with the use of such tools as the jeep, the aeroplane, the radio and camera, medicine and surgery, phonemics and morphology (the sister sciences of language analysis). Nothing, however, could be closer to the core of missionary methodology and missionary efficiency than this one single contribution of linguistic science in the last decade: that the overwhelming majority of new missionaries may learn to speak the language in which they will minister, better, more quickly and more easily than has ever been possible before.

The Wild Chaco Tribes

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PART I

1. The Tribes

In the central part of that wild and inhospitable region known as the Gran Chaco, which lies in the heart of South America, bounded on the west by the Andes, and on the east by the River Paraguay, there are living to-day six tribes of Indians, at more or less the same cultural stage. They are called by a variety of local names, but may be described by the titles found in the maps and writings of the early missionaries, viz. Toba, Mataco, Choroti, Chunupi, Enimaga, and Lengua.

The Tobas and Matacos are the distinctive Argentine tribes dwelling, for the most part, along the banks of the Bermejo and Pilcomayo rivers.

The Tobas have been considered, alike by travellers and missionaries, a fine race of people, tall and well-made, lively in manner and fearless in speech, the terror of those who wished to subdue them by force, and the attraction of those who desired to win them to the obedience of the Cross of Christ.

The Matacos and Tobas have, since historical times, lived side by side, ever hostile, but clearly related to each other ethnically and linguistically. Similar in height and physique, they are very different in character. The Matacos are revengeful rather than warlike, morose in behaviour, and cowed in speech, preferring the dark thickets to the open spaces, fearful and suspicious, apparently despised in the past, as indeed, they are at present.

The Chorotis are akin to the Matacos and occupy the Pilcomayo, near the Bolivian frontier. They are few in number, degraded through contract with a low type of civilization, full of disease and stricken with poverty.

The Chunupies occupy the western half of the Paraguayan Chaco, and must have been, at one time, a numerous and powerful tribe. If I may venture a conjecture, the Chunupies are the result of the union of Toba fathers with Mataco mothers, but the friendship is continued

only on the distaff side. Like the Tobas, they are finely built, bright in manner and forceful in speech, warlike on occasions but greatly given to agriculture. They hold periodic drinking feasts, which are invariably followed by profligacy and quarrels. They are still dreaded by the settlers, and were, at one time, greatly feared by the military; but punitive expeditions, and smallpox and other epidemics have considerably reduced the strength and number of the tribe.

The Enimaga is a tiny nation, very fierce and warlike in character, akin in race and language to the Chunupi, who are not only neighbours but now closely related by intermarriage.

These five contiguous nations are related, and I could satisfy a philologist that both lexically and grammatically their languages had a common origin, the existing differences being the result of the particular development of the several tribes. Granted the kinship of these five nations, their place among the other members of the Chaco group is evident, for they at once link up what has been termed the Guaycurú family, which includes the Toba, Mbaya, Mocobi, and Abipon. The outstanding characteristic of the eight languages of this Chaco group is that all possess the common order of First, Second, and Third Person in the conjugation of their verbs and the declension (i.e. possessive particles) of their nouns, together with vestiges of an original gender system. Ethnic signs point to a distant Patagonian ancestry.

2. The Lenguas

The remaining tribe, the Lengua, occupies the Eastern half of the Paraguayan Chaco. Until comparatively recent times the people dwelt in the interior parts of the country, but as the Mbaya and Payagua disappeared before the avenging arms of the foreign intruders, they gradually made their way eastward and took possession of the river lands. For many generations they have been surrounded by warlike tribes, yet highly respected of all. The open nature of their booths, pitched in an exposed place, in contrast to the Matacos, who seek the shelter of the forest, proclaim them to be without dread of molestation from their neighbours. The Lenguas claim that they came from the north-west, and their stories of glittering stones, caves and underground passages, pieced together, suggest contact at some remote period with the Peruvian highlands. The ear-discs, headband and feather ornaments of honour among the Inca nobility, are worn by the men; and the exceptionally fine weaving of the women shows that they must have been in good practice, as with llama wool, before the arrival of the sheep.

In character and language, in customs and religious beliefs, the Lenguas differ in a marked degree from their neighbours. They seem always to have been a clothed race, and in moral character and conjugal fidelity the women rank high. Monogamy is the rule, and I have never known a man deny fatherhood. In common with the other tribes, the men follow the chase and have similar occupations and weapons; but we feel that it was Divine guiding which led us first in our missionary enterprise to this people, who have so heartily responded to the Gospel.

The Lengua language stands quite apart. Instead of a *person* order

for nouns and verbs, the whole language is ruled by an elaborate *gender* system, which makes the language very difficult to learn. An old missionary of the eighteenth century, who evidently met several members of the tribe and wrote down about a hundred common words, reported the language so difficult that no other tribe could learn it, and he quaintly suggests that it is the most confused of all the tongues that originated from the Tower of Babel. My old friend, Dr. Lafone Quevedo, who spent fifty years in the study of South American languages, wrote to me saying that he could not understand the Lengua; to him it was the most terrible language he had ever come across.

Except for a few borrowed words—the names of local trees, birds and animals—the vocabulary has nothing in common with the other members of the Chaco group; so that lexically and grammatically the Lengua must be treated apart. In my opinion it is one of the most primitive and least developed of South American tongues, and for that reason retains peculiar features and old-fashioned forms, which other speakers have found awkward and burdensome, and eventually cast off or simplified.

3. A Primitive Vocabulary

Many people hold vague, if not queer, notions about the way savages think and talk. The popular belief credits primitive man with very few words, which are flung together into crude sentences without the aid of syntactical rules. I saw it stated somewhere in a serious article that the Guarani had a vocabulary of 800 words and the mere rudiments of a grammar.

The labours of Ruis de Montoya in the sixteenth century, which still remains the standard work on the Guarani, are a sufficient refutation of the statement.

One can, of course, carry on a conversation with a very few terms, but that must not be confused with a full knowledge, or even a working knowledge, of the language. While reducing these Chaco languages to writing I met a quasi-scientific foreigner, with high-sounding titles and a smattering of anthropology, but lamentably ignorant of the ways and thought of primitive people. He looked upon me as an intruder into his scientific sanctuary, and, not too politely, questioned me as to my intentions. I told him that I had come to study the language of the Choroti. He replied that, during the three weeks of his stay, he had collected all the words of the language, and could converse freely with the people. He had secured 300 words, and considered that he had exhausted their vocabulary! I told him I sought equivalents for some 3,000 selected terms, which I hoped to secure during the six weeks at my disposal; and, as a matter of fact, in spite of his doubts and scoffs, I secured that number, together with sentences to illustrate the grammar.

Three thousand selected terms may be considered enough for common speech, but that number by no means represents a complete vocabulary. A language expresses the needs of its speakers. What, then, may we ask, are the subjects of conversation possible to a savage?

(To be continued.)