

the translator must understand in order to translate. But he cannot see the message clearly unless he views it through several 'lenses', gradually bringing the message into focus. Each lense must itself be in focus, otherwise the message cannot be seen in its proper perspective. And if the understanding of the source-language message is inaccurate, the translation will surely be faulty, no matter how well-versed the translator is in the language and culture of the people for whom he is translating.

HENRY OSBORN

## THE WARAO SELF

*This paper grew out of a discussion between the author and Dr Jacob Loewen during a consultation session on Warao translation problems, when fresh avenues of investigation were suggested with a view to adding to the areas where terms had already been collected for the Warao 'self'. At the time, Dr Loewen was preparing a paper which later appeared as 'A Mennonite Encounter with the "Innermost"', The Mennonite Quarterly Review, Goshen, Indiana, January 1965, pp. 40-67. A somewhat different version of the present paper, in Spanish, is being submitted to Boletín Indigenista Venezolana. The Warao live primarily in the Orinoco Delta of Venezuela and in surrounding areas. The orthography in this paper is the practical one used for printing: |j| = [h]; initial |r| = [d].*

After our plane from interior Venezuela had landed at Maiquetía airport we were swept up the four-lane *autopista* by car toward Caracas, round wide curves and through fluorescent lighted tunnels. As we flashed from a tunnel mouth into the sunshine my Warao companion Alberto commented, 'It is more than my *obojona* can know. I have left it behind.'

Diego is not able to control his outbursts of temper because his *obojona* is like that. This does not prevent his *obonobu* from making excellent dug-out canoes.

Eduardo did not think it was possible to be reconciled to his cousin because 'his *kobe* is bad and he will not change'.

The wizened old shaman died but his wife lived in terror for months because he had promised that his *mejokoji* would return to follow her around.

\* \* \*

In Warao the self has four parts: emotional self, *kobe*; thought-self, *obonobu*; personality-self, *obojona*; and likeness-self, *mejokoji*.

The terms for 'birth' and 'dream' seem to be related to spirit phenomena rather than to the self.

Physically, *rijawara* is 'birth', the actual birth of a child; metaphysically, *rijawara* is the manifestation of a spirit-being or a group of spirit-beings. Most of the manifestations recorded in the data are celestial phenomena

like clouds glowing in the sunset or certain groups of stars. One non-celestial manifestation for a given shaman was reported to be a particular manaca palm which appeared to him in feminine form in his nocturnal visions and with whom he had sexual relations.

*Rijawara* has only been employed in a physical sense in the draft of New Testament books to date.

*Musibu* is the dream or vision of the shaman. Only the shaman has *musibu*, though other Warao admit to having occasional visions when they are asleep. The shaman participates in the scenes depicted in his visions and sometimes works his witchcraft through this means. The layman who 'dreams' is merely an onlooker; he sees with his eyes as if he were awake.

An expansion of the Warao self-concepts is presented here with illustrations from translated passages in 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians.

### ***Kobe* Emotion-self**

Physically, *kobe* refers to the abdominal region, including the heart. If specified, *kobe* is the heart, but 'my *kobe* hurts' may refer to any abdominal pain, most likely a stomach-ache.

The following uses of *kobe* are metaphysical:

#### **(1) Fear**

A person with a 'large *kobe*' is a coward, while a 'strong *kobe*', particularly applied to jaguars but also to people, is the mark of fearlessness.

'My *kobe* hurried' or 'my *kobe* goes *kara kara kara*' means 'my heart is pounding'.

Other examples:

'My *kobe* is filled with a fearful thing.'

'My *kobe* got a shock' (like the shock from an electric eel).

'My *kobe* turned to water.'

When a large bug landed on him Esteban said, 'My *kobe* went away!'

#### **(2) Sadness**

The '*kobe* cries' when one mourns for someone who has died.

'My *kobe* hurts for another' indicates concern.

#### **(3) Disposition**

'He has a bad *kobe*' is said of a person who is bad-tempered or of a bad disposition.

'His *kobe* is bad toward me' applies to one who is ill-disposed toward me or who holds a grudge against me.

'His *kobe* is *jau*' is said of one who haughtily passes by without speaking. (*Jau* may refer to the ramrod-straight top of the moriche palm from which fiber is separated for making hammocks.)

When a person is angry his '*kobe* is empty'. When the anger has passed, his '*kobe* rests'.

When there is no inclination to do a given thing the Warao says, 'My *kobe* does not tell me to do it.'

**(4) Intuition**

When Pedro thought a stolen outboard motor would be recovered and it was indeed, he said, 'My *kobe* told me in (the mark).' But had he been mistaken he would have said, 'My *kobe* told it off (the mark).'

**(5) Miscellaneous meanings**

It was said of a man who suffered misfortune as a result of being drunk that his '*kobe* was burned'.

A shaman's *kobe* 'stands up' when he is in a trance or is seeing a vision.

*Kobe* leaves the body during sleep but is not said to go anywhere in particular. If it is caught straying by the spirits, *kobe* is completely lost and the person dies.

It is *kobe* of the dead which may appear to the living.

***Kobe* in translation**

Translation from Warao is given first. Clarification given in parentheses is from the Revised Standard Version.

**Mercy**

Phil. 2: 1 because our *kobe* hurts for other we help (affection)

Phil. 2: 27 but because God's *kobe* hurt for him he helped him (but God had mercy on him)

Col. 3: 12 because your *kobe* hurt for others, help (compassion)

**Joy and peace**

Eph. 5: 19 singing that makes noise with a joyful *kobe* for the Lord (making melody to the Lord with all your heart)

Col. 3: 15 he puts your *kobe* quiet. Let his quietness be chief of your *kobe* (let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts).

***Obojona* Personality-self**

*Obojona* includes the concepts of consciousness, will, attitude, attention and a few other miscellaneous notions.

**(1) Consciousness**

'To have no *obojona*' is said of a person who is sick and unconscious or of a person who is knocked out or has fainted. When the person regains consciousness his *obojona* 'comes out'. 'He has no *obojona*' is said of a little child not yet aware of his environment. It may mean a child just beginning to find its hand or follow objects with the eye.

A man looking back to his childhood measures events from the time his *obojona* came out, that is, from when he first remembers the events taking place around him.

'He has no *obojona*' refers to an adult lacking in judgment. 'He had no *obojona*' described Diego when he forgot to do an errand.

'To run beside *obojona*' means to succeed almost in deceiving someone.

Eulice said of his mother-in-law when she recovered from a serious illness that her '*obojona* is growing again'.

**(2) Will**

A person who persists in a course of action for which he has been reprimanded says, 'It is my *obojona*.' It is said of him that he is 'doing according to his own *obojona*'. 'Doing according to the *obojona* of another' is to be obedient or pleasing.

'To put the *obojona*' on an action is to intend to do what is specified or to be interested in the action.

When Francisco does a favor for me he is doing 'my *obojona*'. If something happens to him, either accidentally or purposefully, through some fault or intervention of mine it is 'my *obojona*'.

When two people are at odds and a reconciliation is attempted they are told to 'leave each one his own *obojona*' and 'be in good standing with each other'.

When a person is mildly disgusted his *obojona* is 'impossibled'. When he is thoroughly disgruntled the thing which has occurred has 'come out close to his *obojona*'. (Gotten under his skin!)

**(3) Attitude**

When an adult tells a child to behave himself he is '(characteristically) to have *obojona*'. The same may be said to an adult known to be a trouble maker.

'To make *obojona*' of another is to give him counsel.

'To have two (or many) *obojona*' is to be unsettled in thinking or to be hypocritical.

'To have a strong *obojona*' is to be stubborn, unmoving and invincible in an argument. It includes being convinced and stable in an opinion.

**(4) Attention**

To 'put your *obojona* on me' is to pay attention to what I am saying. To have the '*obojona* fall' on something is to remember it. When 'I don't leave my *obojona* concerning you', I am remembering you and thinking of you.

**(5) Miscellaneous meanings**

*Obojona* apparently has no source. By eating and drinking and growing the child's *obojona* emerges. During sleep or unconsciousness *obojona* is merely not there. At death the *obojona* of a shaman goes to 'heaven' where the spirits are. The *obojona* of the layman is lost.

*Obojona* is located in the head.

***Obojona* in translation*****Obojona* alone or possessed****Awareness**

1 Cor. 14: 15 (mind)

1 Cor. 14: 17 the other's *obojona* is not built up (but the other man is not edified)

Eph. 1: 17 your *obojona* be wise . . . your *obojona* be knowing (spirit of wisdom and of revelation)

Also: 1 Cor. 14: 19, 20

### Conscience

1 Cor. 8: 7, 10

1 Cor. 10: 27, 28, 29

### Innermost

1 Cor. 4: 5 he will illuminate the *obojona* of people (purposes of the heart)

1 Cor. 5: 3, 4 my *obojona* is with you (present in spirit)

1 Cor. 10: 4 gave water for *obojona* (supernatural drink)

1 Cor. 15: 45 made Adam with *obojona* (living being)

Also: 1 Cor. 5: 5; 6: 20; 7: 34; Col. 2: 5

### Will

1 Cor. 9: 17 if I speak of my own *obojona* . . . because of the *obojona* of another (I . . . of my will . . . but if not of my own will . . .)

Col. 1: 1 God's *obojona* I am the apostle of Christ Jesus (by the will of God)

Col. 1: 21 it was your *obojona* to be enemies with God (hostile in mind)

### Various attitudes

1 Cor. 7: 33 is concerned with the world's *obojona* (worldly affairs)

Phil. 1: 16 their *obojona* is another (not sincerely)

Phil. 2: 5 let this *obojona* be among you. Christ's *obojona* let it be your *obojona* (mind)

Phil. 3: 19 they think only about the world's *obojona* (earthly things)

Col. 3: 7 before you did according to this *obojona* (lived in them)

Col. 3: 8 this is the *obojona* which must be left off (put them all away)

Col. 3: 15 be chief of your *obojona* (rule in your hearts)

Also: 1 Cor. 5: 5; 7: 34; 13: 13

Phil. 2: 13

Col. 2: 20; 3: 5; 3: 14

### On account of

1 Cor. 1: 4 (for you . . . in Christ Jesus)

1 Cor. 9: 23 (for the sake of the gospel)

1 Cor. 11: 9 God did not make man *on account of* the woman; but God made woman *on account of* the man (for woman . . . for man).

1 Cor. 15: 10 his grace did not come out to be empty *on my account* (his grace toward me was not in vain)

1 Cor. 15: 22 (in Adam . . . in Christ)

1 Cor. 15: 56 sin came out to be strong *on account of* God's law (power of sin is the law)

Eph. 1: 1 (by the will of God)

Eph. 2: 13 (in the blood of Christ)

- Eph. 3: 12     *on account of* Christ (in whom)  
 Eph. 5: 6     (for because of these things)  
 Phil. 1: 1     So God will be glorified *on your account*. God will be praised  
                   *on your account*. ([v. 10 you] to the glory of God)  
 Phil. 3: 8     (because of . . . knowing Christ Jesus)  
 Phil. 4: 1     *on your account* I rejoice. *On your account* I have a reward.  
                   ([you are] my joy and crown)  
 Col. 2: 15     *on account of* his cross Christ won over them (triumphing  
                   over them in him [marg. in it (that is, the cross)])  
 Col. 4: 3     I am prisoner *on account of* the word (mystery . . . on account  
                   of which)  
 Also: 1 Cor. 1: 5; 4: 10; 7: 14, 16; 10: 28; 11: 10; 14: 37; 15: 22  
        Eph. 1: 16; 3: 1, 21  
        Phil. 1: 13, 26, 29; 2: 1, 10; 4: 10  
        Col. 1: 17; 3: 6

### ***Obojona* qualified or restricted**

#### **The goodness of his *obojona*—Grace**

- 1 Cor. 1: 3, 4; 3: 10  
 Eph. 1: 2, 6, 7, 8; 2: 7; 3: 2, 7; 4: 7; 6: 24  
 Phil. 1: 2, 7; 4: 23  
 Col. 1: 2, 6  
 Also 1 Cor. 14: 24 the word tests the goodness of his *obojona* (called to  
                   account) [Warao expression for proving or testing]

### **New *obojona***

#### **Life**

- 1 Cor. 3: 22     (life)  
 1 Cor. 15: 45    giver of new *obojona* (life-giving spirit)  
 Col. 3: 4        our new *obojona* (our life)

#### **New man**

- Eph. 4: 23     your *obojona* must come out new (be renewed in the spirit of  
                   your minds)  
 Eph. 4: 24     dress up in new *obojona*. The new *obojona* which is made like  
                   God, dress in that (and put on the new nature, created after  
                   the likeness of God)  
 Col. 3: 10     You have dressed in the new *obojona* (new nature)

#### **Spiritual**

- 1 Cor. 2: 13, 15; 3: 1; 12: 1; 14: 1, 12  
 Eph. 5: 19  
 Col. 3: 16

#### **Old (past) *obojona***

- |                            |                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Cor. 2: 14 (natural man) | Phil. 3: 3, 4 (flesh)     |
| 1 Cor. 3: 1 (carnal)       | Col. 2: 11 (body of sins) |
| 1 Cor. 3: 3, 4 (carnal)    | Col. 2: 18 (fleshly mind) |

Eph. 2: 3 (flesh)

Col. 2: 23 (flesh)

Eph. 4: 22 (old man)

Col. 3: 9 (old man)

**Good *obojona***1 Cor. 15: 33 bad friends 'badden' good *obojona* (good morals)Col. 3: 12 put on good *obojona* (put on [followed by list])Col. 3: 23 do it with good *obojona* (heartily)**Bad *obojona*—Sin**

1 Cor. 5: 8 (malice)

1 Cor. 10: 6 they wanted bad *obojona* (desire [d] evil)1 Cor. 10: 30 but why does another accuse me of bad *obojona*? (why am I denounced)

Also: 1 Cor. 15: 3, 17, 56

Eph. 1: 7; 2: 1, 5; 4: 22; 5: 6

Col. 1: 14; 3: 6, 13

**In one *obojona*—Unity**1 Cor. 1: 10 speak in one *obojona* (agree)Eph. 4: 3 the Spirit puts us in one *obojona*. Seek peacefully to remain of one *obojona* (eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace)Eph. 4: 13 God put it that having believed we should do according to one *obojona* (unity of the faith)Phil. 1: 27 in one *obojona* (striving side by side)Phil. 3: 17 in one *obojona* (join [with] me)Col. 2: 2 that they, loving, may remain in one *obojona* (knit together in love)

Also: 1 Cor. 6: 17

Eph. 4: 4, 5

Phil. 4: 2

Col. 3: 22

**In his (own) *obojona*—According to his (own) will**1 Cor. 1: 1 God, by his own *obojona*, called me (by the will of God)1 Cor. 7: 5 in each other's *obojona* (by agreement)1 Cor. 7: 32 according to [the Lord's] *obojona* (please the Lord)1 Cor. 12: 11 The Spirit . . . according to his own *obojona* (as he wills)1 Cor. 12: 18 God . . . according to his own *obojona* (as he chose)Eph. 1: 5 God abides by his own *obojona* (according to the purpose of his will)Eph. 3: 9 was stored in God's *obojona* (hidden . . . in God)Eph. 6: 6 your *obojona* being so, abide in God's *obojona* (doing the will of God from the heart)Phil. 2: 13 God . . . abiding by his own *obojona* (his own good pleasure)Phil. 3: 6 in order to abide by God's *obojona* (zeal)

Also: 1 Cor. 7: 33, 34; 13: 5

Col. 4: 12

**To have *obojona*—To behave oneself**

- 1 Cor. 15: 34 having *obojona*, do straight (come to your right mind)  
 Eph. 5: 15 having *obojona*, walk (look carefully . . . how you walk)

**Not accused of bad *obojona***

- 1 Cor. 1: 8 so you may not be accused of bad *obojona* (guiltless)  
 Phil. 1: 10 not to be accused of bad *obojona* (blameless)  
 Phil. 2: 15 in order not to be accused of bad *obojona* (blameless)  
 Col. 1: 22 that your *obojona* be not stained . . . if you be not accused of bad *obojona* (blameless and irreproachable)

**Strong *obojona***

- 1 Cor. 2: 2 I put my *obojona* strong (I decided)  
 Eph. 3: 16 ask that your *obojona* be made strong (strengthened in the inner man)  
 Eph. 4: 18 their *obojona* having come out strong (hardness of their heart)

**Forgiveness**

- Eph. 4: 32 not being concerned with one another clean your own *obojona* (forgiving one another)  
 Col. 3: 13 not being concerned with him clean your *obojona* (forgiving)

**Justification**

- 1 Cor. 6: 11 [the Spirit] straightened your *obojona* (you were justified)  
 Phil. 3: 9 I lost all so that in Christ my *obojona* might remain straightened. I do not straighten my own *obojona* etc. (not by my own righteousness . . . but)

**Leave off *obojona*—Reconciliation**

- 1 Cor. 4: 13 When they say empty things of us we desire they leave off their *obojona* (we try to conciliate)  
 1 Cor. 7: 11 leaving off her *obojona* let her return to her husband (be reconciled)  
 Eph. 2: 16 [God] desires that both leave off their *obojona* and remain well with God (be reconciled)

**Miscellaneous uses of *obojona***

- 1 Cor. 10: 5 but some of them got near God's *obojona* (with most of them God was not pleased)  
 1 Cor. 12: 3 opposite *obojona* (no man . . . and that no man)  
 1 Cor. 12: 10 to another is given that he may know which *obojona* is good and which *obojona* is bad (distinguishing between spirits)  
 Eph. 1: 9 his hidden *obojona* (the mystery of his will)  
 Eph. 4: 19 they came out to have no *obojona*. They strongly desire all dirty *obojona* (callous . . . uncleanness)  
 Phil. 2: 15 that you may not have many *obojona* (blameless)  
 Phil. 2: 15 the people of nowadays [have] crooked *obojona*, their *obojona* is off [the mark] (crooked and perverse generation)  
 Col. 4: 18 let your *obojona* fall on [the fact] that I am a prisoner (remember my fetters)



***Kobe* and *obojona***

There is a certain amount of overlap between *obojona* and *kobe*. Informants say it is possible to love, hate and be angry with either expression.

'His *kobe* is angry.' He is in an angry mood.

'His *obojona* is angry.' He is naturally angry.

'His *kobe* is resting.' He is not angry.

'His *obojona* is resting.' He is not an angry person by nature.

'His *kobe* is bad.' He is bad-tempered.

'His *obojona* is bad.' He is a bad person.

***Kobe* and *obojona* in translation**

Phil. 4: 7 so God by Christ Jesus will make your *kobe* be quiet. He will make your *obojona* be quiet. (will keep your hearts and your minds)

***Obonobu*—Mental-self**

*Obonobuae* 'to think, to ponder' is homonymous with *obonobuae*, emphatic plural of *obonoae* 'to love, to desire'. Both of these seem likely to be related to *obono* 'intestine, stomach'.

*Obonobu* is located in the lower abdomen.

'To have many *obonobu*' is to be preoccupied or worried.

A person may have an *obonobu* to make dug-out canoes well or to sing or to tell stories. In that case a person with 'many *obonobu*' has many abilities.

To have 'strong *obonobu*' is to do things carefully and exactly.

***Obonobu* in translation****Ability**

1 Cor. 7: 7 God gives to each one his *obonobu*. One has one *obonobu*; another has another *obonobu* (his own special gift from God)

1 Cor. 12: 1 God gives *obonobu* for new *obojona* (spiritual gifts)

1 Cor. 12: 4 even though there are many *obonobu* (gifts)

Also: 1 Cor. 12: 11, 31; 14: 1, 12

**Thought(s)**

1 Cor. 2: 10 [the Spirit] sees what is in God's *obonobu* (the depths of God)

1 Cor. 3: 20 the Lord knows the *obonobu* of the wise. Their *obonobu* are empty (thoughts of the wise . . . they)

1 Cor. 5: 8 the new leaven is straight *obonobu* (sincerity)

Eph. 4: 17 their *obonobu* is empty (futility of their minds)

Eph. 4: 18 their *obonobu* is in the dark (darkened in their understanding)

Col. 2: 8 they deceive by *obonobu* (philosophy)

Also: 1 Cor. 2: 11, 16; 14: 25

***Obonobu*—(as verb) to think**

1 Cor. 1: 26 when God called you, you must *think of* it (consider your call)

1 Cor. 2: 9 what people have not yet *thought of* (nor the heart of man conceived)

- 1 Cor. 7: 16 *think!* (how do you know)  
 Phil. 1: 7 I must *think* this way (it is right for me to feel)  
 Phil. 3: 4 if I *thought* in that way I might turn more toward past *obojona*  
 (though I have reason for confidence in the flesh also)  
 Phil. 3: 19 they *think of* the world's *obojona* (minds set on earthly things)  
 Phil. 4: 8 *think* about this [repeated with each item of the list]  
 Col. 3: 2 *think* about what is upward. Don't *think* about what is in the  
 world (set your minds . . . not on)  
 Also: 1 Cor. 11: 24  
 Phil. 1: 3; 4: 10

### Worried

- 1 Cor. 7: 32 I want you to be not having many *obonobu* (without anxieties)  
 Phil. 2: 26 because you so heard, he remained *thinking* [much] (has been  
 distressed)  
 Phil. 4: 6 don't *think* many *obonobu* (have no anxiety about anything)

### Obojona and obonobu

- 1 Cor. 1: 10 speak according to one *obojona* . . . according to one *obonobu*,  
 according to one *obojona* (agree . . . in the same mind, and  
 the same judgment)  
 Eph. 2: 3 we did according to past *obojona*. We did according to past  
*obonobu* (desires of the body and of the mind)  
 Phil. 1: 27 to be in one *obojona* . . . be in one *obonobu* (in one spirit with  
 one mind)  
 Phil. 2: 2 *think* alike—Remain in one *obojona*. Remain in one *obonobu*  
 (be likeminded . . . of one accord, of one mind)

### Mejokoji—Likeness-self

*Mejokoji* is the shadow of a person or an animal, but not of an inanimate object. *Imajana* is the shadow of an inanimate object (*ima* = night, darkness).

*Mejokoji* is one's picture in any photograph, but the word is also used to specify the government-issued identification card with picture called *cédula* in Venezuelan Spanish. *Mejokoji* is the representation of anything animate or inanimate in a picture or drawing. A physical likeness such as a doll or church-image is *warosita* 'Indian (person)-image'.

*Mejokoji* is the ghost of the dead. Some informants also say they have been frightened by the *kobe* of a dead person.

*Mejokoji* as such does not occur in the books from which examples are cited.

Some experimenting has been done using the term *mejokojira* (*mejokoji* + *-ira* 'augmentative, superlative') as a suitable term for Holy Spirit. This usually is coupled with God as God's *Mejokojira* or *Rio Amejokojira*.