

FOUNDATION FOR ENDANGERED LANGUAGES

# OGMIOS

*ogmios*



*The High Pamir: the Fedchenko Glacier, Tajikistan. Khorog, in the linguistically diverse Pamir region of Tajikistan, is the venue for FEL's 2009 international conference. See details in this issue.*

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## 1. Editorial

The UNESCO *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger of Disappearing*, which first appeared in 1996 and in a second edition in 2001, was launched on International Mother Tongue Day (21<sup>st</sup> February). This third edition, much more comprehensive than the previous two, will be available on-line for the first time, as well as in print. The print edition will appear later in the year at a date to be announced. The Atlas was given gratifyingly wide publicity: see one example under 'Endangered Languages in the News' below.

But the main concern of FEL at the moment is the preparation for our 13<sup>th</sup> Conference, to be held in Khorog, Tajikistan – see the details below.

*Chris Moseley*

## 2. Development of the Foundation

### FEL XIII – The 13<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Foundation for Endangered Languages

The Foundation's 13<sup>th</sup> annual conference, on the topic of 'Endangered Languages and History', is to be held from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> September 2009. The main venue for the conference is to be Khorog, in the Pamir Mountains, in the heart of the country's minority-language area. In view of the limited access and special travel arrangements required, we're setting out here (and on the [ogmios.org](http://ogmios.org) web-site) the arrangements you need to know about. We can promise a very stimulating programme, not only of papers on the topic, but also excursions.

#### Travel to Tajikistan

##### Useful links

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan, which includes all the required information about travel to Tajikistan and Tajik embassies abroad.

<http://www.mid.tj/>

- Information about travel to Pamir

<http://www.pamirs.org/travel.htm>

##### Important notice

The participants need a special permit to travel to Khorog (in addition to visa).

The permit can be obtained together with the visa from the Tajik Embassies abroad.

The conference participants are advised to commit at least 1 week of stay in Tajikistan.

Arrival date to Dushanbe, 21-22<sup>nd</sup> of September

Travel to Khorog, 23<sup>rd</sup> of September

Conference dates: 24-26<sup>th</sup> of September

Excursion: 27<sup>th</sup> of September

Return to Dushanbe, 28<sup>th</sup> of September

Departure from Tajikistan: 29<sup>th</sup> of September.

##### Conference fees

US\$500 for participants from developed countries;

US\$300 for participants from developing countries (including Russia, Central Asian countries, Afghanistan, Pakistan).

A subsidised rate will be applied to local participants.

The fee includes conference fee, conference proceedings, travel to Khorog by road, food, accommodation and excursion in Badakhshan region. (The fee does not include expenses in Dushanbe. The local organising committee can arrange booking hotel in Dushanbe on request. The price will range from US\$50-US\$150).

*Chris Moseley*

## 3. Endangered Languages in the News

### Poetry in Endangered Languages

My proposal in the last issue for this regular feature met with a warm response from our readers. Welcome to what I hope will be the first in a regular series, presenting poetry translated from some of the less used languages of the world, along with, where possible, their original texts. We start this adventure in Europe.

*Chris Moseley*

#### A Poem in Plautdiitsch, the Language of the Mennonites

In Southwestern Siberia, near the border with Kazakhstan, many of the small villages scattered around the steppe had also German sounding names: Gnadenheim, Schönsee, Rosenwald, Blumenort. Here you could find people with names like Henritj, Klaus, Marijtje and surnames like Friizen, Koop, Klaassen or Ditj. This was an area populated mainly by Mennonites. When we visited this region in the summer of 1993, the first day of our stay one of the villagers greeted us with the words: 'Gndaach, wii zene uk fon Holaunt' 'Hello, we are from Holland, too'. The Mennonites living in this part of Russia had been quite isolated from the other Mennonites in the country since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in Soviet times it had been very difficult for them to find any reliable information about the history of their own group. They knew their grandparents' parents came from the Ukraine, but there the certainty ended. Most people did know, however, that their history was linked with Germany, Holland and Friesland.

The language they spoke, Mennonite Plautdiitsch, is the descendant of Low-German dialects differing considerably from the High-German dialects spoken by their neighbours, often people who had been deported from the Wolga German Republic. Because of the lack of mutual intelligibility of the dialects, Mennonites were never considered to be 'real Germans' by the (other) Germans but were always treated as a rather special group, and this is also the way they viewed themselves. Some Mennonites said their language was a Dutch, rather than a German dialect, others stated it was Frisian. Linguists had long ago demonstrated that Plautdiitsch is a mixture of Low German dialects of the West Prussian branch with a few peculiarities due mainly to the long isolation from other German dialects and the many contacts with Slavonic speaking communities. Since Mennonite history started in the Netherlands and many of the first Mennonites came from areas in the North and East of this country (Friesland), it must be possible, so it was thought, to find linguistic ties with the Netherlands proving the Dutch character of the language.

After the years of perestrojka most Mennonites left their homeland and emigrated to Germany. We were just in time to record their languages - which are becoming endangered - in their Siberian villages. During our fieldwork in these villages we made more than 30 hours of recordings about their language use, oral history, family stories, songs and poems. One of these poems is reproduced here together with its Dutch translation, which shows the similarity of both languages.

The poem gives a poetic description of a special night in the Russian steppe, the beautiful nature in early spring with many blossoming flowers in the garden and the light of the full moon. This picture is used as a metaphor for the young years to which one – as to this special night – cannot come back.

### De farjoasnacht

Zōun farjoa tjemt nich mea tridj,  
 Uk nich de junge joare.  
 Wuu, eawa wōune laange bridj,  
 Mit wōun jesjpaun kaun òina tridj  
 Nuu ziine jūgent foare?

Zōu sjtel sjlep daun de wiide  
 sjtaap,  
 Aus wie blōus jletj op iede.  
 De folmōunt schiind zōu daach,  
 zōu daach,  
 Daut òina jiidret blautje zaach  
 Waan zich de aaste riede.

Daun bliide kretjt de aapelbōim,  
 De tūlpe en de fleida,  
 Daun sjtunde aule krusjtjebōim  
 En eare wundaboare drōim  
 En wite blōumetjleida.

Wōu ritjt et doch zōu wundasjōin  
 Fon aul daut fiile bliie  
 Waan zich de naachtwint sjokle  
 tjōim  
 En wul zich op de goadebōim  
 Em zōite sjluup enwiie.

De nacht en zelvassjliia lead  
 Op aul dee praacht op iede.  
 Zōi haud de sjteerns enjewiift  
 En jiidre funkeld, blitst en biift,  
 Aus waan zōi 't farjoa hiede.

Zōu sjtel sjlep en 'e wiide sjtaap  
 Ons daarp em blōumegoade,  
 Aus waan en kraunts en jaane  
 naacht,  
 Dee etj niimauls fejite haap,  
 Deem farjoa hau'tj feloare.

More details about the Plautdiitsch language can be found in the FEL VIII Proceedings (Barcelona, 2004, page 153) and on our web site about Endangered Languages, where the story of the Siberian Menonites is told in the chapter on Dutch and Frisian in Siberia.

*Tjeerd de Graaf*

## More than 100 Languages in Russia at Risk of Disappearing, UNESCO says

*Paul Goble*

Vienna, February 21 - Today is Native Language Day, a United Nations holiday established a decade ago and designed to call attention both to the contribution even the smallest linguistic communities make to the cultural and, through their maintenance of groups, even biological diversity of the human family and to the threats these communities now face.

To mark that event this year, UNESCO has released a new "Atlas of the Languages of the World."

### De voorjaarsnacht

Zo'n voorjaar komt niet meer terug,  
 Ook niet de jonge jaren.  
 Waar, over welke lange brug,  
 Met welk gespan kan men  
 Naar zijn jeugd terugkeren?

Zo stil sliep dan de wijde steppe,  
 Als was er slechts geluk op aarde.  
 De volle maan scheen zo helder  
 Dat men ieder blaadje zag  
 Als de takken bewogen.

Toen bloeiden net de  
 appelbomen,  
 De tulpen en de vlierbes  
 En alle perebomen stonden  
 In hun wonderbare droom  
 In wit bloemenkleed.

Wat rook het toch wonderschoon  
 Van al die vele bloesems  
 Als de nachtwind kwam  
 schommelen  
 En zichzelf op de bomen in de  
 tuin  
 In een zoete slaap wilde wiegen.

De nacht legde een zilversluiser  
 Over al die pracht op aarde.  
 Ze had de sterren ingeweven,  
 En ieder fonkelde en schitterde  
 Alsof ze het voorjaar hoorden.

Zo stil sliep in de wijde steppe  
 Ons dorp in een bloementuin,  
 Alsof ik die nacht,  
 Die ik nooit vergeten heb,  
 Een krans aan het voorjaar had  
 verloren.

That work, prepared during 2008, which the UN had declared the International Year of Languages, is available online.

This remarkably useful compilation not only provides information on some 2500 languages, out of the more than 6,000 most linguists say exist, but also classified those in terms of the risk they face over the next century. And the UN experts suggest that approximately a third of these languages will not be spoken 100 years from now. Most of the languages at risk of disappearing are spoken by extremely small and hitherto isolated communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America, but size is not the only factor involved in language survival-status: interest, and government support are among the other things that determine outcomes.

And consequently, many languages spoken in the past in Europe and North America are now at risk of disappearing. The UN projections for the situation in the Russian Federation are truly disturbing, and they have attracted the attention of the Moscow media and, one hopes, the Russian government.

The UNESCO site reports that 19 languages spoken on the territory of the Russian Federation a half century ago have ceased to exist, and 117 more are either in a position UN experts say is "unsafe"(21languages), "definitely endangered" (47), "severely endangered"(29),or "critically endangered"(20).

According to a commentary in "Moskovsky Komsomolets," the languages now "near death" (the UN's "critically endangered") include Aleut, Tersko-Saami, and Itelmen, languages spoken by extremely small groups. But among those whose future is "definitely" threatened are Nivkh, Chukchi, and Karelian, the latter two being relatively much larger.

And among the languages in some danger of disappearing are Kalmyk, Udmurt, Yiddish, Chechen, Yakut and Tuvan, now spoken by much larger nations but rapidly losing ground to Russian and English, a development that could but does not necessarily mean the demise of these nations.

Part of the reason for this trend, the Moscow paper says, is the impact of globalization. As people become more mobile, members of smaller groups often are forced to learn a new language, something that can cut them off from their community but also can make them more sensitive to their ethnic attachments. But in addition to globalization, other factors are at work, "Moskovsky Komsomolets" points out. These include the size of the community- smaller linguistic communities generally have a more difficult time than larger ones- the attitudes of the governments under which they live toward their languages, and even the size of the political subdivision in which they live.

If the first of these is intuitively obvious, the second two, the paper suggests, may play a bigger role. When governments work to support languages, these languages survive far longer. And that is why human rights activists have been pressing Moscow to ratify the European Charter on Regional Languages and the Languages of Minorities, something it has not done.

And supporters of language communities and linguistic diversity note that the size of the region or political subdivision within which a group lives plays a key role. The larger the region, the more likely smaller groups are to be overwhelmed by larger ones and the languages of the former give way to that of the latter. That is why, the paper continues, those who support linguistic diversity as an important human value have opposed Vladimir Putin's regional amalgamation plan in which smaller non-Russian regions have been folded into larger and predominantly Russian ones, a step that will accelerate the decline and even death of the non-Russian languages.

The Moscow paper concludes on a pessimistic note: "The chances for saving the dying languages practically do not exist," and consequently UN experts and other language supporters are calling for the dispatch of linguists to "hot spots" in order to create dictionaries and

grammars that might allow these languages to survive or at least give access to their richness.

## Saving data on minority languages in endangered archives

At present, many sound recordings on old records, cassette tapes and other media still remain hidden in private archives and places where the quality of preservation is not guaranteed. Several of these collections are related to data from endangered languages which were recorded early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and they may contain very valuable data on these languages.

In 2008 Tjeerd de Graaf, FEL Committee member and research fellow at the Mercator Research Centre in the Netherlands, finished a project, which has been financially supported by the Endangered Archives Programme of the British Library. Within the framework of this project, a Russian-Dutch research group in St.-Petersburg got access to several private endangered sound collections, digitized and copied them on modern sound carriers, made a catalogue for the metadata available and published part of the material.

In the collection the following languages are represented: Azerbaijani, Balochi, Chagatay, Chatror, Dari (Farsi-Kabuli), Enets, German, Kati, Kerek, Mendzon, Nenets, Nganasan, Parachi, Pashai, Pashto, Russian, Shugni, Tajik, Udeghe, Vaygali and Wakhi (Vakhan).

The data in this digital sound archive provide information about the historical development of these languages and can be used for the purpose of language description, the study of folklore and ethnomusicology. This is in particular the case for many of the endangered minority languages in the former Soviet Union. The information obtained will also be important for the development of teaching methods for representatives of the related ethnic groups and for the maintenance of their language and culture.

Information on the Endangered Archives Programme can be found on the following website:

<http://www.bl.uk/about/policies/endangeredarch/homepage.html>

More details about the work on endangered languages and archives at the Mercator Research Centre are available on the web site below.

*Dr. Tjeerd de Graaf*

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## Aragonese Chornadas, Zaragoza

At the end of March 2009 I had the pleasure of attending the annual week of events held to promote the Aragonese language in the regional capital of Zaragoza in northern Spain.

My invitation to these celebrations was a result of the inclusion of the Aragonese language among the endangered languages of Spain indicated in the new edition of the UNESCO *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*. Situated both geographically and linguistically between Castilian Spanish and Catalan, Aragonese has steadily gone into retreat in recent centuries, to a point where it is now only spoken in a few villages and small towns in the Pyrenees, far from the urban centre and regional capital which held this annual event. As a guest speaker on one of the evenings (presenting the on-line version of the Atlas), I had a chance to experience at first hand the efforts of a small

dedicated band of language activists to promote a regional language in a huge urban centre where it might otherwise be swamped and ignored.

Aragonese has an established orthography and a small but respectable body of creative literature to its name. Other vehicles for its use include a vibrant monthly colour magazine. It has an increasingly strong web presence as well: I attended a presentation by Juan Pablo Martinez on the Wikipedia in Aragonese.

The principal organisers of the week of events, running from 30 March to 4 April, were the Nogarà School of Aragonese language, based in Zaragoza, which runs a programme of teaching the language there. The events also enjoyed the support of the Government of Aragon. Speakers also came from the Cornish Language Partnership and the Institute of Catalan Studies, not to mention the Academy of Aragonese, and the Aragonese activists are successfully forging alliances with supporters of other beleaguered languages in Europe. Most importantly, they are seeking the passing of a long-delayed Act of the regional Parliament recognising the official status of Aragonese in the region, a goal that has so far eluded them despite their best efforts to internationalise and publicise the issue.

*Chris Moseley*

## Lost Aboriginal language revived

*Phil Mercer, BBC News, Sydney, 14 April 2009*

The sounds of a lost language echo across a packed classroom in suburban Sydney as high school children help to revive an ancient part of Australia's rich indigenous culture.

Dharug was one of the dominant Aboriginal dialects in the Sydney region when British settlers arrived in 1788, but became extinct under the weight of colonisation.

Details of its demise are sketchy but linguists believe the last of the traditional Dharug speakers died in the late 19th Century, and their unique tongue only survives because of written records.

In a remarkable comeback, Dharug now breathes again - its revitalisation helped by the efforts of staff at Chifley College's Dunheved campus in Sydney.

"We've already reclaimed it. That's why there is so much interest. People are already speaking it," said teacher Richard Green, who, like others, has fought passionately to rejuvenate the ways of his ancestors that were lost after European settlement.

"They weren't allowed to speak it. They had to learn English or they were punished," he added.

### Language 'engineering'

When the British ships arrived, there were about 270 different Aboriginal languages in Australia. Today, only about 60 or 70 are spoken on a daily basis.

Of these, roughly half a dozen are considered to be strong and are being passed from adults to their children, according to John Hobson, a lecturer at Sydney University.

"It's good especially for the blackfellas - you get to talk about your own culture and all that, learn more stuff"

- Student Steven Dargin

"We can regard any language in the world as worth preserving because it has its own unique nature and contains information that we might not be able to express or find in other languages," he told the BBC.

"These are the first languages of Australia. They have suffered incredible attrition at the hands of over 200 years of the invasion of English."

Other indigenous dialects in Australia have been revived but the revitalisation process may require what experts describe as "language engineering" - the borrowing of phrases and words or the coining of new vocabulary for a modern world in ways similar to those undertaken by New Zealand's Maori and the Hawaiians.

"I often compare Aboriginal languages to something somewhere between Japanese and Latin. That surprises people because the gut approach is to go for something primitive and simplistic which they are definitely not."

"They are an item of cultural pride and are very complex languages," said Mr Hobson.

### Talking culture

At Chifley College, where around a fifth of the students are Aboriginal, Dharug is taught twice a week with great energy through repetition and song.

"Badagarang!" shouts the class when asked the word for kangaroo. Dingo, wallaby and koala are derived from Dharug.

### DHARUG GLOSSARY

- Hello - warami
- Goodbye - yanu
- Possum - wubin
- Kangaroo - badagarang
- White cockatoo - garraway
- Relatives (family) - mudyin
- Land (countryside) - bembul
- Ocean - garragarang
- White man - tullamulla
- Evil spirit - gubba

The language courses are open to non-indigenous pupils, who now have a greater understanding of their country's rich indigenous history. For Aboriginal students like Steven Dargin, 16, it is all about identity and pride.

"It's good especially for the black fellas," he said. "You get to talk about your own culture and all that. Learn more stuff and speak it out of school."

His cousin Colleen Dargin, 16, was equally enthusiastic.

"It's all about the Aboriginal language because not many people know it and it's real good that Mr Green is in there teaching us," she said.

Dharug is firmly embedded in the college's curriculum and Joyce Berry, the deputy principal, wants to export the idea to other schools.

"It is a really big journey that we are on," she said. "It would be wonderful if it could go across to other schools as well and that is the aim."

"If this can work, it is something that a school in western Sydney has been able to achieve with the support of the elders," she said.

"If we can do that it's going to be such a wonderful thing not just for the school but for the Dharug community."

## The Ryukyus and the New, But Endangered, Languages of Japan

*Fija Bairon, Matthias Brenzinger and Patrick Heinrich*

### Luchuan (Ryukyuan) languages are no longer Japanese dialects

On 21 February 2009, the international mother language day, UNESCO launched the online version of its 'Atlas of the world's languages in danger'. This electronic version that will also be published as the third edition of the UNESCO Atlas in May 2009, now includes the Luchuan [Ryukyuan] languages of Japan (UNESCO 2009). 'Luchuan' is the Uchinaaguchi (Okinawan language) term for the Japanese 'Ryukyu'. Likewise 'Okinawa' is 'Uchinaa' in Uchinaaguchi. Well taken, UNESCO recognizes six languages of the Luchuan Islands [Ryukyu Islands] of which two are severely endangered, Yaeyama and Yonaguni, and four are classified as definitely endangered, Amami, Kunigami, Uchinaa [Okinawa] and Miyako (see UNESCO 2003 for assessing language vitality and endangerment).

Through publication of the atlas, UNESCO recognizes the linguistic diversity in present-day Japan and, by that, challenges the long-standing misconception of a monolingual Japanese nation state that has its roots in the linguistic and colonizing policies of the Meiji period. The formation of a Japanese nation state with one unifying language triggered the assimilation of regional varieties (*hogen*) under the newly created standard 'national language' (*kokugo*) all over the country (Carroll 2001). What is more, through these processes, distinct languages were downgraded to *hogen*, i.e. mere 'dialects' in accordance with the dominant national ideology (Fija & Heinrich 2007).

The entire group of the Luchuan languages – linguistic relatives of the otherwise isolated Japanese language – is about to disappear. These languages are being replaced by standard Japanese (*hyojungo* or *kyotsugo*) as a result of the Japanization of the Luchuan Islands, which started with the Japanese annexation of these islands in 1872 and was more purposefully carried out after the establishment of Okinawa Prefecture in 1879. In public schools, Luchuan children were educated to become Japanese and they were no longer allowed to speak their own language at schools following the 'Ordinance of dialect regulation' (*hogen torishimari-rei*) in 1907 (ODJKJ 1983, vol. III: 443-444). Spreading Standard Japanese was a key measure for transforming Luchuan Islanders into Japanese nationals and for concealing the fact that Japanese was multilingual and multicultural (Heinrich 2004).

The US occupation of Uchinaa after World War II, which – at least formally – ended in 1972, marks the final stage in the fading of the Luchuan languages. In their attempts to separate Uchinaa from mainland Japan, Americans emphasized the distinctiveness of the Luchuan languages and cultures and encouraged their development. This US policy of dividing Luchuan from Japan, however, backfired and gave rise to a Luchuan Japanization movement. Today, even the remaining – mainly elderly - Luchuan language speakers generally refer to their languages as *hogen*, i.e. Japanese 'dialects', accepting in so doing the downgrading of their heritage languages for the assumed sake of national unity.

In support of the UNESCO approach, Sakiyama Osamu, professor emeritus of linguistics at the National Museum of Ethnology, stated that "a dialect should be treated as an independent language if its speakers have a distinct culture" (Kunisue 2009). However, linguistic studies also prove that these speech forms should be treated as languages in their own right (e.g. Miyara 2008), distinct both from Japanese as well as from one another. According to results employing the lexicostatistics method (Hattori 1954), the Luchuan languages share only between 59 and 68 percent cognates with Tokyo Japanese. These figures are lower than those between German and English. Scholars, as well as speakers, agree that there is no mutual intelligibility between these languages (Matsumori 1995). Thus calling them *hogen* (dialects of Japanese) may satisfy national demands of obedience but is problematic on linguistic and historical grounds.

### Luchuan language description and dialectology

The two most important aspects of the UNESCO initiative for the Luchuan languages are, first, the encouragement to write grammars and dictionaries, i.e. to initiate a new phase of language documentation and, second, to lend support, by recognition, for community and

official language maintenance activities. Despite the generally high standards of linguistic scholarship in Japan, the documentation of the Luchuan languages remains unsatisfactory (Ishihara 2009). Two reasons might be responsible for this situation. First, the Luchuan languages are predominantly still studied as ‘dialects’ of Japan’s ‘national language’ (*kokugo*), or Japanese *tout court*. Second, Japan’s unfortunate division of linguistics into two branches, i.e. ‘general linguistic’ (*gengogaku*) and ‘national [identity] linguistics’ (*kokugogaku*) (Koyama 2003), resulted in an almost complete lack of studies on Luchuan languages by general linguists.

*Kokugogaku* linguists have always treated, and continue to treat, the Luchuan languages as ‘dialects’. As a result, the Luchuan languages have been studied in a dialectology framework, which proves inadequate for documenting distinct languages. Japan’s ‘National Institute for Japanese Language’ (*Kokuritsu kokugo kenkyujo*, literally ‘National Language Research Institute’) lists 211 publications on the Luchuan languages in their ‘Yearbook of National Language Studies’ in the last 10 years, 90% of which refer to these languages as ‘dialects’. The category under which these publications are compiled in the yearbook is ‘Okinawa and Amami dialects’ and even the most important journal for research on the Luchuan languages is incongruously named ‘*Ryukyu no hogen*’ (Ryukyu Dialects). Most studies of Luchuan languages have been conducted by dialectologists, who have no training in language documentation. Hence, not surprisingly, in employing UNESCO’s (2003) tool for assessing the quality of language documentation, the Luchuan languages score a meagre 2 points out of a possible 5, a documentation level referred to as ‘fragmentary’.

Language documentation has developed over the last decade in response to an increased awareness of the threats to the world’s language diversity among linguists. The global spread of language endangerment became visible in the 1990s in publications such as *Endangered Languages*, edited by Robert Robins and Eugenius Uhlenbeck in 1991. Studies followed, focusing on the underlying processes that lead to language shift, as in *Language Death*, edited by Matthias Brenzinger in 1992. Nikolaus Himmelmann (1998) and others initiated the development of descriptive linguistics towards languages documentation, i.e. the recording, analysing and preserving of endangered languages. In addition to traditional linguistic descriptions, language documentation demands a comprehensive approach, which includes in addition to classical language annotation and analysis, description of the sociolinguistic environment, as well as questions concerning archiving the data. Finally, scholars, such as Arienne Dwyer (2006), began to reflect on the relationship between linguists, speakers and languages, i.e. on ethical and legal aspects of language work. Today, language documentation – unlike language description of the past – is predicated on a cooperative approach, i.e. the active involvement of linguistic communities in the planning and conducting of fieldwork, as well as in the dissemination of the research results.

In order to improve language documentation in the Luchuan islands one would need to encourage linguists trained in language documentation to conduct research on Japan’s endangered languages and at the same time involve the existing *kokugogaku* studies (and scholars) within a language documentation framework. The recognition of the language status in UNESCO’s online atlas might prove an important influence on this new research outline. How urgent and important a thorough reconsidering of existing works on the Luchuan languages really is can be seen in the publications of the ‘Endangered Languages of the Pacific Rim’ project. While explicitly aiming to document endangered languages, all publications of the project series perpetuate the image of the Luchuan languages as ‘dialects’ of ‘national language’. Research of this type is indifferent towards, at best, and at worst undermines community efforts to revitalizing local languages. Statements like the following, both taken from publications of the ‘Endangered Languages of the Pacific Rim’ project have a devastating effect on language documentation and maintenance activities.

“Apart from the material recorded and preserved by researchers, the traditional dialects of the islands and communities of the Ryukyus cannot escape oblivion.” (Uemura 2001: 193).

“People have to learn a different language. It is desirable for them to enter into the world of common Japanese language as soon as possible. The old traditional dialects are becoming useless for their social lives.” (Izuyama 2003: 12).

This is not exactly the stance one might expect from scholars working on endangered languages, but more importantly, these views fuel the ideologically and political mediated misconceptions that there is only one language in Japan and that there is no future, even for the so-called Luchuan ‘dialects’. See Heinrich (2009a) for discussion of possible uses, functions and benefits of the Luchuan languages in the 21st century.

The current situation of Luchuan language documentation is a result of a politically and ideologically marred research policy. The first assessment of the Luchuan languages as ‘dialects’ of Japanese were made by Japanese administrators in the wake of Japan’s annexation of the Luchu Kingdom, without any linguistic research. In negotiating with Luchuan, actually mainly with Chinese authorities over the future affiliation and status of the Luchu Islands, ‘Ryukyu Dispensation Superintendent’ (*Ryukyu shobunkan*) Matsuda Michiyuki stressed the ‘historical, cultural and linguistic’ correspondences between Japan and the Luchu Islands (Oguma 1998: 28-29). The first linguistic research revealed a quite different picture. Basil Hall Chamberlain’s pioneering study of the Luchuan languages, conducted in 1893, established evidence of a shared Luchuan-Japanese genealogy. In explaining the difference between Uchinaaguchi [Uchinaa language] and Japanese, Chamberlain (1895 [1999]: 6) wrote:

“On the whole, we shall not be far from wrong if we compare the mutual relation of the two languages to that of Spanish and Italian, or perhaps rather of Spanish and French.”

Chamberlain’s analysis did not comply with Japanese national ideologies which stressed the firm division of a ‘national language’ into two ‘greater dialects’ (*dai-hogen*), i.e. ‘Ryukyu greater dialects’ (*Ryukyu dai-hogen*) and ‘homeland greater dialects’ (*naichi dai-hogen*). This classification was established by the founding father of Japanese dialectology, Tojo Misao, in his groundbreaking ‘Dialect map of Greater Japan’ (*Dai-nihon hogen chizu*). Tojo (1927:18) adopted Chamberlain’s view that the Luchuan languages were genealogically related to Japanese but then concluded that both are part of the ‘national language’ (*kokugo*):

“Since [Luchuan] is a language which has split from the same ancestor language [as Japanese] and, besides this, the use of the language is limited within the boundaries of the same nation state, I would like to regard it as one dialect of the national language.” [All translations from Japanese into English by Patrick Heinrich].

In a later publication, Tojo (1938: 6) substantiated his view, defining ‘dialect’ in the following way:

“If a national language is broken up into a number of language groups, which differ with regard to pronunciation, lexicon and grammar according to the different regions in which they are used, the various groups are called dialects.”

Based on the ideologically-driven claim of Japan being a monolingual nation, Luchuan people were not considered to be speaking languages of their own. *Kokugogaku* linguists understood it to be their duty to provide arguments that allow for classifying the Luchuan languages as dialects, no matter how clumsy these classifications might be (‘greater dialects’, ‘language group’). Having established Luchuan as a dialect of the ‘national language’, its speakers consequently were also Japanese. Such arguments have been internalized by *kokugogaku* linguists ever since. Furthermore, this academic depreciation has led to a widespread acceptance of the inferior status of their language by many Luchuans.

Since its establishment during the period of nation state formation, linguistic research has been instrumental in creating the ideologically motivated imagination of a homogenous Japanese nation by marginalizing Japan's minority languages (Koyama 2003). Up to now, Luchuan languages have almost exclusively been studied by dialectologists and then of course as 'dialects' and not by general linguists, with the notable exceptions of Osumi Midori (2001) and Matsumori Akiko (1995). There is no tradition of language documentation or sociolinguistic research of the Luchuan languages. The political downgrading of the Luchuan languages as 'dialects' has made them invisible in the international discourse on endangered languages, as for example pointed out by Brenzinger (2007: xv). It still obstructs adequate language documentation and linguistic research, and most crucially, it undermines language maintenance and revitalization attempts.

The publication of the new UNESCO atlas challenges these malpractices and is an important support for pioneering attempts at Luchuan language documentation, such as the one carried out by Shimoji Michinori. His recently compiled Reference Grammar of Irabu, a language variety of Miyako, was accepted by the Australian National University as a PhD thesis in December 2008. Together with Miyara Shinsho's (1995) Grammar of Yaeyama, these works mark a new phase of research on the Luchuan languages. Karimata Shigehisa's 'Ryukyuan audio database' (*Ryukyugo onsei detabesu*) on the Shuri/Naha variety of Uchinaaguchi and the Nakijin variety of the Kunigami language sets standards for the documentation of other Ryukyuan languages. Easily accessible due to its internet based platform (<http://ryukyu-lang.lib.u-ryukyu.ac.jp/index.html>), it is helpful and popular for speakers, activists and researchers alike.

#### Language use in the Luchuan Islands

The crucial phase of the decline of the Luchuan languages started with communal language shifts in the 1950s. At that time, local speech communities decided in large numbers not to transmit their languages to the following generation. Languages vanish by being used less often and in fewer domains. With the loss of the last domain, namely the home, the Luchuan languages have entered the final phase of becoming extinct.

Experts on Luchuan language study are in complete agreement that the natural intergenerational language transmission of the Luchuan languages was interrupted in the early 1950s (Hokama 1991, 2000, Matsumori 1995, Motonaga 1994, Osumi 2001, Uemura 1997). This observation has been confirmed by empirical research across the Luchus (Heinrich 2007, 2009b).

The question why language shift occurred at this particular time is intriguing and Nakamoto (1990: 467) singles it out as one of the foremost desiderata in Luchuan language studies. The reason why we still lack conclusive insights into these language shifts is that language shift is triggered by a complex mix of seemingly endless variables, of which some of the most important include economy, community patterns, family networks, marriage patterns, perception of cultural distance to other speech communities, religious practices, and assessment of local wealth and future prospects. It is this complex mixture of variables which leads Brenzinger (1997: 278) to observe that "no two language shifts resemble each other", a view supported by the case of the Luchuan languages. Consider the results of questionnaire surveys conducted by Heinrich in 2005 and 2006.

The results reveal different degrees of language vitality, with the local language being most widely used in Yonaguni and Miyako. Yonaguni stands out because the local language is widely used in the neighbourhood, due to the *Gemeinschaft* (community) character of an isolated island with 1.600 inhabitants. Also worthy of notice is the frequent local language use among work colleagues, which is largely due to the lack of development of the secondary and tertiary economic sector in Yonaguni. Note, however, that the local language in Yonaguni is just as rarely used towards children as elsewhere. As a matter of fact, the restraint on use of local language towards children is the most consistent result across the five speech communities of

Amami, Uchinaa, Miyako, Yaeyama and Yonaguni. (The sixth Luchuan language according to the UNESCO atlas, i.e. Kunigami, was at that time unfortunately not recognized as an independent language by Heinrich). On the lower end of language vitality, we find the Yaeyama language. Since endangered languages are always spoken in multilingual communities, specific domains of local language use must be maintained to secure their continued use. The most crucial domains for local language are the family and the local neighbourhood (*shima* or *chima* in the Luchuan languages, hence the term *shimakutuba*, 'community language'). For more detailed discussions on language shift in the Luchu islands see Heinrich and Matsuo (2009).

Luchuan language endangerment is the result of the local language suppression campaigns which started in 1907 and became most intense after 1940. They played a crucial role in stigmatizing these languages (Heinrich 2004). Pivotal in subsequent oppression was the 'Movement for enforcement of standard language' (*hyojungo reiko undo*). A particularly notorious and obviously quite effective form of local language repression was the use of 'dialect-tags' (*hogen fuda*), the use of which increased drastically in the 1920s and 1930s, peaking at the time of the general mobilization campaign (Kondo 2006). A stigmatizing dialect-tag had to be worn around the neck to punish students who used expressions from a Luchuan language in the classroom.

Political developments after 1945, with the US promotion of Luchuan nationalism, led many Luchuan to escape the existing dismal living conditions by seeking reversion to Japan. While US occupiers sought to foster the establishment of Luchuan as a national language, the Luchuan people opted for the opposite (Nakachi 1989: 27), "easily seeing through the 'Ryukyu-ization' campaign as a propaganda ploy to prolong the American military occupation" (Rabson 1999: 146). Instead of an increase in language loyalty, Luchuan shifted from their Luchuan languages to Japanese, even in their homes. The hardships that Luchuan experienced under US occupation, ranging from malaria outbreaks, confiscation of land, the complete destruction of infrastructure, the collapse of the education system to the omnipresent discrimination by US Americans (see e.g. Time Magazine 1957-12-12) produced resistance measures. In 1952, on the occasion of restoring Japan's sovereignty in the San Francisco Peace Treaty, more than two thirds of the Luchuan electorate voted for a return to Japan. However, the US occupation continued (Kreiner 2001: 450-451). Nevertheless, reversion to Japan was not welcome by all. Luchuan were left with bitter memories of Japan including pre-war discriminations of various sorts and the Battle of Okinawa when some Japanese military units imposed forced suicides (*shudan jiketsu*) on Okinawan citizens (see Oe 2008). Many expressed doubts about reversion. [i]

Reversion to Japan, as a means of improving livelihood in the Luchu islands, led many Luchuan to engage in proving their genuine Japaneseness both to mainland Japan and to the US (Oguma 1998: 564). Given the ideological view of Japan as a monolingual nation state, speaking Japanese became perceived as a key factor in the 'reversion movement' (*fukki undo*) which called to 'return Japanese to Japan' (*nihonjin wa nihon e kaese*). The reversion movement was predominantly led by school teachers, who were responsible for both, a strong promotion of Japanese and for constituting the reversion issue as a popular non-party movement. Yara Chobyō (1902-1997), one of many Luchuan teacher turned politician at the time and a prominent leader of the reversion movement, promulgated in 1968 a three-point strategy for reversion in which (language) education features most prominently (quoted from Anhalt 1991: 45):

1. Educate Okinawan children as Japanese according to the Japanese school system
2. Inclusion of teachers and all interested into 'pressure groups'
3. Spread of the reversion movement on the Japanese mainland

Since the Luchuan languages had been severely stigmatized before, these languages were given up without much regret at that time.

Hence, Japanese and not the Luchuan languages served as an emancipatory tool in the eyes of many Luchuans under the US occupation, which ended in 1972 but with US bases intact down to today. The languages were sacrificed in hope for a better future.

The language shifts on the Luchu Islands in the 1950s were sweeping (cf. Heinrich 2007, 2009b). With the rise of the popular reversion movement, parents started to address their children in Japanese only. In Uchinaa, Yaeyama and Yonaguni, those born after 1950 can usually no longer speak any Luchuan language. The situation on Amami and Miyako is slightly different. Amami as part of Kagoshima Prefecture, has been considered to be part of mainland Japan since the Meiji period by many. Language shift in Amami was probably less drastic due to the fact that the Amami people did not suffer from language repression campaigns. Therefore, language shift set in earlier in Amami than in the rest of the Luchu islands, but it was less drastic. The linguistic situation in Amami is today the most stabilized. Mixed Amami-Japanese, called *tonfutsugo* (literally potato standard) is widely used across all three generations (Heinrich 2007). Secondly, in Amami the reversion movement ended in December 1953, when the US returned the island group to Japan. Miyako also did not experience radical language shifts, but for quite different reasons. Miyako people shifted only gradually to Japanese. While a detailed account for this is not yet possible and would require detailed field work, the reasons seem to include the absence of immigration and continuance of subsistence farming.

Nevertheless, all Luchuan languages will disappear by 2050 if speech communities and supportive linguists do not act immediately. The establishment of Luchuan heritage language education (Heinrich 2008) and of Japanese language policy supportive of Japanese diversity (Katsuragi 2005, 2007) are necessary for preventing language loss. Official support for language revitalization remains weak but some promising developments can be observed. The most important step was certainly the establishment of the annual *shimakutuba no hi* (community language day) in 2004, an event supported by Okinawa Prefecture since 2006 (Ishihara 2009). In the absence of more comprehensive and structured institutional support, however, language revitalization will not be possible at some point in the very near future, and it is already difficult to reverse the language shift. Even in outlying islands (*ritto*) the use of Luchuan language is declining in neighbourhoods and only older generations know and speak Luchuan languages. The retreat of local language use on Iheiya, an outlying islands in the vicinity of Uchinaa, led to the posting of a billboard which reads ‘On Sunday it’s community language’ (*nichiyobi wa shimakutuba*) (Nishimura 2001: 164).

Today, some of the few remaining domains of Luchuan language use are arts, prayers, festivals and religious rites. However, even in these domains, the Luchuan languages have been under pressure (see e.g. Clarke 1979, Ishihara 2009). What is more, these domains are largely detached from daily life. The current situation is what Fishman (1991) has termed a ‘folklorization’ scenario, i.e. the heritage language is no longer used for communication but merely as a symbol in very limited situations. Languages can, however, not be maintained with such symbolic functions alone.

Especially among the young generation a kind of language crossing is widespread. These new hybrid varieties, in which Japanese is mixed with elements of Luchuan languages, are widely used in informal situations. They are not Creoles as some researchers claim (e.g. Karimata 2006), but are a specific kind of mixed language. Creole languages emerge in contact situations in which two speech communities do not share a language, and hence create on the basis of their respective languages a third language for the sake of communication. Mixed languages, on the other hand, are purposefully formed for the sake of setting their speakers apart from other speech communities (Kaye & Tosco 2003: 22). It goes without saying that present-day Luchuans and mainland Japanese do not encounter communication problems which necessitate the creation of a Creole. The grammatical matrix of these hybrid language varieties, which differ considerably between islands and generations, is that of stan-

dard Japanese while the words or inflections inserted are either from the local languages or are in themselves mixtures of local language and Japanese (see below). In this way it is somewhat similar to incorporating English words into Japanese, a process in which pronunciation and semantic range is also affected.

Mixed language varieties (e.g. *Uchinaayamatoguchi* in Uchinaa or *Tonfutsugo* in Amami) account for a large percentage of language choices in private domains today. Across the Luchu Islands, mixed language varieties accounted for 35% of the language choices among the age cohort between 30 and 60; those younger than 30 chose mixed varieties in 43% of the cases for communicating in private domains (Heinrich 2007: 8-9).

As an example of mixed Uchinaa-Japanese (*uchinaa-yamatoguchi*) consider the following transcription of a radio program in Uchinaa taken from Sugita (2009):

Yoosuru ni ano: [waja] mo [fuyuu shii] suru hito ga:, [fuyuu shii] shita ato ni nani ka shippai shite [[kara nye]] “[Ee shimusa: yaa nankuru nai sa]” tte iu no to:. [[Sakkoo]] ganbatte shigoto shite ite: nayande: “[chaasu ga yaa. chaasu ga yaa.]” tte mainichi nayande ru hito ni: “[[Daijoobu yo.]] [Anshi] nayande mo [yaa.] isshookenmei [soo-ru bun] [nankuru nai sa]” to. Iu tsukaikata: ryooohoo aru wake desu yo ne.

[ ] uchinaaguchi, [[ ]] uchinaayamatoguchi

#### Japanese

Yoosuru ni ano: [shigoto] mo [namakete] iru hito ga, [namakete] ta ato ni nani ka shippai shite “[Shooganaai naa. nankuru nai sa]” tte iu no to, [[sugoku]] ganbatte shigoto shite ite, nayande, “doo shiyoo. doo shiyoo.” tte mainichi nayande ru hito ni, “[[daijoobu da yo.]] [sonna ni] nayande mo [nee.] isshookenmei [yatteru bun nankuru nai sa]” to iu tsukaikata ryooohoo aru wake desu yo ne.

#### English

I mean, well, to say the person who is doing the [job] [half-heartedly], after having worked [half-heartedly] and making a mistake, “[Well, it can't be helped, you know. You deserve it.]”, and to say to the person who is working [[very]] hard, but being worried like “[What should I do? What should I do?]” being worried every day, “[[Take it easy.]] Don't worry [so much]. When you are working so hard, [it will work out.]” It is that we have both usages, right?

The use of language mixed in such a way is Uchinaayamatoguchi, with this particular utterance involving particularly extensive Uchinaaguchi. Despite the lack of any support and prestige, these mixed language varieties are currently spreading into an increasing number of domains in the Luchu islands. This language change from below is significant because it testifies to the lack of Luchuan language proficiency among the younger generations as well as the desire to use language varieties different from Standard Japanese in the Luchu Islands. Whether the ongoing language shift to these mixed language varieties will ultimately replace the local languages in informal situations or whether it will lead to heightened efforts at revitalisation of the local languages can at present not be predicted with confidence.

Luchuan communities, in particular those in Amami, Uchinaa and Yaeyama are shifting from Standard Japanese to mixed language in private domains today. Where the local language is strongly stigmatized, as in Yaeyama, such shift is less thorough than in places where the local language is less stigmatized, such as in Amami. For the time being, it seems that both the Luchuan languages and Standard Japanese are declining in favour of the use of the mixed language.

Yonaguni is an exception in this respect; mixed language varieties are not popular mainly due to the outmigration of large parts of the younger generation. Yonaguni has lost two thirds of its population in the last 50 years.

The shift towards mixed language in most Luchuan Islands today reveals a yearning for local language. Whether this will lead to Luchuan language revitalization, to a further popularization of mixed languages or to both, remains to be seen. Much hinges on the question whether Luchuans can maintain and develop beneficial usages for the Luchuan languages in the future.

### Is there still a place for Luchuan languages?

Languages constitute important tools for protecting and expanding the rights of their speakers and providing a range of meaningful options. Local languages are, for instance, a powerful tool for renegotiating the terms of integration of speech communities within the majority society (Kymlicka 1995: 67). It is exactly this that made Kayano Shigeru, the first Ainu to become a member of the Japanese Diet in 1994, deliver his inauguration speech in Ainu (Maher 2001). Kayano was a lifelong devotee of teaching Ainu language and preserving Ainu culture. And may have been one of the very last people fluent in Ainu as a daily language as well as a ritual language (see e.g. Kayano 1994). It is this instrumentality of language which leads May (2001: 315) to state that “the arguments of minority groups for the retention of their ethnic, cultural and linguistic identities are most often not characterized by a retreat into traditionalism or cultural essentialism but, rather, by a more autonomous construction of group identity and political deliberation.” Readers of Japan Focus will be aware that there is no shortage of arguments in the Luchu Islands for such deliberations. Luchuan issues such as the ‘schoolbook debate’ (Aniya 2008), the ‘base problem’ (Yoshida 2008), its related ‘environmental problems’ (Sakurai 2008) and the repeated ‘rape incidents by military personnel’ (Johnson 2008) highlight the necessity of renegotiating the conditions according to which the Luchu Islands are part of the Japanese state. Language has not been used as an argument by those seeking such renegotiation to their detriment.

Naming is yet another aspect, where the benefits of local languages is manifest. As a matter of fact, Fija Bairon, deliberately changed his name from the Japanese reading ‘Higa’ to the Uchinaa reading ‘Fija’. As motive for changing his name, Fija points to discrimination both towards him as an Uchinaa person of Western appearance and Japanese nationality, and towards the culture he identifies with, Uchinaa. Upon starting to appear in Uchinaa media regularly, ‘Higa Bairon’ decided to henceforth adopt the name ‘Fija Bairon’ (see Fija & Heinrich 2007 for details). His new name serves Fija as a welcome entry to discuss naming issues with people he meets or interacts with through the media. It serves Fija as a means to inform and influence fellow Luchuans on their views on Uchinaa’s cultural and linguistic heritage as well as on their views of him as a person. Fija also prefers the Uchinaaguchi terms Uchinaa [Okinawa], Uchinaaguchi [Okinawan] and Luchu [Ryukyu], and this article follows his terminological suggestions.

Personal names and toponyms give testimony to Luchu’s oppressed past. Consider once more the example of Fija / Higa. The name was originally written with the Chinese character denoting ‘east’ (東) which was read ‘Fija’. It was only after 1624, when the Satsuma Domain (today’s Kagoshima Prefecture), which had invaded the Luchu Kingdom in 1609, tried to conceal its influence on the Kingdom from the Shogunate, that Luchuans were forcefully made to change the written characters of their names. The reason was that Satsuma wanted them to appear more ‘foreign’ in order to obscure its influence on the Kingdom. This is the background upon which the Chinese characters denoting ‘Fija’ were changed from 東 into 比嘉 (Beillevaire 2001: 83). Still, the name continued to be read as ‘Fija’. After all, Fija sounded ‘un-Japanese’ enough to the Satsuma colonizers.

Things changed again with the establishment of the Meiji state, i.e. the establishment of a state into which one imagined Japanese nation

needed to be moulded. The Chinese characters 比嘉 were then required to be read ‘Higa’ in order to assimilate Luchuans with such ‘un-Japanese’ sounding names into the newly invented linguistic and cultural homogeneous nation. Recovering the names as read before assimilation into the Japanese nation state exposes the problems of Luchu’s colonial past (see e.g. Christy 1993, Oguma 1998) and its lingering influences on its linguistic and cultural heritage today. How Luchuans name themselves, their islands, communities and languages has not been for Luchuans to decide. If Luchuans want to restore control over their fates, their cultural and linguistic heritage, then names might be a good place to start. This, in a nutshell, is what led Fija to abandon the Japanese name Higa in favour of Uchinaa Fija.

### Language rights and true recognition

Within the discourses on linguistic diversity, four different directions can be discerned, a linguistic, an aesthetic, an economic and a moral discourse. The linguistic discourse is rather straightforwardly concerned with the ongoing loss of linguistic diversity on an unprecedented scale. It has been framed in a seminal article by Michael Krauss (1992: 10) in which he wrote “[o]bviously we must do some serious rethinking of our priorities, lest linguists go down in history as the only science that presided obliviously over the disappearance of 90% of the very field to which it is dedicated.” This line of thought underlies a large part of endangered language studies, which seek to describe languages before they vanish in order to gain a better understanding into parameters of human language or into histories of language development and spread. The latter point has been repeatedly made with regard to the Luchuan languages (e.g. Uemura 2003). The aesthetic discourse is likewise straightforward. Many of us enjoy diversity, regardless of whether it is in food, in landscape, climate or in language. Luchuan ‘folk music’ (Roberson 2003), literature (Molasky & Rabson 2000) or speech contests (Hara 2005) enjoy the popularity they do largely due to an audience enjoying the diversity which is thereby presented. Economic discourse, that is to say, assessing the economic benefits which specific languages offer their speakers and the way such benefits can be measured and influenced, is the least developed field. Pioneering work in this direction has been undertaken by scholars such as Coulmas (1993) and Grin (2003). Such work still awaits application in the field of Luchuan languages.

The moral discourse, finally, is well developed in the West but underdeveloped in Japan. Moral discourse on language endangerment stresses that it is the languages of those on the shorter end of the power divide which get lost. The major underlying sentiments of this kind of discourse are that of fairness and support for linguistic diversity. Language frequently appears in key documents of the United Nations on human rights and there is a growing literature on this topic in Western scholarship (e.g. de Varennes 1996). In Japan, the issue of language rights has yet to emerge as a prominent form of discourse. The large scale lack of such discourse is primarily due to absence of a frame for ethnic autochthonous minorities in Japan (see Nakamura 2006). That is to say, in contrast to the West, no interpretive schema is readily available in Japan where the right to use one’s language can be derived from one’s ethnic, cultural or otherwise framed minority status. Most Luchuans do not conceive of themselves as language minorities. Despite compelling evidence that the Luchuan language varieties are languages in their own right, the majority of Luchuans call these language varieties ‘dialects’ (see Fija & Heinrich 2007). As we have seen above, the framing of Luchuans being part of the Japanese ‘nation’ was the main objective of the Luchuan irredentist reversion movement of the 1950s and 1960s. It is hence not surprising to see that the sole attempt, to date, to claim language rights by the Okinawan Society for Language Revitalization (*Uchinaaguchi fukyu kyogikai*) in 2005 has so far been totally ignored.

One of the key tasks in language maintenance and the rationalization for language documentation and language education will thus be to frame the relevance of such endeavours in a Japanese context.

Here, again, the inclusion of the Luchuan languages into the 'Atlas of the world's languages in danger' provides for much needed assistance to all those who seek to maintain the Luchuan languages or to establish Luchuan heritage language education.

At present, institutional support for language documentation and education programs is dismal. There exists only one chair for Luchuan linguistics (Prof. Karimata Shigehisa at the University of the Ryukyus), too little for overseeing the six Luchuan languages on the various levels of linguistic description. No study program on Ryukyuan linguistics has been established. Contrary to expectations, the 'Research Centre for the Languages of Okinawa' (*Okinawa gengo kenkyujo*), founded in 1978, has no rooms, no budget, no phone number, no homepage. It is merely a name under which activities of predominantly dialectological research are summarized. Three research institutes for Luchuan Studies exist worldwide (Hosei University Tokyo, Waseda University Tokyo, University of Hawai'i). The notable fact is that none of them is located in the Luchu Islands. Language documentation programs are not established at these centres at present, nor does language constitute a research focus there. No archive exists where Luchuan language data is collected, maintained and made accessible to researchers and community members. There are no conferences on Luchuan linguistics and no plans or initiatives exist for establishing institutions for Luchuan language documentation and maintenance. In short, the lack of adequate institutional support and funding is another factor which contributes to the endangerment of the Luchuan languages. Nevertheless, there are some promising developments. They include the establishment of the 'Society for Okinawan Language Revitalization' (*Uchinaaguchi fukyu kyogikai*) in 2000, the establishment of a 'Sub-committee of Endangered Languages' (*Kiki gengo shoikai*) at the Linguistic Society of Japan in 2003, and Shimoji Michinori's recently established Luchuan linguist mailing-list. Many more such activities need to follow.

Since language shift in the Luchu Islands originated as a product of Japanese language nationalism, reversing language shift requires the reversal of the ideological views which led Luchuan to abandon these languages in first place. To a considerable extent, language attitudes in the Luchu Islands have already changed. This is evidenced by the positive language attitudes many hold towards local languages today. A questionnaire survey by the local newspaper *Ryukyū Shimpō* revealed that more than 90% expressed some kind of affection for *hogen*, i.e. the Luchuan local languages (*Ryukyū shimpō sha* 2007: 25). Questionnaire surveys conducted by Heinrich revealed that an average of 73% of all consultants across the Luchuan Islands support the idea of introducing their respective local language into local school education. In view of such changing language attitudes, the restoration of the local languages might become possible. This requires the establishment of language documentation, revitalization and teaching programs. Towards this end, a reorientation of linguistic scholarship is unavoidable.

Japan's newly recognized multilingualism in the UNESCO Atlas raises some inconvenient questions about Japanese scholarship. How is it that Japan, a country with hundreds of universities and thousands of linguists never doubted that it was monolingual? What is it which makes scholars term languages 'dialects', despite the well known lack of mutual intelligibility and unshared linguistic innovations between them, the need to develop distinct orthographies, independent language development going back to pre-history, in other words, clear indications that they are dealing with languages? Linguistic scholarship in which such questions are not tackled reflects a clear political agenda. It reproduces Meiji period nation-imagining ideology despite the fact that such ideology has long been critiqued (see e.g. Koyama 2003, Lee 1996, Yasuda 1999). The suppression of linguistic diversity in Japan takes sometimes bizarre forms. A talk by Fija Bairon at the University of the Ryukyus titled '*Hogen aibiran, Uchinaaguchi*' ('It is not a dialect, but Uchinaa language') was reported upon in BBTV's 'Dialect news' (*hogen nyusu*) program in February 2009. On the other hand, it is exactly these kinds of contradictions which lead to reflection and discussion about the status of the local languages in the Luchu islands.

Recognition of Japan's linguistic diversity does not affect Japanese citizens alone. Recognition of Japanese linguistic diversity and a shift towards valuing Japan's multilingual heritage also affects perspectives and treatment of the languages of Japanese migrants. Japan's policy of internationalization (*kokusai-ka*) incorporates strong elements of nationalism. *Kokusai-ka* policy has placed much attention on national pride as a basis for Japanese interacting on a global level. Hence, the running gag that *kokusai-ka* ('internationalization') is actually *kokusui-ka* ('nationalization'). Much Japanese discourse on *kokusai-ka* regularly perceives internationalization as requiring a reaction to counteract unwelcome outside influences. It thus reproduces a rigid confrontation between the Japanese state and the outside world (see e.g. McVeigh 2002).

In language shift driven by language nationalism, the loss of local languages is the victory of uniformity and of cultural and linguistic intolerance. A state and its inhabitants not valuing the linguistic and cultural plurality within the confines of its own borders cannot convincingly claim to be just doing that with regard to international languages and cultures. One either values plurality or one does not. Gottlieb (2007) is right in her assessment that Japan's internationalization crucially requires an undoing of the foreigner-Japanese binary, which, in turn, involves reducing the 'foreignness' of foreigners and, of equally crucial importance, debunking the idea of an inherent and uniform 'Japaneseness' among Japanese nationals. In this sense, the Luchu Islands can serve as an important means for the 'deparochialization' of Japan's majority, which recognizes only their language and culture. It can serve as a means to create more tolerant orders and attitudes, more befitting today's diversifying and globalizing world.

The release of the online version of the UNESCO Atlas is an important instance of internationalizing the discourse on Japan's language situation. The release of the atlas coincided with a workshop on language documentation of the Luchuan languages ('Linking language and heritage'), held at the University of the Ryukyus in Nishihara Town, Okinawa.

Leading scholars on the Ryukyuan languages were part of this workshop and the UNESCO initiative triggered an academic discourse among them. Most scholars welcomed the acknowledgment of the Luchuan speech forms as languages and took this as a chance for encouraging language documentation. Others reacted defensively and felt uneasy about this emancipatory step pushed from abroad. Some feared that the UNESCO atlas might have opened a Pandora's Box in that "we might end up with hundreds of languages in Japan".

Some linguists frankly confess that even though their own research findings prove a deeply rooted linguistic distance between Japanese and the Luchuan languages and also among them, they still opt for retaining the term *hogen*, i.e. dialect, for purely socio-political reasons. Even speaking about Luchuan 'languages', to them is almost a rebellious act, challenging no less than the unity of the Japanese nation state. Whether language or dialect, however, is not a question of personal taste or an academic dalliance; the fate of the Luchuan languages heavily depends on the right choice. The right choice, we argue, can only be that of a linguistic scholarship which is detached from Japanese nation state ideology and squarely centred on linguistic facts.

For decades, Japan and Japanese scholars have played leading roles in UNESCO activities related to the documentation and support of endangered languages all over the globe. It was long overdue that the Japanese finally also started to look at the language diversity in their country.

The new, now international discourses on Japanese language diversity will hopefully not only spur language documentation, but also foster language maintenance activities. At a market in Matsuo in Naha City, an elderly woman stated that only old people and foreigners are interested in Uchinaaguchi. She further suggested that professors at the University are much better consultants on Uchinaaguchi than the speakers on the ground.

Discrimination against the Luchuan languages, by downgrading them to Japanese dialects, has had far-reaching effects: Even though many thousand still speak the Luchuan languages, most are no longer confident of their language skills. They furthermore are reluctant to speak their languages in public. Community language activities on Uchinaaguchi generally do not include 'ordinary speakers', such as taxi drivers or local traders. Language related activities are confined to selected groups of intellectuals, who focus on discussing Uchinaaguchi as a cultural treasure, with strong elitist pretensions. Those still speaking the languages on a regular basis are not part of such activities. They are not even aware of the fact that they are the true speakers, the only ones who can actually safeguard the Luchuan languages.

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[i] Consider for instance the following letters to the editor of *Ryukyū shinpo* during the occupation period:

“Are we really Japanese?” (*Ryukyū shinpo* 29.7.1965)

“A rebuttal to ‘Are we really Japanese?’” (*Ryukyū shinpo* 1.8.1965)

“Japan is not the motherland” (*Ryukyū shinpo* 24.1.1966)

“A rebuttal to ‘Japan is not the motherland’” (*Ryukyū shinpo* 15.2.1966)

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Matthias Brenzinger, from the Institut für Afrikanistik at the University of Cologne, Germany, coordinates the information on endangered African languages south of the Sahara in UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger. He is Secretary General of WOCAL (World Congress of African Linguistics) and congress chair of WOCAL6, which will be held at the University of Cologne in August 2009. Since 1995, he has been concerned with language documentation in Japan and by Japanese scholars. He can be contacted by e-mail: [Matthias.Brenzinger@Uni-Koeln.de](mailto:Matthias.Brenzinger@Uni-Koeln.de)

Fija Bairon hosts a radio show in Uchinaaguchi on Radio Okinawa every Sunday from 13:00 to 15:30. He teaches Uchinaaguchi at various culture centres in Okinawa and has also taught the language at Germany's Duisburg-Essen University. He can be contacted by e-mail in Japanese: [fijabyron@yahoo.co.jp](mailto:fijabyron@yahoo.co.jp)

Patrick Heinrich is a sociolinguist and visiting researcher at the University of the Ryukyus. He is currently conducting [language documentation](#) on Yonaguni Island. He can be contacted by e-mail: [heinrich@ll.u-ryukyu.ac.jp](mailto:heinrich@ll.u-ryukyu.ac.jp)

Fija Bairon, Matthias Brenzinger, Patrick Heinrich, "The Ryukyus and the New, But Endangered, Languages of Japan" *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 19-2-09, May 9, 2009. Reproduced from the Asia-Pacific journal, April 2009, by permission of the authors.

## Language of Jesus finds new voice in Syria

From the *Guardian Weekly* (Learning English section) 22 May 2009

Ilyana Barqil lives in the mountains north of Damascus. She likes TV quiz shows, American films and going swimming. But this modern Syrian teenager is also learning Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus.

Ilyana, 15, is part of a big effort to preserve the world's oldest living tongue. Last November she started classes at the New Aramaic Language academy in the picturesque village of Maaloula, where the residents speak more or less the same language as the Galileans did 2,000 years ago.

“My father speaks Aramaic but my mother doesn't as she's from Lebanon,” Ilyana said. “I want to be fluent. I don't know too much about the Aramaic language but I do know it's ancient.”

Aramaic is related to Hebrew and Arabic and was once the language of parts of modern-day Syria and Israel. But it declined rapidly in the nineteen-twenties as the region opened up to the outside world. More recently, television, the internet and youngsters leaving to work elsewhere have reduced the number of speakers.

Aramaic is recognised by UNESCO as a “definitely endangered” language and it is now spoken by just 7,000 people in Maaloula, and about 8,000 more in two other nearby villages.

But things are looking up, particularly since the University of Damascus opened the new language academy, with government help. It has a teaching staff of six and 85 students.

“In Syria there are a lot of minority groups – so it's a big decision to allow the teaching of other languages in government schools,” said Imad Reihan, a teacher at the Aramaic academy. “But the government is interested in promoting the Aramaic language because it goes back so deep into Syria's history.”

Reihan and his colleagues are now hoping for money to allow them to put the vanishing Aramaic words into dictionaries.

Original article by Ian Black, rewritten by Janet Hardy-Gould

## Council of Europe: Sweden must do more for Southern Saami language

Brussel - Bruxelles, Monday, 18 May 2009 by Davyth Hicks ([Euro-lang web-site](#))

The Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers published its third report on the situation of regional languages in Sweden last week. The report has been drawn up by a committee of independent experts (Comex) which monitors the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. As part of the Report the Committee of Ministers calls on the Swedish Government to take “resolute action in the field of education to maintain southern Sámi” which it notes is “particularly endangered”.

The Committee also calls on Sweden to strengthen education in regional or minority languages by, where appropriate, establishing bilingual education as well as providing for university education in Sámi, Finnish and Meänkieli.

Previously, the second report from the Council of Europe had called for “urgent measures” to be taken to help southern Sámi, but it is apparent that little progress has been made. Now the report stresses the need for the whole infrastructure of southern Sámi language education - pre-school, primary, secondary, teacher-training - to be put in place.

The report makes a raft of recommendations also for Finnish, Meänkieli, Sámi, Romani and Yiddish especially in the field of education, and notes the lack of provision for regional language speakers when dealing with the administration.

The Report also notes that representations have been made to Comex over the precarious situation of the Ume Sámi language (Eurolang 2009).

## EBLUL expands as new Committee launched in Latvia

EBLUL has launched a new member state committee in Latvia. On April 4, in Irē (Latvian: Mazirbe) the chief Livonian town, representatives of Latvian regional and minority languages (Livonian, Latga-

lian, Russian and Võro) founded the Latvian Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages (LatBLUL).

It is entitled in Latvian as 'Latvijas reģionālo un mazāk lietoto valodu savienība' - Union of Regional and Lesser-Used Languages of Latvia. Statutes were adopted and a Board elected.

The new President of LatBLUL is the Livonian Jõņ (Jānis) Mednis who is a well-known photographer. The organisation remains open to other Latvian regional languages.

After official registration, LatBLUL will now join the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages as a Member State Committee.

The Board of EBLUL's Estonian branch EstBLUL (Timur Seifullen, Kalle Eller and Pavel Varunin and co-ordinator Andres Heinapuu) and other representatives of Estonian regional languages participated as guests.

Negotiations are also underway to set up an EBLUL Committee in Romania following initiatives from MEPs. (EuroLang 2009)

## New report reveals five uncontacted tribes most at risk

*Press release from Survival International web-site, May 2009*

One year after photographs of uncontacted Indians made headlines around the world, a new report from Survival International reveals the five uncontacted tribes most at risk of extinction.

They are:

- Indians of the Pardo River, Brazil
- The Awá, Brazil
- Indians between the Napo and Tigre rivers, Peru
- Indians of the Envira River, Peru
- Ayoreo-Totobiesode, Paraguay

These groups are all experiencing the invasion of their lands – by loggers, ranchers, colonists and oil companies – and all are at grave risk of being decimated by diseases to which they have no immunity.

The Awá, Rio Pardo Indians and Envira River Indians are all falling victim to the blight of illegal hardwood logging which is penetrating even the remotest parts of the Amazon.

The Ayoreo-Totobiesode of the Chaco scrub forests in western Paraguay, on the other hand, are experiencing the illegal clearance of their forests by cattle ranchers. Satellite photos taken over the past year have revealed huge areas illegally cleared in the Indians' heartland.

In the far north of Peru, the Indians living between the Napo and Tigre Rivers are caught in the middle of Peru's oil boom. In recent years 75% of Peru's Amazon has been carved up into oil and gas exploration concessions. Peru's President has denied the existence of isolated Indians in the Napo/Tigre area, despite abundant evidence of their existence.

Survival's report calls on the governments of Paraguay, Brazil and Peru urgently to protect the tribes' lands.

Survival's director Stephen Corry said today, 'Publication of the photos a year ago caused a huge groundswell of support for the plight of uncontacted tribal people. Many had not realised that such people exist, let alone that there are more than 100 uncontacted tribes around the world. But many governments still refuse to take the simple step – properly protecting their territories – that will actually ensure the tribes' survival.'

## 5. Allied Societies and Activities

### Call for Papers for *Romanitas* April 2010 issue

Topic: Language preservation, rescue, and revival

Today many languages are in danger of disappearing from the face of the earth (Nettle, 2000). Due to the increasing power of a small number of languages spoken by large groups with social prestige or control of economic resources, "smaller" languages are vanishing at a rapid rate. Crystal (2000) estimates that only 600 of the 6,000+ languages in the world will survive the threat of extinction. Language death detaches people from their cultural heritage and leads to loss of community identity. The dominant culture is also deprived of the diversity that is the foundation of human cultural creativity, knowledge, and change (Dalby, 2003; Harrison, 2007).

Fortunately, linguists, anthropologists, sociologists, folklorists, indigenous leaders, and others are rising to the challenge and fomenting projects to reverse language decline (Hinton & Hale, 2001). There are projects all around the world dedicated to raising language awareness in endangered speech communities, documenting languages that are on the verge of disappearing, facilitating language reacquisition and revival, and supporting local efforts to establish bilingual programs, literacy programs, and other forms of language rescue.

*Romanitas* is a *multilingual*, peer-reviewed, online academic journal based at the University of Puerto Rico. It is dedicated to the study of Romance languages, literatures, and cultures. Its April 2010 special issue (which will also be published in traditional printed format) seeks to collect articles reporting on language preservation and revival projects in speech communities where a Romance language is a factor (e.g., South America, Central America, North America, the Caribbean, Europe, the Philippines, North Africa, etc.). The language that is being rescued may be a Romance variety or an indigenous language that is threatened by a hegemonic Romance language.

Articles should be written in Spanish, French, Portuguese or English. Please send contributions (no more than 30 pages including bibliography and appendices) in electronic form to Dr. Alicia Pousada (English Department, UPR, Rio Piedras) at: pousada.a@gmail.com. Manuscripts should include an abstract in the language of the article plus another in one of the other languages of publication. Authors should follow the *Romanitas* style protocol which can be found at: <http://humanidades.uprr.edu/romanitas/english/style.html>.

The deadline for submission is November 30, 2009.

Crystal, D. (2000). *Language Death*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dalby, A. (2003). *Language in danger: The loss of linguistic diversity and the threat to our future*. New York: Columbia University Press. 2

Harrison, K. D. (2007) *When languages die: The extinction of the world's languages and the erosion of human knowledge*. New York and London: Oxford University Press.

Hinton, L. & Hale, K. (Eds.). (2001). *The green book of language revitalization in practice*. San Diego: Academic Press.

Nettle, D. & Romaine, S. (2000). *Vanishing voices: The extinction of the world's languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## New issue of !khwa ttu newsletter of San culture

Our old friends the !khwa ttu cultural centre in South Africa have produced a new issue of their on-line newsletter. It is based at the San Ecation and Culture Centre, which has made great progress since our FEL conference-goers visited it in 2005 in conjunction with our conference in Stellenbosch. A great deal of information about the centre, its work, and the San peoples and their languages is available at [www.Khwattu.org](http://www.Khwattu.org).

## Sacred Earth Network continues programme

Greetings,

Sacred Earth Network, a non-profit organization located in Peter-sham, MA, is continuing its Endangered Languages Program after its successful launch in 2008. Endangered Languages Program aims to support preservation and revival of those indigenous languages which are threatened with extinction and which are vital to indigenous cultures of Siberia and North/Central America. One of the components of the Program is financial assistance to projects working towards these goals. In 2008 we offered assistance to eight grassroots language preservation projects in Russia and the US:

<http://sacredearthnetwork.org/elp/2008elpawards.cfm>

With the deadline approaching soon - May 15th 2009, we would like to spread the word out to underfunded grassroots initiatives about financial assistance that we are offering to projects that work towards preservation of indigenous languages particularly in North America.

We are very much hoping for your assistance in dissemination of this information among interested organizations and individuals. If you would like to post this information on your website or newsletter I encourage you to do this. If you would like to point out further contacts, I would be very grateful as well.

Please address inquiries about the Endangered Languages Program to the Program's Coordinator, Mariyam Medovaya, at [mariyamsacredearth@gmail.com](mailto:mariyamsacredearth@gmail.com). Again, we are grateful in advance for your assistance in helping us reach out to interested individuals and organizations who might benefit from the Program.

## Studies on Endangered Languages

### SEL: A new open archive for linguistic research

*Call*

We would like to announce a new open archive for unpublished, in-progress and in-press papers on endangered languages: Studies on Endangered Languages. SEL will be integrated as a topic page on Lingbuzz (<http://ling.auf.net/lingbuzz/>). To get the site going, we need a minimum critical mass of about 20 studies.

If you have work you would like to make available, please send it (or a link to it) to Chris Collins ([cc116@nyu.edu](mailto:cc116@nyu.edu)) or Daniel Kaufman ([bahasawan@gmail.com](mailto:bahasawan@gmail.com)), and we will post it when we have the critical mass.

*Description*

The inspiration for this archive is Lingbuzz, a thriving repository of papers on theoretical linguistics. We would like the SEL archive to serve as a repository of electronic grammars, dictionaries, and papers (including scans) on endangered languages.

As there is no precise definition of "endangered language" - even very large languages can be considered endangered if their speaker population is rapidly decreasing - we extend the scope of this archive to include studies on under-researched languages as well.

The papers can be descriptively or theoretically oriented. For the more descriptive papers, the description and keywords that are posted on Lingbuzz (see below) should try to convey notable typological features or points of potential wider interest in the data. One of the goals of the project is to try to integrate data on endangered and under-researched languages into work being done in the theoretical linguistics community.

Papers will not be reviewed. For an overview of Lingbuzz policies, see: <http://ling.auf.net/buzzdocs/>

As with Lingbuzz, each paper will appear with the following information:

- Title  
Name of Author
- Date of Submission
- Description (one or two paragraphs)
- Place of publication (if there exists a published version)
- Keywords (one of the key words for all SEL papers will be "Endangered Languages")
- Previous version dates
- Number of times downloaded

## 6. Letters to the Editor

*From William Wolkowski, by e-mail, 17 March 2009*

Dear Dr. Moseley,

For your information, In 2002 I published a compilation of one poem by Mickiewicz in 109 languages, including a fair number of endangered.

According to Index Translationum UNESCO, this is the most extensive of its kind worldwide.

A full list of languages and translators is available in the catalog of BNP in Warsaw, and copies are in LOC Washington, BL London, BNF Paris.

Best regards,

Wolkowski

Paris Universitatis

*P.S.* There is also another compilation in 64 languages (not identical with the Mickiewicz), of Bogurodzica (first poem in Polish, XIIIth century).

## 7. Publications, Book Reviews

### A handbook of Aboriginal languages of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory,

edited by Jim Wafer and Amanda Lissarrague. Nambucca Heads, NSW: Muurrbay Aboriginal Co-operative, 2008, 840 pages.

For students of language endangerment, this comprehensive new book fills a pressing need. The territory that came to be called New

South Wales was the first part of Australia to be colonised, and thus has the longest history of language attrition, reaching a point in the present day where there are no languages left with more than a handful of speakers.

This handbook is thus not a synchronic study, but a very necessary diachronic one, making a record of every known language living and extinct, including those known only from brief word lists recorded by early colonists, who were not trained linguists.

Each language is listed with its known alternative names, and explained in terms of its affiliation. In their introduction, Wafer and Lissarrague distinguish 14 language areas, and estimate that the total number of identifiable languages in NSW is around 35 – though the status of language and dialect is a fluid one. Only a handful of these languages have retained any speakers, and their greatest number of speakers is twenty. However, there are ongoing efforts at revival of a number of NSW languages, and these are given due attention.

This is the first handbook of Australian languages to take an entire state as its scope. The authors are meticulous in crediting the many sources, both early and recent, that they have used, but a particularly important resource for classification has been N.B. Tindale's *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia* (1974).

The compilers face formidable challenges, not only in the nomenclature of languages, but also because past scholars have generally ignored dialect differences within languages, making it extremely difficult to distinguish dialect from language. (O'Grady and others have set an arbitrary division of 71% cognate words.)

Languages and language families are no respecters of state boundaries, of course. Cross-border languages are included wherever there is sufficient information on them. Sub-groupings within sub-groupings are given numbers separated by a point, such as '14.13.2.4'.

The word-lists in Part B of the book are, for the sake of ready comparison, based on a standard list of 191 English words. Likewise they use a single standard orthography, based on the 'practical orthography' devised by Leeding and Gudschinsky (1974).

In view of the appalling rate of attrition of languages in New South Wales, the compilers have relied heavily on 19<sup>th</sup>-century efforts at documentation, notably those of E.M. Curr (*The Australian race*, 1886), R.B. Smyth and R.H. Mathews. The great strength of this book is its diachronic scope, bringing together sources ranging over two centuries.

*Christopher Moseley*

## The Romani Morpho-Syntax (RMS) Database

From the *Linguist List* 13 January 2009

This is now accessible online on  
<http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/rms>

Featuring:

- Comprehensive documentation of over 150 varieties of the language.
- Phrase exemplification of all data in sound, transcription, and translation.
- Browse, search, and query facilities.
- Dynamic map-generating function that plots the distribution of features.
- Extensive Help menu.
- Link to Romani Linguistics Page with:
  - background information on the Romani language;
  - bibliographical database of Romani linguistics;

- downloadable DVD presentation in 17 languages on the historical development of Romani and more.

Username and Login are NOT required in order to access the database. Note that data entry for some categories and samples is still in progress. Comments are welcome and can be sent to

[romani@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:romani@manchester.ac.uk)

## Anthology of Nahuatl Traditional Narrative

The Seminario de Estudios Modernos y de Cultura Acal-ian (SEMYCA) announces the release of *Cuentos náhuatl de la Malintzin* (2009), edited and translated by Pablo Rogelio Navarrete Gómez. This anthology of traditional narrative is part of a larger documentation project that has gathered material from the towns of San Isidro Buensuceso, Tlaxcala, and San Miguel Canoa, Puebla, Mexico. The stories might also be useful for educators in this region where many children still speak or understand Nahuatl, and for students of Nahuatl as a second language. Commentaries and observations are welcome.

Send comments and questions to the email address on the SEMYCA website at <http://www4.nau.edu/seminario/>, where the full text of the collection is also freely available.

*Cuentos náhuatl de la Malintzin* by Pablo Rogelio Navarrete Gómez (editor and translator). San Miguel Canoa, Puebla: SEMYCA.

Table of Contents:

- Prólogo
- Introducción
- In tomin
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- In tlacatzintli tlen amo oquinequia tlanamaz
- Chapulin huan Coyotl

## New books from Pacific Linguistics

PACIFIC LINGUISTICS is happy to announce the publication of:

*The Lexicon of Proto Oceanic: The culture and environment of ancestral Oceanic society 3. Plants*, edited by Malcolm Ross, Andrew Pawley and Meredith Osmond

*Serial verb constructions in Austronesian and Papuan Languages* edited by Gunter Senft

*A grammar of Klon: A non-Austronesian language of Alor, Indonesia* by Baird, Louise

*A reference grammar of Puyuma, an Austronesian language of Taiwan* by Teng, Stacy Fang-Ching

*A dictionary of Toqabaqita* by Frantisek Lichtenberk

Prices are in Australian dollars (one Australian dollar is currently equivalent to about US\$ 0.70).

### **A dictionary of Toqabaqita**

Frantisek Lichtenberk  
PL 592

Toqabaqita is an Austronesian, more specifically an Oceanic, language spoken on the island of Malaita in the Solomon Islands. This is the first published dictionary of the language, based on the author's work on the language for over two decades, starting in 1981. The volume contains a Toqabaqita–English dictionary (nearly 7,000 entries) and an English–Toqabaqita finderlist.

2008 ISBN 9780858835849 407 pp

Prices: Australia AUD \$75.90 (incl. GST), Overseas AUD \$69.00

### **Serial verb constructions in Austronesian and Papuan Languages**

Gunter Senft, editor

PL 594

This volume of new work explores the nature of verb serialisation in a range of languages from the Pacific region – both Austronesian and non-Austronesian. Serial verbs can be described linguistically as a sequence of verbs which behave as a single complex predicate. A particular focus of this book is the detailed examination given by most authors to the relationship of such uniaxial linguistic structures with the real world notion of eventhood. The book also makes a valuable addition to the description and analysis of serial verb constructions from the Pacific, a region which has generally been under-represented in cross-linguistic discussions of verb serialisation. The book will appeal to syntacticians and typologists as well as to Austronesianists and Papuanists.

Contributors: Louise Baird, John Bowden, Volker Heeschen, David Mead, Andrew Pawley, Ger Reesink, Miriam van Staden, Catharina Williams-van Klinken, and Scott Youngman.

2008 ISBN 9780858835917

Prices: Australia AUD \$64.90 (incl. GST), Overseas AUD \$59.00

### **The Lexicon of Proto Oceanic: The culture and environment of ancestral Oceanic society 3. Plants**

edited by Malcolm Ross, Andrew Pawley and Meredith Osmond

PL 599

This is the third in a series of six volumes on the lexicon of Proto Oceanic, the ancestor of the Oceanic branch of the Austronesian language family. Each volume deals with a particular domain of culture and/or environment and consists of a collection of essays each of which presents and comments on lexical reconstructions of a particular semantic field within that domain.

Volume 3 examines the terms that Proto Oceanic speakers used to name plants and parts of plants. After the general introduction to the series, Chapter 2 places Proto Oceanic plant naming within its biogeographic and ethnographic context, Chapter 3 examines its major plant categories from an ethnobotanical standpoint, and Chapter 4 reconstructs terms for parts of plants. Chapters 5-8 present reconstructed names of wild plants, organised by vegetation habitat: the coastal strand, mangrove swamp, rain forest and secondary forest. Chapters 9-13 investigate the naming of cultivated plants: staple foods, green vegetables, nut and fruit trees, the coconut and a variety of cultivated non-food plants.

2008 ISBN 9780858835894 565 pp.

Prices: Australia AUD \$137.50 (incl. GST), Overseas AUD \$125.00

### **A grammar of Klon: A non-Austronesian language of Alor, Indonesia**

Baird, Louise

PL 596

The languages spoken on the Alor archipelago in Indonesia are geographically the west-most non-Austronesian languages. Klon is one of these languages, spoken on the west coast of the island of Alor. This is the first descriptive grammar of Klon, adding to the slowly

growing – but as yet mainly unpublished – body of knowledge concerning the structure of the Alor languages.

This grammar is primarily based on a corpus of spoken texts from the Bring dialect. Phonetics and phonology, morphology, clausal and inter-clausal syntax are described, including the pronominal system which works on an agentive basis, and commonly used serial verb constructions.

2008 ISBN 9780858835979 258 pp. Prices: Australia AUD \$66.00 (incl. GST), Overseas AUD \$60.00

### **A reference grammar of Puyuma, an Austronesian language of Taiwan**

Teng, Stacy Fang-Ching

PL 595

The Puyuma people reside in southeastern Taiwan in Taitung City and Peinan Township in Taitung County. There are still fourteen extant Formosan (Austronesian) languages in Taiwan, but only thirteen indigenous groups are officially recognised by the Taiwanese government. The present study investigates the Nanwang dialect of the Puyuma language, spoken by the people in Nanwang and Paoshang Suburbs of Taitung City in southern Taiwan.

The aim of this grammar is to describe the phonology and morpho-syntax of Puyuma. The work is descriptive in nature, and the theoretical framework employed is Basic Linguistic Theory (BLT), following Dixon (1994, 1997) and Dryer (2006). BLT emphasis is the need to describe each language in its own terms, rather than imposing on it concepts derived from other languages. Thus, in this study, the author abandons traditional terms used by linguists studying Philippine-type languages, such as 'agent focus', 'patient focus', 'locative focus', or 'instrumental focus', and replaces them with the terms like 'transitive' and 'intransitive' that are more familiar to most of the world's linguists.

2008 ISBN 9780858835870 327 pp

Prices: Australia AUD \$77.00 (incl. GST), Overseas AUD \$70.00

## **"THE LINGUISTS" DVD now available**

Having just aired nationally on PBS to fantastic buzz and reviews, the Sundance hit documentary THE LINGUISTS is now available to stream online and via mobile device for FREE at <http://www.babelgum.com/thelinguists>.

PLEASE NOTE: Availability is limited to the next few months! To make THE LINGUISTS part of your permanent collection for educational screenings, please visit <http://www.thelinguists.com/dvd>. Ongoing Public Performance Rights are included. Order the documentary Noam Chomsky called, "a breathtaking thrill ride through the landscape of language." DVD features 30 minutes of extras profiling endangered languages around the world and efforts to archive and revive them; and a discussion guide created by Dr. K. David Harrison and the Center for Applied Linguistics. For any questions about purchasing, please contact [info@ironboundfilms.com](mailto:info@ironboundfilms.com).

## **And now a music review:**

**Philippe Kadosch: Babel Eyes.** CD: Multicrea limited edition, 2008. Available from Multicrea, 31 Avenue Laplace, 94110 Arcueil, France. Lyrics available from [www.babeleyes.com](http://www.babeleyes.com) – performance on [www.myspace.com/philippekadosh](http://www.myspace.com/philippekadosh).

The French musician and composer Philippe Kadosch has long been fascinated with the musical potential of not only indigenous people's music, of with the possibility of incorporating the sounds of their languages into a sonic landscape.

The project *Babeleyes* is subtitled *Musique des langues vierges*, thus stressing the purity and innocence of the indigenous peoples whose languages form his raw material. In his notes to the CD (in English, Portuguese and French), he says: *The Virgin Languages of BABELEYES are foreign and understandable to all. Their sounds translate into sense thanks to the mystical interpretation of the Mistress of Sound Sense, Teté Espíndola. I saw her go into a trance in order to transmit her visions to us and plunge the music into the baths of languages on the verge of extinction.*

*Heated at a very high temperature the languages first burst into syllables and then change into the shapes of sound images.*

Apart from the vocalist Espíndola, the music is performed by the Babeleyes Orchestra, a chamber orchestra playing traditional Western instruments. The effect of this combination of snatches of "virgin languages" used integrally as an instrument with its own unique sonic texture, with a chamber orchestra, sensitively and subtly scored, is hypnotic and fascinating. As a piece of music it is a uniquely satisfying experience. For a linguist, though, the lack of information in the notes about the source languages for the musical raw material is more than a little frustrating, and smacks of mystification. When I met the composer in Paris, he told me he had spent time and made recordings among the Awa people in Brazil (see the article on loggers and oil firms under 'Endangered Languages in the News' in this issue). The languages of the 'virgin' or 'uncontacted' peoples of Brazil have been among Kadosch's chief inspirations for this work.

Chris Moseley

## 8. Obituaries

### Viktor Berthold (1921-2009)

And so another light goes out in Europe. With the death of Viktor Berthold (Viktors Bertholds in Latvian), the Livonian language, a Finno-Ugrian language spoken for centuries on the western coast of Latvia, has lost its last mother-tongue speaker.

He was born in 1921 at Zuonkõ farmhouse in in the village of Vaid, and in his school years spoke only Livonian. When the second world war broke out and the majority of the Livonians were forcibly evacuated, Berthold was one of very few who stayed behind. After the war, with Latvia now a part of the USSR, he worked as a forester, a fisherman, motor engineer and a harbour-watchman. He was also known as a healer.

In his later years, as one of the few remaining first-language Livonian speakers, he was often called upon as an informant for linguists, and he also taught Livonian on an informal basis at Kuolka school, on the northern tip of the Kurzeme peninsula. He was an instructor at the summer camps organisers for children of Livonian heritage, and has thus ensured that a generation of second-language speakers is growing up. His only other regular Livonian conversation partners, his brother and his wife, both died in the nineteen-nineties.

Livonian will live on among second-language speakers, now that he has been laid to rest in Kuolka. There are at least 140 people who have registered Livonian nationality in their Latvian passports, and of these a number are heritage learners.

Chris Moseley

## Peter Martin

*From the An-Lang web-site, submitted by Margaret Florey/Beatrice Clayre*

Peter Martin was Professor of Education and Linguistics at the University of East London. Previously, he had taught at primary and secondary levels. At tertiary level, he worked at the Universiti Brunei Darussalam (1985-1998); and then at the University of Leicester (1998-2005), before moving to the University of East London. Peter's academic research and his prolific publication output was largely focused on multilingualism and relations that obtain between language, culture and identity. His early published work, from his time in Southeast Asia, considered mainly sociolinguistic issues in multilingual settings, in particular: bilingual classroom interaction and language policy, planning and practice. A further significant strand of his research was the sociolinguistics of minority Austronesian language communities in Borneo. He had completed substantial work towards a dictionary of Kelabit (spoken by around 5000 people in the uplands of Borneo), a project that will continue. His later work focuses on complementary schools in England and issues of multilingual classroom ecologies. Peter's research has increased our understanding of multilingualism, language education, and language in society. Furthermore, his teaching stimulated the learning and lives of generations of students. He was a wonderful father to his four children, a hugely caring person and unfailingly generous with colleagues and friends alike, as well as being very good-humoured. One cannot imagine a better friend than Peter. He will be missed by everyone who knew him.

*Peter Sercombe, Newcastle University, UK*

## 9. Forthcoming events

### Bilingual Education in the Northern Territory: Principles, policy and practice. AIATSIS Research Symposium, 26 June 2009

9am - 5pm

Venue: Visions Theatre, National Museum of Australia, Canberra

At the start of the 2010 school year, the number of hours of bilingual teaching in Northern Territory Two-Way schools is set to decrease by more than half. The public debate that followed the announcement of this policy change revealed a need for further research on the models, achievements and challenges of bilingual education in Indigenous communities.

Acknowledging this research gap and recognising that the new policy represents a significant shift in educational practice, AIATSIS will hold a one day symposium to debate and discuss the policy change and its implications.

Issues to be discussed include: the historical role of bilingual education; the status of research into its efficacy and practice; implications of the policy change; and bilingualism and language rights.

The symposium will bring together Australia's leading experts in bilingual education and practitioners in Northern Territory Indigenous schools. Bilingual educators, linguists, educationalists, policy makers and prominent Indigenous specialists will be invited to discuss this recent policy initiative thus providing a timely forum for debate.

*Program*

Speakers at the symposium include: Mr Tom Calma; Prof. Joe Lo Bianco; community members associated with Two-Way schools in Areyonga, Yuendumu and Yirrkala; Ass. Prof. Brian Devlin; Kathy McMahon; Dr Jane Simpson, Dr Patrick McConvell and Dr Jo Cafery.

The concluding discussion panel will be chaired by Dr Peter Toyne.

The one-day symposium will be followed by a reception at AIATSIS in the evening. The program is available on the AIATSIS website.

#### Registration

Please register using this form. Please save a completed copy of the form and either email, fax or post to:

Bilingual Education Symposium

AIATSIS

GPO Box 553

Canberra, ACT 2601

Email: [conference2009@aiatsis.gov.au](mailto:conference2009@aiatsis.gov.au)

Fax: (02) 6249 7714

Registration includes morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea as well as the reception. For catering purposes, please indicate whether you will attend the reception. Places are limited so please register as soon as possible.

For further information contact Sarah Cutfield tel: (02) 6246 1116, [conference2009@aiatsis.gov.au](mailto:conference2009@aiatsis.gov.au)

Media contact: Chris Ryan tel: (02) 6261 4254, [chris.ryan@aiatsis.gov.au](mailto:chris.ryan@aiatsis.gov.au)

## Summer course in Manx, July 2009

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Adrian Cain, Manx Language Officer on the Isle of Man, sends an announcement of a summer course for learners of Manx in late July 2009 at Eary Cushlin, I.o.M. from Monday 27 to Friday 31 July. Parallel sessions are to be held for beginners and intermediate learners in an informal setting, ending on the Friday with a tour and a music session at Port St. Mary.

Contact Adrian Cain for more informati at [greinneyder@mhf.org.im](mailto:greinneyder@mhf.org.im).

There is a web-site for learning Manx: [www.learnmanx.com](http://www.learnmanx.com)

## International Seminar on Endangered Languages in India, 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> October 2009

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Two day international seminar on language endangerment on 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> October 2009 in collaboration with India International Centre, Sahitya Akademi, CIIL, ICCR

### Day 1 (22<sup>nd</sup> October 2009) Inauguration and Plenary Session

Inaugural address by Sunil Gangopadhyay, Chairman Sahitya Academy

Keynote Address: Christopher Moseley (Editor-in -chief, World Atlas of Endangered Languages, UNESCO)

### Session I: Overview of Endangered Languages in India

Which language family poses the biggest threat?

Which geographical areas are threatened most?

### Session II: Is Revival Possible or Desirable - Best Practices

Problems and solutions in revival programmes

How to save endangered languages - Documentation and Archiving

### Day 2 (Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> October)

#### Session I: Impact of Hindi on Unwritten Languages

Hill regions & North East Regions

Other Regions

Bilingualism and multilingualism (including Hindi and 3 language formula, life expectancy of a language in a multilingual context)

#### Session II: Language & Power & VIIIth Schedule

Valedictory Session: Opening Address

Summing up and recommendations

Valedictory lecture

Closing Remarks (INTACH)

## National Indigenous Education Conference in Tasmania, 23<sup>rd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> November 2009

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### *Strength in Community: Closing the Gap*

Australia continues to be faced with the profound challenge of overcoming unacceptable inequality in education, training and employment outcomes for Indigenous people. This has now been brought into sharp focus by the Council of Australian Government's (COAG) Productivity and Indigenous Reform Agendas; establishing expectations on all jurisdictions to demonstrate sustainable improvements from early childhood through to workforce participation.

The 2009 National Indigenous Education Conference will build on the success of the previous Conference held in Newcastle in 2006, as well as the World Indigenous People's Conference on Education, held in Melbourne in 2008. The conference theme, Strength in Community: Closing the Gap, emphasises the challenges of accelerating outcomes for Indigenous students and successfully engaging Indigenous communities with education and training in order to strengthen culture and improve quality of life for our people. For further information go to: <http://www.cdesign.com.au/niec2009/default.htm>

### Important Dates

Abstracts due 26 June

Abstract acceptance emailed 31 July

Provisional program available 31 July

Registration of presenters by 25 Sept

Early-bird registration closes 1 Oct

# Foundation for Endangered Languages

For membership or orders you can visit <http://www.ogmios.org/apply.htm> or alternatively send this form, or a copy of it, to the Foundation's UK Treasurer:

Chris Moseley, 9 Westdene Crescent, Caversham Heights, Reading RG4 7HD, England. e-mail: [chrismoseley50 at yahoo.com](mailto:chrismoseley50@yahoo.com)

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## 1. Preamble 1.1. The Present Situation

At this point in human history, most human languages are spoken by exceedingly few people. And that majority, the majority of languages, is about to vanish.

The most authoritative source on the languages of the world (Ethnologue, Gordon 2005) lists just over 6,900 living languages. Population figures are available for just over 6,600 of them (or 94.5%). Of these 6,600, it may be noted that:

56% are spoken by fewer than 10,000 people; 28% by fewer than 1,000; and 83% are restricted to single countries, and so are particularly exposed to the policies of a single government. At the other end of the scale, 10 major languages, each spoken by over 100 million people, are the mother tongues of almost half (49%) of the world's population.

More important than this snapshot of proportions and populations is the outlook for survival of the languages we have. Hard comparable data here are scarce or absent, often because of the sheer variety of the human condition: a small community, isolated or bilingual, may continue for centuries to speak a unique language, while in another place a populous language may for social or political reasons die out in little more than a generation. Another reason is that the period in which records have been kept is too short to document a trend: e.g. the Ethnologue has been issued only since 1951. However, it is difficult to imagine many communities sustaining serious daily use of a language for even a generation with fewer than 100 speakers: yet at least 10% of the world's living languages are now in this position.

Some of the forces which make for language loss are clear: the impacts of urbanization, Westernization and global communications grow daily, all serving to diminish the self-sufficiency and self-confidence of small and traditional communities. Discriminatory policies, and population movements also take their toll of languages.

In our era, the preponderance of tiny language communities means that the majority of the world's languages are vulnerable not just to decline but to extinction.

## 1.2. The Likely Prospect

There is agreement among linguists who have considered the situation that over half of the world's languages are moribund, i.e. not effectively being passed on to the next generation. We and our children, then, are living at the point in human history where, within perhaps two generations, most languages in the world will die out.

This mass extinction of languages may not appear immediately life-threatening. Some will feel that a reduction in numbers of languages will ease communication, and perhaps help build nations, even global solidarity. But it has been well pointed out that the success of humanity in colonizing the planet has been due to our ability to develop cultures suited for survival in a variety of environments. These cultures have everywhere been transmitted by languages, in oral traditions and latterly in written literatures. So when language transmission itself breaks down, especially before the advent of literacy in a culture, there is always a large loss of inherited knowledge.

Valued or not, that knowledge is lost, and humanity is the poorer. Along with it may go a large part of the pride and self-identity of the community of former speakers. And there is another kind of loss, of a different type of knowledge. As each language dies, science, in linguistics, anthropology, prehistory and psychology, loses one more precious source of data, one more of the

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## FEL Manifesto

diverse and unique ways that the human mind can express itself through a language's structure and vocabulary.

We cannot now assess the full effect of the massive simplification of the world's linguistic diversity now occurring. But language loss, when it occurs, is sheer loss, irreversible and not in itself creative. Speakers of an endangered language may well resist the extinction of their traditions, and of their linguistic identity. They have every right to do so. And we, as scientists, or concerned human beings, will applaud them in trying to preserve part of the diversity which is one of our greatest strengths and treasures.

## 1.3. The Need for an Organization

We cannot stem the global forces which are at the root of language decline and loss.

But we can work to lessen the ignorance which sees language loss as inevitable when it is not, and does not properly value all that will go when a language itself vanishes.

We can work to see technological developments, such as computing and telecommunications, used to support small communities and their traditions rather than to supplant them. And we can work to lessen the damage:

- by recording as much as possible of the languages of communities which seem to be in terminal decline;
- by emphasizing particular benefits of the diversity still remaining; and
- by promoting literacy and language maintenance programmes, to increase the strength and morale of the users of languages in danger.

In order to further these aims, there is a need for an autonomous international organization which is not constrained or influenced by matters of race, politics, gender or religion. This organization will recognise in language issues the principles of self-determination, and group and individual rights. It will pay due regard to economic, social, cultural, community and humanitarian considerations. Although it may work with any international, regional or local Authority, it will retain its independence throughout. Membership will be open to those in all walks of life.

## 2. Aims and Objectives

The Foundation for Endangered Languages exists to support, enable and assist the documentation, protection and promotion of endangered languages. In order to do this, it aims:

- To raise awareness of endangered languages, both inside and outside the communities where they are spoken, through all media;
- To support the use of endangered languages in all contexts: at home, in education, in the media, and in social, cultural and economic life;
- To monitor linguistic policies and practices, and to seek to influence the appropriate authorities where necessary;
- To support the documentation of endangered languages, by offering financial assistance, training, or facilities for the publication of results;
- To collect together and make available information of use in the preservation of endangered languages;
- To disseminate information on all of the above activities as widely as possible.





