

Chapter Four

Being Matsigenka: Emotional Life in the Family

The Nuclear Family

Judging from representations in folk literature, the main dilemma of Matsigenka interpersonal life is balancing individual willfulness against the compromises required for life in the family group of household and hamlet (Johnson 1999). Somehow individual men and women must be highly self-reliant, motivated to do the necessary thing according to their own judgment with little encouragement (or interference) from others, and yet at the same time be generous in the family and avoid the impulsive expressions--especially of sex, aggression and greed--that can shatter even the strongest interpersonal bonds in closely-cooperating family groups.

The Nuclear Family in Folklore--. Evidence that this problem is anticipated to arise in even the most intimate nuclear family relationships is to be found in Matsigenka folktales, especially three incest tales Orna and I collected in Shimaa in 1972 and 1973. These stories of incest between mother and son (Shakanari), father and daughter (Yakoviri), and brother and

sister (Osheto) are published elsewhere (Johnson and Price-Williams 1996: 268-270, 311-313, 315-317), and need be discussed here only briefly. Each represents a basic emotional conflict within the nuclear family, and in each case the conflict results in suffering, death, or both. As we shall learn, this is typical of Matsigenka folktales, where emotional conflicts inevitably lead to painful and violent outcomes.

In Chapter 3 we learned that gender differences characterize the relationships between members of the nuclear family. Behaviorally, mothers are highly engaged with their children, especially in issuing directions and commands, and as targets of children's efforts to get attention and acknowledgement. Fathers are more distant, requesting information rather than action from their children, and are seldom sought out for attention. This is consistent with the sharp inside-the-house vs. outside-the-house division of labor between women and men. For example, Shepard (1999: 13) finds a strong difference in knowledge of plants, with men's knowledge specialized on hunting skill and curing injuries incurred while hunting, whereas women specialize on plants to control fertility and treat the illnesses of children.

Likewise, although young boys and girls are equally liable to take direction from and seek approval from their mothers, older boys increasingly orient on their fathers whereas girls remain attached to their mothers even well into adulthood. In folktales we see evidence that the emotional tie of both sons and daughters to their mothers remains strong, and in the son's case, anxiety-provoking. We can also see father in a somewhat marginal, threatening place in the family emotional constellation.

For example, Shakanari is a young man who does not want to leave home to get married--perhaps he does not want to grow up at all. He hits his mother and angers his father,

who then hits him. Violating the usual pattern of matrilocality and bride service, the family of his bride arrange for her to come live with his family. But soon his father dies and Shakanari neglects his wife to devote himself and the fruits of his labor to his mother, treating her “in all aspects as a wife.” His real wife complains about this to her father and brothers, who beat Shakanari within an inch of his life and take her home with them. Shakanari’s mother treats his wounds and he survives, only to be clubbed to death later by a neighbor from whom he has been stealing plantains.

Shakanari is a classic oedipal story in the comparative sense of the term. The core emotional problem is Shakanari’s willful violation of the rule that a boy must grow up and leave home, transferring his emotional allegiance from his mother to his wife. This leads him into violent conflict with his father, his wife’s menfolk, and finally, fatally with the man from whom he steals plantains. Shakanari seems primarily responsible for the tragedy that kills him, but in the story he blames his mother, saying, “You were angry at my wife, and never gave her any of the meat I gave you.” So the story implies that the mother’s reluctance to lose her son, or share him with his wife, is part of the emotional problem that leads to the fatal outcome.

Shakanari and the other Matsigenka stories we will examine are enduring stories, widely known and told. Their content is there for a reason and the audience is listening to it (Johnson and Price-Williams 1996: 77-89), even if the message is inchoate and difficult to express in words. In this case, the story addresses the possibility that a boy and his mother might want to remain so close together as to exclude the father (who quietly dies early in the tale) and any possibility for marriage for the son. That such an emotional outcome of family life is unacceptable (and anxiety-provoking) is seen in the violent end of the tale, the message being:

sons who remain at home and emotionally bound to their mothers will encounter violence with other men likely to lead to death.

In Yakoviri a father's sexual desire for his daughter also leads to a bad outcome, although the overall tone of the story is lighter than Shakanari. Yakoviri wants to have sex with his daughter and, as in many native American stories of father-daughter incest (Carroll 1986), he accomplishes his goal through trickery. Pretending to take ayahuasca and make a spirit journey to the land of the unseen ones, he claims that his body has been taken over by a powerful spirit who threatens to "cut the edge of the sky so it will fall on you and destroy you" unless his daughter agrees to have sex with him. After consulting her mother, the daughter consents to incest. But the daughter's righteous fiance and his father discover the trick and, in a comic episode, expose Yakoviri as a fraud. Then the fiance abandons the daughter, leaving her "very sad" and crying, "It's not my fault--it's my father's fault."

In this story the emotional problem is the father's uncontrolled desire for his daughter. Although mother and daughter go along with the incest under supernatural threat, they in fact form a coalition that opposes the father and blames him in the end. The bad ending is relatively mild for a Matsigenka story in that no one is killed or mutilated, but the daughter's chance for marriage with a good man is ruined.

In the folktale Osheto a brother falls in love with his sister after his mother tells him to take care of her. The sister responds to his love and when the mother discovers their incest she is furious, beating and tormenting them by putting hot pepper on their genitals. The father urges a tolerant attitude on the mother, but when he is away she persecutes the couple until finally they leave home. They move farther and farther into the forest and up into the trees until the son

transforms into Osheto, the spirit ruler of the spider monkey (osheto). Their offspring is a particularly foul and vicious monkey-demon who endangers its grandparents when they try to come into the forest to apologize and invite their son and daughter back home. The incestuous siblings blame their mother for the whole problem: first, she should not have asked her son to take care of his sister, and then, given that she did, she should not have been so surprised and upset when they fell in love.

In this story, there is certainly an emotional issue about the wrongness of brother-sister incest, and this is addressed by the couple's transformation into dirty and dangerous demon-spirits. But much of the story is an attack on the punitive mother, who destroys her own family and her chances to have grandchildren because of her angry intolerance of her children's sexual liaison.

In everyday life, Matsigenka siblings are close and affectionate. They spend most of their childhood in each other's company, and interact seldom with other children. This is partly because there may be few other children around, but it is also a reflection of the nuclear-family centeredness of Matsigenka behavior. Even when there are children present in the household who are not of the nuclear family, such as the child of a sister of the household head, the other children interact surprisingly little with them. Of all videotape observations of children initiating interaction with other children, 94% were with own siblings. This bias toward own siblings even characterizes polygynous households, where the centeredness of the child on its biological mother's hearth and full siblings is quite marked.

Our behavioral evidence is that siblings interact with high frequency. They initiate interactions with each other as often as they do with their mothers. The difference is that what

they seek from one another is not attention but action. In the videotape study, whereas none of their requests of fathers was for action, and only 12% of requests of mothers were, over 60% of their requests of siblings were for action (O. Johnson 1978: 322). Since requests for action are intrinsic to cooperative work, it is not surprising that older children have considerably greater authority (giving orders and receiving compliance) than younger children (O. Johnson 1978: 258).

The Matsigenka could not point to any actually-occurring incestuous liaisons in their immediate experience. They regard incest tales, like other folktales, as more or less true reports of an exciting or outrageous past in contrast to the mundane present. They did know of marriages between people who had an incestuous relationship within the kinterm system--i.e., parallel cousins who married--but, as we will see, the parties to such unions tend to subvert the system by redefining their relationships into a marriageable category. People did not flaunt incest violations, and the transgressions reported in these folktales are considered repugnant, shameful and dangerous by the audience listening to the folktale.

One characteristic of these Matsigenka stories is an element of transparency not found in the incest tales of more complex, stratified societies (Johnson and Price-Williams 1996: 66-7): the actors' emotional states are clear (if their full meaning is left implicit) and their real identities are not masked. Each story begins immediately with a representation of emotional trouble (inappropriate desire leading to conflict), and the ensuing disaster unfolds without diversions.

We find a pattern in these three incest tales: each of them explicitly blames a parent for the incest and for the tragedy that follows. Mother gets the worst of it, being blamed both for

hating Shakanari's wife, and for forcing Osheto and his sister together then blaming them for the incest that they claim was inevitable. And even though father is blamed for the incest in Yakoviri, there is a subtle undercurrent of mother's reluctance to see her daughter married. In tone, therefore, the sympathies of the story appear to be with children. This would support Dundes' (1985: 37) generalization that all folktales are told from the child's point of view-- keeping in mind that adults in the audience may be listening with a child's ear.

In this light, the message of the Matsigenka incest tales appears to be that children are the helpless victims of their parents' actions, especially their mothers.' In the parent-child tales, if the children feel any of the longings represented in the story--to mate incestuously and stay at home for life--these are not acknowledged, although they are rather strongly indicated in the mother-son tale. My own sense is that placing responsibility for these wishes on the parents, and especially mother, is defensive. The temper tantrum phase was a desperate but doomed effort to hold onto the treasured position of indulged toddler, and these stories are indirect evidence that even after the storm of protest has passed, old wishes for exclusive nuclear family intimacy, including but not limited to incest, remain. These are most clearly represented in the brother-sister tale, where the desire for marriage between siblings is frankly acknowledged and the tone of the story is almost a lament for their ultimate separation from the household.

The Married Couple--. In Chapter 6 we will see that a nearly complete division of labor separates men's and women's tasks, creating a thoroughgoing economic interdependence between husband and wife. When nuclear families live on their own, the husband and wife may be the only two adults in the vicinity, increasing their psychological and social interdependence.

The difference between men and women, however, extends beyond the division of labor to cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity. The complementarity of husband and wife is tempered by the fear each has of the other.

Quantitatively, behavioral interactions between husbands and wives are highly supportive (O. Johnson 1978: 232). Given that husbands and wives interact a great deal, and have many opportunities to quarrel, their highly supportive behavior is notable. Other nuclear family members show much more hostility and unsupportiveness toward one another. In fact, behaviorally, husbands and wives interact with each other in a pattern similar to the way nuclear family members interact with “additional” (i.e., non-nuclear) members of the household. Such interactions are carefully supportive, but (spouses excepted) of low frequency:

Owing to the intensity of the relationship, I had expected husbands and wives to show less supportive behavior toward one another, but the expression of antagonistic feelings appears to be restrained in daily household interactions. This must be understood in light of the fact that animosity has its outlet: husbands and wives do periodically fight; drunken husbands do sometimes vent hostility on their wives; and in consequence wives sometimes leave their husbands. (O. Johnson 1978: 233-4)

A clear behavioral difference was that wives directed most of their requests to their children, whereas husbands divided their requests equally between their wives and children. Husbands and wives complied with each other's requests over 90% of the time, but because of the husbands' greater frequency of requests to their wives, in fact wives were being compliant to husbands twice as often as husbands were to wives. In this domain at least it might be said that husbands have greater authority than wives in their relationships with each other.

Other lines of evidence also suggest a certain ascendancy to the husband's position. For example, husbands inevitably precede their wives (and their children) when walking through the forest. I learned early in fieldwork that my ethnocentric tendency to be courteous by pausing to let "ladies first" on the path led only to comical impasses. A man goes first on the trail because he is armed, at least with a machete and probably also with bow and arrows, and prepared to defend the rest of his family in any dangerous encounter. This attitude seems to be generalizing to dealings with the outside world, for men handle money and make purchases even though their school-educated young wives may know much more about money and prices than they do.

Rosengren (1987a: 341; 1987b: 82-4) stresses the separation between the sexes, especially in terms of the man's control over hunting and aversion to the pollution of women's menstrual blood. He sees a general pattern of separateness, lack of cooperation, mutual avoidance, and male domination of women (1987a: 334). Although some of my evidence tends to support his argument, his generalization is too strong for Shima, where the emphasis is on husband-wife mutuality. His idea that men control and exploit women's labor is far from the mark (Rosengren 1987b: 104-6).

It is true that since women prepare and serve most of the food, men are often in the position of requesting food or manioc beer, and they will be served quickly by their wives. Although the husband is being equally serviceable when he brings home a bag full of food, it is perhaps not so noticeable (or measurable) as service, because he generally drops it without comment outside the house, or near his wife's mat and leaves it to her to take it from there. Within the household, women take pride in anticipating their husband's wants--a bowl of water

to wash in at daybreak or a special food to garnish the manioc at supper. The smiles in both directions signal their mutual pleasure in the courtesy.

What is also not so noticeable, because it is kept under wraps, is the disappointment husbands and wives feel toward each other as providers. Husbands feel frequently impatient with their wives for a lack of manioc beer. Men would drink more beer if only their wives would make more; certainly, men quickly drink up whatever beer is on hand, and make a small face or dismayed noise when they peer into a gourd and find it empty.

At least some men also feel unfortunate that their wives are poor cloth makers. In such families, the children and even the adults must wear badly torn and patched cushmas because the wife does not keep up with the family's need for clothing. This is a public embarrassment, of course, because everyone can see what others are wearing when they meet en route to gardens or foraging areas, not to mention beer feasts and other social gatherings. In a well-supplied household, a husband can wear a good quality cushma even while working, saving his shreds-and-patches cushma for really dirty work, like burning a garden or hauling roofing leaves. At special social occasions, he may even wear the new white (not yet dyed) cushma his wife has finished and stowed away, in advance of his practical need for it.

For their part, wives are often displeased with their husbands as providers of meat. Garden produce is generally ample, but fish and game are always too scarce, more scarce even than manioc beer. This becomes a source of tension because, when meat is scarce, people prefer drinking manioc beer to eating boiled manioc unimproved by meat. The problem intensifies as men demand more beer from women who are already angry because there is so

little meat coming in, the women knowing that when men get drunk on manioc beer they are more likely to vent their frustrations on their wives.

Despite the disappointments, Matsigenka husbands and wives spend much time together in evident harmony and enjoyment of each other's company. We frequently find them sitting side by side at home, working quietly at some task, talking and laughing together. At times they become playful and giggle, or wrestle erotically. They care for each other spiritually, by observing food taboos when the other is sick or vulnerable. They often depart the house together also, leaving the children in the care of an older sibling or a kinsman from the hamlet, to go foraging or to work in the gardens. These are also their opportunities to make love away from the crowded household.

The Matsigenka believe that both men and women enjoy sex and can take the initiative in finding a partner. Men and women are not openly flirtatious as a rule, and the separation of the sexes at feasts and other public events minimizes the opportunities for seduction. Nonetheless, quick glances and smiles serve amply to show interest. Judging from the number of extra-marital affairs we heard about, most men and women probably experiment with love affairs at least once or twice during their married lives. No form of homosexual relationship ever came to our attention, either in life histories or folktales, but Shepard (1999: 97) reports a belief that some phallic demons attack their victims via anal intercourse.

Courtship is generally open and a topic of delighted conversation at large. For many couples, courtship is a more or less public expression of mutual interest as they test the possibility of marriage. For example, on a trip with Mariano, who was looking for a second

wife (a short trial marriage to a second wife had recently failed), I noted his developing interest in Viviana:

Fieldnote 5-5-73: On the way up, and again on the way back, Mariano carried on humorous conversations with Viviana as we passed Aradino's house here. On the way back, Mariano hurried ahead of us on the trail and had 4-5 minutes with her out of hearing range before Jorge and I caught up with him. She is potentially his wife, in kin terms (Rosa calls her sister), and seems very well-disposed toward him. At least, she smiled lavishly at him, and in the morning when we left, she came to the bank and watched us crossing the river. When he got to the other bank, he turned and said "I'm going," although he had already said it earlier. She asked "Will you be back?" he said, "Yes," and she said "I'll be waiting for you."

That relationship never worked out, however. This sort of flirtation is common and may leave some wounded feelings, but unless the man actually announces his intention to marry the woman, complaints are muted. When a man asks for a woman, then changes his mind, as happened when Angel (while drunk) courted Maritina, her family will express their anger, "You are bad. Why did you ask for her if you didn't want her?"

When one is contemplating marriage, one looks above all for someone who will be hardworking. The worst mistake is to marry a lazy person (peranti), for such a spouse will not only fail to hold up his or her end of the division of labor but will also tend to be stingy and dissatisfied. Eating red meat in childhood is often mentioned as a possible source of laziness and dissatisfaction as an adult. Yaniri (howler monkey; see tale below), who sat greedily eating the beans he was supposed to plant, is the epitome of laziness: yaniri inti peranti, tera irogote ivantavagetera "Yaniri is lazy, he doesn't know how to work." That howlers are the slowest

monkeys, lingering as they feed on bulky leaves (low-density nutrients), probably contributes to their reputation. For this reason children and pregnant women should not eat howler monkey meat and many adults limit their intake. Perhaps owing to having eaten such meat in childhood, some adults, like Santiago and Rosa (the mother of Apa, who burned down his house after his baby sister was born) are thought to be characteristically lazy people for whom not much can be done.

Most Matsigenka are industrious, however. In addition to long and often grueling work days, men and women, after dark or on rainy days when mobility is limited, occupy themselves with manufactures while enjoying affectionate interactions and story-telling. It is up to parents to instruct their same-sex children to become industrious and generous so that they can marry well, and to help them choose an equally excellent spouse. Roberto's father, for example, advised him: "Don't marry a bad, lazy woman who will criticize you--leave them for the bad men!" A man will tell his lazy wife that he will look for another. And a woman whose husband is lazy, it is said, can tell a man who desires her to come and kill her husband--although we never heard of such a thing actually happening.

Men are agreed to be stronger and braver than women, who are described as "fearful" (*tsaronti*). Indeed, the word for brave, *iseraritake*, literally means "he-male-is." It is not a complement, however, but a label for men who fight too much. When I asked men if they were brave, they would say *tera noserarite* "I'm not brave," but might mention one or two other men who they thought were brave. The phrase *iseraritake*, therefore, may best translate as "he is hyper-masculine, fierce."

Men, however, must be strong. A man's life is said to be dangerous, and men are expected to do the heaviest labor and carry the heaviest burdens. A woman will cry from a harsh word, but a man will not cry even when struck. If a man encounters a demon in the forest, he will shoot it, whereas a woman can only scream. A man who cries easily or is perceived as weak is described as womanly (tsinaneshinianka [literally, "happily female"?]). A complementary term for women who spend too much time outside the house and avoid women's work (especially spinning cotton) is serarishinianka, "manly."

Men fear contamination by women's menstrual blood, which can make them tired, weak and ineffective--i.e., the opposite of strong. Husband and wife should not lie near one another during her period, and he must not come into contact with her menstrual blood: "It makes him sleep all the time," Roberto says, "and when he hunts, his arrows miss the mark; he won't catch fish, won't want to work--like an old man." The menstruating woman enters and leaves the house by a separate door, so that the man can use the main entrance without risk of pollution.

Owing more to the association of strength with masculinity than to the specific fear of pollution, men see hunting as exclusively their domain:

...Women have a negative influence on hunting and they are therefore not allowed to accompany men on hunting trips. Sexual abstinence the night before staging a hunt is a necessary prerequisite if the hunter shall have any success. Even merely dreaming of women is considered to be devastating for the outcome of the hunting. (Rosengren 1987b: 61)

Hunting is also an opportunity for men to get off alone, to "stretch their legs" away from the importunities of life in the hamlet (cf. Kensinger 1995: 33).

Male strength also plays a role in the different ways husbands and wives manage anger. The Matsigenka keep anger under wraps as much as possible. For the married couple, this means many courtesies shape the way they make their wishes known. If a man wants beer, he asks, aityo shitea (“Is there beer?”) rather than say, makero shitea (“Bring me beer!”). Likewise, if a woman wants her husband to hunt, she does not command, “Go hunt!” or criticize him as a poor hunter--it is enough for her to say quietly, “There is no meat.” Men and women know what is expected of them and they generally do it without having to be told.

But when anger breaks through, especially while drinking beer, men may beat their wives. The primary reasons a husband gives for anger are that he believes his wife to be lazy or unfaithful. He may become short-tempered with her if she is slow serving him, but unless there is a build-up of resentment over time, his anger is unlikely to turn violent. If he is deeply angry, he may leave (divorce) her, but the most likely outcome when he sobers up is that he feels remorse and asks her forgiveness.

The woman’s response is different. If beaten, she becomes angry, but does not fight back, fearing to make his violence worse. Instead, she will run away (oshiganaka, “she flees”)--this is understood to be in anger and not out of fear. She may run to a brother or father if they are available: they are liable to come angrily to her defense, scolding the offending husband, “You married her--don’t beat her now, or why did you marry her in the first place? If you don’t want her, give her back and live alone.”

As a measure of their hurt and rage, however, some women who have been beaten run alone into the forest. This is a bold and desperate act, since women are far more vulnerable than men to spiritual attack in the forest. A husband who loves his wife becomes quite frantic

at this turn of events and runs into the forest to find her. If he cannot find her, he must wait anxiously for her to show up somewhere (word reaches him quickly), then go and contritely ask her to come back to him.

Men sometimes run angry into the forest, perhaps to avoid hurting anyone in their anger. But a woman would not go into the forest looking for a runaway man, because she would be afraid of his violence.

Apart from this emphasis on male strength and violence, desire between men and women is a largely egalitarian matter. Although stories emphasize the man's role in asking for a woman's hand in marriage, there are also reports of women who pursue particular men. In Shimaá in 1973, three young women trekked from homestead to homestead throughout the greater Kompiroshiato watershed to scout eligible mates and advertise their own availability. In folktales, both men and women are portrayed as aggressive seducers.

Either can be the object of love magic. Some aromatic herbs, like the unidentified ichomonteshiaroni, can be rubbed on the skin to attract lovers without harming anyone. Others, like ivinishi, a category of "perfumed" [okasankatake] herbs including spearmint (Menta spicata), are believed in even small quantities to drive both men and women mad with desire. A small amount placed under one's sleeping mat can cause him or her to run around nude and shameless, and can be used both to woo a lover and to punish an ex-lover. Ivinishi is also mixed with achiote and rubbed on the body to attract lovers, and can be slipped as an aphrodisiac into the beloved's beer.

Shepard (1999: 143) found the Matsigenka to be anxious and very secretive about love magic. In Shima, considered very dangerous forms of love magic are matsatonkishi (lit., “weak bone leaf”) and vurioroshi, leaves that can cause an individual to become listless by day yet active by night, an awful reversal by Matsigenka standards. People are reluctant to use this potent weapon because it has the reputation of rebounding to inflict the one who administers it. To ward off love magic, the herb iratsipini is grown in many gardens and administered in a drink of leaves and cool water, or as eye drops.

In sum, husbands and wives acknowledge their need for each other in pragmatic terms (Who will hunt for me? Who will cook for me?), and tend to form stable, long-term marriages. But women fear becoming the victims of violence from men, and men fear being weakened by women. Both fear love magic that could intensify their sexual desire to a shameful, animal-like running-around-naked or leave them listless by day and hyperactive by night. And both openly express their anger--albeit in different ways (men beat wives, wives run away)--and then seek to reconcile before the damage leads to divorce.

That the marriage bond is just as vulnerable to the dangers of impulsive behavior as the ties between parents, children and siblings is evident in many folktales, such as the story of Narani, a nocturnal bird (the Common Potoo, Nyctibius griseus).

Narani

There was a man who used to get drunk all the time, and went off to drink by himself, leaving his wife alone at home. He said he did not want his wife to have children because he wanted her to work only for him. One night, when the woman was alone, Narani appeared as a man

and called to her. She was afraid he would kill her, but then she told him to come and give her a child. Narani entered and spent the night until her husband returned. Then Narani assumed his bird shape and flew out.

Her husband brought back a tinamou (game bird). When he asked her to open the door, she remained lying down. When he asked her to cook the tinamou she said she was too sick. When he offered her food, she said she was too sick to eat, she had a toothache. He asked, "Why are you sick?" "Because you do not know how to give me a child," she replied. He said, "If I gave you a child, how would you work?" She said, "I could work." But the man knew from her illness that she had had intercourse with Narani and that his penis had broken her back.

That night, Narani came near the house (as a bird), and rested in a papaya tree. The man said, "I will shoot him." "Do not kill your brother," the woman said. "He is not my brother, he's a bird," the man said. His wife fell asleep and he shot Narani. When she woke up, she was cured. She got angry and tried to kill her husband, but could not. She said, "Now, kill me." He said, "Wait until I finish eating." Then he tied her to a tree and cut open her abdomen. Inside were thousands of tiny Narani babies. The largest was a few inches long, and ready to be born.

Narani took her away with him (i.e., her soul). The man ran into the forest, until he came to the house of his classificatory daughter. "Where is my mother?" she asked. "She is dead," he replied. "Narani killed her. I want to sleep here."

After some time, he returned to his former home. Narani was sitting up in the tree, very sad. The man cut some sugar cane and sucked it. The day was cloudy, no sun. On the way back to his daughter's house, he encountered his wife's spirit. She said, "Why did you kill me before?" He said, "Because Narani already killed you." She said, "Cut me open now," but the man fell unconscious because she was ovegaga (kamagarini, a very evil spirit). Later, he came to and went to his daughter's house. He was very sick. He slept on a sandy beach. He could not get up.

“Why can’t you get up?” his daughter asked. He answered, “Because I saw your mother earlier and she killed me.” In the morning, he was dead.

This economically told story offers a clear emotional narrative. In the first two statements we learn of a man who drinks alone and wants his wife to work only for him, two highly selfish and inappropriate desires that lead to disaster. His wife, though fearful, assertively pursues her reproductive desire with the night bird, Narani, an act that in Matsigenka lore is bound to be fatal, her soul being taken by the spirit. If we count Narani’s implicit desire for the woman, the story begins with four instances of desire, setting up a dangerous love triangle between a selfish man, his neglected wife, and the man-spirit who gets her pregnant. These clashing desires are followed by a series of violent acts: husband shoots bird-rival; wife attempts to kill husband; husband kills wife (cutting open her belly to reveal the horrifying sight of hundreds of narani babies); demon-wife kills husband. The story presents us with a marriage between two willful individuals whose conflicting desires lead to frustration, aggression, death/loss, and mourning.

In the Matsigenka viewpoint, this story is not at all far-fetched but in fact entirely plausible. The husband’s selfish desire that his wife should not have children so that she could work only for him, while culturally inappropriate, is already familiar to us from the two cases in Shimaá where dominant women required subordinate women to kill their newborns because the dominant one wanted the subordinate to “work only for me.”

Nor is the idea of a married woman seeking another man to impregnate her far-fetched. In Shimaá, two men were reputed to be unable or unwilling to have intercourse (terira irogote

ineerora tsinane, “not he-knows he-see-her woman”, or terira irogote iragantera, “not he-knows he-take-her”). Santiago (Chapter 3) was impotent and lost his wife Martina to a man who could give her children.

The other case involved Evaristo, who was said to be capable of intercourse but did not want his wife to become pregnant. When she died in childbirth, two contrasting accounts were given.

THE DEATH OF SERAFINA (Version I)

Evaristo’s wife, Serafina, had an affair with her cross-cousin and became pregnant. When she felt the baby stirring in her, she believed she might have been impregnated by a demon and went to Maestro for help. Using a stethoscope, he diagnosed a healthy pregnancy. After he left for teacher training in Yarina Cocha, she became anxious, believing she was in labor throughout the month of March. To hasten birth, a neighbor prepared the folk remedy, potogo in a tea. But, not being familiar with the drug, he gave her several times the usual dose and her diaphragm seized up and she died.

This version tells of a commonplace tragedy, a woman who died unnecessarily of an overdose of a folk remedy. Her anxiety about the pregnancy, stemming from her fantasy that she had been impregnated by a demon, may have drawn strength from her anger at her withholding husband and fear of punishment for her extramarital liason.

There is another version of this story, however, that is remarkably different:

THE DEATH OF SERAFINA (Version II)

In the fall of 1971 Evaristo and Serafina went on a collecting expedition to the headwaters of the Rio Pogentimari and camped for the night along the riverbank, making a caña brava shelter. She left the house to defecate, and encountered Segamairini, an evil spirit who chased her into the woods. Later, she got back and told Evaristo. Some days or weeks later, she had a dream in which

her father, who is dead, came to her and invited her to come live with him, saying “I have my son-in-law here” (notineri), but not meaning Evaristo. After that, although she had not had intercourse for some time, she began to feel the presence of a mature baby inside her. She believed it was the demon’s child. When it was time to give birth, the child strangled her from inside.

Serafina was buried downstream on an island which has since been swept away by the changing currents of the river. Evaristo burned their house down, and his remaining family, including two related households, fled upstream to escape her soul, which would be expected to return to the house to get her possessions (she was buried only in her *cushma* and beads). The burning of the house makes it hard for the ghost to find its way, and after a few days the danger is past. She was now transformed into Segamairini, a powerful and evil spirit, with a large penis, capable of killing everyone in the vicinity of Evaristo’s house. (The other relatives did not burn their houses and returned after four days).

Version I minimizes supernatural involvement. There appears to be no connection between Serafina’s extramarital love affair and her death by accidental overdose. But what about Version II? Her encounter with a demon is clearly related to her death by “strangulation” by the demon-child inside her, but the illicit love affair is not mentioned. As we shall learn in the next section, the folktale, Narani, holds the key to understanding the relation between these two versions, and offers further insight into Matsigenka emotional life.

We should take careful note, however, of this link between demons and lovers. Segamairini is one of several demons with large penises that seduce and kill. Either a man or a woman can become such a demon, and both genders possess the deadly penis. Another demon that attacks sexually is Sevatatsirira:

Fieldnote [5-14-73] - Sevatatsirira, a demon who lives in rockpiles (imperitaseku), will inhabit an abandoned house. Tsimvimvini (tiger-heron, Tigrisoma fasciatum) is the bird shape of sevatatsirira, who also knows how to metamorphose into Matsigenka, looking like any other male. He takes the shape of a woman's lover, appears to her when she is alone and has sex with her. She will begin to feel sick soon after, and will go to bed, where she will die the next day. Symptoms: fever, nausea. Remedy: none, but by spreading crushed ivenkiki (sedge) along the path, the demon can be killed. In any case, the woman will die.

Sevatatsirira can also be a female being who seduces men. If a man only sees her, he sickens. But if he has sex with her, he dies. Sevatatsirira wants a spouse and so takes the soul (onoshikapitsatakeru isure “she-removes-away his -soul;” also, agapitsatakeru isure “she-takes-away his -soul”), leaving his body to die.

Such demons embody unrestrained impulsive sexuality and yearning for companionship. By blaming illness and death on such demons, the Matsigenka concretize the danger that impulsive acting out presents.

The fear, furthermore, is not limited to illicit sex. Even intercourse with a spouse can be dangerous because spirits not only take the shape of lovers, but husbands or wives as well. This is especially true of deer (maniro). Maniro is believed to once have been a man who killed women. They say that now, when a deer is attacked by a jaguar, the deer appears to cry, Ina, Ina (“Mama, Mama”).

Fieldnote [7-12-73] - Maniro can become human (imatsigenkatanake) and take on the appearance of one's spouse. When Maniro wants you, you have a dream of sweet flowers perfuming your whole body. For example, after such a dream, a man goes to his garden, where his wife appears with beer. He drinks, has intercourse, and keeps working until late. He returns home forgetting that he saw his wife [really Maniro]. Next day, he wakes up, remembers the events of the previous day, then dies of soul loss. The same can happen to a woman. The main elements are the dream, apparition

of spouse or lover (inintane), sexual intercourse, sleep, wakening and realization, and death.

Maniro gets a spouse.

It would seem, then, that any act of sexual intercourse, whether innocent or not, exposes either partner to the possibility of deadly assault by a lonely hypersexed demon.

Emotional Life

The Matsigenka tend to fear strong emotions (Shepard 1995a). Ordinarily, they are calm, quiet, polite and good-natured people--this is how they present themselves in everyday behavior, certainly with strangers but also throughout the daily routines of household life. Beer feasts are an accepted opportunity to use alcohol to relax this emotional control, but only to a degree. Even at a beer feast if strong emotions result in violence or destructive verbal attacks, they can leave a trail of lasting anger and regret. Strong emotions may also appear in dreams, kisanirintsi, where they can be frightening and are often taken to be omens of impending disaster.

It is therefore no coincidence that nearly all Matsigenka folktales are emotional narratives, where a protagonist's strong emotions instigate emotional reactions and dangerous behavior in other protagonists. In almost all of 29 Matsigenka tales I have examined, the core dramatic narrative of the story repeats a common emotional progression: Either someone desires something inappropriate (e.g., a man prefers the taste of human flesh to that of animals), or someone inappropriately does not want someone else to have something they desire (e.g., a father opposes his daughter's desire to marry a blameless suitor, as in Yakoviri). In either case the inappropriate desire makes someone else in the story angry (e.g., relatives of the cannibal's

victims, the frustrated suitor). The anger is expressed in aggression whereby people are mutilated, killed, or transformed into animals or demons. Frequently, the tale ends with sorrow and blame, generally directed at one of the protagonists who got angry and caused all the violence and suffering. Analysis of many such tales reveals the common pattern summarized in Figure 4.1.

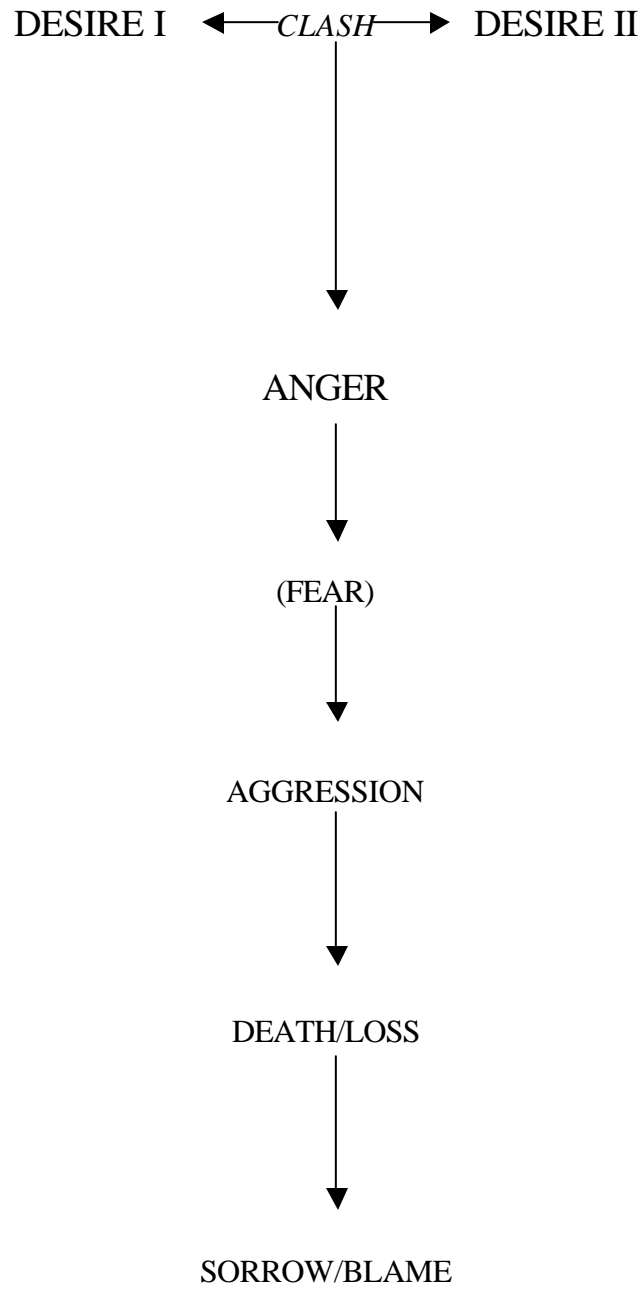


Figure 4.1. Common Form of the Matsigenka Emotion-Story.

The tale Narani exhibits this pattern in the flow of emotions: Desire 1 (husband wants to drink alone) & Desire 2 (husband wants to hoard wife's services) --> Anger 1 (wife's frustration) --> Fear (wife's, of Narani) --> Desire 3 (wife wants Narani to give her a child) --> Desire 4 [Implicit, Narani wants to give wife a child] --> Suffering (wife sick) --> Aggression 1 (husband shoots Narani) --> Aggression 2 (wife attacks husband) --> Aggression 3 (husband cuts/kills wife) --> Loss (Narani mourns wife) --> Aggression 4 (wife-demon kills husband).

Version II of Serafina's death may be regarded as a transformation of the coolly factual Version I into one consistent with the emotional message of the tale of Narani. Serafina's husband does not want her to get pregnant, so she seeks a lover but he turns out to be a demon. Her implied anger at and betrayal of her husband are contained in Version I, her belly swelling with the demon's offspring and her death are contained in the Version II. Evaristo's terror at her likely return and spiritual attack on him leads him to burn down the house and flee far away for as long as it takes her spirit to give up and leave the area. The transformation from Version I to Version II "mythologizes" Serafina's death, from a "just the facts" story in which death is accidental into a morality tale in which death is the spiritual punishment for adultery.

Matsigenka folktales are rich stories full of details about all aspects of ordinary life and spiritual existence. Among these details, they nearly always portray feeling states and sometimes indicate their causes and consequences. Table 4.1 lists the frequency with which emotions and emotionally-charged outcomes appear in the 29 folktales I have analyzed.

Table 4.1 supports the conclusion that Matsigenka folktales are nearly always tragedies. Only about 10% of the emotions and outcomes of the tales reflect approval, gratification and

happiness. The other 90% involve anger, fear, threat, aggression and suffering, all as a consequence of the clash of impulsive desire, primarily for sex and meat in the context of jealousy, greed and envy. Further examination of these most frequently mentioned emotions will take us far in understanding Matsigenka emotional life.

<u>Emotions/Emotional Outcomes</u>	<u># of Occurrences</u>
Desire (especially sex and meat)	81
Anger/Frustration	51
Aggression	45
Admonition (includes warning, threat, suspicion)	27
Loss, sadness, remorse	21
Fear	19
Approval and gratification	19
Pain and suffering	16
Happiness/Happy ending	<u>12</u>
TOTAL	302

Table 4.1. Incidence of Emotions and Emotionally-Charged Outcomes in 29 Matsigenka Folktales.

As we examine different Matsigenka emotions, we will encounter other tales that follow this progression from desire to anger to danger and, often, remorse or blame. The desire is

usually but not always of a man for a woman; sometimes it is of a woman for a man. Otherwise, most often it is someone's desire for a particular food, especially meat, that leads to anger and its terrible consequences. How might we understand the prevalence of this sequence in the folktales? Briefly, I will show that the Matsigenka conception of self as a powerful center of will goes hand in hand with a belief in the inevitability of anger when desire is thwarted. And, anger begets aggression. Sensing this ever-present potential for violence within themselves and those with whom they live, Matsigenkas become anxious in situations where anger is aroused. Stories represent this anxiety-provoking situation over and over, showing how it is resolved with punishment and frequently assigning blame.

Desire--. (nokogake "I want"). The root -koga- refers to all kinds of desire, including food, sex, companionship and possessions. That Matsigenka stories begin with representations of desires is an implicit recognition of the importance they attach to the willfulness of the individual. In my experience, the Matsigenka are remarkably assertive people. They take it for granted that all beings--animals, humans, spirits, even some plants--are centers of will and purpose. Although they acknowledge the parents' responsibility for shaping the individual, their emphasis is on the self as agent who creates its world through choice and action, like the self-creating Kashibokani (Chapter 3). As we will see in Chapter 6, when crops do not do well, it is not because of the soil but the seed, that is, the strength and capacities integral to the individual plant. Similarly, when game are scarce, they have not been killed off but have fled the sound of shotguns; when fish are scarce after repeated applications of barbasco, they are not depleted but "hiding." In these examples, crops, game and fish are all conceived of as active and responsible, not as passive outcomes of their environment.

As we saw above in the discussion of fathers and sons (and the same is true for mothers and daughters), one is what one is by virtue of a lineal inheritance, both genetic and instructional, mainly from one's parent of the same sex. All sorts of individual differences, from details of manufacture to food taboos to storytelling, are acknowledged and accepted. "I am as I am," is the underlying attitude, "and I do as I do." Such individuality is, in the Matsigenka view, by itself a sufficient explanation for much behavior. I found it difficult to get people to speculate on the motives of others or even to talk about individual differences. Why did Karoroshi move his house? "Kogapai, (no reason)." How do your arrows differ from Omenko's? "He makes his and I make mine." Why do men plant many varieties of manioc instead of only one? "Because they want to." When I would tell people of a different version of a folktale than the one they were familiar with they would say, "Well, this is the way I heard it." It is not surprising that someone else heard it differently, and it is not a problem. The problem was mine, wanting to discover explanations and attitudes for individual differences and discrepancies that--for the Matsigenka--required no further comment.

The assumption of the primacy of individual will is pervasive. In a difficult birth, the child "doesn't want to be born." From infancy caretakers leave room for the child to take the initiative in finding ways to soothe and entertain itself. To anticipate the child's wants in the absence of a signal from the child would be to replace its will and initiative with the caretaker's, and this is not the Matsigenka way. As an implicit example of this, it was not until 1976 that I noticed that Orna and I had developed the habit of saying nani "OK, or fine" whenever people said noate "I'm going." Yet the Matsigenka reply to noate was always, je 'ee "yes, or uh huh." The difference is that our habit was to express approval or give permission, as though that were

our place, whereas the Matsigenka practice was simply to acknowledge another's decision, without passing judgement or claiming authority.

They do not often mask the self-centered motives of the individual, whether discussing themselves, others, or the protagonists of folktales. When Evaristo, for example, told me of his feelings about Serafina's death, he simply said, "I miss her. Who will cook for me, who will weave my cushma?" Similarly, in the folktale Matsiti (Ross n.d.: 67), a demon woman (Matsiti) kills a man's wife and takes her place. When the husband discovers her evil deception, he kills the demon: "This done, he gave the dead woman's son to his mother and went off to look for another wife." In a parenthesis, Ellen Ross commented: "Practical people, these men!" She must have been looking for a deeper sense of mourning from the widower, as I was from Evaristo. We will see below that the loss and mourning are there, but the self-centered needs behind the mourning are not masked or ennobled with a social gloss.

In Chapter 5 I will analyze my difficulties in learning to establish a "fair exchange" with Matsigenka individuals and households. My problems arose from my naive, to a degree ethnocentric, expectation that a combination of courtesy on the one hand and guilt on the other would compel people to anticipate my needs and supply them without being asked. What I learned was that the Matsigenka required me to identify in every transaction exactly what my self-interest was and to assert it clearly and firmly. If my interests were not met, I was to withdraw the hand of friendship, albeit without apparent anger, and simply stop dealing with someone who was, to use a most common Matsigenka word, michanti (stingy). In short, I was required to be, by my standards, rude (if not arrogant).

Not very far below the surface of the courteous Matsigenka is a “selfish” Trickster-like being, that is partially revealed in drunkenness:

Fieldnote 7-1-73 - Getting drunk among Matsigenka, as among ourselves, exaggerates states of mind: pensiveness, affection, despair, anger. But the most striking effect is an increase in selfishness, or self-willedness: an increase in small impoliteness, demands for attention, and getting into activities (drumming, fluting) to the partial or complete exclusion of others.

Willful beings with varying degrees of supernatural power appear in many Matsigenka folktales. Osheto (Spider Monkey), for example, married his sister because, as he said, “There were no others. I wanted her. I took her.” Later, driven from the house and living deep in the forest, he was invited to return home by his father. But he replied, “If I hadn’t married my sister, perhaps I would come. But perhaps you have other daughters. If I came home, your daughters there, I might marry incestuously with them. So it is better that I don’t come. So I won’t marry them. So I won’t marry all your daughters.” He is describing himself as someone who cannot control his incestuous impulses.

When Matsigenkas tell folktales, the audience is usually quite engaged, interrupting the narrative to ask questions or make comments. Sometimes, they show they are emotionally affected by the story. Once, as she told the story of Kashiri (Moon), Pororinta mentioned that Kashiri’s bride was big and her vagina was big. At this point Pororinta’s husband, Aretoro, interrupted the story to exclaim, “*If she were here now, I would sleep only with her!*” He was obviously aroused by a story in which Kashiri marries a stereotypically desirable woman, and he could say so in front of his wife.

Where the central clash of desires in a folktale does not concern sex, it is most likely to concern greed or gluttony over protein foods like game, fish or beans. In Yaniri we see the same emotion story unfolding around greed over beans as we saw in stories of inappropriate sexual desires.

YANIRI (HOWLER MONKEY)

(Julio 7-22-75)

Once I heard tell of Yaniri. He lived, had human shape. He cleared a large garden for planting beans. When he finished clearing and planting beans in half of that large garden, he said, "I have finished my beans, I will ask Brother-in-law (komaginaro, woolly monkey) for some to plant."

When he got there he told Komaginaro, "I am growing my sister's beans. I have made a large garden and I said to myself, 'I will ask Brother-in-law if there are any of my sister's beans for me to plant.'" Komaginaro replied, "Mameri (There are none)." His wife asked, "What did he say?" He told her, "He came for beans. He asked for beans to plant for you." She said, "Give them to him, of course; give them to him." Komaginaro said, "I still haven't cleared my own garden. I will clear my garden and plant manioc. He will plant beans for you. When they are good and ripe, I will get seed from him for us to plant."

He filled a large container with beans and Yaniri took them home with him. Next day he went on clearing and planting his garden until he ran out of beans. The beans sprouted and grew quickly. Their flowers turned deep blue. In the middle of the garden stood a nearometiki tree of enormous circumference. "When I am ready, I will fell it. Now I will plant the beans all around it so they will grow up covering it."

Next day he went and got more beans from Komaginaro, and had finished planting them by midday. The next day he went to ask for still more. Komaginaro took down his last container of beans, larger than the others. Later, to his wife, he said, "I gave him beans yesterday. What is going on? A while ago I planted just one container, and there were plenty of beans. How can this be--is he eating them?"

Yaniri got home and began to remove the beans from their pods. He told his wife, "Take out the overripe ones--they will probably die anyhow--and roast them." She said, "Don't eat too many or the beans growing in your garden will fall out of their pods." "Don't worry," he said, "roast them." She roasted them and served him. He took a handful and popped them into his mouth. "Mmmmmmm. These beans are good. Delicious! Give me the rest of them to eat!" He put more in the fire to roast. He moved over next to his wife's pot and put the rest of the beans in it. She cooked them at a fast boil. He pulled some out with a stick and they popped open. He said, "He he he he he he he he! O aroma of beans!"

Next day, Komaginaro said "I will go see how Brother-in-law is doing with his beans." When he got there he heard no sound of work. He saw some beans almost ripe, others still green. He said, "It's true. He planted a lot of beans. He didn't eat them." Then he heard, "He he he he he he he he! O aroma of beans!" from the space between the buttress roots of the huge tree. In anger he cried out, "'Brother-in-law Planter,' now you are eating that which you were going to plant. You are eating your sister's beans. Your promise to plant them was worthless. Now, change into what you will become!"

Komaginaro picked up his gourd, saying, "You will change into howler monkey." He hit him in the throat. Yaniri put his sorcerer's stone around his neck. Komaginaro said, "Good. It's working. You put your sorcerer's stone around your neck. Now you will change into howler monkey so you will never eat beans again." He was furious at him. He took the remaining beans home. He showed his wife, "See? He was eating the beans he was supposed to plant. Guard these carefully."

She said, “Why shouldn’t he eat them?” But Komaginaro just told her again to guard them. She cooked a few for them to eat and stored the rest. Several days passed. Komaginaro said, “I will go again to see if he has finished planting his garden.” When he got there, he noticed that no further work had been done, and no sound of work. He saw the uncut standing tree, and noticed that all the beans around it had died and withered as far as the eye could see. “Maybe he left because of what I said to him.” When he got to the tree, he heard Yaniri move in the branches and growl. He came down to the ground. Komaginaro shot an arrow at him but it missed. Yaniri charged him fearlessly. Komaginaro turned and ran home.

“He is Howler Monkey,” he said, “he has killed his beans with his shit.” He rallied his neighbors to go help kill him, but when they arrived there were howler monkeys everywhere. Yaniri charged them and almost bit them. They fled. Now there are howler monkeys all over. Their grandfather sits there among them, he multiplies them. Who knows what would have happened if Komaginaro had not been so angry over his beans? Yaniri would have lived as a man. But Komaginaro hit him, causing his throat to swell into a howler pouch.

This is the story of Yaniri I heard long ago.

Emotionally, this narrative flows from Yaniri wanting more beans to plant, to the suspicion of his brother-in-law, to Yaniri ecstatic over the taste and aroma of cooked beans, to his brother-in-law’s rage at him for eating beans that were for planting, to his sister defending him, to his aggression after converting into howler monkey, to the brother-in-law’s fear of him, and finally to the storyteller’s lament that none of this would have happened if the brother-in-law had not gotten angry. This follows the general pattern of Figure 3.1. It also appears to emphasize the badness of the anger rather than the gluttony: Yaniri’s sister forgives him for eating beans, and the story-teller blames his brother-in-law’s anger for Yaniri’s metamorphosis into howler monkey. This transformation is especially serious because the male howler monkey

is regarded as a dangerous sorcerer (seripigari). Once again, as in Narani, and Osheto, someone's unjustified anger and aggression (in the context of a clash of desires) has ended in a demon being loosed upon the earth.

Further evidence of the fear of danger from the inevitable clash of desires in social life is the Matsigenka desire to get away. When they are angry or distraught with loss, both men and women run into the forest to be alone. Men love nothing better than to go off hunting, alone or in pairs. Single households go to their distant gardens to enjoy the isolation, for anywhere from a few days to many years. The social high that accompanies group events like fishing expeditions and beer feasts (see below) has its opposite in the fatigue that seeps into social relations over time, resulting in withdrawal and escape.

The most extreme case of isolation may have been a skilled young man Mike Baksh introduced me to in densely-settled Camaná, who lived alone in his own house and spent long periods on trek without any companions. In Shimaa it was Aradino, who explained that he never gives meat to others because, "I have little and need all I have for myself." He claimed in general neither to give nor receive from others, and his household was often away from the community at Shimaa for long weeks at a time to enjoy his isolated homestead upstream.

It sheds an interesting light on Matsigenka individualism to learn that they are enthusiastic and competitive soccer players. They practice hard and play to win. Individuals strive to shine and whenever someone scores a goal, the audience cheers and those who missed the point turn excitedly to their neighbors and say, tiani igolatake "who scored?" Although there is an undeniable group aspect to this, since one can only shine in the presence of others, the

predominance of grandstanding and a reluctance to pass or collaborate in strategy point to a strongly self-centered motivation.

In contrast to a tendency in western literature to see child development as primarily dependent on parenting and the social context, the Matsigenka theory of child care might be likened to Michaelangelo's idea that the figure he was sculpting was already present in the marble before he began to work, and only required his skill to allow it to emerge. If western theories of child care emphasize the need to impose proper standards of behavior, Matsigenka caretakers emphasize a kind of inevitability that the child will become what it is to become. Like all such dichotomies, this is not an absolute difference but a matter of emphasis.

Anger--. Anger (nokisake "I am angry") is far more prevalent in folktales than it is in everyday behavior. For the Matsigenka, anger is strongly associated with danger and fear, because anger can get out of control and lead to aggression, injury and death. Although we can easily sympathize with the situations that make the Matsigenka angry--theft, aggression, stinginess--we may not so readily appreciate the meaning of anger in the Matsigenka context. In the "Colors of Emotions" study (Johnson et al 1986), for example, although the Matsigenka associated colors and emotions much like subjects from the United States and Mexico, the most obvious difference pertained to anger: whereas for Maya, Spanish, and English subjects anger tended to be closely associated with strength (anger makes you strong), for Matsigenka subjects it was most closely associated with fear (anger is dangerous).

For the most part there is little mystery as to what makes a Matsigenka angry:

Fieldnote 11-24-72 - Roberto told me on Monday that he wished to go to Kiteni on Friday.

I understood he would need money, and promised to pay him what I owed him on Friday. Today, I

told him I owed him 85 soles, and that, lacking small cash, I would give Antonio 500 soles to break in Kiteni and give him his share. He said nothing, but appeared a little morose. Then, as they were departing, I explained again to Antonio, who said he did not know if Roberto was going. I turned to Roberto and asked if he was, and he said no. When I asked why, he replied “85 soles is nothing!” The rafts were already downstream, and it was too late to advance him the money he needed to buy a pair of pants (135 soles). He seemed very disappointed and angry, and left without saying goodbye.

Fieldnote 7-27-73 - Karoroshi pointed out his new field, which he said burned very badly when he tried yesterday. “I am very angry,” he said.

Fieldnote 4-23-73 - Evaristo burned down his house because ikisanaka (he got angry) after his wife died [see the “Death of Serafina,” above].

Fieldnote 8-5-75 - Felipe and Mariano express anger at Aradino for the time, in Shimentaato, when he hit [their sister] Rosa over the head with a 2” stick, hurting her.

Fieldnote 6-24-80 - Mike [Baksh] said that recently the Camaná boys’ [soccer] team had regularly beaten the men, and the men were angry about it and held heated discussions to improve their game.

Fieldnote 6-26-80 - Venturo has asked to transfer from Camaná. He is disappointed: “They get angry and always want to leave. Then I have to argue (pelear) with them to keep them here. They should live like brothers.” I said, “Brothers also fight.” “Yes,” he replied, “but the people here don't know how to forgive.”

Disappointment, loss, theft, violence and humiliation make the Matsigenka angry. And while some anger is expressed in the heat of the moment, the Matsigenka can also carry a grudge, re-kindling old anger even years after the event. Anger is the most common reason given for leaving a hamlet or community.

In everyday demeanor the Matsigenka approach some Apollonian ideal of calm and courtesy. People speak so softly they cannot be heard across the room. Rather than raise their

voices, they send small children with messages. In Shimaa, social graces are carefully observed: visitors (including people with whom one has an old or current grudge) are always offered a mat, conversations begin safely with neutral topics, and all visitors are greeted individually on arrival and again on departure (a general-purpose, “Bye y’all,” is not acceptable here, although it is in more densely-settled Camisea). For the most part, people answer questions with disarming frankness and usually with a smile. This was the pattern both in households where we were unfamiliar visitors and in those where we were regular and even live-in guests.

In our early interactions, we had to watch carefully for signs of irritation with our impositions, for people generally avoided openly expressing it. If our visits were becoming less interesting to them, they simply answered our questions as briefly as possible and without helpful elaboration. If a more direct confrontation were inevitable, it would still be managed with delicacy. For example, early in fieldwork I wanted to measure Javier’s new garden, not knowing that it was in that crucial stage of growth when no one may enter without causing the maize crop to fail:

Fieldnote [11-21-72] - After leaving Julio's and crossing the stream, we encountered Javier standing by the path. I greeted him and he was very reserved (he usually is); when I offered the information that I was going to measure his chacra, he replied, “It is far.” We went on ahead, and some 20 minutes later looked back to find Javier following us, bow and arrows in hand (Roberto laughed, but I began to feel nervous). The upshot was that, when I started to measure his new corn field, Roberto explained to me that Javier didn’t want me to.

Javier was worried about magical harm to his young maize plants and could have confronted me outright, but he tried instead to avoid open conflict by giving me signals that, had I known, indicated his displeasure with my plan. I sensed something was wrong but lacked the cultural

sensitivity to know what it was. Later, after several days of asking questions about the incident of reluctant, and possibly embarrassed, people, I came to understand the situation and was easily able to arrange with Javier to measure his garden after the vulnerable growth phase was over.

The sense of peace and tranquility of life with the Matsigenka is so wonderful that it comes as something of a shock when it is violated. For example, while on a hunting trip early in fieldwork, when I was still willing to hunt animals with the shotgun I had brought, I was asked to bring down a howler monkey:

Fieldnote 1-24-73 - ...after I shot the first yaniri, it fell 30-40 feet out of a tree into a creek bed, but was still alive. The others seemed afraid of it, and Felipe asked if it was a seripigari [shaman]--it was female and without a howler pouch in its throat, and hence not a seripigari. After a few minutes they all began to stone it to death, laughing riotously at its attempts to escape.

The monkey was hurt and kept scrabbling out of the way of the pursuing men who joked back and forth about her terrified screams and futile maneuvers.

On another occasion Aretoro picked up our little kitten by the ear and, as she wiggled and struggled, held her close to his face while saying mishi, mishi, mishi "kitty, kitty, kitty," in a cute-horrible little voice, before dropping her indifferently on the floor. Another time, Aurelio heard a rustling in the rafters and, getting out his bow-and-arrow, impaled a mouse that wriggled for quite a while on the arrowhead while he thumped it pensively, over and over again on its head, snapping his middle finger off his thumb. To a degree, these may not so much reflect cruelty as indifference: not seeing the animals as within the orbit of beings they care about, these men may not feel any sympathy for their suffering.

Yet, this kind of behavior also allows expression of sadistic impulses that are carefully controlled in the human setting. They seem clearly evident in the next episode:

One afternoon Aretoro brought in a heron [trumpeter] he had caught in a trap. He had clipped its wings and laughed as it flopped ineffectually on the ground. A group of men and boys gathered to prod and taunt the bird, which attempted to strike back with its beak, evoking roars of laughter and new taunts. Aretoro suddenly kicked the bird viciously into the air, then did so over and over to the laughter of the group. After a time, seemingly weary of the sport, he abruptly grabbed the bird and broke its neck. The crowd drifted away.

Taunting the trumpeter was similar to the way many people would come and play with our cat by prodding her into a fury and then laughing.

The Matsigenka view anger as a powerful force capable of taking over an individual with disastrous results. Several stories contain a similar episode where a violent man says, “Kill me before I kill you,” or gives instructions about how his enemy may kill him (e.g.. Kashibokani, Shakanari). For example, Julio believes the following to be a true story from the past:

Fieldnote 8-9-75 - Kintiaro was a fierce seripigari who wanted to wipe out Julio's ancestors. He was violent. He went hunting with his classificatory brothers and threatened to kill them: “*I will kill you. Kill me if you want, I don't care. If you don't, I will kill you.*” They attacked him at night and killed him, even though he said it was a joke and begged them not to kill him. They left his body, but he cured himself, except that he remained blind. They attacked him again, and this time cut him up--his blood was black--and put him in the river. But again, with the help of inetsane [his spirit helpers], he reassembled himself, though still blind. After a long series of events, they managed to kill Kintiaro.

In another example, the Matsigenka believe that, out of envy, a man may sabotage another man's crops by magic:

Fieldnote [5-19-73] - Once there was a man whose crops were dying because an enemy, Teshaniri, was killing them. He saw Teshaniri leaving sanorishi leaves in his garden and decided to kill him. He went with his wife, but could not kill him because Teshaniri was strong and knew how to fly.

The man made a kitsari [men's net], then went hunting. Teshaniri came upon the kitsari and cut it to shreds. The man wanted to kill Teshaniri, so he went with two strong men (as strong as Teshaniri) to kill him. They found him in his house and the man cut his leg at the tendon behind his left knee until blood flowed. Teshaniri fell to the ground, saying, "Why do you want to kill me?"

The man replied, "Because you killed my crops and ruined my kitsari."

"All right," Teshaniri replied, *"kill me so I won't come again and destroy your house and fields."* He cut Teshaniri's throat and whole body, and he never was bothered again.

There appear to be two messages implied in such stories: first, that anger can overwhelm someone to the degree that he can do no other than kill; and, second, that some people are so intrinsically violent that they must be killed. This latter idea is especially clear in the story of a man in Shimaa who on two separate occasions lost his temper and hit someone. After the second incident, the men of the surrounding households said to him, "You must leave here. You are too angry and cannot live here anymore." The next morning, they found his *cushma* lying on the rocks at the edge of the river. According to one version, he drowned in the river. But in another version, he still roams the forest on the other side of the river, naked like a wild animal.

Although, as we have seen, running away is a common response to anger, angry confrontation does occur. When Erena wrote her love letter to the assistant schoolteacher, his wife confronted her in a public setting and gave her a tongue-lashing. Insults, shouting matches,

and fistfights break out at beer feasts. These are frightening to other participants and observers, who try to intervene in the fighting, disarm the anger with humor and strained laughter, or leave the scene. The following angry outburst occurred in the context of beer-drinking (a partial transcription is in O. Johnson 1978: 144-145):

Fieldnote 8-7-75 - Felipe and Mariano working late today; Ekitoro was helping by cutting brush with kotsiri. Ekitoro comes in about 4:30. Then about 5 Felipe comes in. Both he and Mariano are drunk from a pot of shitea they had with them in the garden. When Mariano returned, he balled his son out at great length about how hard he would have to work as a man. Then he came here [Felipe's house] and told us [Orna and me] how we were like a real father and mother to him. He reminded his son about the time he (the son) burned down the house.

Later, we went to Mariano's house to drink beer. Julio was there with his family. Mariano and Felipe got very drunk. Still later, Mariano came here and sang [orated] in a high-pitched voice for a long time, getting angrier and angrier at Rosa (not clear for what). Felipe was also angry at Eva for not making beer.

Mariano jumped up and ran in and started slapping Rosa around. The other women got agitated, aroused Felipe who went out and had a long shouting match in which Mariano repeated how much he was working for Felipe (each slapped own self quite a bit). His anger about this was already reflected in his outburst against his son earlier.

8-8-75 - Things still hairy in the morning. Felipe and Mariano are very mad at each other. Karoroshi says tovaiti notsarogake--tera nonseraritake (I'm scared, I'm not brave).

Karoroshi's expression means, literally, "plenty I-afraid-am--not I-masculine-am." The profound anger of his two brothers-in-law had him frightened, and he packed up his family and left the party early in the evening.

The fight itself was fairly well-contained. Mariano's real anger was at the weeks of hard labor he had been putting into his brother's garden, but he first deflected it onto his son, addressing the real issue of hard work, then recalling how his son had burned down his house. Then he turned on his wife, finally unleashing abusive blows that agitated everyone and required his brother to intervene. Felipe was the real object of his wrath, and the two brothers carried on an intense high-pitched diatribe outside the house, in which, interestingly, they refrained mostly from striking each other, slapping themselves instead. This was a major fight. Mariano was sullen for days thereafter, and finally moved his family to a new site a kilometer downriver.

The worst of the bad feeling between the two close brothers passed after some months, but Mariano continued to live separately. In this way anger brings about the social instability that the schoolteacher at Camaná had complained about: "They get angry and always want to leave." In many folktales where blame is assigned, the blame is placed on one who got angry (above see Osheto, Shakanari, and Yaniri; also Kashiri (Chapter 7).

Although envy is not a prominent concern of the Matsigenka, there is some evidence that people are envious of others and that envy can lead to anger. We already have encountered a story where a man was killed for enviously bewitching another man's crops. The Matsigenka are also watchful of what others have and will inquire in detail as to someone else's possessions. Upon returning from our visits to town, we were always asked what we brought and for whom. People would sometimes minimize the value of gifts we brought them. For example,

Fieldnote 5-20-73 - we brought back a large pot for Pororinta, but when I asked Aretoro if the pot was large, he said 'No, it's small, no good,' at which Maestro laughed good-naturedly. My feeling was that Aretoro was pleased and just joking.

Envy comes up in a number of folktales, especially the envy of a mother toward her son's wife. In the tale, "The Sky Woman" (Ross 1947: 49-50), the key event is that the mother-in-law's envy toward her son's wife--who is the Sun's daughter with special powers--causes her to stir a boiling pot with the leg of her daughter-in-law's newborn son. This brutal act drives the Sun's daughter away in anger, taking her great talents (she can have a child without giving birth, weave cushmas with hardly any work) back to the sky with her, depriving all human women of these benefits forever. When the envious mother-in-law's husband blames her for this disaster, however, it is her anger he identifies as the cause of all the trouble. Envy, which is linked to desire, is not itself the problem, but the anger it stimulates.

In sum, the Matsigenka understand that frustration in interpersonal relations, which nearly always comes out of a clash of desires, leads to anger. Recognizing the strength of emotions in themselves, and the degree to which they feel entitled to have what they want and to feel what they feel, they know that anger can potentially take someone over. Anger out of control invariably leads to aggression.

Aggression--. Actual physical aggression was quite rare in the vicinity of Shimaa in our experience. In contrast to the pervasive appearance in folk literature of threats, blows, homicides, and soul-murders (spirit soul-stealing), daily life is overwhelmingly tranquil. The entire record of major violence in Shimaa around the time of our research was the infanticide attempts reported above, the violent man driven from the community, and a homicide reported

to have happened over a love affair in the not-too-distant past. We also met a man whose face was disfigured by a suicide attempt with a shotgun in the mouth before the Shima school-community was formed. But tales of infanticide, homicide and suicide tended to blend into folk literature, so that we were often unsure whether a death really happened or was a projection of violence into folktales.

Related to the process of projections is that any death is upsetting and brings about discussion of possible causes, including violence. When children die, gossips are apt to recall that they were dropped or beaten sometime before the death. When women die in childbirth, supernatural aggression is suspected. When a man dies, it was a demon who took human form as his lover to steal his soul. A death becomes an opportunity to project onto the outside anger that is ordinarily contained, with some difficulty, in the individual.

At least in folktales, not all aggressive behavior is attributed to anger. In a story of cannibalism, Shampanari (Ross 1947: 1-8), the cannibal kills only in order to eat human flesh. It is his furious nephew whose aggression flows from anger.

SHAMPANARI

Shampanari lived with his wife; his sister lived at a distance. His wife died and he wondered how she might taste, so he ate a little bit and liked it so much he ate her all up. Now he lost his taste for animals and hungered only for human flesh. He visited his sister and asked for a couple of her daughters to visit him, arguing that there was plenty of meat at his house and they would not go hungry. She agreed, so he took his nieces home and, when they were asleep, crushed their skulls and ate them.

Shampanari went back to his sister and, calming her suspicions, invited more nieces, whom he also ate. Finally, only her nursing baby and her eldest son were left, so Shampanari invited the elder nephew. But the latter was suspicious and figured out what had happened.

Mourning his lost sisters, he anticipated his uncle's attack and instead caught him and burned him in the fire. While burning, Shampanari cried out, "Nephew, you are very angry with me!" On returning home, the nephew blamed his mother, "If only you had not let them go!"

Shampanari's violence, unlike that of his nephew, does not spring from rage: he, in Trickster-like innocence, simply wants to eat his nieces, and it is necessary to kill them first. This is a picture of a completely amoral, self-centered agent--not unlike the selfish husband in the Narani tale--that the Matsigenka appear to assume is potentially present in some, if not all, people.

The Matsigenka avoid anger like a contaminant. Shepard (1999: 54) provides a telling example of how the Matsigenka viewed Yora violence:

Though the two groups exchanged no information regarding medicinal plants directly, the Matsigenka became aware of some Yora medicines by observing the trail left in retreat after raiding expeditions. In 1987, long before I worked with the Yora, an older Matsigenka man, Quispe, pointed out to me a Chondodendron (Menispermaceae) species, saying it was a plant used by the Yora. He had observed that the Yora stripped the leaves from the plant, but did not know what they used it for. He had no interest in experimenting with the plant as a medicine, since he feared it might make the Matsigenka become warlike and violent like the Yora.

Anxiety and Fear--. (notsarogake "I am afraid;" tsaronti "coward, fearful person"). In stories, the sequence from desire to anger to aggression is followed often by someone expressing fear, a reasonable connection given that the Matsigenka assume anger can overwhelm a person and lead to out-of-control aggression. Still, I did not experience the Matsigenka as fearful people. Their peaceful faces were ready to break into smiles at any

moment and lacked the haunted eyes or frowns of people who are plagued by anxiety. During a storm, or while awaiting the arrival of relatives who had been traveling on the river, their anxiety would become unmistakable as they cringed after a thunderclap or asked, “Where can they be?” But these moments passed when the storm ended or the relatives arrived safely, and the usual tranquility returned. When I surprised someone by coming close before they noticed me, their eyes would widen, followed by a spontaneous grin, rather than the startled jerk and “Oh, you scared me!” I was familiar with in my own cultural world.

The words for fear describe immediate danger from other people (notsarogake “I am afraid”) or from dangerous animals and spirits (nopinkake “I am afraid”). The concept of anxiety or worry is rarely expressed, although nokenkiake, “I am thinking about,” is sometimes used in this sense, as “I am thinking (wondering, worried) about my maize crop.” A general absence of anxiety was among the most pleasant aspects of living among the Matsigenka, and I experienced a sharp drop in my own level of anxiety while among them. Watching my anxiety build back up to “normal” levels after my return to the U.S. gave me a keen appreciation of the truth of the description of ours as the Age of Anxiety.

I attribute their relative lack of anxiety to a combination of a reality in which anger is well-controlled and unlikely to erupt without warning, and to an inner life relatively free from intolerant self-judgements (a harsh superego). This may seem strange, after all the evidence we have seen for a fear of violence arising from out-of-control impulsiveness. But it is a matter of emphasis. In pointing out that Matsigenkas are concerned about impulsiveness, I do not imply that they are more concerned than other people. On the contrary, they seem to me to be far

less judgemental of themselves and others than people are in the modern peasant and urban societies with which I am familiar.

Padre Alves Ferrero complained that the Matsigenka “permits neither repression nor criticism” (Chapter 2). This is certainly not true--they control lust, wrath, gluttony, sloth and other “deadly sins” effectively in their own way, including both criticism (via teaching and gossip) and repression (to the degree that they deny their own impulses and project them into in-laws and folktale characters). But Alves Ferrero is ethnocentrically pointing to a real difference between his own background and what he experienced among the Matsigenka, namely, the Matsigenka are not guilt-ridden. Indeed, to label the impulses they control as “sins,” as I just did, is partly misleading. For example, through contact with the SIL linguists, some Matsigenkas have given up ayahuasca, and some have also foresworn alcohol (after widespread modern alcoholism nearly destroyed their communities). But when I asked Roberto of Shimaa about this, he told me that he had tried to give up drinking manioc beer because he did not want to go to hell, but, he said, “What can I do? I get thirsty!”

It is this acceptance of the inevitability of appetites that will seek fulfillment that Padre Ferrero accurately saw posing difficulties to effective missionization. This is further evidence that the Matsigenka take for granted a center of willfulness in every individual, and accept it as basically good, not a source of continual anxiety about transgression and sin.

So, fear tends to be invoked in a moment of perceived danger, like a storm or encounter with a snake. In an unusual anxiety dream, Roberto expressed some fear of the bush plane trip we were scheduled to take the next day:

Fieldnote 8-24-75 - Roberto told me his dream from last night; he was travelling down the Kompiroshiato on a raft with his whole family--Julio, Juana, Guillermo, Elva--and the trip was very rough and dangerous, with fast water and huge rocks looming. They were going "just for a visit."

We were indeed to be traveling in the downstream direction, albeit by air. In the dream Roberto's anxiety is represented by the rough, dangerous rapids and looming boulders. In addition to the understandable fears associated with travel by single-engine plane over the rainforest, there is also a complex meaning to the direction "downstream" (kamatikya). It is at once the direction of modern Peruvian society, the direction in which ancient enemies dwelt, and the direction the soul must travel past Moon's weirs if it is to reach heaven. It is understandable that he felt a little apprehension about traveling in that direction in a single engine plane. As is common when reporting dreams, he commented, "It was just as bright as day, although I dreamt at night."

But we could go too far in exploring the realistic basis of Matsigenka fear and overlook the occurrence of what Freud (1933: 78) called "neurotic anxiety." In contrast to real anxiety, neurotic anxiety is based not on an external threat, but a perceived internal threat posed by the clash between id impulses and ego restraint. For the Matsigenka, this internal struggle is liable to become public during a life-or-death crisis, when impulsive behavior is identified as the cause of the crisis.

For example, late in her pregnancy Eva became very anxious that something was wrong, although subsequent events proved she was in perfect health. At this time, however, she had a hysteria-like attack in which she hallucinated a snake and fainted. Felipe rushed to her

side. Cradling her in his arms, he whistled and blew on her head to recall her soul. When she came to, the family began a search for broken dietary taboos. They finally settled on Eva's co-wife, Amaria, who had eaten shito monkey during Eva's pregnancy. Having solved this frightening puzzle, Felipe drained off a whole liter of manioc beer in one draft. It is likely that the anxiety behind Eva's attack had something to do with her angry and competitive relationship with Amaria.

Not following taboos is willful and impulsive behavior. It is analogous to the common theme in folktales where disaster results when someone disobeys the leader or shaman. For example, tales explaining the origins of Quechua-speakers (puñaruna) and of Euro-Americans (virakocha) describe how someone ignored the shaman's advice and created a path or opening into this world from a lower plane of existence.

In the tale of Anteater (Ross 1947: 36) a shaman warns a man, Shigentini, to come to his house or be eaten by Anteater. But Shigentini ignores the warning and Anteater eventually kills him and discards the corpse. The shaman discovers the corpse and sadly announces: "I tried to call you. I told you to come, but you didn't. If you had, he likely wouldn't have killed you." Such lamentations are the usual accompaniment of disobedience in folktales, and point to the underlying anxiety about transgressions, with the shaman playing the part of the authority figure.

Dreams often contain images that frighten the dreamers. Jaguar, snake, a great wind, turbulent waters in the river frequently appear in dream accounts, signifying great danger. Matsigenkas are quite interested in their dreams and stress their vividness and realism. Emelio reported this dream in Camaná in 1976:

Now, I dreamt earlier. It was like daytime. As I went along there hunting, I came across jaguar sitting in the trail. He climbed a tree, guarding the trail. Then he jumped. He didn't come for me. Then I shot him. It was as bright as day, but it was a dream.

Then I woke up. I was here in my sleeping place. I was so frightened I was shaking. It didn't happen--it was a dream.

Then I slept again. I dreamt again. I dreamt about Brother. We went hunting peccary together. I shot one peccary and Brother shot one. I awoke. Nothing. It was a dream. Now, that's all.

And here is a dream of Leonidas (Camaná 1976)

A while ago I dreamt many different dreams. In one the demon Kamagarini took human form. He carried me far away. He wanted to kill me quickly, but I took my arrows and shot and killed him. Then I went far away alone. Lots of Kamagarini came for me, they tried to stab me. But in my dream I wasn't afraid. I protected myself well. I was able to kill those demons. I was very frightened in my soul. I had no strength. But then I woke up, very frightened. I wondered what my dream had meant. I don't know.

I slept, I dreamt of rain. It fell heavily. I couldn't run away. Everything was a river of mud. It destroyed every living thing. But I had wings like a sparrow. It was as though my soul was flying through air. I took one man with me. I carried him up. Then I awoke. I was in my house here. That dream of mine, it was as if I were dead. All those others I saw in my dream were dead. But everything I have told of my dreams is nothing [[kogapage](#)]. I didn't really see them.

Then I slept again. I dreamt about jaguar. He came for me at my house, to get me. Then I shot him. I killed him.

Now, that's all.

In these and many similar dreams, for women as well as men, we find threatening episodes that are sometimes experienced by the dreamer as frightening, and sometimes not. In

either case, they are evidence of an underlying sense of danger that comes out in the dream state.

It is a common Matsigenka belief that certain kinds of dreams portend death, a theme also found in folktales. We have seen that if a man dreams of an encounter with a deer, he will encounter Deer (spirit) in the form of his wife or lover and have intercourse, not realizing that his soul is being broken up until later, when he becomes very ill and then dies. Such a dream may be interpreted as anxiety over sexual desire (especially extramarital sex), that, if acted upon, will be punished by sickness and death.

A similar process may be the basis for the fear that loved ones upon their death can become terrible demons. The Matsigenka reasoning is that the deceased selfishly want their loved ones' souls to keep them company in the next life. This is one reason that Evaristo, angry at his wife's death, burned down his house: he assumed that she, in her anger and loss, would linger as a demon and steal his soul. His anger and loss are projected into his now demon-wife. In this case, the demon she was feared to have turned into is segamairini, with a long snout and penis, who uses her penis to tear open a man's chest and belly, killing him and stealing his soul.

All of these fears are really about illness, suffering, and death. Since these are realities the Matsigenka experience directly throughout life, we may say that there is an undercurrent of anxiety ready to surface when omens of various kinds set them off. In addition to dreams and illness, seeing a vision (notsavitetara, "I have a vision") can be such an omen. Eva visioned a snake before fainting, but others have reported seeing a butterfly (notsavitetara pachantaro) in the corner of their eye then finding it gone, or mistaking a log in the forest for a person. These visions are actually glimpses of demons and carry mortal danger.

A portion of these fears postulate a simply malicious, possibly jealous, world of others. Men often avoid the trails near other settlements. Being away from their immediate neighborhood, they fear snakes or other dangerous animals that might attack for encroaching on others' hunting territories. Or, people fear the excessive tiredness that can be caused by magical herbs used against them by a spurned lover. Body aches and pains can also be caused by the wasp spirit that maliciously shoots an invisible arrow. Incidentally, excessive tiredness and body aches can be explained by amebiasis, but those invisible beings (amebas) are not recognized in Matsigenka folk medicine.

Baer (1983: 7) points out that for the Matsigenka, fear is a common reaction to anything believed to be contaminating, such as exposure to menstrual blood, violation of food taboos, and dangerous feelings like anger and greed:

Contamination produces fright and this "opens the body." When frightened, a body opens, leaving it defenseless, easy prey for any witch sending off darts and menacing helping-spirits.... [However] Demons that bring illness and death can themselves be frightened away (by certain body-painting designs).

In short, the Matsigenka weave realistic and "neurotic" fears into a tapestry of danger, where realistic concerns about health and safety are linked to failures--one's own and others'--of impulse (desire) control. While not anxiety-ridden, their tranquility is not far from being disturbed by perceptions of danger both material (poisonous snakes really exist) and spiritual (snakes are the arrows of demons who hunt our souls for food). The impulses that move spirits to harm people are easily recognized, because they are the same selfish impulsive motives that humans try to control in everyday life. Although the Matsigenka have no exact word for "guilt"

and show no evidence of the self-hate and self-condemnation that accompanies full-blown guilt over sin, they do hold people responsible (ipakagantanake; B. Snell 1998: 175), and there is something guilt-like (like a superego) about the accusations and punishments that accompany impulsive behavior in dreams and folktales.

They do have a word for shame (nashiventaka “I am embarrassed or ashamed”) and it can be a source of anxiety, particularly in the form of public ridicule. The Matsigenka are no strangers to ridicule, but at the same time they appear to be relatively immune to its effects.

Here are some examples:

Fieldnote 9-9-72 - I asked what an unfamiliar pile of leaves on the floor was. This latter question occasioned some embarrassment (he first showed me the shinki [maize] sitting next to it, then a tomato del monte, and finally told me it was igatsi [feces], at the sound of which everybody broke into giggles.)

Fieldnote 5-10-73 - Around 2:30 [Felipe’s 4-year-old daughter] had lovingly caressed the remaining smoked fish, but without taking any. Now, at 2:50, she takes a small piece (almost guiltily, it appeared to me). [She was alone with the fish and only saw me watching after taking the meat, grinning sheepishly after she discovered me watching her.]

Fieldnote 7-28-75 - Maestro apologized that there was no meat.

Fieldnote 12-9-72 - All students were asked to sing (even Tito) except for Mauro. Mikaiera and Alicia (downstream) were asked to sing, but could not; “ashiventaka bastante” (plenty embarrassed), Antonio explained.

Fieldnote 8-21-76 - Interviewing Aurelio: he was very shy, almost speechless, while many observers stood around. I waited while he squirmed, then suggested we work alone in schoolhouse, where he worked very well.

Despite these descriptions, for the most part, the Matsigenka appear not to be uncomfortably shy or afraid in public settings. On the contrary, they seem self-possessed when in public, free to watch and comment, to participate in and frankly enjoy what is going on without shame.

The most intense forms of embarrassment appeared in the public celebrations organized by Maestro around national holidays. He would have students rise singly or in groups to sing or recite texts. A few students boldly performed, but the majority showed some mild shyness-- looking down, covering shy grins with their hands, speaking or singing softly, and running with giggles to their seats after completing the performance. At the other extreme were a few who were so overcome that they could not perform and ran to their seats after a few stanzas. But there was no breakdown in tears, and no lingering effects: after reaching their seats, they resumed their normal, comfortable demeanor. It was as if their *shyness* was just something that happened to them, not anything to be *ashamed* of.

Verbal assaults and ridicule in public also involve some shaming, but in the cases I observed, the recipients of the attack did not appear overly disturbed. They would stoically “take their medicine,” attack back with barbs of their own, or defiantly deny or justify the acts of which they were accused. It is not easy to shame a Matsigenka.

One reason for this may be found in the way shame is used in child rearing. Children are constantly admonished to correct their behavior, and shame may be used as part of this larger process: “If you eat like that, you will grow up to be tapir,” or, “You are lazy like howler monkey.” But, as we have seen, these admonishments are administered with little heat or danger. The young child appears to regard them as it does the rest of its environment: with mild curiosity, but without anxiety. Parents patiently accept the child’s attitude, which is nine-tenths

willful disregard and one-tenth compliance. As the child grows older, the proportion of compliance gradually grows at the expense of the disregard. The part that shame plays in this process is limited--it has an effect, but is tempered by the individual's powerful sense that desire is his or her own business and is taken for granted by family and friends (who are aware of and accepting toward their own willfulness).

Joy/Happiness--. (noshinetake "I am happy"). If the expression of anger is common in folktales but rare in everyday life, then the opposite is true of happiness. My deepest sense of the Matsigenka is that their ordinary existence, while physically hard, is one of peace and relative contentment, punctuated by moments of strong feeling that usually pass quickly. Of course, some episodes of illness or anger last much longer, but these are rare. I discovered that, as I settled into fieldwork, I felt an unaccustomed tranquility, which I identified with happiness. I became most acutely aware of this feeling when I came home to the U.S., and found the stresses of my own life quickly engulfing me, leaving me with a longing for Shimaa, a mild case of nostalgia for paradise lost.

The Matsigenka, however, do not often use the term noshinetake to label this everyday contentment. They use it to describe feelings closer to elation and joy. For example, at a beer feast drunken men would continually ask me, pishinetake "Are you happy?" I usually said I was happy, even if I wasn't--it seemed rude to say otherwise. Regardless of my response, however, they would inform me more than once that they were "very happy." They would also use the term to label the delight when a special good happens, like a successful hunt or a return to health.

In the folktales, happiness is one of the least commonly described feelings. Usually, it occurs near the end of a story, after the trials have been endured and the heroes achieve a happy ending. In some cases, the happiness occurs when a mother is reunited with her lost child. In others, it is when the heroes reach the promised land of the Unseen Ones. Of 29 tales, only six have happy endings for some of the protagonists, and then only after much violence and suffering. Clearly, depicting happiness is not the main purpose of the folktales.

One text that does depict a happy state is The Immortals (Ross 1947: 45-6):

TERIRA INEERO IGAMANE (The Immortals [not he-sees his -death])

They live in the forest. They have wives and children. When their wives give birth, they feel no pain. If they give birth at noon and cut the umbilical cord, by mid-afternoon the baby is sitting up, by evening he is walking, and by dawn he is fully grown up.

They take good people (from earth) when they die, but the bad ones they take not. They have long hair. When it is sunny, they walk about; when cloudy, they do not walk. They are unseen, they are invisible.

They eat boquichico fish, a little from the backbone, then throw it back in the water, where it goes on living. They do the same with its scales. Guan does not fear them, comes right to their houses. Jaguar does not attack them; they call jaguars their dogs. They pick fruit, eat it, by next morning a new one has grown back. They dig manioc tubers, next morning a new one has grown back. The plant does not die. When they harvest banana, they do not cut down the tree, they merely cut the stalk; next day a new one has grown back. They weed their gardens a little, the weeds do not grow back.

When they cut out the palm heart, the palm does not lie down but straightens back up. Whatever trees they cut down, they do not die; they grow again. Their houses never wear out, they are always new. The manioc beer they drink is never sour but always sweet. They have

canoes that they pole strong and fast. Unlike people, they do not sleep while traveling--they arrive in one day.

Their cushmas never wear out, their teeth never fall out, they never get sick. They have flutes, they have string instruments (igovoire), they always sing beautifully. They are different, not like people.

This story tells of the happy state of the perfect beings also known as the Unseen Ones (Chapter 7).

In the real world, group events, with or without beer, occasion unusual happiness (joy). As we will see in Chapter 5, cooperative work events like barbasco fishing stimulate joviality, exaggerated courtesy, and playfulness. These social highs cannot be sustained for more than two or three days, but cooperative work rarely lasts that long. Some of the elation may be stimulated by the anticipation of fruits of the collaboration like fish. But, because elation can even accompany such drudgery as clearing a garden or weeding a landing strip, it owes at least some of its strength to sociability as such, the opportunity to interact in close quarters with acquaintances who normally pursue separate lives. The obvious pleasure schoolchildren take in showing up for school early and staying late may also owe something to this kind of social high.

Visits between communities, which are organized around soccer matches, have also become happy occasions. The host community provides food, and conversation is animated. The game itself draws a large crowd that cheers not only goals, but good plays in general. Fans discuss the speed and skill of individual players, and passers-by ask how the game is going. The soccer players from Shimaa are athletic, well-conditioned, skilled and aggressive. They are competitive with the more experienced teams from Quechua-speaking communities.

More commonly, recreational socializing involves smaller groups of close relatives who also live close by and interact regularly. Their get-togethers are often supplied with small to moderate quantities of manioc beer. People sit around in the shade or outside in the cool evening, picking up small tasks and setting them aside at their pleasure, recounting recent events or folktales, relaxed and good humored.

At larger beer feasts, where there is plenty of beer and festivities go on for 48 hours or more, the highs (and lows) are more extreme. As drunkenness waxes, courtesy wanes. The man who asks, “Are you happy?” pushes his face into yours and insists on an answer, grinning with wet lips. Requests for more beer become demands. Men lose themselves in drumming or flute playing and ignore whatever other rhythms or melodies are going on around them. Dancers dart and swirl nonstop, eyes half-closed, faces lighted in ecstasy or trance.

Much of the hilarity now centers on jokes. A good joke is to get mad at someone through some other, like scolding a child when the target is clearly the parent. Or one may tell a funny story about another person who is present, barely disguising his identity. These are imakempitakena “he kids me,” what Wayne Snell calls “ear-stopper” jokes. A good person knows how to take the joke without showing irritation.

Not all humor has this edge of aggression. A man may make fun of himself, as when I asked Omenko why he moved to Shimaa from his previous settlement, and he answered, “I was lazy.” Or, an absurdity can bring an onset of the giggles, as when I asked if there were any grey-haired people in the region. Someone finally remembered having seen one, causing another round of giggles. A story of misfortune, which would elicit comments like “Oh?” or “Is that right?” if the victim were present, can sometimes cause laughter if the victim is not around.

Pain and Mourning--. In describing myself as “happy” among the Matsigenka, I was comparing a stressful professional life at home with a relatively carefree, adventuresome field study during which I was either healthy or able to treat afflictions like amebiasis with effective medication. For all their good-natured calm, life for the Matsigenka is hard and they suffer much. Their life histories are full of accounts of the early death of parents, spouses and children. Their usual greeting, tera pimantsigate “You’re not sick?,” is a reminder of how illness is a central preoccupation. The most desired foods and materials are scarce and much of work life is filled with arduous tasks like weeding and cloth manufacture. They are careful not to overindulge children so that they will not grow up to be lazy, stingy malcontents.

We will see later that the sick or suffering person is left alone. One is expected to endure on one’s own. A nurse, Joan Lemke, once told me she found the Matsigenka to be among the most stoical of the tribal peoples she treated in her clinic at Yarina Cocha. Shepard (1999: 69) writes, “the Matsigenka take a stoic attitude, understating their pains and illnesses....” I also found that even very sick people who must have been in considerable pain would come to our house but wait to be noticed rather than show their discomfort. They would matter-of-factly describe their problem and accept treatment with few questions or comments.

I only witnessed one exception to this, when late in her pregnancy Eva believed her fetus had died and that she was herself in mortal danger. Orna and I became frightened for her and ordered a very expensive plane trip to take her to the hospital. While walking to the landing strip, Eva was so excruciatingly slow that the 15 minute walk could have taken several hours. But Wayne Snell, who had arrived with the plane, told her to get moving, which she did with

amazing alacrity. After the plane had landed in Pucallpa, she gave birth without complications in the back of the truck on the way to the hospital. Wieseke (1965) also reports a woman who had no clinical symptoms but exaggerated her “near-death” condition by writhing on the floor, then opening one eye to see how the effect was working. Her health was completely restored a few days later when her husband returned from a long absence.

The Matsigenka frequently say choeni nokamake “I almost died” when describing an illness episode. At first I thought this was an “hysterical” exaggeration like those just described. But it is instead simply an appreciation of how fragile life is, and how often people do die very quickly from conditions that could be readily treated in a clinic or hospital. Many people also told of episodes of weeks, months (and in one case years) in which infections and injuries kept them housebound in pain. Men with painful conditions (water on the knee, toe split by machete, foot wounded by shotgun) still limped to their fields every day. Pain and suffering are familiar conditions to everybody.

Stoic acceptance can take the form of resignation, as in the following incident from Camaná:

Fieldnote 6-25-80 - Several women, led by Viviana, came by saying that a child at Alejandro's house was “dead.” I asked if he still had breath and they said yes. We finished lunch and went over to see his mother holding him on her lap, his face extremely pale, breathing in little grunts, his eyes rolled back, sweating. His mother offered him the breast but he was unable to take it. We discussed treatment with the sanitario, who said the mother had refused treatment (no money). People standing around were pronouncing the child dead, and it almost seemed as if they wanted him to die. They discussed the poor care the mother had given him. Earlier, Manuel had asked for

some Mentizol [worm medicine], that I gave him, but it seemed too little, too late. I suggested that if he survived until tomorrow, ameba treatment might save him.

Everyone is pronouncing it dead--interesting how they have given up. The sanitario said she is not a good mother. Later, Ventura said that the father doesn't want this child because Eleoterio is the real father.

Later, neighbors came by with the news that the boy had died. Manuel used this opportunity to correct my impression that there had been an opportunity to save the boy's life: Eleoterio's son had the same problem, a blow on the back caused him to turn yellow and eventually die, despite all efforts by Manuel and the Friedlis [Swiss missionaries] to save him. Ventura had also insisted that this was an illness that had to result in death: no efforts to save him would have effect.

It is a common Matsigenka belief that a blow to the back, often caused by a fall, is fatal because it causes soul loss. Although no one said so in this case, the “fatalism” that struck me at the time probably reflects the belief that this illness was essentially spiritual.

Though stoic in the face of suffering, the Matsigenka feel loss strongly, and mourn long after the loss. Even when travelling away from home, they speak of missing home (nokenkiakero “I think about it”). They speak of much more intense loss and grieving by combining the root -kenki- (think) with the word for soul (-sure-), to form nokenkisuretaka, “I grieve” (literally, “my soul thinks”; cf. Shepard 1999: 89). Evaristo, who pragmatically lamented the loss of his Serafina's weaving skills, nonetheless also described to me how for more than a year after her death he could barely drag himself to work and could find no joy in life. And Mike Baksh found that his good friend Aurelio, months after the loss of his young son to poisonous frog's eggs, said that all he dreams about is “my son, night and day” (Baksh 1980).

The following dream, reported by Casiano in Camaná in 1976, includes a poignant reflection of his feelings over the death of his 4-year-old son.

Yesterday I dreamt again. I dreamt of a big wind. It blew jiririririri. As I watched, it knocked down a tree and carried it far away. It was as clear as day. Then I was going along with my daughter, the wind was no longer beating on us. Then I awoke. It was a dream, I was there in my sleeping place.

Then I fell asleep and dreamt again. Many men arrived from downstream. They said to me, "Let's all eat together." We prepared the food and ate it. Then one of the men gave me 1,000 Soles [about \$15.00]. I bought ten knives. Then I said, "Give me that shotgun, so that I may shoot guan." He said, "It costs too much, you can't afford it." I said, "If it costs too much, forget it." Then I awoke, it was a dream.

Again I slept. I dreamt I went to Mantaro [where he lived before]. I dreamt that on arriving I saw my son who had died. He said, "Father, I miss you. Now where did you go?" I said, "I went to Parotori." He said, "Father, you got angry at me, you abandoned me." I said, "You died. If you hadn't died, I wouldn't have abandoned you. Like your sister, she didn't die and I didn't abandon her." Then he told me, he said, "Father, I'm coming." I said, "Let's go." He was really coming. Then I awoke: nothing. My head ached.

Then I slept again. I dreamt again of my son. I dreamt that, upon arriving, I saw him drinking beer there with his group [itovaigavageti]. He said, "Father, drink." He gave me some to drink. It was as clear as day. I saw that my son was grown, he had a wife. Then I said to him, "My son, I will come." He said, "You can't come." He could go where I, not being dead, could never go. I said to him, "Maybe later I will never see you again." He said, "Later, you will see me." He gave me arrows. He said, "Father, these are deadly to spider monkey." I took them and went home on the path. I slipped and fell down. I arrived here at my house.

I awoke. This was my dream. Now, that's all.

In this dream, it is clear that Casiano wants to be reunited with his dead son. Significantly, his son says to him, "Father, you got angry with me. You abandoned me." Since it is Casiano's dream, we must ask why he has his son say such a thing. On the one hand, this may be a reversal and a projection: it was Casiano who was angry when his son "abandoned" him. On the other hand, Casiano may be feeling some guilt over his son's death, that he was unable to prevent. In either case, there is an accusation in his son's words, a sign of the anger that accompanies the loss of death. And the dream is moving evidence of how the boy's death still haunts Casiano more than a year after it happened.

Giving and Receiving: A Lesson in Matsigenka Social Relations

Orna and I had to learn how to exchange with the Matsigenka for our own survival, since we had to live with them for months at a time without access to outside goods. Our experience was an indelible lesson in Matsigenka social relations. We began in a relatively open and generous way, wanting to distribute our trade goods to demonstrate our friendliness and desire for reciprocity. As outsiders who were intruding into and disturbing their lives, we owed them some benefits in return. Also, as an economic anthropologist I knew, or thought I knew, that the royal road to social relations is through exchange.

So we distributed items we had brought as gifts: kitchen knives, needles and thread, fishhooks and line, glass and ceramic beads, soda crackers and candy. But the Matsigenka did not behave quite as I had expected them to. For one, they did not appear grateful: they quietly accepted a gift and put it away without comment. This was not too surprising, for I had read of other native American cultures where people contained their emotions rather than express them,

where effusive gestures of thanks were unwanted and even aroused suspicion. It left me with a strange feeling to bring a gift I understood to be special and have it treated as though (in my cultural terms) it were without value, yet I assumed the recipients of my gifts would show their appreciation in some reciprocal act of generosity.

Although there was some truth to this analysis, the patience it sustained only gave time for a more disconcerting pattern to reveal itself. The Matsigenka usually offered nothing back. I did not expect anything right away, but when after days and weeks no return gifts were offered, I began to feel uneasy. We needed fresh foods that we saw in the homes of our new acquaintances--manioc, papaya, eggs, fish, pineapple, banana--but they almost never offered to share these with us. When we began to be more assertive, and to ask for, say, bananas, people would look us straight in the eye and utter a word we came to know very well: mameri "there are none." This even when quantities of bananas were clearly visible against the wall just behind the speaker.

To add to my chagrin, people wanted more from us than we were prepared to give. In addition to the items we brought in for trade, the Matsigenka quickly noticed that we had many other desirable goods, like matches, kerosene, cooking oil, nails, and rope. We had brought these in in quantities geared to our own needs, but found visitors at our door several times a day wanting these, too. At first we said yes, but when we noticed our supplies dwindling at an alarming rate we had to begin to say no.

And here I learned a valuable lesson. When I said no, at first people generally persisted. But after three or four no's, they gave up without resentment. That is, they tested my resolve to refuse, and when they sensed it was absolute, they accepted it. They did not threaten

me or storm out angry; they simply stopped trying and went on treating me with the same calm courtesy they always showed.

About this time, I began to request reciprocity directly. Waiting for gifts clearly was not working, so, when people came to ask for things, I would say, “what will you give me in return?” This generally elicited one of two answers: mameri (“nothing”), or “what do you want?” If the answer was mameri, I simply shrugged and waited, but by and large that was that. After testing my resolve, people who wanted something for nothing accepted that this would not happen very often.

If the answer was “what do you want?” I would mention some item, say bananas, and then would come the reply, mameri. It might seem I was back where I started, but actually I was making progress. I was starting to behave more like Matsigenka, who are assertive and persistent about getting what they want from others. But I had several more lessons to learn before I could begin to construct a social world through exchange.

The first of these was that mameri is just the opening gambit in a negotiating process. What people really mean when you ask for something and they say mameri is that they do not have large quantities available. To get large quantities, someone would have to do a lot of work, like harvest a whole stalk of bananas and lug it home. I learned about this when people did respond to my requests for reciprocity: they generally brought amounts much larger than we could possibly handle in our two-person household. I would be offered 40 lbs. of plantains, or 6 large ripe pineapples, when one pineapple and a hand of six or eight plantains would have more than sufficed.

It seemed that by asking for food I was understood to be asking for very large amounts of food. This was a problem for them because they felt they had to show generosity at great trouble to themselves. It was a problem for me, and this was the next lesson I had to learn, because--consistent with the law of prestation (Mauss 1967)--it is impolite to refuse to accept all of a gift when it is offered. I caused a lot of disappointment when people brought too much and I tried to keep only a portion of the gift. The same process was evident when one of us offered a plate of food to guests: the first person to receive the plate would clean it off and return it empty. One does not pass around a plate of cookies here, assuming that each person will take just one or two and politely pass the plate on. It is understood that an offering to an individual is for that individual only. A polite guest eats everything on the plate, or drains the bowl before returning it. And I was expected to accept all of what was offered to me.

One comedy of errors helped me to understand a bit of this process. Early in the fieldwork, I recorded:

Fieldnote 9-4-72 - Out in the garden, Aradino came by and showed me a necklace. Thinking he wanted to get beads back (I asked but could not clearly understand the answer), I said no, we wanted food, not necklaces. A moment later he reappeared with bananas, then more bananas, and, each time I said tovaiti (meaning to say "too much"), he brought more. Finally, we came in, laden with bananas, to where Antonio was working and straightened matters out. Aradino simply wanted to give us a gift, without stating what he wanted in return. When we asked him to take back what we could not possibly eat, he refused, whereupon Antonio and Oscar fell upon the remains and rapidly parcelled them out to their wives. The total amount of the bananas was about 65 lbs....

Somewhat contrary to usual behavior, Aradino here did act first to offer a gift. Where the problem arose was that in trying to say “too much” I used the word tovaiti, which best translates as “plenty.” Aradino thought each time I said it, I was asking for more. Had I said intagati “enough,” he would have understood immediately, and the flow of bananas would have ceased.

Later, having established a policy of giving gifts in exchange for food, we often received food in amounts we could not possibly consume before it rotted. The Matsigenka were not so much thinking of our realistic needs as meeting their own standards of gifting. A stalk of 50 or 60 bananas is not too much for a family of 7. The bananas ripen over several days, and, with each family member eating three or four bananas per day, even this many bananas can seem inadequate. The problem was that our two person household was an oddity; we simply could not eat food in the quantities we were given. During this phase of the fieldwork, we were increasingly spending time not only receiving gifts of food from people in exchange for trade goods, but also processing excess food and trying to figure out to whom to give it before it spoiled. This took up increasing amounts of our time and thought every day.

This phase did not last long, however, for two reasons. First, as we became more fluent in the language, we were able to explain our needs better, and the quantities we received in gifts became more manageable. Second--and this was the last major lesson about exchange we had to learn--people began to lose interest in us after they had gotten what they wanted from us. This sounds harsh, but it is true. When we had nothing left to give them, most households stopped not only giving us presents of food, but stopped visiting us and were cool when we visited them. When they are encouraging visits, members of a household will rise the

moment you appear in the doorway and offer you a mat to sit on. Then they will pass a drink of manioc beer. But when they are not eager to see you, they will glance up and greet you politely, but not offer a mat; they will answer questions but not enter into a conversation.

When this first began to happen, we asked ourselves if we had done something to offend. But we came to learn that it was part of a general pattern of closeness followed by distance that characterizes the Matsigenkas' relations with one another as well. Members of different Matsigenka households seem fascinated with one another when they have not seen each other for a while. But after a time, they lose interest in anyone who is outside the intimate family circle of the hamlet. Whenever we returned to Shimaa after an absence, we would be the center of intense social activity for perhaps a week, then the intensity would rapidly fall off and we would be quite alone. This was especially true in our case for we were, after all, outsiders without genuine family ties.

Our downstream family, was an exception to this rule: they always welcomed us as though we were real family to them, and did not seem to grow bored with us. Of course, being downstream, they were some distance from us and, except for those periods when we went to live in Felipe's house, were far enough from us to let absence make the heart grow fonder. But here we encountered a reciprocal sort of problem. Gossip throughout the Shimaa region let people know pretty much all of our exchange activities. When we gave a valuable gift like an aluminum pot or plastic flashlight as part of an exchange with someone outside the downstream hamlet, we sometimes stimulated the envy of our downstream kin. They would then scold us for giving nice things to others when they themselves were doing without. We could resolve this problem by agreeing to make some compensatory exchange with them.

What was difficult at first, but refreshing when I got used to it, was that the Matsigenka do not dissimulate much. When they want something, they ask for it, and when they don't want to give something, they refuse to give it. They may ask directly, as when Oscar came by while I was smoking fish, pointed to the fish, and said nosekatagakero "I eat that" (I gave him a piece). Requests can also be made indirectly. For example, if they want to trade a necklace for something, they will rattle their necklaces with increasing energy until you realize they are dropping a hint. Or they may ask some question about the object of their desire, like, "What is in that can over there, kerosene?"

As might be imagined, this latter tactic sometimes made fieldwork very difficult, for it was my business to ask about things. Early in fieldwork, before I had worked out how to get what I wanted from people, they would hide special foods like fish whenever they saw me coming. They knew I would ask about it and they viewed this as a request for a portion of the catch. Of course, sometimes I would have welcomed a gift of fish. But even though these families were receiving many material goods from me without reciprocity on their part, fish are still fish and they did not want to share.

The Matsigenka do not always refuse by saying mameri. I have observed several occasions on which they simply refuse by acting as if the request were never made. Even when the request is repeated once or twice, they act like they did not hear it, and the supplicant finally gives up.

It ran partially against my grain to have to ask directly for what I wanted. I found myself at something of a disadvantage because the Matsigenka had little hesitation about asking for things. Yet, when I visited their homes and saw something I wanted, I felt it was rude to say,

for example, “I eat that.” I would have preferred to wait politely for the item to be offered to me, just as I would have preferred them to wait for me to offer gifts of my own choosing. My predicament is captured nicely in a passage from Gulliver (1951: 9), whose work with the familistic Turkana of Kenya raised similar issues:

One of my better informants came to us one day and asked what I was going to give him for his help in the past (he had had several small gifts) since, he explained, he knew that I had given a blanket to an earlier informant. My wife told him that he must wait and see, for in our country one did not ask for presents, but if one was a friend one was given them in due course. “Oh, we do not do that,” he replied immediately, “we ask for what we want or we do not get anything.” “But,” said my wife, “No-one ever gives us presents in return for those we give out.” “Well, you should ask for them,” was his answer.

The whole problem stemmed from my ethnocentrism, of course. It is not rude for a Matsigenka to ask outright, nor is it rude for his host to say, mameri. Both are seen as normal self-assertion and nothing to be ashamed or upset about. Refusing a request need not spoil an otherwise friendly interaction:

Fieldnote 8-29-72 - When Arturo came by, I asked him about manioc beer and he said “mameri” although I could smell it on his breath. We sat talking for a while. I gave him a cigarette, and he leaned against me while I played guitar (he seemed hesitant about touching it). Later, I heard him playing harmonica.

My fieldnotes are full of examples of occasions on which the Matsigenka seemed stingy. People would borrow my shotgun with the clear understanding that I wanted a small share of the meat in exchange, and yet would return home with many kilos of game meat and offer me none. They might not even return the gun, planning to use it again if I did not come to their

house to retrieve it. If I asked to borrow an axe, they would make excuses (“you don't want this awful axe [actually it was nearly new], borrow Maestro's”). People to whom I was constantly giving valuable items like cloth or steel tools would hide wild food when they saw me coming. People would contract to provide some service in exchange for kerosene or cooking oil, then procrastinate or do inferior work. And, over and over again, when I asked for generally abundant things like plantains or pineapples, “mameri.” I had to work hard to get what I wanted from the Matsigenka.

So as not to overgeneralize, however, I include the following incident. Midway in fieldwork, December 6, 1972, I was working at home, trying to catch up on the previous day's journal, but I was continually interrupted by visitors coming to watch me and then ask for something before leaving. I was frustrated and irritated when Tito came into the house and stood waiting for me to acknowledge him. I made him wait a while, which was rude of me. Then I greeted him and said, tatoita “What is it?”. He said, noki “My eye.” I looked and could see it was puffy and red with conjunctivitis. I said, okatsiti “Does it hurt?”, and he replied, tovaiti “Plenty.” At that, my resentment melted away. I had had a bout with conjunctivitis in Shima and I knew how it could sting and ache. Matsigenka remedies were of little help, but I had medicines that could reduce his pain in a few hours and clear the infection in a few days. Yet Tito had come modestly into my house, which was culturally appropriate, waited for me to show him minimal courtesy, and then waited for me to discover what he wanted. He was respectful and shy even though in great discomfort.

Naturally, I felt guilty about snubbing him, but my behavior was a product of the clash of my cultural expectations with what were by Matsigenka standards appropriate behaviors. I was

feeling battered by continual requests and demands that I wanted to comply with but could not. I did not want to have to say no; when I did, I did so with some resentment.

I also resented the difficulty I had in getting reciprocity from people I felt I had been most generous toward. The problem was, at base, that the Matsigenka did not expect me to give them anything I did not want to give them, and so they did not feel sorry for me or guilty about accepting gifts from me. Nor did they see why they should give me anything they did not want to give me. If I wanted something badly enough, they reasoned, I would let them know by persisting in my demands. For their part, they would then evaluate how much they wanted to fulfill me in light of how much work they would have to invest in doing so. If they decided not to give me what I wanted, then that was that, and I was expected to accept it.

Once, when we had not been invited to a beer feast at Maestro's, I noticed Oscar at his fireside and went to pay him a visit. I asked him if he was not planning to go the feast. He replied, "I was not invited. If invited, I would have gone." He was not overtly hurt or angry; wistful, perhaps. He would have liked to have gone to the feast, but he wasn't invited. No agonies of rejection. That was simply that.

These issues appear in my fieldnotes primarily during October and November of 1972, the third and fourth months of fieldwork in Shima. We were by now a familiar part of the community and were interacting frequently with far more people than the average Matsigenka household did. But I was still operating on old habits of interaction that were not working well here. Although my difficulties with exchange never entirely disappeared, they greatly diminished after November. By then I had learned the lessons outlined here and knew what to expect (e.g. mameri) and what not to expect (e.g., just what I wanted without asking for it).

Self in a Family-Level Society

Adult Matsigenkas frequently live in nuclear family isolation for long periods. Given their division of labor by sex, each adult in that situation is the only adult capable of addressing the daily challenges of provisioning, protecting, and sustaining the family. Each is also the only responsible one, since no one is around to criticize and judge performance. One's spouse may indicate areas that need attention (there is no meat, there is no beer), but day in and day out the Matsigenka head of household is essentially alone and in charge of his or her own gender-specific domain.

The Matsigenka pattern of child rearing interferes as little as possible with an individual's confidence in his or her own ability to acquire skills and to act freely on whatever needs to be done. A deeply vested sense of entitlement supports energetic and persistent actions geared to satisfaction of wants and desires.

But the very strength of autonomy and willfulness poses a problem. Acting on impulses like sex, aggression and greed corrodes trust and prevents the formation of stable cooperative social groups. In their stories, Matsigenkas implicitly recognize this by drawing close associations between impulsive behavior and animals, as well as demon-spirits that behave like powerful animals. In folklore, individuals unable to control their impulses are either killed or end up becoming animals or animal spirits--dirty, greedy, hypersexed and violent.

Recognizing that humans possess the inherent possibilities of animal-demon-Trickster impulsiveness, the Matsigenka know well the need to contain impulsiveness. But it must be done in such a way as not to cripple the self-sufficient confidence with which they as heads of

household must one day face the world. Their solution is to allow their children to grow up much on their own terms, signalling their own needs and having them met insofar as it is reasonable to do so given the harsh realities under which they live. The natural increase in a growing child's strength and competence is taken by caregivers as a license gradually to withdraw support, a process that the child both embraces and resists. The main crisis in this approach comes at weaning, usually at the time of mother's new pregnancy, when the gradualness is replaced by a sudden withdrawal of nurturance and the now strong, fully entitled youngster storms in protest.

The protest is to no avail, but it does show us an extent of rage that would be truly dangerous in a full and free adult. It is this danger that is represented in the majority of folktales, where impulsive efforts to fulfill desire clash, and the resulting frustration causes an eruption of anger and destructive aggression. These stories both express the emotional sequence the Matsigenka are trying so hard to avoid in everyday life, and present scenarios of punishment that may help them use anxiety to clamp down on dreaded impulsiveness. To the degree that fear of punishment is internalized, there is something guilt-like about this process, as when Serafina thought her body had been invaded by a demon-child after her adultery with Mauro. But fear of punishment is not the same as blaming oneself, and it would probably be an overstatement to say that Serafina had a guilty conscience.

In anger, mothers commit infanticide, parents give children up for adoption, husbands and wives leave one another, brothers fight and break up the extended family, jilted lovers kill their rivals. Against these trends, most parents lovingly raise their children, marriages last a lifetime, and extended family hamlets come together again and again, even across generations.

But there is little to motivate the formation of larger groups, and so, as Venturo complained, they get angry and want to leave. In the chapters that follow, we will see how the Matsigenka manage to meet their needs without larger groups, and how self-sufficient individuals and families avoid making the kinds of compromises that such larger groups require.