



Wampurái Peas plants manioc cuttings in a recently burned swidden.

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Tsewa's Gift

Magic and Meaning in an Amazonian Society

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CHAPTER 5

A Technology of Sentiment

Relations between the sexes leave little room for gestures of affection. When the [Jivaro] husband feels sexual desire he points out to his wife the path to the river and follows her there. . . . His wives accept favors and brutality with equal indifference; they are the two alternatives inalterably inherent in their condition.

Bertrand Flornoy,
*Jivaro: Among the Headhunters
of the Amazon*

The mute and priapic male whom Bertrand Flornoy claims to have seen among the Jivaro is notably absent from the accounts of more reliable witnesses. Both Rafael Karsten (1935) and Michael J. Harner (1972), for example, found the concept of romantic love and its corresponding social conventions to be highly developed among the Shuar. Much the same can be said for the Aguaruna. One expression of this concern with romantic matters is the elaboration of a complex technology by which people secretly manipulate the feelings of others.

In the preceding chapters, I described how the Aguaruna assert control over animal behavior and the growth of cultivated plants.

Covert intervention in the psychological states of people is not, as it might seem at first, a radical departure from this pattern. After all, the Aguaruna see the world of plants and animals as an eminently social domain. The extension of control from this realm to the human one is probably inevitable. The Aguaruna technology of sentiment differs from the other forms of magic that I have discussed in one important respect—its moral ambiguity. Successful hunting or gardening benefits the community even as it rewards the hunter or cultivator; covert manipulation of people, particularly where sexual matters are concerned, can threaten the foundations of social life and take the actor perilously close to the frontiers of sorcery.

Male-Female Relations

To understand the secret manipulation of sentiments, we must first consider Aguaruna attitudes toward courtship, sexuality, and marriage—areas rife with contradictions. From one perspective, it is undeniable that traditional lore stresses the threat that sexual activity can pose to the well-being of men and, to a lesser extent, of women. Young men anxious to obtain a vision from an *ajútap* spirit are enjoined to observe the strictest sexual purity, since the taint of sexual pollution is anathema to the spirits. A myth explains that long ago a certain man who failed to remain chaste actually became pregnant. He was forced to endure the mockery of the entire village until an *ajútap* removed the fetus (which, the myth implies, was not a true child but a reified form of pollution) and granted him a powerful vision. Other myths recount cases of men losing special skills or powers when they succumbed to feminine charms. Today the Aguaruna continue to insist that for both sexes abstinence from intercourse is essential for recovery from a serious illness.

Despite this current of thought emphasizing the dangers of sexuality, the Aguaruna regard sexual adventures as exciting and highly desirable. In private conversations men often joke about their hidden paramours (*japa ampúya*, "little deer") in other communities, and during parties they freely sing joking songs of an overtly sexual nature. This kind of humor is not unlike the proverbial locker room conversation of American males, except that the Aguaruna are more imaginative in their use of metaphor. Though typically more reserved than men, women also share a ribald sense of humor that is given fullest expression during drinking parties. When talking about sexual relations in general terms, then, both men and women express the view that sex is enjoyable and relatively harmless if pursued in the proper manner.

This laissez-faire attitude toward sex in the abstract tends to evaporate when the Aguaruna confront concrete cases. Sexual liaisons often lead to social conflict when they become public knowledge. Incest and adulterous relations with the spouses of close kin cause the greatest uproar, but even unions considered proper—say, between unmarried people who are classified as opposite sex cross-cousins—may provoke discord. I suspect that this stems in part from the conflict between the desire of men to dispose of their daughters in marriage as they see fit and the desire of daughters to marry whom they please. The secrecy in which affairs must be conducted thus requires that meetings between lovers be brief and sporadic, taking place at night or in some secluded spot during daylight hours.

Kayáp Jiukám, my closest confidant in Huascayacu, took it upon himself one evening to tutor me in the art of seducing women. He assumed, no doubt, that after five months of celibate life in the village I was sorely in need of feminine company. Kayap set out to teach me the proper manner of approaching Soledad, a young widow who at that time was considered the most desirable unattached woman in the community:

Listen, Mayak, I'll explain how you make her your sweetheart. First you should go to her house during the day when nobody else is around. You just start to talk. "Sister, are you home? Can I come in for a while? Will you serve me beer?" [Here Kayáp's voice dropped from the forceful style typical of men's public speech to an ingratiating, almost wheedling tone.] You talk for a while like that, and if she smiles and seems friendly you say something like "Woman, I think about you all the time." You can give her a small present, too, maybe a ring, some beads, or a little bit of money. If she doesn't get mad or leave the house, you know that she likes you.

Now here's the tricky part. You ask her to let you into the house late at night or before dawn, when everyone's asleep, so that you can talk some more. Then you slip into the house and speak to her quietly on her bed. If she wants you, she'll offer to come outside to meet you in some quiet spot, maybe in her garden. If anyone asks her where she's going, she'll say she's got to urinate. So you make love, then get home before people wake up. Now she's your *paki*, your girlfriend. It's easy.

As Kayáp's lesson suggests, men are expected to take the initiative in amorous affairs, but women sometimes become openly flirtatious during parties, and they make themselves more alluring by wearing strands of aromatic seeds and scented packets fashioned from vanilla pods.

Although the ideal manner of contracting a marriage is for a man (sometimes represented by an intermediary) to approach a woman's father and ask formally for her hand, many first marriages in the Alto Mayo now begin with elopement. By eloping, the couple hopes to circumvent objections to the marriage by presenting it as a fait accompli. Parents raise objections to marriages for one or more of the following reasons: (1) the partners are very young and still partially dependent on their older kinsmen, (2) they are not in a marriageable relation to one another, (3) their families do not enjoy good relations, (4) either partner is considered lazy or dissolute by the other's family, or (5) the father of the bride wants his daughter to wed another man more to his liking. An eloping couple spends several days hiding in the forest, in a mestizo town, or in the home of sympathetic kinsmen in another community. Eventually, they return to the woman's home, and a meeting is called to reconcile the differences among the concerned parties. Lovers always claim that they eloped because of their strong affection for one another; the woman may threaten to commit suicide if she is forced to separate from her new husband. After considerable debate, they are usually allowed to cohabit in the home of the wife's father, and from then on they are considered married. Only in the case of an irregular marriage between parallel cousins or some other prohibited category of relatives is there continued pressure for them to separate. In time, even this pressure may diminish.

The Aguaruna say that marriage is best contracted between bilateral cross-cousins (children of one's father's sister or mother's brother), although people with no established genealogical connection are also free to marry. Data that I gathered in the Alto Mayo show that the cross-cousin marriage ideal is frequently realized in practice: 70 percent of all marriages are between people of the category *antsúg*, "opposite sex cross-cousin." Of these, approximately 17 percent are true cross-cousins, while the rest are more distantly related in genealogical terms. A surprising 22 percent of the marriages that I recorded were between people of prohibited categories, usually real or classificatory parallel-cousins. I don't know whether this high incidence of incorrect marriages is typical of all Jivaroan populations or the result of the scarcity of acceptable marriage partners in the demographically isolated Alto Mayo region.¹

First marriages between people in their teens are highly volatile regardless of previous genealogical connection. Nearly half end in separation after a few months. Marriages tend to stabilize after the birth of a child; the divorce rate for couples whose marriages survive the first year of marriage drops to about 15 to 20 percent.

There are marked disparities in the freedoms granted to men and women within the institution of marriage. Men can have more than one wife—about 15 percent actually do—and, as an unstated corollary to this, married men are relatively free to engage in discreet extramarital philandering as long as they avoid having affairs with married women. The wives of these men, however, enjoy no such license. They are expected to dedicate themselves to their domestic tasks while avoiding even the hint of scandal. Men sometimes punish their wives for "visiting too much" or even "laughing too much," since visiting and flirtatious laughter are interpreted as signs that a woman wants to attract the attention of other men. Only elderly women—in particular, elderly widows—can socialize as freely as men.

While custom dictates that men have the right to form polygynous marriages, in practice arranging them is a delicate matter. A woman rarely welcomes the addition of a second wife to the household. She may respond to the arrival of a new wife by attacking her physically (cf. Harner 1972:95) or, more commonly, by threatening or actually attempting suicide. Sororal polygyny is common (62 percent of all polygynous marriages) because a woman is more likely to accept her sister as a co-wife than an unrelated woman. Even when plural unions are successfully established, relations between co-wives often remain chilly. A prudent husband divides his time equally between his wives to avoid domestic friction.

Besides the freedom to form plural marriages, men have much more leverage than women in ending marriages. Many divorces occur when a husband rejects his wife because of her barrenness, sloth, or even simple old age. Women, on the other hand, find it difficult to separate from their husbands when they are dissatisfied with their domestic situation. If a woman leaves her husband, he may simply ask her family to return her; they usually agree to do this unless he has treated her with the most extravagant brutality. About the only way that a woman can end an unsatisfactory marriage is to run off with a man from another, usually distant, community. The Aguaruna consider this a serious crime, and both the woman and her lover are severely punished if caught by the pursuing husband and his kinsmen. An astonishing number of adult female deaths in the Alto Mayo occur as a result of suicide, usually following a domestic argument.² The restrictions and insecurity of the woman's role in marriage undoubtedly contribute to this high suicide rate.

I hope it is clear from this brief summary that the area of courtship and marriage is a turbulent one for the Aguaruna. There is an

obvious double standard at work: men look forward to their own amorous affairs but express great moral outrage when their sisters, daughters, or wives are implicated in similar affairs. That the Aguaruna themselves recognize the disruptive nature of sexuality is evident in a set of written statutes—the first attempt at written laws in the Alto Mayo—prepared by the residents of the community of Shimpiyacu in 1978. There are eleven laws in the Shimpiyacu document, nine of which concern the regulation of sexual conduct. The remaining two statutes treat such crimes as fighting and shirking communal work. Theft is not even considered significant enough to be mentioned in the community laws. Only witchcraft accusations have as great a role as sexual peccadillos in disrupting village life.

The Aguaruna thus see sexual activity as having some formidable dangers—metaphysical, physical, and social—but also as being inherently desirable. Courtship is characterized by a strong notion of sentimental attachment and an atmosphere of intense secrecy. Marriage is a volatile institution within which men are permitted greater freedom of action than women. Married women are in an insecure position because they may be rejected by their husbands in favor of a younger spouse, and they have few avenues of escape should they suffer from mistreatment.

Magical practices related to courtship and marriage reflect these conditions. Men are primarily concerned with soliciting the affection and sexual favors of women. Women are more preoccupied with maintaining the affection of their husbands and preventing them from philandering with younger rivals. Both men and women want to avoid gossip that might implicate them in adulterous affairs; if their adultery is discovered, they are anxious to escape punishment. For each of these concerns, there are techniques that secretly produce the desired end.

Songs That Direct Human Emotion

When the Aguaruna speak of *anen*, the first songs they mention are likely to be those that manipulate other people's emotions. For the sake of convenience, I shall call this vast corpus of *anen* "romantic songs," but it should be understood that not all of these songs are concerned with romantic relations per se, and some are designed to quell affection rather than kindle it.

People learn romantic songs in much the same way that they learn other *anen*: the receiver of the song memorizes the words and melody after first inhaling tobacco juice prepared with the saliva of the song's teacher. A newly acquired song is ready to be used after

a period of fasting and sexual abstinence. Romantic songs have their greatest effect when performed at sunset, the time of day when people's reflections are said to take a melancholy turn toward loneliness and longing, desire and desperation. The singer seeks a private place, takes a bit of tobacco juice through the nasal passages, and softly sings the *anen* that will catch his or her beloved at this vulnerable moment. "When you sing a love song at sunset," say the Aguaruna, "the person to whom you are singing suddenly sighs and feels a sadness that won't go away." The songs, of course, are not heard in a literal sense because the singer may be many miles away from the one to whom they are directed. Rather, the thoughts and emotions of the recipient suddenly change to conform to those suggested by the words of the song.

There is general agreement that women are much more skilled at singing romantic songs than men, "because their voices are better." Men, however, can play their songs on the bamboo flute or, better yet, on a mouth bow called *tumág*. The mouth bow, made from a thin, springy branch strung with a palm fiber cord, has an ingratiating sound that is supposed to have a profound effect on the emotions of the woman to whom the song is directed, despite the fact that she doesn't hear it in a conventional way. When men play love songs on the flute or mouth bow, it is sufficient for them to think the words rather than to sing them aloud.

I was unable to collect any stories explaining the origin of romantic songs, but various ethnographic sources stress their link to Tsugki, the water spirit. Stirling (1938:109), for example, mentions that Shuar men sing special songs directly asking Tsugki for help in love affairs. Romantic songs collected by Pellizzaro (1977) and Tsamaraint et al. (1977) support Stirling's observation. As we shall presently see, many substances used in love magic come from aquatic animals thought to be manifestations of Tsugki.

I found that it was generally easier to persuade people to record romantic *anen* than other categories of magical songs. Love songs are thought to be more benign than other forms of amorous manipulation. The Aguaruna also consider them intrinsically beautiful and therefore worthy of public performance. The openness with which people share songs of love does not, however, extend to those songs intended to extinguish affection, which are among the most secret that I was able to obtain.

The most straightforward romantic songs are those that cause a member of the opposite sex to be attracted to, or to fall in love with, the singer. These sort themselves into two general categories: songs that are used outside of marriage (i.e., in courtship or in pursuing

extramarital affairs) and those used within marriage to strengthen the bond of affection between spouses. As far as I could determine, the first kind of song is better known to men, while the second kind is almost exclusively known to, and presumably used by, women.³

A.19 is an example of the kind of song that men use to make women more receptive to their amorous advances:

A.19 Look where the sun hides itself

Woman, woman
Look where it hides itself
Its rays red, they strike
Your little face
The last rays striking your face
Sit with pain in your heart
If you are thinking of another
Think of me
Woman, woman
If you are thinking of your husband
If you are thinking of another
If you are thinking of your food
Think of me
"I feel that I cannot remain happy here"
Think thus
Woman, woman
Think of me

This song requires little interpretive commentary. It evokes the image of the setting sun, which marks the time of day when the woman is most inclined to think of the singer. The words seek to create in her a feeling of sadness and profound agitation that can only be remedied by meeting with her lover. If the woman knows the singer but slightly, she will find that when they next meet she will be inexplicably attracted to him.

The fervid words of A.19 seem bland by comparison to those of the songs used by women to keep their husbands' affection from wandering, or to effect their early return from extended journeys during which they might be tempted to have affairs with other women. The following two *anen* hurry a woman's husband home from a trip:

A.20 Husband, husband

Husband, husband
Like the palm grub *datúunch*
You will fast [i.e., be unable to eat from sadness]
Let your stomach rumble "jachachaka"

Let your stomach rumble "jachachaka"
Thinking of me
Let your stomach rumble "jachachaka"
Let it throb
Little heart
Little heart
Let it move like a tethered animal
Let it move like a tethered animal
"Oh dear! What am I doing? [the husband says]
Is my wife still alive?
I shall return
Thus I think
Are my children suffering
While I travel like this?
Thus I think
Rapidly I shall arrive"
Do you think this?
Let your stomach rumble "jachachaka"
Little heart
Let it move like a tethered animal
Let your feet run "tu tu tu ra"
Let your feet run "tu tu tu ra"
On the little pointed hill
On the little pointed hill
You walk, appearing suddenly
Let the dogs whine
Let the dogs bark [i.e., announcing his arrival]
Passing over little thorns
Feeling nothing
Let your feet run "tu tu tu ra"
You will be lonely
"I do not eat"
Are you thinking this?
Let you be in my heart
Sitting with a thud on the ground [like dog with his master]
Let the dogs bark
Let the dogs whine
Little heart
Let it move like a tethered animal
Let it whine
Fill my heart
Are you thinking as my heart thinks?
Let it whine
Let it shake with emotion

A.21 Frog *bukún*, frog *bukún*

After it has rained

Among the clouds
 Where the rains are perpetual
 Frog *bukún*
 Wet with dew, you sit
 Your eyes, also damp
 Where my husband sleeps
 At my husband's head
 With fast little steps
 Sing "wara wara"
 Sing "wara wara"
 "Oh dear, oh dear! [the husband says]
 At the blue hill
 I let my wife go
 My wife thus
 My wife remaining
 Oh dear! Ay!
 While I wander here
 Will my wife leave me?
 Where she walks
 I will not see her [i.e., she may commit suicide from loneliness]"
 Let him say these words
 "Oh dear, oh dear!
 I have a wife
 Others have wives
 If I wander for nothing
 I may regret it
 I shall return swiftly
 When the sun reaches the horizon
 I shall go"
 Husband, husband
 Be not with other women
 I am your little wife
 I incline toward you
 When the sun reaches the horizon
 When the sun reaches the horizon
 "Oh dear, oh dear"
 Frog *bukún*, frog *bukún*
 Sing "wara wara"
 Sing "wara wara"

Both A.20 and A.21 exploit fully the conventions of Aguaruna romantic imagery. The husband is depicted wandering in some lonely, inhospitable place, torn with worry about his wife and children, missing the comfort of his own house and his wife's meals. The songs sketch the man's anxious thoughts in considerable detail (e.g., "Oh dear! What am I doing? / Is my wife still alive?" and so

on) to add to the vividness of the imagery. From my own observations, men do worry about such things when they are away from home. Husbands of young and attractive women are particularly restless on extended journeys because they fear that their wives may be taking advantage of their absence to commit adultery. On several occasions, I saw young men suddenly abandon a journey and return to their own community, saying that they were "worried about their family." The men who continued on were wont to remark sarcastically that their departed colleague was "worried about turtle heads," that is, other men's penises. These songs, then, play on the very real fears and discomforts suffered by men when they are traveling without their wives.

Song A.21 begins by addressing the frog *bukún*, which in the original text is labeled with the esoteric term *ukaráip*. The woman who recorded this song commented:

The woman singing this song says to the frog *bukún*: "Change yourself into me. Take my tobacco. Become my soul. Go to my husband in a dream." The man will be unable to sleep. His thoughts will turn constantly to his wife. He will think, "Perhaps she has died. I should return home right away." He is filled with such desperation that he will turn around and return quickly to his home.

These observations illustrate the commonly voiced belief that romantic songs act on people's emotions by secretly influencing their souls. A woman who takes tobacco juice uses her intoxication to enter the visionary world of souls and manipulate her husband's soul through the power of the song. His soul "hears" the song unconsciously, or perhaps in a dream, and this subtle influence alters his thoughts to conform to his wife's desires. In the case of A.21, the woman's message is conveyed through the mournful croaking of the frog at sunset, which turns the man's meditations to thoughts of home.⁴

Some wives know even more powerful songs that prevent their husbands from dallying with other women. I was told that the following *anen*, a particularly expressive example of this genre, is very effective in keeping a man tied sentimentally and sexually to his wife:

A.22 The untamed agouti
 Tying with the vine *yais*
 I fasten tightly
 In my vagina
 "Tu tu tu" I domesticate it
 The untamed mouse
 In my vagina

Tying with the vine *yais*
 I fasten tightly
 The paper of the mestizos
 Rolled up
 With new branches [i.e., legs]
 I fasten tightly

Here the agouti, the mouse, and the rolled-up "paper of the mestizos" serve as metaphors for the man's penis, which the woman "fastens tightly" so that it will not be inclined to wander to other women. The domestication theme is especially apt because women are in charge of taming wild animals that their husbands bring back from hunting trips. The song illustrates yet another reversal of the equation culture/nature :: man/woman, since here it is the man (metonymically represented by his penis) who is controlled and brought into the regulated domestic sphere by the woman. Indeed, in contrast to the myths stressing the danger that female sexuality poses to society, the romantic songs of women operate under the assumption that it is the promiscuity of men that most threatens normal domestic life.

Thus far I have discussed songs that magically influence a person's feelings toward the singer, but there is also a genre of songs that attempt to manipulate feelings toward a third person, usually a potential or actual co-wife. The Aguaruna say that a woman who knows such songs can successfully prevent her husband from establishing a polygynous marriage; he suddenly loses interest in his new love and contents himself with his first wife alone. The imagery of these anti-love songs is quite malevolent, the prospective co-wife being equated with a dangerous viper, a flea-ridden dog, a demon, or some other undesirable creature.

I had considerable difficulty in obtaining recordings of these songs of loathing, apparently because women feared that I might bring their knowledge to public attention. The woman who sang A.23, for example, had a daughter who was one of the three wives of her community's bilingual teacher. She was at first unwilling to record the songs for fear that I might play the tape for other villagers who, she said, would then leap to the conclusion that she must be teaching them to her daughter for use against her co-wives. If the husband subsequently rejected one of the wives, the family of the rejected woman would have cause for grievance against the singer and her daughter. Only by promising never to play the tape in her own village could I prevail upon her to make the recording. Another cause for secrecy is that a woman's husband might beat her severely if he thought that she were using *anen* to control his actions and

emotions. These factors conspire to make songs of rejection among the most closely guarded *anen* known to the Aguaruna.⁵

A.23 You, you
 Say, "I will marry a woman"
 Her, her
 You marry a mangy dog
 "I will marry a woman" you say
 "Later, the day after tomorrow"
 That bed
 "It is my wife's" you say
 That bed
 Is nettlesome, like the skin of the fruit *kukúch*
 Oh! don't sleep, don't sleep!
 A death shroud will wrap you
 Oh! don't sleep, don't sleep!
 My little bed
 Is the armadillo's nest [i.e., warm and cozy]
 Is the armadillo's nest
 In mine, mine
 You sleep warm
 Your other wife
 Day after day
 You will beat like a signal drum
 Day after day
 You will beat like a signal drum
 You, you
 "When she gives me beer, I drink"
 You say, you say
 Beer of human brains
 She gives you, she gives you
 Thus you drink
 "She gives me food" you say
 She, she
 She gives you dog's excrement
 Served in a bowl
 [The bowl] filled, you eat
 Oh! don't eat, don't eat!
 You are wrapped in a death shroud
 Don't sleep!
 "I give you food" she says
 Don't eat, don't eat!
 She will give you human flesh
 At your side will be a mangy dog
 Oh! don't sleep, don't sleep!

My back
 Makes your hand fly away
 Your other wife
 Her back
 Day after day
 You will beat like a signal drum
 My back
 Makes your hand sleepy
 Your other wife
 Her back
 Makes your hand light [i.e., it is easy to strike her]

A.24 Oh, don't look!
 You say that she is your wife?
 She is not your wife
 She is a vulture who eats the dead
 Belching noisomely
 She will harm you
 You say that she is your wife
 She is a fierce boa
 She traps those who approach
 To devour them
 Oh, don't look!
 I am your wife, not she
 She is a viper
 She will strike you
 She is a scrawny dog
 With mucous-filled eyes
 Curled in the ashes of the fireplace
 Barking, she opens her mouth
 Full of yellow teeth
 Oh, don't look!
 Since when is she your wife?
 She is like a chicken house
 Uncleaned, it has a foul odor
 Oh, don't look!

The tropes used in A.23 and 24 are bluntly self-explanatory. The songs take major symbols of happy domestic life—a warm bed, well-prepared food and beer, and so on—and imply that these things will be perverted or lost if the man is foolish enough to marry the singer's rival, who is likened to a series of repulsive animals. The Aguaruna insist that these songs, when performed correctly, can create an almost instant revulsion in a man with respect to his potential spouse.

Because men are aware that their wives may be using this sort of magical strategy to prevent the establishment of a polygynous marriage, they sing *anen* of their own that are supposed to reconcile their wives to the addition of a new woman to the household. Samuel Wajajái, who in 1977 had two wives, recorded several brief examples, which I shall render as if they were part of a single song:

A.25 *Waníg, waníg* [an insect]
Waníg that does not anger
Waníg, waníg
 The little women
 Let them join
Waníg, waníg
Chiág, chiág [a plant, *Renealmia* sp.]
Chiág, chiág
Chiág that does not separate
Chiág that grabs
 The stems
Chiág that grabs
 Not angering
Chiág, chiág
Puush, puush [a wood-quail, *Odontophorus* sp.]
Puush, puush
Puush that does not anger
 With their husbands
 The *puush* join together
 The *puush* following
 Their husbands
 The *puush* following
 Behind, the *puush*
 Their food
 The *puush* eating together
Puush, puush

The three organisms mentioned in this song share the characteristic of living in close and harmonious association with their fellows, a trait that a man wishes to transfer to his wife so that she will accept the addition of a co-wife to the household. The unidentified insect *waníg* is described as being like a waterstrider; it lives in holes in tree trunks and, as Samuel explained it, "Many *waníg* live together without fighting." *Chiág* is a plant in the ginger family that has parallel stems growing together in clumps, hence the allusion to "*chiág* that grabs." The species of wood-quail called *puush* is said to travel in groups, with a male in the lead and the females

following obediently behind him. A man sings this kind of song before bringing home a new wife in hopes of preventing a violent outburst on the part of his first wife.

When a person becomes entangled in an adulterous affair, he or she may use certain *anen* to silence the gossip that can lead to public exposure:

A.26 Lies lies [i.e., the gossip]

I am a bird's egg
I burst and disappear
Lies, lies
I burst, I fly
Lies, lies
I leave the lie
Next to the bed of another woman
I am innocent
There is no gossip about me
Lies, lies
I am not from this place
Lies, lies

Here the prominent metaphor of bursting seems to be used in two senses: first, that like an egg the singer is different from her outward appearance and therefore innocent of the charges that would seem to indict her; second, that the woman will "burst and disappear" from the arena of gossip in which she is currently enmired. A similar metaphor is exploited in A.27, which was recorded by a man who explained that it is sung to dissipate another man's anger when one has been caught philandering with his wife:

A.27 "Te te" [sound of stick hitting ground]

It is erased
"Te te" it is erased
The red worm
The red worm
The red worm
Your anger
In the heart of the earth is erased
It remains erased in the heart of the earth
It remains erased
In the heart of the earth it is erased
"Te te" it is erased
You say your anger is new
In the heart of the earth it is erased
"Te te" it is erased
The center of the papaya
"Pak!" bursting

Put inside
Scattered, it is erased
Let it erase anger
New anger is impossible
It is difficult to anger
Your anger
The red worm
Taking into the earth, erases
"Te te" it is erased

A unique aspect of A.27 is that the singer, again Samuel Wajajái, described a set of actions to accompany it. To use this song, he said, one chews a wad of tobacco, digs a shallow hole, and then pounds the tobacco into the hole with a stick while singing, this last action being echoed in the song by the onomatopoeic refrain "te te." Samuel added that the tobacco "becomes the anger" of the aggrieved party; this anger is then pulled into the earth by the "red worm" (*kapá nampich*) and thus neutralized. The "new anger" mentioned in the song is an allusion to the belief that recent anger is more rancorous than anger that is "old" or partially forgotten. The song's second stanza asserts that the cuckolded husband's anger will burst and disappear just as the seeds of the papaya scatter when the fruit falls to the ground.

When caught in an adulterous situation, people rarely have time to perform the sort of acts associated with A.27, or even to sing anger-dissipating *anen* aloud after taking tobacco in the forest. It is more likely that a man or woman will, by dint of circumstance, only have time to sing songs hurriedly in his or her thoughts before facing those whom they have angered. Most of the songs that are believed to lessen anger follow one of two metaphorical lines. Some emphasize the singer's ferocity, the terrible powers at his or her command, with the idea of inspiring fear in the aggrieved parties, thereby inducing them to be satisfied with mild punishment. Other songs take the opposite approach—they equate the singer with some abject creature that is at once too pitiable and too beloved to deserve severe sanctions. The following song, A.28, illustrates the first of these two approaches:

A.28 Peccary, peccary

That throws out anger
I come enraged, I come enraged
"A bad woman" they will say
But with my glances
I silence them
When I enter

Anger departs
I am a peccary woman
I come enraged, I come enraged

This song vividly conveys an image of a furious peccary, hackles raised, casting its intimidating glances over a crowd of people. At the same time, it metaphorically reverses the relationship of the singer to the people who will mete out punishment. In reality, the woman returns contrite while her husband and his kinsmen are angry, but in the song the enraged woman returns to silence her critics. A.29 is somewhat less forceful than A.28 but follows a similar line in that it equates the singer with Nugkui (who of course cannot be harmed by ordinary mortals) and unspecified ancestors who could make the earth tremble:

A.29 Being a Nugkui woman I say [three times]

I don't bleed easily [three times]

Husband, husband

Husband, husband

If you speak with harsh words

The ancestors

Dividing the land

Destroyed, it is said

I will do this to you

I will do this to you

It is not easy to bruise me

Being a Nugkui woman I say

Being a Nugkui woman I say

I, I

Being a Nugkui woman I say

Being a Nugkui woman I say

Don't speak with harsh words

Don't speak with harsh words

"Returning above [i.e., dying]

My wife did thus

Because I spoke harshly"

You will say this

Your little hands

Breaking you will remain [i.e., clapping them with grief]

The traditional punishment for adulterers is to slash their scalps with a machete or knife. The phrase "I don't bleed easily," then, suggests that the singer is immune to such punishment. The next lines assert that, like the ancestors who were able to part the earth, the woman can use her Nugkui-given powers to destroy her husband. The final stanza describes the grief the husband would

feel if the woman were to commit suicide after being beaten. The husband, concludes the song, will break his hands as he mourns for his dead wife, an image that is based on the handclapping that accompanies demonstrations of profound sorrow among the Aguaruna.

A.30, which is sung by men, achieves the same end by focusing attention on the imposing demeanor of the singer:

A.30 I, the *wirakocha*, am coming

I, the *wirakocha*, am coming

Wearing red shoes

Sounding "tak tak" I come

Wearing a red belt

Don't stare at me

With *señoras* I couple

I come, I come

If you stare at me

If you stare at me

I shall go far away

The ancestors, the ancestors

Annihilated [their enemies] it is said

I shall do the same

I shall do the same

Don't stare at me

Making the earth boil

The ancestors, the ancestors

Annihilated, it is said

I shall do the same

With my pistol I shall annihilate

With a *cushma* [a garment] to my feet, I come

With a *cushma* to my feet, I come

I, Waisukuan [a personal name?], come

Don't stare at me

Making the earth boil

I shall annihilate

Don't stare at me

I come, I come

I come, I come

The principal rhetorical means of self-aggrandizement used in A.30 is the repeated association of the singer with the trappings of non-Indian culture. Thus the singer claims to be a *wirakocha* (*wiakuch* in Aguaruna), a wealthy person of European ancestry, who consorts with *señoras*. He wears articles of European dress—a red belt, red shoes—plus a *cushma*, a long garment indicative of authority. He also carries a pistol, a firearm that the Aguaruna asso-

ciate with mestizo landowners and policemen. The words for these objects are all borrowed from Spanish and therefore have a slightly esoteric ring in the context of the song. The song develops images of authority, self-possession, and extraordinary power that have the effect of cowing the singer's antagonists.

The last song that I shall present illustrates the opposing strategy for dissipating anger:

A.31 Brother, brother

The lost dog [i.e., which strayed in the forest]

The lost dog

It comes, it comes

After such a long time, it comes

The lost dog

It comes

Brother, brother

Give the word of food [i.e., ask that it be fed]

The lost dog

Its little ears flapping, flapping

It comes

Give the word of food

Give the word of food

Feed it

Don't speak of anger

To the lost dog

When dogs became lost like this

The ancestors

Spoke not with harsh words

It is said

The lost one

It comes

After such a long time, it comes

Give these words

Brother, brother

Give the word of food

Don't give words of anger

Here the adulterer—man or woman, since either can sing this song—is equated with a dog that has strayed from the path and returned days later to its owner. Instead of words of admonition, the singer seeks the friendly reception symbolized by "the word of food," that is, hospitality as opposed to hostility. The intent of the song is to replace indignation with a reaction of sympathy and pity.

Puságki: Agents of Demented Attraction

Without fail, on the night before I planned to leave my field site for a trip to a large jungle town such as Iquitos or Tarapoto, at least one of my male neighbors would stop by to visit, seemingly to engage in casual conversation. Once he was sure that no one else was within earshot, he would say softly, "Brother, in town they sell dolphin teeth. If you see one, buy it for me and I'll repay you when you return." "Why do you want a dolphin tooth?" I would ask, to which the reply was simply, "Because it's a *puságki*. It attracts women."

The term *puság* or *puságki* covers a variety of substances used in courtship to attract members of the opposite sex.⁶ As a consequence of this attraction, *puságki* make the person on whom they are acting more receptive to sexual advances. "My friend Mantu knew all about these things," one man told me. "He had bad skin—a case of *pinta*—but he always found sweethearts. That's because he had *puságki*."

Although *puságki* have a generalized ability to attract members of the opposite sex, the Aguaruna associate their acquisition and use primarily with men. People claim that no woman would want to use a love charm and that it would be highly improper if she did. I cannot say for sure that women never use charms to attract men, but if they do the fact is shrouded in a secrecy that I was unable to penetrate.

The Aguaruna prepare love charms from several animal, vegetable, and mineral substances. Different kinds of *puságki* substances may be used separately or combined to form powerful mixtures. As is the case with all charms, the intrinsic power of the substance is intensified by the fasting and sexual abstinence of the person who has obtained it. A typical fast reportedly lasts from seven to ten days, after which the owner tests the *puságki* by rubbing it with his hands and then touching a neighbor's dog. If the dog suddenly becomes friendly and playful, it is a sign that the *puságki* is effective. The efficacy of the *puságki* may also be substantiated by dreams in which the owner enjoys the attention of many attractive women.

A man uses a *puságki* by contriving to bring it into contact with the woman he desires. Usually this contact is indirect. The man may, for example, store the *puságki* substance next to or mixed in with a quantity of red face paint and then use the paint to decorate himself before going on a social visit. He touches the paint before drinking beer served by a woman who interests him, and when she receives the bowl after he has finished drinking she is necessarily



PLATE 6. Men and women dance during a drinking party in Shimpiyacu. Men reportedly take advantage of such occasions to seduce women with love magic.

brought into contact with a minute portion of the paint and its attracting power. Sometimes a man touches a woman directly with a *puságki* while she is dancing at a party. Generally, though, direct contact is considered too dangerous because it exposes the woman to the full effect of the charm and may cause her to become literally mad with desire. The great drawback of *puságki* is that it is impossible to predict their effects on different people. A woman who has been exposed to an overdose of *puságki* power is likely to throw herself into a river and drown, or commit suicide in some other manner, if she is not able to satisfy immediately her passion for her lover. Even the owner of the charm is not immune to its unhinging effects. If he gets drunk while carrying the *puságki*, he is inclined to fight with his kinsmen (an action that the Aguaruna associate with an inability to think right or "straight"), and he also becomes more prone to accidental drowning. The following two incidents illustrate ways in which the use or alleged use of *puságki* can produce tragic results:

Case 1. A young man making an extended visit to the community of some kinsmen reportedly used an exceptionally strong charm (called

wawágki) to secure the affection of a girl he was courting. The man eventually returned to his own village, which caused the girl to become "crazy" with grief. She died after drinking poison, but not before telling her family about the charm, the existence of which she had somehow divined. Her family held the man responsible for the suicide. There was serious talk of a vengeance raid, but the principals later resolved the dispute through a cash payment by the man to the girl's father.

Case 2. A man was accused of having loaned a *puságki* to a younger brother-in-law who subsequently shot himself. The dead man's father argued that the power of the charm had deranged his son and thereby caused his suicide. The accused denied that he had either owned or loaned a love charm. At a public gathering, he produced a hunting charm that he owned but insisted that it had no effect on women. Because the accusers could not establish that a love charm had been involved, there was no definitive resolution of the dispute.

In both instances a *puságki* was held responsible for suicidal behavior, in the first case by a woman who had been the object of the charm's power and in the second by a man who had simply possessed one. Another effect of the deranging power of *puságki* is that they arouse passion in a woman with whom a charm's owner cannot legitimately have sexual relations (e.g., a real or classificatory sister) if she should accidentally come into contact with it. The fact that love charms are thus associated with incest, suicide, and social conflict leads most Aguaruna to state publicly that their possession and use are "bad" or "stupid." Nevertheless, self-interest apparently lures men into acquiring them despite the risk.

Puságki of Zoological Origin

Residents of the Alto Mayo consider a tooth of the Amazonian dolphin (*Inia* sp.) to be the most powerful kind of love charm. Interestingly enough, few Alto Mayo people have ever even seen live dolphins, since they are only found far downstream in the larger Amazonian tributaries. The teeth are thus obtained by trade either from Aguaruna who live near the Río Marañón or mestizo merchants who traffic in resources from downriver. The price of a single tooth is said to be high; in 1976–78 the cost was about fifteen hundred soles each, the equivalent of ten days' wages.

As Lévi-Strauss (1973:200–201) points out, many Amazonian cultures associate dolphins with sexuality. Although the Alto Mayo Aguaruna have had few firsthand encounters with this animal, they hold at least two dolphin-related beliefs that shed light on the sexual power attributed to dolphin teeth. First, people say that it is dangerous for a pregnant woman to travel by canoe on large rivers

because male dolphins may tip the canoe "to deliver the woman and the fetus to the dolphin's father, the anaconda." Here the dolphin is clearly seen as an agent of the anaconda, which in turn is the principal manifestation of the water spirit Tsugki. A second belief is that the genitalia of the female dolphin are identical to, and more desirable than, those of human females. People tell of men who have tried to copulate with dolphins and found it so pleasurable that they were unable to stop. A dolphin, caution the Aguaruna, will take all of a man's semen and then all of his blood until the man dies.⁷ Cetaceans symbolize the arousal of sexual desire beyond the limits of prudence, a quality that is further emphasized by their link to Tsugki. Tsugki once appeared in the form of a beautiful woman to lure an Aguaruna man into the depths of the river in spite of his legitimate fear of the anacondas that lurked there. As the mythical first shaman, Tsugki also represents the ultimate source of the powers used to manipulate human sentiments and physical well-being. The dolphin is thus the nexus of several distinct properties: excessive sexual desire, unreasonable attraction, and shamanistic power.

The teeth of the otter (*Lutra* sp.) are sometimes mentioned as potential *puságki*, though they are considered less powerful than dolphin teeth. The otter, like the dolphin, is conceptually linked to Tsugki because of its aquatic habitat. Lévi-Strauss (1973:200) notes that in the mythology of the Americas the otter is often identified as an "aquatic seducer," but I cannot confirm that the Aguaruna share this view.

One man stated that the teeth of snakes (species not indicated) may serve a similar purpose. More commonly, the attracting power of snakes is concentrated in special stones called *yuka*.

Informants listed the internal organs of two birds as possible components of love potions: the heart, eye, tongue, and brain of the *bijágchichi* (unidentified) and the heart, liver, eye, and brain of the *bichíkuat* (*Monasa* sp.). I obtained no direct explanation of why the entrails of these birds should have an attracting power, nor did I find any evidence linking them to the prevailing pattern of aquatic symbolism.⁸

Puságki of Mineral Origin

An extremely potent charm is a liquid called *wawágki* or *wakágki* (cf. Chevalier 1982:385). Reportedly, people can acquire this liquid only in remote escarpments near the Alto Río Marañón, where it drips slowly within rock crevices. To obtain the liquid, one must scale the cliffs and collect the drops in a tiny vessel. Once collected,

wawágki liquid can be carried in a small bottle by itself or mixed with other charms to form a potion.

I have few clues at hand that can explain why this liquid is thought to have remarkable powers. Water, of course, is linked symbolically to Tsugki, but in this case the source of the liquid seems to be far removed from the rivers in which the water spirit resides. Quite possibly, there is an underlying association between the liquid and the demons that inhabit such remote, rocky places. These demons have formidable shamanistic powers that they sometimes use to attract and imprison women who become separated from their husbands while traveling near the demons' dwelling place.

Yuka stones, mentioned earlier in connection with strategies for attracting game, can also be used to attract women. A speaker who wishes to distinguish one type of *yuka* from the other sometimes calls one "game grabber" and the other "woman grabber." A person who discovers a pebble that he suspects of being a *yuka* establishes the nature of its power by trial and error, as well as by attending to dreams and omens. The accounts I recorded in the Alto Mayo indicate that "woman grabber" *yuka* are most commonly found in snakes, fish, and aquatic mammals. One man, for example, stated that people encounter such stones in the entrails of the otter, while others named the dolphin, various fish, or an animal called *wagkánim* (possibly a kind of nutria), which is said to live in or near the water. The following narrative, recorded by a woman, is typical:

Yuka are found inside the fish *mamayák* or in the "nose" [mouth?] of the fish *nayúm* [*Pterygoplichthys gibbiceps*]. If the stone is found in a *nayúm*, the fish is not killed or eaten. One must take the stone and put the fish back in the water. The stone is white. If a man dreams of women after finding the stone, this means that it is a *yuka* or *puságki* for attracting women. If a woman finds the stone and dreams of men, she should give it to her unmarried brother. She shouldn't keep it, because it's bad.

Some knowledgeable men describe a technique for obtaining a very potent kind of *yuka* found in the mouth of a snake. One account went as follows:

A man who wants a strong *yuka* should kill a snake [species not identified] and bury it in the forest. After a while, another snake will come to the place because it is attracted to the dead snake. The man must kill this one, too, and bury it in the same spot.

Later another snake will come, an enormous snake with a glowing stone in its mouth. The man quickly pins the snake's head to the

ground with a forked stick, then pries the stone out of its mouth. He runs away. He does not kill the snake, because when it dies the stone is ruined. This stone is called *yuka*. It attracts women.

After acquiring the stone, the man continued, one puts it in a closed vessel with a small quantity of red face paint. The new owner will soon have a dream in which a person tells him, "I give you the *yuka*. Take it and enjoy many women, so long as you don't use it to attract your sisters."

The question of why snakes—and though the narrator does not name the species, it appears that he speaks of poisonous snakes—carry a stone with attracting powers was not clarified to my satisfaction, despite my many queries. One man did say cryptically, "Snakes easily have sexual relations with women because they attract them with these stones." Yet I collected no tales of sexual contact between women and snakes, nor do other ethnographic sources stress such unions.⁹ Poisonous snakes are connected with shamanism in many accounts, however, since shamans may take the form of vipers to bring death to their victims. There is also a prevalent notion that snakes are drawn to human beings in a way that resembles the attraction of vultures to carrion. In chapter 2, I noted that when a person is bitten by a poisonous snake, an important part of the usual treatment strategy is to isolate the patient in a shelter surrounded by four campfires in order to frighten off other snakes that are inevitably drawn to the victim. Note that a similar sequence of elements is described in the account of how one steals the snake's *yuka*: one snake is killed and others are mysteriously attracted to its place of burial. Snakes thus symbolize the kind of uncanny attraction that a man wishes to exploit through the use of a love charm.

Like *nantag* stones, *yuka* may "run away" from their owners if they are not properly cared for:

My brother-in-law once found a stone in the mouth of a snake. It was red. He put it in a gourd and hid the gourd in a pot where he stored cotton thread. But the stone broke through the gourd, ate the lid of the pot, and ran away. He never found it.

Puságki of *Botanical Origin*

People commonly cite two herbs, *píjipig* and *tsumáik*, as sources of love charms. Varieties of the sedge *píjipig*, it will be recalled, figure prominently in hunting and gardening magic as well as in the treatment of diverse illnesses. In contrast, the uses of *tsumáik* (a folk taxon that includes species of the genera *Justicia* and *Alternanthera*) seem to be limited to hunting and love magic.¹⁰ Men often

acquire varieties of these herbs suitable for making love charms from kinsmen who have previously established the plants' efficacy in their own love affairs. Powerful plants command a high price in cash or an equivalent amount of trade goods. When a man obtains a cutting of one of these species, he plants it in a sheltered spot and sees that it remains undefiled by animals or through contact with people who have recently engaged in sexual intercourse. Once the cutting has established itself, its owner is free to take part of the plant (leaves, stems, and roots in the case of *tsumáik*; rhizomes in the case of *píjipig*) and put it in a pomade of face paint which, after a period of fasting and abstinence, he can use like any other *púságki*.

Many men are familiar with complex procedures by which varieties of *píjipig* and *tsumáik* can be obtained from animals. Manta Tsajupút, an elderly man from the Alto Marañón who had recently immigrated to the Alto Mayo, explained:

My father Wejin told me how to get *píjipig* from the woodpecker *tatasham* [*Coephaloecus lineatus*]. First you need to find a woodpecker's hole with chicks inside, crying, waiting to be fed. You plug the hole with a piece of wood, then wait for the woodpecker to come to feed its young. It comes with worms or grubs in its mouth, but it can't get through the hole. The bird leaves then returns, leaves then returns, each time with food for the chicks. You wait, hidden at the bottom of the tree, until sunset. At about that time, the woodpecker brings a stalk of *píjipig* to open the hole. You must jump out of hiding just at this moment so that the bird will be frightened and drop the plant. After you grab the plant, you must climb the tree to unplug the hole.

This *píjipig* is planted. It's used to attract either game birds or women.

Another man described a way to obtain *tsumáik* from vultures:

A kind of *tsumáik* that attracts women is found in the vulture *chuág* [either *Cathartes aura* or *Coragyps atratus*]. A man must kill the vulture, then burn it where it falls to the ground. He leaves the ashes. After a few days, three *tsumáik* plants grow from the ashes. The vulture carries *tsumáik* in three places: in the back of the neck, in the shoulder, and in the chest. The man should collect the plants and hide them in his house. He takes one of the plants to his bed when he sleeps that night. He dreams of many snakes—angry, dangerous snakes. This means that this *tsumáik* attracts snakes. The next night he takes another plant to his bed. He dreams of the anaconda. This *tsumáik* is for anacondas. He tries the third plant and dreams of women, beautiful women. This is *tsumáik* for women. It is mixed with face paint, and he uses it after fasting. When he touches a

woman with this *puságki*, she cries for no reason at sunset. She desires him very much.¹¹

One informant closed his version of an identical account by saying, "This plant has its power. Who can bear to kiss a vulture? It eats rotten things. No one will go near it. Yet it has this plant that everyone wants."

Aside from its obvious sexual symbolism (the woodpecker brings an herb that can unblock a closed cavity), the first of these two recipes remains obscure. Why is a woodpecker an appropriate source of *tsumáik*? What is the connection of this *tsumáik* to sexual attraction? The second recipe is, I think, more amenable to analysis. It is obviously a variant of the account presented in chapter 3 that explains how people obtain a charm (in this case identified as a variety of *píjipíg*) that brings game birds to the vicinity of the hunter.¹² Despite its repulsiveness, the vulture is a symbol par excellence of attraction because it is drawn to carrion from great distances. A difference between the attraction symbolized by the vulture and that sought through love magic is that the vulture is attracted to carrion for the purpose of eating it, whereas a man with a love charm seeks to become the attractor, filling the structural role of carrion while remaining the predator with respect to the woman he attracts. The shift from attractee to attractor is accomplished by transforming the vulture to carrion or ashes, or both. The herbal charms that result from this transformation give the bearer the same attracting power that carrion has vis-a-vis vultures.

Love Magic, Hunting Magic, and the Limits of Affinity

Aguaruna love magic and hunting magic exhibit striking similarities. A single term denotes the stones used to attract game and women; the same herbs figure prominently in both kinds of magic. The Aguaruna often say that hunting charms "make game fall in love with a man" in the same way that love charms make people fall in love with one another. Furthermore, hunting songs exploit metaphors of sexual union to reorder the relationship of men and animals to one of affinity. In both arenas men try to arouse a demented attraction—demented because game animals and women are made to lose their normal attitude of caution or suspicion. Descriptions of the effects of hunting charms stress their stupefying power, which causes birds to sit tranquilly as their fellows are shot one by one with darts, or monkeys to abandon their usual wariness and approach a hunter. The effects of love charms are less stupefying than arousing, but the result is that women lose all sense of

propriety, even to the point of desiring incestuous unions. The bearer of the love charm is similarly affected and easily descends to behavior (e.g., fighting, incest, adultery) that prudent and straight-thinking men regard with contempt.

The Aguaruna note two other negative effects of love charms that express the danger they pose to the social order. First, when charms are used to secure a wife rather than a casual lover, the resulting marriage is certain to end in discord. People point out that the effect of the charm eventually wears off, causing the woman to lose affection for her husband. She is then drawn into adulterous affairs with other men. Second, a wife obtained through the use of a love charm will never be able to raise domestic animals with success.¹³ Clearly, the reason why the use of love charms is inimical to domestic tranquility is that to fulfill properly and happily their domestic roles men and women must "think straight," something that they learn to do through the accumulation of visionary experience. When a man uses a *puságki* to acquire a wife, he prevents her from thinking correctly by bringing to bear deranging powers ultimately derived from *Tsugki*, the water spirit. The resulting chaos prevents the establishment of the harmonious order that the Aguaruna seek, but so rarely find, in their domestic lives.

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