

## A MENNONITE ENCOUNTER WITH THE "INNERMOST" OF THE LENGUA INDIANS<sup>1</sup>

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"These people will simply 'poijh' us to death," affirmed one of the Mennonite settlers concerning the Lengua Indians who work on Mennonite farms as peones. "We've now lived with them here in the Paraguayan Chaco for more than thirty years, but I still find this habit of theirs most exasperating. You know for a fact that they want *something*, but they just stand there impassively and keep on repeating 'porijh' (which translated means *nothing*). There have been times," he continued in all seriousness, "that I felt convinced that they didn't actually know what they wanted, but, lo and behold, when you least expected it, they expressed their wish. When I then asked, 'Did you know what you wanted when you arrived?', they would answer in the affirmative. If you then reprimand them and say, 'Why didn't you tell me this as soon as you arrived?', they will again assume that impassive facial expression, or at the most, shrug their shoulders, but say no more."

"They are just plain ignorant and basically dishonest," opined another settler. "You can't trust these Indians nohow, not even the converted ones. Their heathen lying habit is so deeply ingrained in their nature, that they cannot possibly tell the truth."

Both of the speakers were Mennonites who with several thousand of their fellow believers had settled in the Chaco and who were now struggling to wrest a livelihood from its harsh environment. As nonconformists of Anabaptist heritage they had retreated to the Chaco in order to find an environment in which they would be permitted to practice their faith without persecution from the ungodly world. They were a God-fearing people who believed the Bible and were convinced that all lies were from "the evil one."

Both of the men quoted were talking about some 5000 Lengua Indians, who in their own language call themselves "enlhet," *the people*. The Lengua had been a nomadic hunting-gathering tribe until contact with Paraguayan civilization, missions (Anglican, New Tribes, and Mennonite), and particularly the Mennonite colonies launched them in a cycle of change. Great changes in their overt culture have already taken place, especially since they have adopted

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so many material traits from the Mennonite agriculturalists. Furthermore, the majority have also accepted the Christian faith. This paper, however, intends to describe not so much the overt culture of the Lengua, nor the culture change, but rather the covert, "the inner," or "the psychic" nature of man as the Lengua Indians used to and even now see it. It proposes, *first*, to present an ethnographic description of man's "inner life" as seen through the eyes of the Lengua Indians who represent a world view which at many points differs radically from our Mennonite Weltanschauung which we, of course, consider to be the right one; *secondly*, to illustrate by examples from everyday experience how the mutual lack of understanding of the respective covert world views can lead to prejudice, frustration, and even sin for members of the cultures in contact;<sup>2</sup> *thirdly*, to point out some of the advantages that an understanding of the Lengua concepts of the "innermost" can have both in the evangelistic efforts of the missionary and also for the "everyday" dealings between the Mennonite settler and his Indian employees; and *finally*, to whet the appetite of all the readers to develop sensitivity to and appreciation for ever-increasing areas of the worldview (and its unspoken value hierarchies) of all the people who, in the economy of God, become *our* neighbors.

#### DEFINITION OF THE LENGUA "INNERMOST"

In the area of man's inner life the Lengua distinguish at least four foci: (1) the -valhoc (the hyphen before a Lengua noun indicates that such a stem can never stand without a possessor, generally a possessive pronominal prefix) is translated as the "innermost." This innermost serves as the mainspring of behavior in a man's life. (2) The -vanmongcama, which is most frequently translated "soul," "dream," or "shadow," has very little to do with behavior; it is really the core of man's life or existence. Should it be lost, stolen, or ill, a man will surely die. (3) The -nenyic, translated "chest," can refer both to the chest anatomy and to its psychic functions. It carries with it the implications of deep involvement of the entire inner make-up of man. (4) The -jangauc, translated as "soul-of-the-dead," is the disembodied inner existence that is "born" from man's total inner being at the moment of his death. Most frequently it is treated as the dead person's counterpart to a living human's -vanmongcama,

<sup>2</sup> There is a half-secret wish in the "innermost" of the writer that even though not all of the readers may have experienced contact with "exotic" cultures, that the "dailiness" of the experiences recounted may make possible flashbacks of personal encounters with "impossible" people even in the "home" culture. Maybe there will even be awakened a strong enough feeling of "guilt" about these "negative" encounters that the individuals will be stimulated to become inquisitive about the covert factors that were the real basis of the misunderstanding.

but in actual function it seems to include also the functions of the -valhoc and the -nenyic.

If we look at these foci in terms of their locus, their place of "residence" within the body, we notice that the latter, the -jangauc, is the total spiritual counterpart of the person, including his recognizable appearance. However, it may also be used occasionally in a limited sense as the "soul" or essential core of the dead person. As indicated by its name, the -nenyic finds its locus in the chest, including possibly everything from the navel and up. As already indicated earlier it often refers to the sum total of the *living* man's inner being. The -vanmongcama resides either in the upper part of the chest or in the brain, possibly both; while the -valhoc is located in the lower part of man's chest, or in the upper part of his abdomen, possibly in his stomach.

From the linguistic idioms of the Lengua language we can conclude that the -valhoc is definitely the seat of the emotions. Notice the following list of expressions<sup>3</sup> that proceed from and involve man's innermost (the left-hand column lists the idiomatic English translation and the right-hand column provides a literal translation of the Lengua expression):

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| to love                      | the innermost dissolves                                  |
| to hate                      | the innermost does not dissolve                          |
| to be happy                  | the innermost spreads out                                |
| to think or to thank         | the innermost mentions                                   |
| to meditate                  | the innermost searches                                   |
| to be afraid                 | the innermost falls down                                 |
| to excite, become excited    | the innermost labors, works hard                         |
| to worry                     | the innermost keeps on mentioning it<br>with concern     |
| to hope                      | the innermost waits                                      |
| to be greedy                 | the innermost demands                                    |
| to be kind                   | the innermost receives, accepts                          |
| to frighten, be frightened   | the innermost jumps up high                              |
| to cry with fear             | the innermost trembles                                   |
| to taunt or annoy            | the innermost goes in, enters                            |
| to be obstinate              | the innermost is closed up                               |
| to be sad                    | the innermost walks aside or beside                      |
| to be in a hurry             | the innermost pushes                                     |
| to be angry                  | the innermost goes under                                 |
| to be hurt (psychologically) | the innermost suffers hurt                               |
| to be quarrelsome            | the innermost talks back                                 |
| to be ashamed                | the innermost suffers embarrassment                      |
| to be astonished             | the innermost dries up                                   |
| to be jealous                | the innermost is riled up, or it mentions<br>unceasingly |
| to be two-faced              | the innermost is double, or two inner-<br>mosts          |

<sup>3</sup> This list was assembled exclusively by Dietrich Lepp.

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| to be peaceful, meek           | the innermost is good                                 |
| to be bad, troublesome         | the innermost is not good                             |
| to be homesick                 | the innermost desires to be at another place          |
| to be sympathetic              | the innermost is not locked up                        |
| to be proud                    | the innermost praises (mentions) itself               |
| to be humble                   | the innermost does not praise itself                  |
| to be obedient                 | the innermost is soft or gentle                       |
| to be upset                    | the innermost is wavy (turbulent)                     |
| to be calm                     | the innermost is clean                                |
| to be sick                     | the innermost is unclean, or bad                      |
| to be sickly                   | the innermost is rotten                               |
| to be sick (sorcery)           | the innermost is judged, or known                     |
| to be sick (sympathetic magic) | the innermost is under a spell                        |
| to become well                 | the innermost is restored                             |
| to be converted                | to change one's innermost                             |
| to comfort                     | to refresh the innermost                              |
| to lose one's temper           | the innermost is not straight                         |
| to have passion (illicit sex)  | the innermost dies                                    |
| to suffer                      | the innermost is sad (passive and reflexive)          |
| to confess                     | to mention about the innermost                        |
| to greet                       | the innermost remembers, or makes mention of a person |
| conscience                     | the knowledge of the innermost                        |

In addition to the emotions or states of the innermost there are the following emotions or conditions of the chest.

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| to grieve               | the chest goes away  |
| to be alive and healthy | the chest is strong  |
| to breathe              | to drive breath out of the chest                                     |
| to die                  | the chest remains without breath, or the core of the chest tears off |
| to sigh deeply          | the core of the chest flees  |
| to desire intensely     | the core of the chest dies   |

All of the expressions in this latter group seem to carry overtones of something very intense and possibly more inclusive than the states of the innermost. This agrees with the former statement that at times the "chest" expressions refer to the totality of man's inner life.

In some respects the -valhoc compares very favorably with the conscience of our Western inner life, for like the latter it can distinguish between good and evil; but it can also *be* basically good or evil in character. Thus conversion is very often spoken of as the exchanging of a bad -valhoc for a good one. The idiom occurs in a Lengua folktale about a very bad man, who, through the change of his innermost, became a very kind and good man.

But we must here immediately point out that the Lengua term "innermost" also carries a much more physiological connota-

tion than the metaphorical usage of English "heart." This contrast can be meaningfully demonstrated in connection with the Lengua expression "changing or exchanging one's innermost" which, as indicated above, is used to translate the Christian concept of conversion.

Missionary D. Lepp, as a new missionary zealous to eradicate the evils of shamanism and magic, forbade all medicine men to practice their art at his mission station. As soon as he heard their chanting—day or night—he went and ordered them to desist or to vacate the premises. After about three months of consistent interference by the missionary all the chanting had apparently ceased. When shortly thereafter a number of women came to "exchange their innermosts," he was delighted. His firmness was now paying dividends in conversions. When, however, more and more groups began coming to "change their innermosts," he began to be suspicious.

"Why did they want to change their innermosts?"

"Because the missionary was telling them that God wanted them to do it."

"But why do it now and so many together?"

After some hesitation someone finally volunteered: "You see, you told all the medicine men to stop singing—well, some of them are still singing softly. Since they do not seem to be afraid of you or of your God, we are beginning to fear that their medicine and magic may be stronger than we thought. We are becoming very much afraid of them. However, we want to remain your friends, so we have decided to ask you to give us Lenco (Mennonite) innermosts so that we could become immune to the medicine man's magic." This request reveals that the Lengua expected far more than only a "psychic" change of heart.

It is probably correct to point out that the -valhoc has both physiological and psychic function. Consider the interesting distinction made in the case of hemorrhages. The Lengua identify two kinds of chest hemorrhages: in the first, the bleeding is organic and proceeds from the actual organs of the chest; in the second, it is the -valhoc that is bleeding. Tubercular hemorrhages, for example, are classified as bleeding not of the organs, but as bleeding issuing from the innermost. The informants identified great fear as the major cause of bleeding of the innermost. In like manner other ailments, especially those of the thorax, will be classified as being physiological and organic or as emotional and then resulting from conditions of the innermost.

At other times during the research it seemed as if the -valhoc could to a large extent be equated with the Western concept of personality, especially since it develops in the social context, rather than through mother's milk, as in the case of the soul. As such the innermost is also responsible for making decisions, for "thinking" is one of its main functions. However, "feeling" runs a close second.

Nor are human beings the only ones possessing a -valhoc, an innermost. Indeed one must say that all things have a -valhoc, but people are more concerned about the -valhocs of certain objects. The camera, for example, is said to have a diviner's -valhoc; for it can put on paper the things it sees and thus "reveal" them long after it is no longer possible to see the scenes with the human eye. This parallels their experience with the shaman whose soul can identify the thief of a stolen object, or the place where something was lost. In like manner the shaman's soul retains its observations of a world invisible to the natural eye in which it wanders when the medicine man has visions, and which, at a later date, he can graphically describe to the other members of the tribe.

Another example of the divining function of the innermost cited by informants involved the sick person who suddenly says, "My innermost is thinking of the hospital." This means that the patient who had resisted going there has become convinced or at least resigned to the fact that he ought to go.

The watch and the radio are said to have a sick -valhoc, because they make much noise—the ticking of the watch and background static in the radio. Again, should the -valhoc of a doll enter the womb of a woman she would die.

Like the soul, the innermost can leave the body of the person. Informants were able to list at least four common reasons: (1) to accompany the soul when the latter wanders about during dreams or visions; (2) when it is stolen, or lost, either together with or separately from the soul; (3) if a person is suddenly and violently frightened; and (4) at death, when it ceases to exist entirely, or rather is absorbed together with the rest of man's inner being into the -jangauc, the soul-of-the-dead. This -valhoc/-jangauc overlap will be treated more specifically under the discussion of innermost-linked property. The fourth cause for separation of the -valhoc from the body, of course, was permanent. Loss or stealing can involve absences extending up to several weeks in length. Dreams, visions, etc., will only mean separation for only shorter periods, while in the cause of fright it will be absent only momentarily.

It will not be necessary at this point to discuss fully the function

of the -vanmongcama, the soul. Its origin will be discussed in the next section and further remarks about it will be made in connection with death. We only underscore that the soul is essentially the bearer of life. If the soul is lost or stolen, death is sure to follow in due time, while its return to the body means a return of health and life. For this reason dreaming and visions can be dangerous in at least two ways. First, they leave the thorax empty and open for the entry of one of several kinds of unattached spirits or souls with whom the universe is filled. Secondly, the wandering soul is much more vulnerable to capture and "getting lost" than when it is "at home." Visions, dreams, and delirium are all experiences of the -vanmongcama. In the case of the latter, the soul is actually trying to share its experiences through speech, but since the experience reaches beyond the "natural," it is very difficult for humans to understand, even though the soul speaks only its native language. Shamans can describe the world of "myth-age" or of the sky because their souls have wandered there and made observations. One could thus summarize that experiences within the body such as hearing, seeing, feeling, thinking, are activities of the innermost, but all experiences outside the body are made by the soul. It is only proper to record that in trying to distinguish between the soul and the innermost the informants often differed in detail. Obviously, there are areas of overlap between the concepts so that no entirely consistent separation can be made.

When a person finally dies, his living soul, -vanmangcama (together with the other inner aspects of man's existence), is transformed into his soul-of-the-dead, -jangauc. This soul-of-the-dead is one of the greatest sources of fear for Lengua Indians. It also will be described in more detail in connection with property and death. A detailed discussion is foreseen in a separate paper.<sup>4</sup>

#### THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF MAN'S INNER LIFE

Lengua informants tended to be very vague about the origin of the soul, -vanmongcama. However, in several group and also private informant sessions the consensus was that the "seed" for the soul comes from the father. For this reason a father is charged with a partial couvade. He abstains from certain foods, does not perform hard physical labor or bathe in cold water at least until the umbilicus has healed. Some fathers do not bathe in cold water until the mother stops bleeding. However, even though a child has the "seed" for a soul at birth, it is not viewed as having either a -vanmongcama or a

<sup>4</sup> Jacob A. Loewen, "The Spirit-World of Chaco Lengua," in preparation.

-valhoc. And because neither the soul (life) nor the innermost (personality) is functional at birth, infanticide is not viewed as killing. Thus the question of whether or not a newborn child should live was an open option. The decision of life or death was based on values other than that this meant killing a living person. Should a mother die at child-birth, infanticide was considered obligatory, for the -jangauc of the mother would be greatly angered if she were deprived of her infant.

Mother's milk was viewed as the great food of the soul. In order to assure the full development of the soul the Lengua viewed three to four years of breast feeding as imperative. Because mother's milk plays such an important part in the development of the -vanmongcama, the Lengua have found bottle feeding with non-mother's milk to be very barbarous. A few of the Lengua babies raised this way by missionary nurses are even today, as grownups, being called "animal babies." Their full humanity is really in question.

Just how the -valhoc developed and was nurtured informants did not seem to be able to answer. The Chulupi, who have a very similar outlook, explain that man's innermost develops through breast feeding and attention (love and instruction) from the mother. We can thus suggest that breast feeding builds the -vanmongcama, while attention, love, and instruction build the -valhoc. In both cultures fathers have very little responsibility beyond the couvade.

When a child was eight days old it underwent the first of a series of festivals. This celebration, called "tayjaycoc," involved the piercing of the child's earlobe with a cactus pricker. This marked its entrance into the human race. From now on it was considered to have both a -valhoc and a -vanmongcama. To kill a child after the piercing of the earlobe was considered murder. Once the child's earlobe had been pierced it was also accorded the respect of a person. Mothers tried as much as possible to do what the "person" wanted. Out of respect for the innermost of her child a mother would not force it to take medicine when it resisted. She would try to persuade the child, but if it would not accede, she would not use force. The missionary's threat—if you don't give the child medicine it will die—would be met by a shrug and possibly the slowly spoken words, "But he/she wants to die." This certainly does not mean a lack of maternal concern for the child, for mothers have been known to plead in tears with their children, but they would not resort to force.

Several missionaries who could not bear to see such "careless motherhood" reported occasions at which after much pressure they

had been permitted to use force in administering the medicine. In one case this involved a series of injections. When even after this effort the child still died, the mother wept daily for more than a year. She was continually "repenting" that she had permitted the application of force when the child itself "wanted to die." In her disrespect of its intent, she had made the child suffer all the pain of the injections. This mother considered herself as having failed morally in a very serious way. She had not respected the innermost of her child.

To encourage the developing innermost (self-consciousness) both boys and girls become the object of a second festival somewhere between eight and ten years of age. This festival follows the first "grown-up" deed of the youngster, such as the first killing of game or the performing of a difficult errand all by oneself. At this time the whole community recognizes the emerging personality and the chief gives the child a pep-talk to continue in this way, for then he or she will become a person of great worth and respect.

There is another interesting "growing-up" feature to be mentioned for girls. It is associated with the female puberty ceremony. At the climax the celebrated girl is dragged by a group of youths until she faints. When she is revived with cold water, everyone rejoices that "the girl has died and a woman has been born."

#### THE IDEAL INNERMOST

Simply stated, the Lengua ideal holds that the good person will have a stable innermost and he will exercise great respect for the innermosts of his fellows. He will not talk or act when his own innermost is "wavy" (unsettled). Negatively stated, he will avoid those things in speech and action that will disturb his neighbor's innermost; and positively stated, he will say or do those things that will pacify it or keep it calm.

This philosophy lies at the base of the use of "poi<sup>ij</sup>h" discussed at the beginning of this paper. If one asks a Lengua Indian who has obviously come for *something*, "What do you want?" he will, indeed, say poi<sup>ij</sup>h, *nothing*, at least twice for his own benefit. He is testing his own innermost to see whether it is at peace and whether he will be able to utter his request without losing his inner even keel. But he generally says poi<sup>ij</sup>h more than twice, often more than four times. After having checked out the condition of his own innermost he may continue to say poi<sup>ij</sup>h, first, if he feels that his innermost is not at rest. He must not speak when excited. Secondly, he may also be checking the condition of the innermost of the person to whom he

is speaking. If the third and fourth utterance of *poi*jh elicit impatience in the hearer, he knows that he had better not state the purpose of his coming for fear of agitating his hearer's innermost even more. While certainly the ideal of respect plays an important part, one must not overlook the fact that fear is also a major motivation. Should he disturb his neighbor's innermost by daytime, there is much more possibility that the neighbor's angered soul will come to do him harm when it wanders at night.

If we again look at the use of *poi*jh as a test of one's own *-valhoc*, there is an instructive experience told by missionary G. B. Giesbrecht.

The Yalve Sanga mission herds were being decimated by a tiger that was killing both sheep and calves. Something needed to be done. First, the carcass of a sheep was poisoned with strychnine, and next, an Indian, who was called "Father-of-Tiger" because he had single-handedly killed seven of them, was delegated to actually hunt down the marauding beast. Early the next morning the hunter shouldered his old muzzle-loader and set out. Shortly after noon the hunter returned. His clothes were in shreds, his one arm and leg were caked with blood from some deep gashes that were visible on them, and the butt end of his gun was ragged and chewed up. Obviously something serious had happened. The missionary hurried out and asked him, "What happened?" But the Indian only answered with an unemotional *poi*jh. He kept on repeating *poi*jh so many time that the exasperated missionary finally left him. A full four hours later, when the hunter's innermost found its even keel again, he finally recounted his experience.

I went to the poisoned sheep and found that the tiger had been there. So I followed his tracks. Not too far away in the bush in a little clearing I found the tiger lying down. Since one never knows if there is a deceased shaman's soul living in the tiger, one must always speak to him before killing. So I said, "Father Tiger, you have become bad, very bad. You kill sheep. You kill calves. If you only killed to eat, we would not be angry, we know that you too get hungry. But you have become bad, you kill many more animals than you eat. You have become a killer. So I must now kill you." I pointed my gun at him while I was still talking, but it wouldn't go off. Then I noticed the tiger was becoming restless, so I said, "Father Tiger, lie still, my gun is old. It will not go off. But I must kill you." I tried to adjust the gun, but it still would not fire. Then the tiger jumped. I threw myself down and the tiger jumped over me. The tiger turned, jumped, and missed again. The third time he knocked the gun out of my hand and tore my clothes and clawed my arm and my leg. Then growling he began to chew the butt of my gun. I then said to him, "Father Tiger, I must get my gun and kill you." I reached out slowly, slowly until finally I was able to grab the barrel of the gun. Then I pulled the gun out of the tiger's mouth, aimed it and fired. This time

it went off. I had blinded the tiger. Then I jumped on his back and finished him off with my knife.

The incredulous missionary immediately went to investigate and found the scene just as described—the marks of the tiger's jumping in the sand, the pieces of wood gnawed from the gun butt and the dead beast. The account illustrates dramatically that while his innermost was perturbed and excited the old hunter did not talk. He was a great hero, who knew how to control his innermost both in and away from danger.

Regardless of what the circumstances may be, the ideal adult will not lose his even keel. This same missionary related a very humbling experience with a Lengua in connection with an Indian's horse that was always grazing on the missionary's pasture and garden. The missionary had spoken to the owner of the offending animal a number of times and had explained that he did not want the horse there. This was his own private property. But next day the offending horse was there again. After several weeks of this the missionary was exasperated and felt that other methods were now legitimate. He got a club and rather unceremoniously beat the animal as he drove it from his property. To be sure the horse did not return next day, but one of his Indian friends came and spoke to him about his deed. "You did not live like a man: You beat a horse that did not know better. You were angry. It is not good for a missionary to be angry." The missionary realized that in Lengua eyes he had acted very unwisely. After serious inner battles he went to the owner of the horse and apologized. The Indian's face lit up and he said, "It is good. You are a man."

Our own culture also stresses emotional equilibrium, but certainly not to the degree the Lengua do. We do believe there are legitimate occasions for a person "to blow off steam." This difference is reflected in the following experience of pioneer missionary to the Lengua, W. B. Grubb, who reports that he once lost his temper and became very irritated one night when, after a difficult day of trekking, many mosquitos and sandflies made life very miserable. As soon as he began to take out his ill will on the Indians, they wanted to know the reason for his irritation. When he told them that obviously he was annoyed because of the mosquitos and sandflies, they were greatly amused. Some asked him whether he could talk mosquito language. If so, he should really bawl them out and tell them to leave Indians alone also. Then they added that he should remember that shouting at Indians did not bring relief from biting mosquitos.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> W. Barbrooke Grubb, *An Unknown People in an Unknown Land* (London, 1925) 198.

Mennonites, too, believe in "righteous wrath" and that this was a constant source of frustration and problem for the Lengua was evident in the universality and the frequency with which Indians made mention of this situation during the anthropological investigation. One of the Lengua bitterly remarked that it was impossible to keep the Mennonite innermost calm. "You tell them the truth and they get angry. So you tell them the opposite—a lie, and they still get angry. What shall you finally say to them?"

According to the Lengua, should a situation develop in which a person's innermost cannot maintain an even keel, then he must first keep quiet. If this does not solve the situation, he must leave the scene or the community as his individual case might require.

If we take another look at this use of *poi* or of silence as a protection for the perturbed innermost of the neighbor, we find some additional and rather interesting ramifications in regard to truth and lies. Consider the experience recounted by one of the colony leaders, who for a time was administrator of the mission ranch. It was during the pioneer years and barbed wire was still very scarce. Only three sides of the mission pasture had a barbed wire fence. On the fourth side a barrier of brush had been built, but this was now all dried up and for that reason cattle often broke through it. Once out on the open range, the cattle quickly disappeared through rustlers. During some busy season the administrator had completely forgotten about the cattle. When he finally did remember it, he became quite afraid that the cattle might have broken out and if they had, that they would have been stolen. He at once dispatched an Indian to check. When the scout returned, the administrator hurried to meet him and asked, "Has something happened to the cattle?" The Indian's answer was "*poi*."

"Had any of the cattle broken out?"

"*Poi*."

"Had the brush fence been damaged anywhere?"

"*Poi*."

Deeply relieved the manager walked toward the house. About half an hour later an older man came to tell him confidentially that the cattle had broken out and that they had all strayed from the pasture. The administrator contradicted him saying that he had just finished sending an Indian to check and this man had reported that nothing of the kind had happened. Then the old man gently insisted, "But the man you sent to look now sends me to tell you that the cows are all gone." Angrily the administrator retorted, "But why did he lie to me before?" Then the old man answered, "When

he came back you were so excited that he was afraid that you would 'blow a gasket' or something. He was hoping your innermost would be able to take it now. That's why he sent me."<sup>6</sup>

It is not too difficult to believe that in their desire to keep the Mennonites' innermosts from becoming upset the Lengua told lies. In fact, in discussing this during the ethnographic research, the Indians confided that it was very difficult to live with the Mennonites because of their unstable innermosts. "You can tell them a lie to try and keep them calm, but they get angry. So next time you tell them the truth, but they still get angry."

Nor is it hard to understand that Mennonites often suffered because of this. Take the Indian who had a difficult message to deliver, and who found the receptor in an excited state. He said that which he felt would keep the Mennonite's innermost from excitement. Then, three or four days later, often too late, the Indian finally felt that the atmosphere was stable enough to deliver the actual truth. In a way, the Lengua are indeed relativists whose culture insists that they say that which will calm the innermost—if possible, of course, the truth.

The missionaries reported how at one of the early Lengua baptisms a Lengua girl raised as an orphan in a Mennonite home was being examined for baptism by an assembly of Mennonite ministers. Since she spoke German, and knew the appropriate expressions, all were deeply impressed with the "wonderful work of grace" and decided to baptize her without consulting the Indian leaders. Three weeks after the baptism it became apparent that she, though still unmarried, was with child. She had been living with several men in a most profligate manner even at the time of her baptism. When the Mennonite ministers scolded the Lengua leaders, who had known the truth, for not telling them, they answered, "How could we say anything like that? Your 'innermosts were spread out widely' as you listened to her testimony and you would have become very unhappy. And besides, you didn't ask us."

Before we leave the discussion of the use of *poijh*, we must describe another experience of Missionary Lepp. During his earlier mission work, he had become so upset about Indian "lying," as he termed the use of *poijh*, that he decided to preach a series of messages on the subject. As he waxed eloquent in his denunciation of this universal "lying" pattern, the congregation patiently heard him to the end, but afterwards a group of elders came and expressed their grave concern over the state of the missionary's innermost. It

6 Personal communication with Oberschulze Heinrich Duerkson of Fernheim Colony.

must be very immature that it could go "wild" about the use of the word *poijh*.

In the current trend of culture change and with the introduction of the school, the demand for respect for the other's innermost is giving rise to some serious problems. As the younger generation begins to develop insecurity and rebellion, the older, the teachers, are in a serious dilemma. The Mennonite pedagogy instructs them to discipline with the rod—but what about the respect for the child's innermost?

The length to which Lengua will carry this respect for the innermost of others is quite amazing. Missionary B. Toews of Loma Plata reported an interesting lesson he had learned from the Indians at the mission station. Saturday, when all the men were home from work, had been designated as the improvement day for the station. All the residents of the mission village would share in building fences, drainage ditches, schools, etc. There was, however, one able-bodied character who for many months contrived to be "unavailable" every Saturday. The missionary noticed this with growing concern and finally decided that the time for action had come. He summoned some of the village leaders and shared his concern with them. All agreed completely to the fact that this man was shirking his duty. However, when the missionary proposed economic sanctions, he was faced with silence. Finally after listening to several expositions of the missionary's plan, one of the braver men spoke up and said, "Yes, that is the way you Lencos<sup>7</sup> do it, but it is not the Lengua way. Maybe that man should work; but if it does not come out of the desires of his own innermost, he will only be unhappy if we *make* him participate. Maybe it is better that we do the work for him and wait. Who knows, one of these days his innermost will think and realize the path of duty. When this happens he will come and be happy to share in the work. Maybe it is better that we wait for him until his innermost knows his duty."

One certainly cannot say that the reasoning of these Lengua leaders was immature. Possibly their way was more in accordance with Mennonite peace principles than that proposed by their spiritual mentor.

#### HURTING THE INNERMOST

Whenever the innermost of a person is not respected, hurt results. Though one must honestly admit that every phase of Lengua existence is associated with the innermost and therefore it can be

<sup>7</sup> Lenco is a corruption of the word "gringa," for Lengua possesses neither a *g* nor an *r* in its phonemic inventory.

hurt at almost any point, informants were able to single out at least four major areas in which hurts were most frequent. These are gossip, embarrassment, disapproval of action, and disregard of person. Each of these areas will now be discussed in some detail.

Gossip appeared to be by far the most common source of hurt. Interestingly enough, Christianity has helped increase both the incidence of gossip and the potential for hurt. The former resulted from the catalogue of specific sins that missions have introduced. These now serve a ready yardstick to measure short-coming and provide "gossip material" in the behavior of one's fellow. The potential for hurt was increased through the downgrading of spirit fear. Formerly fear was the most powerful emotion. It drove people to stick together closely. This was seen most clearly in their village layout. When a village was subject to excessive fear, they always built their houses in a circle, house against house, and then at night huddled around the common fire trying to draw courage in togetherness. As the settlers raised doubts about the validity of these spirit fears, and faith in the gospel brought about much release from former fears, the hurts of the innermost began to climb in the value hierarchy. Paralleling the loss of fear was the disintegration of the clan, which now separated to live with individual employers. This brought social distance, personal insecurity, and interpersonal rivalry. One must conclude that the mission program greatly fortified both incidence and degree of hurt to the innermost.

Illustrating this fact is the experience with the first settlement of Lengua Christians. The village was laid out with a central street and a row of houses on either side. The individual lots were twenty-five meters wide. This distance was actually much greater than in their circular villages the Lengua used during the Chaco War, and yet they had to be discontinued because the villagers constantly complained that they could hear all the remarks their neighbors were making about them and this caused them much pain in their innermosts. In fact, some of the settlers became so deeply hurt that they left the village for periods of several months to regain the equilibrium of their innermost somewhere removed from the problem.

When the question of the village pattern and the issue of private versus communal work were aired, the settlement director of Yalve Sanga reported that the Indians rejected a communal long-house with separate family rooms on the grounds that this would bring them into even closer proximity and therefore increase the potential for hurt. The Indians then chose the same village pattern they had

had, only the lots were increased from 25 meters to 100 to 125 meters in width.

One of the Indian "failures" as a settler by the administrator's evaluation (he has never yet delivered even a single kilo of cash crop) answered the question whether he was happy as a settler with a confident affirmative. "Yes, I am very happy now. Formerly on the 25-meter lot I could always hear the neighbors say I was lazy. This made much hurt. Now on the 100-meter lot I can never hear them and I am very happy."

Similarly now that Christian morality has become the yardstick for measuring sexual conduct, many young men have left the community when they became aware that people were talking about their visits to given girls at night.

Embarrassment as a source of hurt could of course be closely related with gossip, but it also goes beyond. Take the young man who was observed by a missionary when he left the sleeping quarters of a girl to whom he was not married. He was immediately deeply embarrassed and though no word was spoken the young man immediately left the community for a number of months.

On other occasions parents, embarrassed by some negative behavior on the part of their children, have disappeared from the community. Especially if siblings quarrel or resort to physical aggression, parental embarrassment becomes acute.

In the case of marital infidelity, it was generally the "innocent" partner that was embarrassed and who at once left the community. Missionary Giesbrecht illustrates this well in the following account of an experience with his informant and early convert.

At the end of a day of working on translation with the missionary, the informant went home. This day he came home a little earlier than usual and surprised another man lying with his wife. Right after the informant's departure the missionary decided to take a walk to the Indian camp some 100 meters away from his residence. When he arrived in the Lengua village he noticed his informant was just leaving with a small bundle of his belongings over his shoulder. The missionary hurried and overtook him.

"Are you leaving?"

"Yes, I am leaving."

"Have I hurt you in some way?"

"No, you are not responsible. I am leaving now and I will never return." With this the Indian began walking resolutely down the trail.

The missionary walked after him and pleaded for the reason.

Suddenly the Indian stopped and said, "It is of no concern for you. When I came from your house I surprised another man lying with my wife. This man is a shaman. I am now leaving. I will not return."

The missionary tried to reason with him, but to no avail. The man continued walking away. There was nothing left but to follow. Occasionally the missionary called his name, but the man just kept on walking and repeating, "I cannot come back." Finally the missionary offered, "If you cannot go back to your own home, come and live at my house. I will be your brother." Gradually the Indian slackened his pace. Then he turned and said, "Yes, I will come to your house."

However, the missionary noticed how inwardly torn the man was, so he suggested prayer to God. Together they knelt down. The missionary prayed first in his own language. Then to the missionary's surprise the Lengua, who had never prayed before, poured out his heart to God about the hurt of his innermost. He asked for strength to be calm. After a few days of living with the missionary, he appeared one day with his former wife and announced that he was returning her to her people. After that he himself returned and continued to work with the missionary.

Such embarrassment was often associated with amorous affairs. A girl rejected by the man whose belt she took during an evening dance might immediately leave the community because of the resulting embarrassment.

Informants also cited Lengua marriage customs as a source of embarrassment. Generally at the festivals, when a young man and a girl were seen to spend consecutive nights together, relatives would suddenly grab them and set them down together in public proclaiming them husband and wife. Where this was premature, marriages were frequently broken up because of the embarrassment that resulted. Generally the youth would be first to leave the community.

Interestingly enough, even death was viewed as a source of embarrassment. The sudden death of a member in the family showed that it lacked power. This was embarrassing. The bereaved family might avoid the public; occasionally certain members actually left the area, embarrassed by this public revelation of their collective lack of power.

Disapproval of behavior could also be linked to embarrassment, but it generally involves the "confession" of wrong behavior (not one's own) at some public gathering. Missionaries have found this aspect of Lengua culture somewhat objectionable. Either during an

evening gathering around the fire, or at a scheduled public meeting, a person will begin to "confess" the shortcomings of his child, marriage partner, or relatives. While this certainly is not ideal, by our standards, it seems to be an accepted pattern of overt confrontation for the Lengua. Because of the mutual respect for the innermost, parents and children, husband and wife and relatives seldom air their differences in a face-to-face encounter. If a problem is brought into the open, it is almost always in public. But we must point out that in such a public airing the audience serves as witnesses and as checks against violent manifestations. If "confessions" are made, it is generally done without any display of emotion. If one compares this with the violent face-to-face encounters between husband and wife in the Spanish environment, the Lengua institution has many advantages. However, because it goes against Mennonite "grain," the missionaries are generally discouraging it.

One of the missionaries reported that recently a husband had recounted his wife's shortcomings at a church service. As soon as he sat down the wife got up and said that she had been completely unaware of what she was doing to her husband and that she regretted this. In this case the matter was solved at once.

On another occasion, however, a husband "confessed" his wife's intimacies with another man. There was no immediate repentance, and as a result all three persons eventually left the community. First, the "wife stealer" (the man had been the initiator in this illicit affair) left, because of the public disapproval of his deed. Then the "stolen" wife was overcome by embarrassment and she left. Finally the innocent husband who had "confessed" this delict also felt guilty over his lack of control over his innermost as revealed in the public confession he had made and so he also left.

Similarly when a church group disciplines one of its members, he generally disappears for a period of three to six months. Once he has found himself he returns to make amends to the church. There is a record of a case of wife-stealing in which the culprit returned to face the church after an absence of six months. The church listened to his statement, but did not find "his innermost genuinely changed." This man immediately left the village for another extended period. His next appearance in the community led to his restoration to fellowship. He is today a very respected member of the believing community.

Retreat from the community is not the only exit, however. Missionary Grubb reports the case of attempted suicide following a

reprimand by the missionary.<sup>8</sup> There is also a recent record of a suicide by a young woman who was rejected in an amorous approach.

Possibly the most serious reprimand does not involve sexual lapses (as in the missionary's value hierarchy), but stinginess in regard to food. Since Mennonite settlers do not share their edibles as the Lengua culture demands they are classified as stingy. One of the meanest modern insults for a Lengua is: "You are as stingy as a Mennonite."

Disregard of person as a source of hurt could actually include all the others already discussed. It is here used in a more specific sense of the Indian-Mennonite relationship, especially as employees and employers.

Mennonites were used to differential treatment—to each according to desert. With the Lengua they found that approach did not work. They could not show favoritism or give differential wages. If one Indian who did especially fine work was singled out for special reward he generally refused it. If he did accept under pressure, two types of problems generally developed. First, the employees not so rewarded were "hurt" and frequently left this employer. Secondly, even the rewarded person might leave if he did not receive the same reward at the end of the following week. To give special reward only occasionally involved reflections on the person's worth. The settlers had to learn that additional reward for better individuals could not be used as an incentive for better production. It generally resulted in the loss of all the employees. Today, under growing individualism, this is beginning to show signs of change.

This concern for regard of person is also seen in the hand-shaking ritual that takes place with all visitors and especially the preacher at the church services. At the conclusion of the meeting, the whole congregation—men, women, and children—will usually file by the speaker and the visitors and shake their hand to show their respect for them. The younger generation found this quite amusing and would frequently giggle as they lined up to shake hands.

Should a wife and mother want to hurt her husband, she could do so by mistreating their children. Husbands will be deeply hurt by wives who do not respect the personalities of their children. Such husbands will generally leave the community. This is one mechanism women can use to drive away unwanted husbands.

#### MECHANISMS FOR HANDLING HURTS

As already indicated repeatedly, the major mechanism in re-

<sup>8</sup> W. Barbrooke Grubb, *The Church in the Wilds* (London, 1914) 154.

solving a hurt innermost is personal retreat from the scene. It appears that with culture change such extended withdrawals are becoming increasingly burdensome and possibly also less frequent. Going away at the first appearance of the hurt before the community sanctions became operative was definitely considered as a type of control of one's innermost.

The public revelation of someone else's shortcoming was not ranked as the most ideal behavior. At least up to a point it showed both lack of control over one's own innermost as revealed in the very act of talking; and it showed a certain disregard of person, for the confession was bound to upset the person who was concerned. Its survival in the face of missionary disapproval is interesting. Possibly to the Indian mind it is more closely related to the ideals of Christian confession than missionaries have realized. It is also possible that growing social distance and individualism are increasing interpersonal tensions and thus in the absence of a face-to-face avenue to resolve them, the public confession serves as the most reasonable alternative. Again, absenting oneself from the community is becoming increasingly difficult with the advance of sedentary agriculture, so there is a real need for a mechanism to settle these differences.

The avenue of suicide has been briefly mentioned, but it was definitely not considered a mature way of handling a hurt.

An avenue that appears to be gaining rapidly in popularity today has probably grown out of missionary mediation mentioned in the earlier incident of the husband who surprised his wife in infidelity. Increasingly Lengua are taking their hurts to an extra-cultural source—the missionary, the settlement officer, the colony official, or just any white settler, who then functions as a mediator to bring about reconciliation. Settlement officers found themselves spending considerable time dealing with damages done by neighbor's horses, and complaints that "my neighbor does not want me to use the (shared) plow."

#### THE INTENT OF THE INNERMOST

Technically speaking, dreams and visions are experiences of the -vanmongcama, the soul, but practically it is often very difficult to separate the innermost from the soul in this respect.

The dream of sexual intimacies with a given woman is taken to indicate the intent of the innermost in terms of behavior. Once a man has been involved sexually with a woman in a dream (-vanmongcama), the actual physical union is viewed as secondary. This

point—intent and not the act is important—is well illustrated in an experience related by Grubb.

One day an Indian arrived from a village about 150 miles away and demanded compensation for some pumpkins that Grubb was said to have stolen from the Indian's garden. At first the missionary thought this was a joke and explained to the man that he had never even been near to the village in question. To Grubb's satisfaction, the Indian agreed that the missionary had never been there, but he still in all seriousness demanded payment for the stolen items. The bewildered foreigner then learned that the man had seen the missionary take three pumpkins from his garden in a dream. For these he now wanted compensation. To Grubb's repeated avowal that he had not been there and that he had not taken any pumpkins, the old man answered, "But if you had been there, you would have taken them, because that's what your soul (*sic*) wanted to do." By Indian reasoning it was obvious that Grubb's innermost intended to appropriate the pumpkins and thus he was liable to be charged for them, even though he had not actually taken them.<sup>9</sup>

Grubb records another interesting experience that illustrates the primacy Lengua place on intent in the account of the attempted murder by Poit, Grubb's traveling companion. In the course of his associations, he had frequently pilfered the missionary's property and as a result must have accumulated serious guilt. Most recently he was anxious to appropriate a new gun Grubb had acquired. Then one night Poit dreamed that the foreigner was pursuing him with this new gun, because he somehow had become aware of Poit's stealing designs. This dream had serious implications for Poit. The dream revealed that Grubb knew his intentions. He himself knew he was guilty. The dream also revealed that the missionary wanted to punish him. As a result he arranged to get Grubb alone on the trail. There he fired an arrow into his back and left thinking he had killed him. Even though the missionary survived, the tribe still treated Poit as a bonafide murderer. Poit's plea that the dream indicated Grubb's intentions seems to have been disregarded. Poit was judged guilty in spite of the fact that he had not actually killed Grubb. His tribesmen told him that the fact that Grubb survived was an accident. Poit had "intended" to kill the missionary and this intent made him guilty. They then drugged him and then clubbed him to death according to Lengua oral law.<sup>10</sup>

This area of intent versus overt act has been a source of serious tension and misunderstanding between the Lengua and the Men-

<sup>9</sup> Grubb, *An Unknown People*, 127-29.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 119, 169, and 271.

nonites. The Mennonites, with a tendency toward legalism, dwell heavily on the actual deed, while for the Indian the deed is secondary to the original intent.

Consider the indignation of a recently baptized Indian who was seen carrying a bundle of dried tobacco leaves which he had just purchased in the colony co-operative. He was accosted by a Mennonite and reprimanded. "How is this? Were you not baptized only several weeks ago and here you are running around with tobacco?" The Indian was deeply grieved and said, "How can you think that I smoke? This is for my aged non-Christian father. It makes him happy and he has no money to buy it. My own innermost is clean."

This intent of the innermost is also at the base of marital infidelity. When a person's "innermost caves in" and becomes attached to a member of the opposite sex, the adultery or infidelity has been committed; the presence or absence of the act is judged as secondary. Often the dream of a sexual encounter becomes the guide to the conduct of the individual. He seeks to fulfill the desire of the innermost as revealed in the dream. The body in a sense is then viewed merely as the vehicle to carry out the intents of the -valhoc.

The belief of guilt in spite of the absence of the act is borne out by the events that transpired at the Laguna Pora Mission. A woman was dying of tuberculosis. All the nurse could do for her was to alleviate the suffering somewhat; cure was already out of the question. At daybreak one day the missionary observed feverish activity by the hut of this woman. Horses were being prepared for a trip. And before it registered with him, he saw the dying woman mount a horse and ride away. Inquiry now revealed the reason for this trip. During the night the patient in a dream had seen a certain shaman come with knife in hand as if to kill her. To escape the actual murder, the woman was now fleeing. She was physically able to ride only twelve kilometers and here the missionary found her entirely exhausted. He arranged to bring her back to the dispensary and tried to talk her out of the belief in the dream. She died a natural death shortly after her return, but in the village the people still affirmed that the shaman she had seen in her dream had murdered her.

As in the above example, dreams can also serve as warnings as to the intent of another person. Related to this is the function of premonition of events. This is quite evident in the recent death of a "blue baby" from the Anglican mission. This blue baby had survived a number of years, but it was becoming evident that without surgery it would not live much longer. The mother permitted it to

be taken to Asuncion where an examination indicated a 90 percent possibility of success and recovery. However, the child unexpectedly died during the operation. When the mission sent a radio message next morning, the mother met the bearer of the news at the door and said: "Mecong, there is none (meaning: the child is dead). I knew this before you came, for during the night the -jangauc of the child appeared at the window and knocked." Because she had sent the child against the wishes of the other members of the family, the mother was now embarrassed and left the community.

An unfavorable dream prior to childbirth previously always meant that the child would be disposed of at birth.

As already stated, it is the soul that leaves the body and has experiences abroad. At times the innermost also seems to be involved. Consider the story related by Grubb concerning his encounter with a very agitated Indian. On inquiry the Lengua admitted he had just had a bad dream. He dreamed that his soul had left his body and just outside the house it observed several quilyicjama, which are soul-stealing evil spirits, going toward the body the soul had just vacated. He then observed them entering and beginning to drag away his soul (innermost?). Near the forest, however, the soul escaped and returned to the body, so the dreaming soul also quickly returned. His present agitation was the result of this experience.<sup>11</sup>

A somewhat similar dichotomy and dissociation is apparent in certain alibis that culprits put forth to execute some negative deed. Such people describe them as being deeds of the innermost, which they were unable to prevent. A case in point is the church member who was caught in the act of distributing liquor and tobacco among teen-agers. Under questioning he admitted everything including his complicity in making the forbidden articles available to children. But he exonerated himself by saying that he did not want to smoke or drink, but his innermost desired it so intensely there was nothing he (or the body) could do to prevent it.

A helper in one of the churches was discovered in a whole series of sex involvements. This was repeated again and again. His ultimate defense was that he was helpless, his innermost always took him along in its exploits with other women.

#### THE INNERMOST AND PROPERTY

The Lengua culture distinguishes two kinds of property: communal and private. To the communal category belong food, products of the garden, game and gathered items. These are shared with all

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

men alike. The insult "stingy" discussed earlier would imply that a person would not share communal items. So strong is the sharing ideal in the area of the communal that Indians frequently find that they have had to use their stored "seed" to feed some unexpected visitor or relative.

Private property, however, is private indeed. It is intimately linked with one's innermost. Because of this people generally give a living person's private property wide berth; and after his death all of it is destroyed or buried with the corpse in the grave. Should any survivor as much as dare to touch such property, the -jangauc, the soul-of-the-dead, would immediately attack the offender. Accounts of the dire results for people who tried to violate a dead man's private property abound. Consider the following eye-witness account of a Chaco Mennonite.

"We had not been in the Chaco very long. I was not yet a Christian. There were several Lengua families working for us. They lived on our yard. Once an old woman died at our place. She had just purchased a large cast-iron pot. It was brand new. When they buried her all her other property was buried with her. Her dogs were shot and buried. Only this new pot stayed out. Somehow it seemed too new to bury. It lay there for about three years. One day a new family came to work for us. The man liked that pot, but was told its history. After many days of looking at it from a distance, this man finally went and picked it up to look at it closely. Immediately he screamed and ran to the bush, straight into the nearest prickly cactus plant. He rolled himself against the cactus thorns until the blood flowed. Then he ran to the next cactus . . . and the next. Finally he came running toward the house at full speed, but in the garden he fell down, screamed very loud and then passed out. The family members rushed up and began wailing. They said, 'He has lost his soul.' They wailed for a long time. When the man finally came to he told us, 'As soon as I lifted the pot, the -jangauc of the owner appeared to me and was going to kill me.' He had rolled in the cactus to get the -jangauc caught on the thorns, but he had not been successful. Finally running toward the house his fear was so great that he had lost his soul, but somehow it had escaped the avenging -jangauc. 'Now I will never even look at that pot again.'"<sup>12</sup>

While studying Lengua property values and methods of property exchange, the investigator created the following setting. He announced his need of a horse to visit all the Indian villages, but added that he would like to acquire it like a good Lengua. Since

12 Personal conversation with missionary Henry Toews of La Esperanza.

he did not know how, he wanted the informant to teach him how to do it in the Indian way.

"First," the Indian said, "you must look until you find a horse your innermost wants. Then you go to the owner and talk with him about the horse and frequently look at it. Then the owner will see that your innermost is attaching itself to his horse. If you also say three times that you would like to have that horse, the owner will give it to you."

"Why would he give it?"

"Well, he knows that if your innermost links itself to the horse, then when you dream at night, your innermost will accompany the soul to see the horse. If he were not willing to give it, then your soul-innermost would get angry and wait until his soul left the body in a dream and then it would enter and tear him all up inside and make him sick."

"What about price?"

"One does not talk about price. The owner just gives the horse, but this is 'non-thank you' giving. That means that when the former owner's innermost has found its equilibrium after the loss of his horse, he will visit you. He will see what good things you have. If you have sheep, he may say, 'Those are nice sheep, I'd like three of them.' Then you would give them to him."

"How long can such a former owner come to get things?"

"As long as the horse lives, he may come and get things from you."

At La Esperanza the workers reported the following curious episode which illustrates innermost-property linkage very effectively.

An Indian wanted a horse, so he began to save money to buy one from a Paraguayan rancher. One day out hunting he killed a tiger and collected 3,200 guarani bounty from the colony administrator. Then he did day work until finally he had 5,000 g. He entrusted the money to his son-in-law whom he delegated to buy the horse. After several weeks the son-in-law returned with the newly-purchased horse. Soon thereafter the man asked the missionary for work to earn money to buy a horse. The missionary pointed out that he had just bought a horse. No, that horse belonged to the son-in-law.

"But wasn't it your money that the son-in-law had used to buy the horse?"

"Yes, it was, but since the son-in-law bought it and rode it, his innermost has linked itself to the horse and so I do not have one now."

This innermost linking has led to all sorts of misunderstanding

between Indians and settlers. A settler hires an Indian to chop firewood. Later he notices that the Indian takes home some of this firewood. This annoys the Mennonite, who feels that he is paying for the work and so the firewood is his. But this doesn't register with the Indian who explains that it was he, and not the Mennonite, who cut the wood. Therefore the wood is linked with the Indian's innermost and not really with the Mennonite's.

In a way one can say that this type of property concept and exchange system serves as a damper on "material progress." Asked why he did not buy four bars of soap in a package because there was a saving, the Indian replied, "It does not help for me to buy more soap than I am using now. Visitors come; they see the extra soap. They keep looking at it until their innermost gets linked to it and so one has to give them a cake."

This concept has also spelled problems for the Indian settlement program. It was reasoned that since Mennonites had begun in the Chaco by sharing plows and draft animals, the "lowly" Indian, who had never known any better, should surely be able to share the implements, especially if everything was already being given to him. Thus when the equipment was distributed, each family received one horse and harness. Every two families together received a plow. Their two horses together now made up a team to pull the jointly-owned plow. Thus when the rains came and with this also the time for plowing (Chaco farmers can plow only within twenty-four to forty-eight hours after the rain), the settlement administrator felt the Indians would be eagerly plowing. To his great disappointment he found no one plowing. Neither explanation nor scolding could move them. Exasperated, the administrator caught the one man's horse and harnessed it. Then he harnessed the neighbor's. He hitched the two of them to the plow and began plowing. Once he had made a start he ordered the Indian to continue. The administrator then went to the next pair of Indian settlers. He was just beginning to plow there when he noticed that the first man was already unhitching.

"Why?"

Well, hadn't the settlement officer dropped the plow on the neighbor's yard? Now the neighbor's innermost had linked itself to that plow. He just could not bring himself to plow when his neighbor's unhappy innermost was "dragging along" with the plow. "Why, this will not only ruin this harvest, it may even damage the fertility of the land for days to come." Lengua belief in soul-linked property automatically eliminates shared equipment. At Loma

Polaina it was interesting to note that all farmers invested their first year's harvest (the land had been plowed with a tractor belonging to the mission) in redeeming the half of a plow and buying a second horse and harness. This was a minimum requirement for success among all the Lengua settlers. Jointly owned property was inconceivable for them.

The persistence of linkage between soul and property even after death has already been illustrated in the story of the Indian who coveted a deceased woman's unburied cooking pot. Immediately upon the death of the owner all his animals must be shot. Cows, sheep and goats may be eaten, but dogs must be shot and burned. Furniture, bows, arrow shafts, and other combustibles are set on fire. Arrowheads, trinkets, knives, tools, clothes, etc., are buried with the corpse. Not a thing can be saved.

One missionary reported that a woman died the day after she collected her pay from the cotton harvest, a 30-yard bolt of good quality cotton. She received it on Friday morning and Friday night she suddenly died. Twice the missionary picked the bolt of cloth out of the grave and gave it to the people, but each time they threw it back in. When he picked it up for the third time, a relative took the bolt and threw it at the missionary's feet. Finally the missionary himself threw it into the grave and it was buried. Fear of revenge by the -jangauc appears to be the motive in the great aversion to touch the private property of others. Of course, the -jangauc is even feared in itself. To this fact the burning of the village, the shaving of the widow's head, and the painting with charcoal of all close relatives render eloquent testimony.

#### THE INNERMOST AND CHRISTIANITY

As the reader will already have noticed, there are a good number of Lengua beliefs concerning the innermost that show rather striking similarity to some very fundamental Christian ideals. In fact, one must almost conclude that the very central thrust of Lengua innermost ideals stands in harmony with the highest New Testament ideals on Christian character and godly living. For this reason these similarities do not only have the value of points of contact for the introduction of Christian teaching, but they actually provide both foundation and support for behavior "worthy of sons of God" as taught in the Gospels and the Epistles. This is not the place for a detailed discussion of similarities, but it may be instructive to conclude with a few of the most obvious parallelisms:

- (1) The Lengua emphasis on intent as primary over deed finds

re-echo at many places in the New Testament such as Christ's emphasis on the spirit of the law being more important than some outward form of obedience.<sup>13</sup> Related is Jesus' assertion that "evil deeds" are "born" in man's heart even before they become overt.<sup>14</sup>

(2) The Lengua ideals of the mature innermost and its respect for the "self" of others lines up with Jesus' dictum that "to love one's neighbor as oneself" is equal to the greatest of commandments.<sup>15</sup> It parallels Paul's instruction about avoiding behavior which will harm the faith of a brother.<sup>16</sup> In its application to self-control, especially in one's speech, the Lengua emphasis is reminiscent of the Epistle of James and its teachings on the control of the tongue.<sup>17</sup>

(3) While far from being consistent or universal, one notes Lengua emphases on the avoidance of force, argument, and personal advantage that would be worthy of some of the highest ideals in Anabaptist peace principles. The author was even tempted to think that possibly Lengua methods of child training were actually more effective in inculcating respect for the worth of man and for the peace position than our own Mennonite training.

(4) The Lengua also exhibit some rather interesting "Koinonia" concepts and practices. Most obvious here is the unlimited sharing of the necessities of life; but the submission to group discipline is worthy of note. Perhaps in this respect Mennonites will need to learn from rather than teach the Lengua.

13 Matthew 5-7 and 23.

14 Matthew 15:17-20, Mark 7:17-23.

15 Luke 10:27.

16 I Corinthians 8-9.

17 James 3.



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