age 20, but no children. Everyone agreed that he was lazy by nature, like howler monkey. He became one of the earliest "hangers-on" at our household, taking advantage of our early efforts to build ties through generosity. His attitude was to ask for things as frequently as possible because it took little effort and we might comply. Certainly, we gave him medicine like anyone else who showed up asking for help, and in the beginning we gave a multitude of small gifts like kerosene, matches, and fishhooks.

But Santiago never made any effort to reciprocate. He was among the first people we asked, "What will you give me in return?" He invariably answered, "Nothing," with such frankness that it was almost charming. Once, in January 1973, after I had given him many unreciprocated gifts, I asked him for some papaya, and he replied, "What will you give me?" After that, I wrote in my journal, "Santiago comes whenever he feels bored, apparently, and amuses himself by asking me for things for free and by pointing out all his sores and ailments, trying to bully me into giving him attention or medicine--he is a pest, and without doubt the laziest man in the community."

Santiago was believed to be sterile (terira intomintempa). Everyone he had lived with agreed he did not “know how to work,” and that he hardly covered his own costs of living. He had planted a small garden in which he worked half-heartedly, and he earned staple crops from the landlord in return for field labor. An explanation for his laziness was his inadequate potency. His nickname otiovune, perhaps a play on the words otiomiani ishivu “little penis,” indicated his inadequacy: not only sterile, he did not know how to have intercourse with a woman. When younger he had lived with a man named Asencio, who, when Santiago would not work, put chili pepper on his penis (cf. Roe 1982: 225). This remedy apparently led to a slight improvement in his industriousness.

For all of this, Santiago was accepted for what he was. He had a wife, and a single woman (Maritina) who lived in his house and called him “Father.” When accompanying other men on work tasks, he would sit and whittle or shoot his slingshot while they did the work, all the while carrying on a friendly conversation that seemed to contain no resentment on the part of the hardworking companion. This tolerance for individual variation and responsibility is the other side of the coin of efforts to instill diligence, restraint, and generosity in growing children. If Santiago was the way he was, then so be it.

Santiago, however, made a rather serious, if characteristic, miscalculation. He asked another woman to become his second wife. His first wife, Marina, already disappointed in him for not giving her a child, stormed off to become another man’s second wife. Meanwhile, his prospective second wife refused, and Santiago was left without a mate.

Santiago was a handsome young man with a pleasant manner. He was guileless and friendly. He was not ridiculed or ostracized. On the other hand, accepting him as he was did not mean that people took on burdens on his behalf. They gave him the little he earned, with which he appeared contented. One incident captures his marginal situation. He came by to see me in late April 1973, drunk and asking for soap and matches. When I asked what he would give me in return, he said “Nothing.” Then Angel showed up offering me three spinning tops for a bar of soap, which I gave him. Seeing this, Santiago left and returned later with some spinning tops, but I was nearly out of soap and had enough tops, so I had to refuse the transaction. He was, in a sense, “a day late and a dollar short,” but that was in character.

Later childhood elaborates upon themes encountered at the beginning of Matsigenka self development. Children are not taught but allowed and expected to watch and learn, aided by the occasional question. Their individuality is conceived not as a property of the category into which they fall, but as a creative response to their inheritance of qualities from their parents, especially their same-sex parent. Their link to step-children, and especially adopted children, is correspondingly tenuous, tending toward a contractual relationship conceived in purely self-serving terms. Adolescents and young adults confront a world in which the self-serving acts of others are taken for granted, but for which their own strong sense of self has prepared them, as seen in the cases of Erena and Santiago. But strong self-centeredness poses a threat to the family group, and so the lessons of puberty seclusion emphasize self-restraint and generosity, tackling the problem of impulse control that is the central theme of their folktales and cautionary stories.