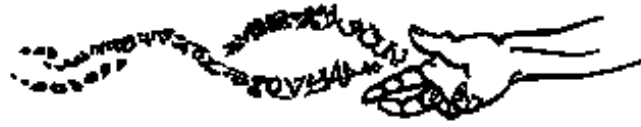
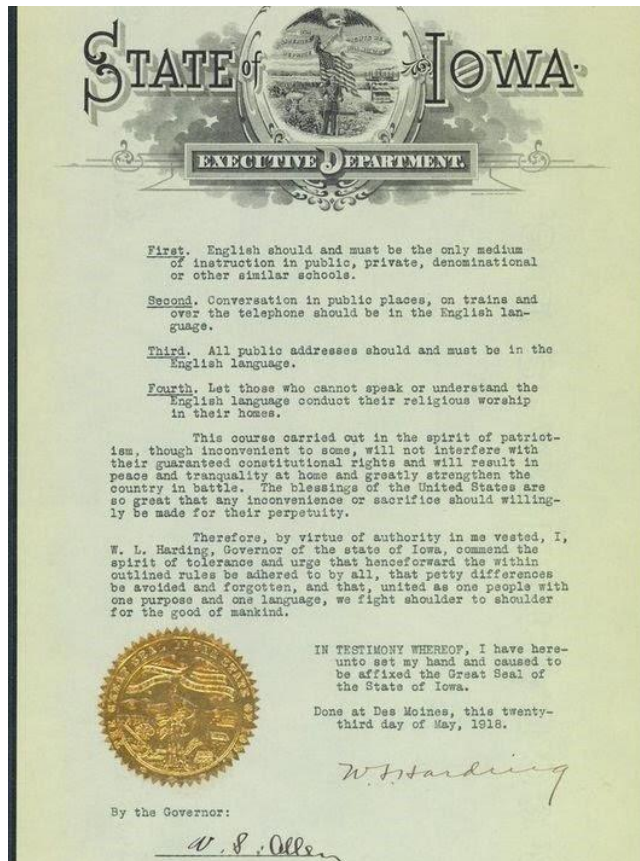
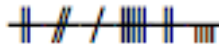


FOUNDATION FOR ENDANGERED LANGUAGES



(UK Registered Charity No 1070616)

OGMIOS



What wartime conditions can do for endangered languages. The Babel Proclamation: Courtesy of Don Stursma and Robert Fowler.

OGMIOS Newsletter 80: — February 2025

ISSN 1471-0382 Editor: Christopher Moseley

OGMIOS Newsletter 80

February 2025

Contact the Editor at:
Christopher Moseley,
9 Westdene Crescent,
Caversham Heights,
Reading RG4 7HD, England
chrmos50 at gmail.com

Assistant Editor: Eda Derhemi
Contributing Editors: Nicholas Ostler, Serena d'Agostino
OGMIOS

appears three times a year, and is the journal of the Foundation for Endangered Languages, available to members either on-line or in hard copy. Contributions are welcome, and can be sent to the Editor, Chris Moseley, at chrmos50@gmail.com. Subscription details can be found on the Foundation's web-site. www.ogmios.org.

Table of Contents

OGMIOS	1
1. Editorial	3
2. Development of the Foundation	3
3. Endangered Languages in the News	4
4. New publications	13
5. Forthcoming events	14

1. Editorial

First of all, apologies for the lateness of this issue, owing to your Editor's ill health as we were about to go to press. On the cover of this issue you see a sobering example of the compromises with linguistic freedom that governments and state authorities have been prepared to make in the past. In this case the decree was made by the Governor of the State of Iowa in the closing months of the First World War. You can only guess what the reasons were for imposing an English-only rule in public life, on the stated grounds of 'patriotism', but you can hazard a guess that it was intended to guard against passing secret messages to the enemy, or causing general mistrust and suspicion. We can't know for sure today whether immigrants or indigenous people were the target of this stern warning – probably both, anybody who couldn't be understood by the majority in a public place.

Iowa in 1918 can be translated into so many other times and places – wherever national unity is being called for by xenophobes and warmongers. I hope that we in the Foundation have our inner antennae attuned to violations of human dignity and diversity – that much-used word – wherever they occur. And I haven't got down off my soapbox yet. More than one article reproduced from the media in this issue makes a reference to the UNESCO *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger of Disappearing* as the arbiter of the level of endangerment of a particular language. If you want to check this resource on-line, you'll be hard-pressed to find it. (It does exist in print too, but UNESCO made little effort to distribute it.) Since 2018 the on-line version of the Atlas has been frozen and not maintained up to date as it had been before. Its planned successor, the *World Atlas of Languages*, seems to have foundered after being announced at the beginning of the current UN Decade of Indigenous Languages. I can only conclude that both Atlases have been stifled by member states of UNESCO that objected to the results of their anti-indigenous policies toward language being highlighted in an international forum.

Objections from them mean that their governments are ashamed. Ashamed and not prepared to do anything about language endangerment in their countries. So the unpalatable facts must be swept under the carpet. I've resisted commenting on this in the pages of *Ogmios* up to now, as it seems like special pleading by the editor of the atlas. But I frequently get inquiries from linguists and researchers wanting access to the Atlas. And it grieves me to have to tell them that that resource is closed.

Chris Moseley

2. Development of the Foundation

FEL XXVIX conference to be held in the Basque country

Plans are afoot to hold our twenty-ninth annual conference in October 2025 in the Basque Country. As we go to press the plans haven't been finalised, but the conference committee is

working on the details with our Basque partners, and the Call for Papers is about to go out. Full details of the conference will be made available on the FEL website www.ogmios.org well before the next issue of this journal comes out.

The Babel Proclamation

With reference to our cover picture in this issue, the following information about the Babel Proclamation by the governor of Iowa in May 1918 comes from Wikipedia:

The **Babel Proclamation** was issued by Iowa's Governor William L. Harding on May 23, 1918. It forbade the speaking of any language besides English in public. The proclamation was controversial, supported by many established English-speaking Iowans and notably opposed by citizens who spoke languages other than English. Harding repealed it on December 4, 1918. The Babel Proclamation marked the peak of a wave of anti-German sentiment in Iowa during World War I.

As America became involved in World War I on the side of the Allies and against Germany, the nation saw a rise in anti-German sentiment. Nativism, which had existed before the war, became increasingly mainstream as a result of American intervention. The state of Iowa saw a particularly large rise in anti-German sentiment. On November 23, 1917, the Iowa State Council for Defense determined that German should not be taught in public schools and took actions to that effect, such as burning German books. Iowa also saw places that had German-related names renamed, such as Germania being renamed to Lakota. Some German-Americans were attacked for speaking their language in public. In 1900 there were 46 German-language newspapers in Iowa; 20 years later there were just 16. The Governor of Iowa, William L. Harding, issued the Babel Proclamation on May 23, 1918. It stated that Iowa schools must teach their courses in English, public conversations had to be in English, addresses in public were to be given in English, and religious services were to be in English. Harding asserted that allowing languages other than English to be spoken "disturbs the peace and quiet of the community" and would lead to "discord among neighbors and citizens." He maintained that all non-English languages could be used to spread German propaganda. He further argued that the proclamation would "save the lives of American boys overseas by curbing sedition at home." Harding stated that the proclamation should be treated as law, although it was accused of violating the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech. He argued that the amendment did not apply to languages other than English.

In response to the mandate, there were several protests, including one led by a priest at St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church on May 30. Scandinavian speakers were not excluded from the discrimination; one Lutheran pastor wrote to his representative in May 1918 complaining that half his congregation would be unable to understand the service if it were not conducted in Norwegian, the language in which he had been preaching for the past 40 years. The next month, Harding stated that "there is no use in anyone wasting his time praying in languages other than English. God is listening only to the English tongue."

However, it was generally popular among English-speaking, well established Iowans. Former US President Theodore Roosevelt publicly supported Harding's decision in a speech given on

May 27, saying "America is a nation—not a polyglot boarding house ... There can be but one loyalty—to the Stars and Stripes; one nationality—the American—and therefore only one language—the English language." Virtually all ethnic minorities who spoke languages other than English opposed the proclamation to some extent. The proclamation was seriously enforced, and many "patriotic organizations" issued fines to violators. The majority of violators were caught when telephone operators listened to conversations for violations received fines after they spoke German over the telephone. They ended up paying \$225, which was donated to the Red Cross. Nebraska issued a similar proclamation. Across the Midwestern United States, 18,000 people eventually faced charges of violating English mandates.

The proclamation became "the major political issue" in Iowa for 1918. *The Des Moines Register* led opposition, publishing several op-eds against the proclamation. A Jewish leader in Des Moines contacted Louis Marshall, then the president of the American Jewish Committee, for advice. Marshall responded that he couldn't "conceive the possibility that the people of any state could be guilty of such an absurdity." However, he advised the Jewish community to avoid publicly going against the proclamation. On June 13 Marshall wrote a letter of protest to Harding.

People debated the proclamation across the state and more generally what it meant to be "American". Some newspapers called English "American", as calling it English would suggest that it was "borrowed, and therefore any European tongue would be as legitimate as English." After World War I ended, Harding repealed the proclamation on December 4, 1918.

A 2018 op-ed published in *The Des Moines Register* called the Babel Proclamation "perhaps the most infamous executive order" in Iowa's history. Several articles have cited the proclamation as an early example of anti-immigrant sentiment. A hearing in the United States House of Representatives in 2006 called the proclamation "the most famous" of several "English-only" restrictions passed around the same time.

And with further reference to the cover picture, some news just to hand:

Trump to make English US's official language for the first time

By Marina Dunbar, from The Guardian (UK), 1 March 2025

Donald Trump is planning to sign an executive order that would make English the official language of the US for the first time.

The order would rescind a federal mandate issued by the former president Bill Clinton that requires agencies and other recipients of federal funding to provide language assistance to non-English speakers, according to the Wall Street Journal. The US has never had a national language at federal level in its almost 250-year history. Given the nation's long record of taking in immigrants from around the world, hundreds of languages are spoken in homes and businesses across the US, and Spanish is especially prevalent.

The move is also the latest in a series of symbolically nationalist executive orders, including one renaming the Gulf of Mexico

the Gulf of America in official government documents and reverting the name of Denali – North America's highest mountain – to Mount McKinley, swapping a Native American name for that of a former US president.

According to the Journal report, a White House summary of the order said the goal of making English the national language was to "promote unity, establish efficiency in the government and provide a pathway to civic engagement".

Agencies would still be allowed to provide documents and services in languages other than English under the order, according to the summary.

The president has previously used anti-multilingual rhetoric as a talking point in his arguments against open borders and immigration in the US.

"We have languages coming into our country. We don't have one instructor in our entire nation that can speak that language," Trump said during the Conservative Political Action Conference last year.

"These are languages – it's the craziest thing – they have languages that nobody in this country has ever heard of. It's a very horrible thing," he added.

Despite Trump and the Republicans spending millions of dollars on the 2024 campaign trail to reach Latin American and Spanish-speaking voters, the Trump administration took down the Spanish-language version of the White House website almost immediately after taking office.

Though the federal government has not recognised an official language until this point, about 30 states have passed laws designating English as the official language.

A few of these states, such as Mississippi and New Hampshire, require their public schools to teach only in English.

3. Endangered Languages in the News

Opinion: New Zealand needs to do more to preserve Pacific languages

By Moana Makapelu Lee, 1news.co.nz, 9 October 2024

Te Karere journalist Moana Makapelu Lee, of Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Kahungunu, Cook Island and Niuean descent, has found a critical shortage of full immersion childcare facilities and *kōhanga reo* in Aotearoa. What does this mean for our endangered Pacific languages?

Last month was Māori Language Month. It was also a month where the Minister of Education cut funding for te reo Māori programmes for teachers by \$30 million.

Erica Stanford's decision to shift that funding towards maths resources in schools followed earlier moves by the Government to discourage te reo Māori usage within its own public service.

It's important to look at these decisions through the lens of the 'Decade of Indigenous Languages' launched by the United Nations in 2022.

Conservative estimates indicate that more than half of all those languages will become extinct by the end of this century. Former President of the UN General Assembly Csaba Korosi said an indigenous language dies every two weeks.

If we look across Aotearoa, Polynesian people, led by Māori and the kōhanga reo movement, are doing their best - often with limited resourcing - to ensure their languages do not become extinct.

From May to November every year, Pasifika communities in New Zealand celebrate their specific languages and their cultural significance.

We often refer to languages as a 'mother tongue' because there is an expectation that you learn them as a child from your mother, but if your mother is busy contributing to the New Zealand workforce, what are the solutions in the face of a language crisis?

As a first-time mum from the kōhanga generation with a pēpē who has Māori, Niuean and Cook Island whakapapa, it feels special to celebrate these language weeks with my two-year-old girl.

But it's not lost on us that while we work incredibly hard to ensure the survival of Māori and Pasifika languages, all our languages are in a state of emergency.

Statistics showing only 9% of the 80,000 Cook Islanders in Aotearoa can speak te reo Māori Kuki Airani are perhaps an example of the urgency of the situation.

When I interviewed Cook Island language advocate Tauraki Rongo last year, he shared his concern that the issue extended beyond Aotearoa.

"In the islands, they haven't done the same survey," he said. "If you've been to Rarotonga, you'll notice that everybody speaks English, especially in Rarotonga."

He was keen for a survey to be conducted in the Cook Islands itself to understand the full picture of the nation's language crisis.

In Aotearoa, limited full immersion language centres and their resourcing for toddlers and pre-schoolers like mine paint a worrying picture for the future of language sustainability. Families that want to pass on their indigenous reo are in a cultural battle of a lifetime.

In Wellington, for example, there are only two Cook Island language kindergartens in the city - Toru Fetu in Porirua and Te Punanga o Te Reo Kuki Airani in Newtown. They promote Cook Island language to the children to encourage and promote identity.

Given the large Cook Island population in the region, it's no surprise both are in high demand with an overwhelming waiting list.

Clearly more resources are urgently needed, given there is also a critical shortage of ECE and kindergarten staff across the country in general.

The 42 kōhanga reo within the Wellington region have a two-year waiting list on average. Nationwide, the pressures on kōhanga reo are counterproductive to the urgency that is required for the retention of the language.

Upon these waiting lists sit the aspirations of parents and the cultural security they want for their children. With every kupu learned and spoken, like all native peoples, we behold an act of tino rangatiratanga.

Living examples of this are the new Māori Queen, Nga wai hono i te po, a product of the kōhanga reo movement standing ready because of her rich understanding of mātauranga Māori.

Likewise, another graduate of the kōhanga movement hailing from Tainui, Hana-Rāwhiti Maipi-Clarke, entered Parliament with a confidence that can only come from being culturally strong in the knowledge of her people and their language. Given the proven success manifested by these women, it is frustrating that waiting lists can be so long that by the time those on them get to the top of the list, they are ready to begin primary school.

For example, a kōhanga reo I visited in Tītahi Bay last year had a waiting list of 47 pēpē. According to its head kaiako, Hine Hori, many māmā were still hapū when they enrolled their pēpē and three years later, were still waiting for a spot. It's usually a pre-requisite for kura kaupapa Māori for students to have attended kōhanga, too, so waiting list pressures can be a double whammy.

At the same time, there are critical staff shortages within kōhanga, something Hori said had come about due to long-term under-resourcing.

Last year, the then-Labour government increased staff pay by 30%, the first investment in decades.

Previously the average pay for a kaiako kōhanga reo was \$44,000. Under the new rate, a full-time kaiako starts on \$59,358, which former Associate Education Minister Kelvin Davis hoped would help attract more kaiako to the role.

But it's going to take more than increasing kaiako pay scales to win this battle, with more resourcing required.

Whether it's New Zealand Māori, New Zealand-based Niuean, Tokelau or Cook Island Māori, these groups are ready to do what they can to save their language.

In 2022, Māngere's Favona School made history by opening the first ever Vagahau Niue Bilingual Unit.

Niue is made up of just over 1800 people according to their latest census, but 70% of the Niue speaking population live in Aotearoa. Of the humble 30,000 tagata Niue living in Aotearoa, only 3600 can speak their native language. Vagahau Niue has been classified as "definitely endangered" by UNESCO.

As Māori, it is a given that we are tangata whenua and under Te Tiriti have rights for the protection of our taonga, including our language - even if colonisation did very nearly wipe it out. For Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau, they are part of the realm of New Zealand and New Zealand citizens at birth.

Generations of Pasifika communities have given their lives to Aotearoa, including fighting in two world wars. Decades of Pacific Island people have been imported to increase New Zealand's work force. As New Zealanders, we enjoy our Pacific neighbours for holidays and a quick cultural get away.

Is it not our responsibility to safeguard the unique languages of our Pacific kin, too?

New Zealand should heed the call of the UN to save languages from extinction by taking responsibility and resourcing these Pasifika languages.

Our education system and communities would benefit from offering relevant models for New Zealand-born Pasifika youth with dedicated full-immersion language schools.

We know that Māori students in Māori institutions have higher NCEA pass rates than Māori students within main-

stream schooling. It's reasonable to assume that the opportunity for access to similar educational models will produce the same positive outcomes for Pasifika.

Funding for Pasifika languages should be prioritised alongside English, while we think innovatively about the formation of establishments like kura and wharekura for Pacific Islanders in Aotearoa, with each school set in the foundation of the values of those islands to guide their way of teaching and learning of indigenous knowledge. Future generations of Aotearoa-born Pasifika could continue to learn, with no whati [fracture] of their language and culture.

Reading the runes: Could Swedish 'dialect' be an ancient language?

By Miranda Bryant, from the Guardian (UK), 4 November 2024

It is a distinct language that has survived against the odds for centuries in a tiny pocket of central Sweden, where just 2,500 people speak it today. And yet, despite bearing little resemblance to Swedish, Elfdalian is considered to be only a dialect of the country's dominant language.

Now researchers say they have uncovered groundbreaking information about the roots of Elfdalian that they hope could bolster its standing and help it acquire official recognition as a minority language.

Elfdalian is traditionally spoken in a small area, known as Älvdalen in Swedish and Övdain in Elfdalian, which is part of the region of Dalarna. But using linguistic and archaeological data including runes, Elfdalian experts have tracked the language back to the last phase of ancient Nordic – spoken across Scandinavia between the sixth and eighth centuries.

They believe it was imported to hunter-gatherers in the Swedish region of Dalarna from farmers based in the region of Uppland, which became an international base for trade, who started adopting the language. At the time, the hunter-gatherers of Dalarna spoke language referred to by linguists as "paleo north Scandinavian."

Yair Sapir, the co-author of a new book on Elfdalian grammar, the first to be published in English, said: "There is research that compares the distance between Elfdalian vocabulary and it shows the distance is as large [between Swedish and Elfdalian] as between Swedish and Icelandic. So there is higher mutual intelligibility between speakers of Swedish, Norwegian Danish than between Swedish and Elfdalian"

Until around 1400, as a trade and transit area, the region was influenced linguistically and culturally by Norway and other parts of Sweden. But when the Kalmar Union was established and trade patterns dramatically changed, innovations in the language suddenly stopped.

It was not until about 1900, with the arrival of schools, industrialisation and urbanisation, bringing with it a strong Swedish influence, that the language started to change again. This, in effect, said Sapir, made it "a medieval language that survived up to modern times."

While runes had become obsolete in most of Sweden as early as the 14th century, there is evidence of their use in Älvdalen as late as 1909, making in the last place in the world where they were used.

The legacy of Sweden's empire, which during the 17th and 18th centuries ruled over much of the Baltic region, is visible in attitudes to Swedish minority languages and dialects today, he said, citing the principles of nationalism and Göticism, which connected the idea of being a strong nation state with a strong uniform language. As a result of such attitudes, there has historically been shame about speaking the language, but in recent years there has been a sense of pride. Efforts by speakers to preserve and revitalise the language have resulted in more people learning it, standardisation, more teaching in schools, research and Elfdalian children's literature.

About half of the former parish of Älvdalen's approximately 5,000 residents speak the language and many others have knowledge of it, meaning it is often heard in the local supermarket, he added. But as the influence of Swedish on it grows even stronger, weakening the structure of the language and replacing Elfdalian words, greater protection is needed.

Bringing back some of the linguistic features of the pre-1900 version, known as Late Classical Elfdalian, is helping native speakers to reclaim the language and allow new speakers in, argue Sapir and his co-author Olof Lundgren, in their book *A Grammar of Elfdalian*.

But it would benefit even more from official recognition as a language, they write. "If Elfdalian is recognised as a minority or regional language in Sweden, the number of speakers is likely to increase, and likewise the general level of Elfdalian language skills."

(See also the announcement of 'A Grammar of Elfdalian' in the New Publications section)

Sámi languages at risk of extinction over cuts to funding, say speakers

By Miranda Bryant, from the Guardian (UK), 21 October 2024

The Indigenous parliaments of Sweden, Finland and Norway have warned that some Sámi languages could disappear if Stockholm and Helsinki press ahead with plans to withdraw funding that could hit a critical preservation body.

Sámi Giellagáldu was created to safeguard and strengthen the use of the nine Sámi languages across the Nordics, including North Sámi, which is spoken by an estimated 20,000 people across Norway, Sweden and Finland and classified by UNESCO as endangered, and the much smaller Pite Sámi and Ute Sámi, which have fewer than 50 speakers each. There are 80,000 to 100,000 Sámi people in northern Europe.

But just two years after Sámi Giellagáldu was made a permanent institution, the Swedish and Finnish governments have announced cuts.

Mika Saijets, the director general of Sámi Giellagáldu, described it as a regressive step that would take the region "50 years backward" and accused the governments of "cutting the heart out of the language."

He added: "It's a big risk that some of these languages will disappear. All Sámi languages are defined as threatened or critically threatened according to UNESCO."

Sweden is to cut 5,000,000 Swedish kronor (£365,000) a year for the organisation – a contribution that it says was always a "temporary investment" – and the Finnish government is understood to be cutting 193,000 euros (£160,000) of 5targeted

funding to the Sámi parliament of Finland, forcing it to reconsider allocation of funds.

Saijets said that if the funding is cut as planned, the organisation would not survive beyond a year. The cuts were proposed as truth and reconciliation commissions by governments across the region have pledged to uncover and respond to historical systemic discrimination – including church and state-run assimilation policies that separated children from their parents and stopped many from learning the language, with some suffering violence and mistreatment.

The cuts also hit two years in to the UN's International Decade of Indigenous Languages. The Nordic Council of Ministers was due to meet in Reykjavik this week to discuss cooperation across the region.

Silje Karine Muotka and Pirita Näkkäljärvi, the presidents of the Sámi parliaments in Norway and Finland, and Håkan Jansson, the chair of the board of the Sámi parliament in Sweden, said in a joint statement: "The three Nordic countries have a great responsibility towards the Sámi-speaking population and the nine different Sámi languages.

"Funds that have previously been earmarked to support language standardisation have been removed, thereby jeopardising the basis for all language work and for common Nordic language efforts."

The Swedish government has said Sámi Giellagáldu's future is the Sámi parliament's responsibility. "The Sámi parliament has had during 2022-2024 a temporary increase in funds for Sámi Giellagáldu," said the Swedish minister for culture, Parisa Liljestränd.

"It has always been clear that it was a temporary investment, and when it now ends, the Sámi parliament can, within the framework of the allocation of funds decided by the government in regulatory letters, decide on possible continued funding of Sámi Giellagáldu."

The Finnish government did not respond to a request for comment.

Lotta Jalava, of the Institute for the Languages of Finland, said: "The continuity of all Sámi languages for future generations and the support of their vitality requires, among other things, people proficient in Sámi languages working in various professions, Sámi-language translations of official texts, and translators."

News from Wikitongues: Mother-tongue Wikipedias in Nigeria

From Wikitongues.org, 27 December 2024

Agnes Ajuma Abah joined the 2023-2024 cohort of Wikitongues Fellows to safeguard the Igala language of Nigeria. She brought Igala online by building a mother-tongue version of Wikipedia – not a translation of the English Wikipedia, but an original Igala Wikipedia made up of articles about her culture's historical knowledge.

The Internet can make it easier to share vulnerable languages, so Wikipedia is a big step for the Igala community. It's also a big step for everyone. In time, Igala language articles will be translated into other languages like English, Spanish and Mandarin, making Igala knowledge accessible worldwide.

From Igbo to Angika: how to save the world's 3,000 endangered languages

By Kaamil Ahmed, from the Guardian (UK), 7 January 2025

Every year, the world loses some of its 7,000 languages. Parents stop speaking them to their children, words are forgotten and communities lose the ability to read their own scripts. The rate of loss is quickening, from one every three months a decade ago to one every 40 days in 2019 – meaning nine languages die a year.

The UN's culture agency, UNESCO, says predictions that half the world's languages will have died out by the end of the century are optimistic.

Some languages are disappearing with their last speakers, but thousands are endangered because they are not being spoken widely enough or are not being used in formal settings such as schools or workplaces.

A quiet fightback is under way in communities that feel their traditions are drowned out by the dominance of the most spoken languages globally, such as English, or by the official languages of their country.

Tochi Precious, a Nigerian living in Abuja who helps endangered language activists, says: "It pains my heart every day to see that a language is dying off, because it's not just about the language, it's also about the people.

"It's also about the history associated with it and the culture. When it dies, everything linked to it dies off too."

Precious says it was the community aspect that brought her to join efforts to save Igbo, a West African language that was predicted to become extinct by 2025. Ensuring there is a substantial record of words and meanings, how it is written and how it is used is key, according to campaigners such as Precious, who help others protect their languages through the organisation Wikitongues.

Amrit Sufi, who speaks the Angika language of India's eastern state of Bihar, records videos to preserve its very oral culture, providing transcriptions and translations. "Documenting the folk songs was my way into getting to know my culture and doing my bit for it," says Sufi, who has recorded dozens of such videos.

"It is urgent to document and to make it accessible where other people can see it – not just archived somewhere in a library," she says. "Oral culture is disappearing as new generations are more inclined towards consuming industry-produced music rather than sitting in groups and singing."

Sufi says that while Angika has about 7 million speakers, it is not used in schools and is rarely written down, which is accelerating its downfall. Some people are ashamed to speak it because of a perceived stigma attached to it, seeing Angika as inferior to dominant languages such as Hindi.

Sufi uses the same set of tools that Precious used for Igbo to upload videos of people speaking Angika. Wikipedia is favoured by language activists as a good way to upload media and build effective and affordable dictionaries.

Wikitongues, in particular, focuses on helping activists document languages using collective resources such as dictionaries and alternative-language Wikipedia entries. Wikitongues says it has supported activists to document about 700 languages in this way.

There are moves to use artificial intelligence to document languages by processing texts and feeding them into chatbots, though some have ethical concerns around these services “stealing” written material for training purposes.

Many language activists also create books, videos and recordings that can be widely shared. Community radio stations also have a long record of providing services in local languages.

For the Rohingya people from Myanmar, who now mostly live as refugees in Bangladesh after decades of persecution, concerns about their mostly oral language being lost because of their dispersal abroad have led to attempts to develop a written version.

Books written in the recently developed Hanifi script have now been distributed to more than 500 schools within the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh, which host more than a million people.

Sahat Zia Hero, who works with the Rohingya Cultural Memory Centre, says: “Using books translated into Rohingya language, as well as historical, political and educational books published in our Rohingya language, can significantly speed up the process of educating our community.

“If we prioritise teaching our language, especially to the younger generation, we can prevent the loss of both education and cultural identity for future generations. Otherwise, they will face the dual threat of losing their language and access to meaningful education.”

The museum provides a physical space for Rohingya culture. There are also efforts to use the script on social media, where most Rohingya write their language using Roman or Burmese lettering.

But after preservation, activists then have to persuade people to use a language – a major challenge.

Precious says that even though Igbo is one of Nigeria’s largest languages, many parents believe only English is useful for a child’s future.

“Parents saw that if you do not speak English you do not belong, you’re not part of the society, and it feels like you don’t know anything. So, no one was passing down the language any more – they used to say you’re not going anywhere with Igbo,” she says.

But efforts to save it have worked, she says, adding that it gives her pleasure to see the language thriving again.

“I have realised that, yes, a language can be endangered but then the people who speak the language can also fight for its survival. Because 2025 is already here, and definitely Igbo is not going extinct,” she says.

Growing a ‘word forest’: the Kenyan teacher trying to save her language from extinction

By Gioia Shah, from the Guardian (UK), 1 October 2024

The Yaaku people long ago assimilated with the majority Maasai, and few still speak Yaakunte, but there is a new determination to save their culture – and their forest – before it disappears.

In a community centre made of glass bottles, Juliana Loshiro stands before her pupils, a group of village elders. Sitting in a semi-circle, they listen and repeat simple words and greetings in Yaakunte (also called Yaaku), the language of their tribe.

Though it might seem strange that even older people cannot speak the language, one of the pupils stands up and explains why he is in the class: his grandparents died before they could teach him Yaakunte, he says, and his mother, a Maasai, did not know the language. “So we got lost.”

Loshiro, 28, is one of the few Yaaku people of northern Kenya who speak Yaakunte fluently – and, along with one of her sisters, the only young Yaaku. In the UNESCO World Atlas of Languages, the United Nations lists the language as “severely endangered”, with only nine speakers. In 2010, UNESCO declared Yaakunte to be extinct. But Loshiro is determined to give the language – and her culture – a future.

At the community centre in Kuri Kuri, a village in Kenya’s Laikipia county, Loshiro teaches about 300 students, both elders and children, twice a week. But the lessons are about more than just saving a language, they are about preserving the Yaakunte culture too.

The dense Mukogodo Forest, one of the largest in east Africa, is the traditional home of the Yaaku. Originally hunter-gatherers, they looked after the 300 sq km (74,000-acre) forest, using it for hunting, rituals and to collect plants and honey.

“If we lost the language, we have lost the culture, we have lost the forest,” she says.

Loshiro, a mother of a one-year old boy, believes that by saving the language she is also safeguarding the knowledge it holds about the flora and fauna of the forest, empowering future Yaaku to protect it. “We are teaching our kids and passing our traditional knowledge to new generations,” she says.

Every week, she takes her students to the forest to plant indigenous trees such as wild olive or cedar. So far they have planted 10,000 seedlings and distributed 50,000 seedballs.

They then tag trees with labels that have words in Yaakunte and English. Loshiro calls it a word forest. “As the trees grow,” she says, “the language grows.”

Today Mukogodo is managed by the Yaaku community rather than the Kenya Forest Service (KFS), which looks after most of the country’s wooded areas.

As conservation efforts around the world increasingly recognise, Indigenous knowledge can be crucial in protecting ecosystems and fighting the climate crisis. The Indigenous management of the Mukogodo forest has proved successful: the numbers and diversity of wildlife and tree cover, as well as the capacity of the water catchment, have all improved, the KFS reports.

Loshiro learned Yaakunte from her grandfather, Stephen Leriman, who raised her from the age of seven after her parents died. Every day he taught her 10 new words, and if she could not repeat them the next day, she was punished.

“There was a time I forgot three words and I slept without eating,” she remembers.

Changes in the 20th century pushed Yaakunte to the brink of extinction. The Yaaku lived alongside the Maasai, a pastoral community who looked down on the hunter-gatherers for not having livestock. According to UNESCO, when Yaaku girls began marrying their neighbouring pastoralists, and parents received livestock as bride-wealth, Yaaku fathers began to demand cattle rather than just beehives as had been the Yaaku custom.

“The temptation to identify with pastoralists was stronger,” says Kenneth Ngure, a linguist at Kenyatta University. The Yaaku gradually assimilated into the Maasai, and gave up their language for Maa.

Kenya has about 45 ethnic communities and 70 languages, and Ngure estimates that up to seven languages were lost in the 20th century.

He is sceptical that the language can be revived through a few dedicated Yaakunte teachers, but in recent years the Yaaku have developed a renewed sense of pride in their identity.

The Yaaku teacher Manasseh Rux Ole Matunge – who has spent three decades recording information on Yaakunte, teaching and advocating for its preservation – believes “the new movement” that Loshiro is spearheading has a chance of reviving the language.

Loshiro is working on other ways to preserve Yaakunte, including building a website and app to digitise the language and make learning easier; creating an archive of audio recordings of Yaakunte words, phrases and stories; and working on a curriculum for primary schools.

Her aim is to enrol about 40 children a year into her language programme; she hopes they will be fluent in Yaakunte after five years of classes.

“My goal is that by the end of the day, the language is spoken [and] that my kids also – apart from language – know their culture.”

Fighting for a language – and saving a people

By Leyland Cecco, from the Guardian (UK), 22 January 2025

Centuries ago, the music of the Hilzaqv language echoed across a territory of deep fjords, rugged islands, windswept beaches and thick forests. And then, for more than a century, the lands now in the western reaches of Canada fell quiet.

Wars with neighbouring nations, disease and violent assimilation by colonial governments brought the people and their language to the brink of extinction. The once-thriving population plunged from more than 40,000 to fewer than 200 people.

Today, nearly 4,000 live in the region. But only seven fluent speakers remain.

“Hilzaqv is a deeply relational and nuanced language. It teaches us so much about how to relate to each other. It teaches us to relate to the land. It speaks to an entire context [of] how to exist in our homelands,” said Jess Hausti, a poet and member of the Heiltsuk Nation. “If that is lost, we no longer have our guiding signpost. The loss would be profound.”

The Heiltsuk’s experience of the collapse of their language has left them grappling with a profound and complex grief. And

yet in the coastal community, nestled against the mountains, there is a buoyant sense of hope.

Before the creation of what is now Canada on more than 3.8 million square miles of North America, 58 distinct Indigenous languages were spoken throughout the lands.

Decades of hostile government policies, including the forcible removal of Indigenous children from their families, and a system of residential schools that attempted to kill off the culture of Indigenous peoples, stripped many of their language.

Today, Cree, Anishinaabemowin and Inuktitut still have a relatively large number of speakers, but other tongues are on the brink of extinction: shashishalh (the Sechelt language) has just two native speakers. On the archipelago of Haida Gwaii, the youngest native speaker of Xaat Kil is in her seventies.

Sol Mamakwa, a member of the legislative assembly of Ontario, attended residential school in his youth and was punished for speaking his mother tongue in school, a language that captured his people's intimate relationship with the lands, the animals and seasons.

"That's where you learn the language. Along the banks of the river, your parents teaching out the names [of] fish, or plants and the history of those names. You don't learn it in the four walls of a classroom."

Last year, he became the first provincial lawmaker to stand in the cavernous legislature in Toronto and give a speech in Anishininimowin. More than 100 guests attended, many of them flown in from the scattering of geographically remote communities he represents.

"For community leaders who were there, it was very emotional for them. They had tears in their eyes – not because of what I said but because they were hearing their language in a place where it was never supposed to be spoken," he said.

The colonial apparatus that tore children from their families and sought to kill off culture and language has been gradually dismantled. But Mamakwa, who has experienced the gradual erosion of his own fluency while living in Toronto, has focused his attention on the remaining systems that erode the ability to speak the first languages of the land.

Of the 31 municipalities he represents, 24 are fly-in communities. Because not all of them have high schools, students are moved hundreds of miles to larger cities to study. "They're brought away from their families, away from their land, and away from hunting and fishing," said Mamakwa. "And so the loss continues on. It takes different forms. But it continues."

In Bella Bella, the largest community on the territory of the Heiltsuk, efforts to halt the loss of fluent speakers have taken on a renewed intensity. The motivation comes both a fluent

speakers die and the culture experiences a deep and transformative revival.

For Hausti, Hilzaqv was the soundtrack to every interaction on the land. "It was the background to being out on the boat, harvesting berries, picking seaweed, and processing that food, together, as a family," they said. "I'm still in the really early stages of my own learning journey to reconnect with the language, but I can still hear the music, their words; I can hear the depth of feeling they had."

Hausti is a member of the first generation in which no family was taken away to residential school.

"Culture is being normalised for kids in a much deeper way now than it ever was before," said Hausti, who remembers potlatch ceremonies held in school gyms.

"Now, kids don't know anything but to see the potlatch [in] or Big House. It gives me so much joy and hope that there are kids growing up who have no concept that it was ever different, that our culture was ever at the margins. They're growing up only with the knowledge that in this moment, it's in the centre."

New resources have been poured into preservation and education, including compiling vast amounts of information from the current fluent speakers.

Social media are having a transformative effect, stemming losses and in some cases reversing declines. A recent feature in the *Walrus* magazine points to the success of the Squamish speaking people to preserve their language. In 2010, there were only 10 fluent speakers. But the effects of immersion programmes for adults, infants and toddlers, as well as on-line lessons have led to more than 100 people being able to speak the language.

"You never want to lose the body of knowledge and language that you had as a people. But our language is also growing. There are words emerging and concepts emerging that are being captured in our language, that are new, to reflect the new reality we live in, and the new way that we live and work and be together," said Hausti. "Language is not monolithic. It's something that's always evolving."

That evolution, combined with efforts to catalogue and preserve the accrued knowledge of the region's remaining fluent speakers, has left the Heiltsuk with a set of tools and resources that might not have been available decades ago.

"It's hard and terrifying to lose fluent speakers. And yet I just have so much hope that there are so many new speakers who are taking up that work in a really deep, meaningful way. They're making it their life's work. The language will change. It's changing now. But there will always be people carrying it," said Hausti.

"Because of the community's efforts, there are babies today whose first words, the first sounds they experience, are Hilzaqv. That's something beautiful and worth fighting for."

Barriers to usage: expectations of "correctness" and historical taboos in the Seediq community of Taiwan

By Stanisław Pstrokoński, Panglot Laboratories

At Panglot Labs we have been working on an app for learning the Seediq language, an indigenous Formosan language of Taiwan. Last time when I was visiting the Seediq community with one of our linguists, he asked them a pertinent question: "What is the most difficult thing about learning Seediq?" We expected an answer in terms of linguistic features such as grammar or pronunciation, but instead got into a fascinating conversation about something completely different. "Home language is direct," said Bakan, the head of the Seediq Language Promotion Centre, daughter of Walis Perin, former Taiwanese legislator representing the indigenous people of Taiwan. "When we speak to others, we are concerned about how others will receive the language that we speak. Will they be offended? Will they understand? Will we make a mistake? Will they try to correct us?" "There are two things really," said Pitay, a young woman with traditional facial tattoos clearly marking her ethnic identity. "Firstly, I'm worried that I will offend the person I'm speaking with by saying something wrong. But I'm also worried that I say something correctly, and then they try to correct me even though I didn't say anything wrong, and then I'm offended by them trying to correct me!" Bakan explained how this results in a reduction in the willingness to use the language. "When old people correct you, it's ok, there's no offence there. It feels good when communication is correct and you feel like you have gotten it right. It feels good to understand each other and be able to answer questions. The bad thing is when you haven't communicated anything yet, and the other person has already interrupted you to correct your language." What could have led to such a situation, where people are afraid to speak because of the possibility of mutual offence due to "correction"? Bakan continues: "Previously, people didn't correct each other. People of different dialects would naturally speak with each other without being particularly bothered by dialectal differences. Now people do correct each other, because the dialects and their differences are more clearly defined." After Taiwan became a democracy in the early 1990s, previous repressive attitudes to minority languages, including those of indigenous people, started to be turned around. Now, thirty years later, there are sixteen recognised indigenous nations, each with their own language, and 42 dialects in all. The Council of Indigenous Peoples has a special division devoted to promotion and revitalisation of indigenous languages, which is where Pitay and Bakan work; now there is one hour per week of mandated "mother language education" at schools, with children of different backgrounds choosing their ethnic language or a minority Sinitic language (Hokkien or Hakka) as appropriate. According to Bakan, while

"mother language education" and the development of the language education department of the Council of Indigenous Peoples has overall been a very good thing, there has been an unexpected negative effect in the form of people becoming very particular about "correct" language, leading to awkwardness. As Pitay put it, "You end up spending a lot of time thinking whether you should say something in your ethnic language or not." Mainstream Taiwanese culture is generally quite high in social pressure, as many Confucian cultures tend to be, and Formosan cultures such as the Seediq are known and appreciated for having a more laid-back approach to life in general, but in some regards Seediq culture can also feel tense. Bakan added: "Any family misunderstanding means you need to kill a pig or a chicken as a kind of sacrifice to clear the air... or in the past, a person," referring to the phenomenon of head-hunting that existed prior to the Japanese occupation in the early 20th century. Pitay: "You need to be careful when speaking, and you feel restricted, even with other young people. When misunderstandings happen and it feels awkward, you stop communicating, stop talking, or use shorter sentences." There are other layers to this issue. Both Bakan and Pitay said that there are a lot of historical issues that have not been "cleaned up". According to Pitay, "Lots of things have become taboo. There are some things that have not been discussed to everyone's satisfaction*. There are taboos about all kinds of things, for example about the Musha Incident (a Seediq-specific uprising against the Japanese in 1930 which resulted in some Seediq fighting other Seediq on the side of the Japanese)." Bakan: "Chat GPT is pretty terrible (at Seediq) and gets stuff wrong, but at least it's polite!" However, a third person who was listening to our conversation explained how she had had a positive experience with the language so far. Lin, another young woman at the language promotion centre, said that she is grateful for her mother's attitude to the learning process. "At first I wasn't interested in the language, but my mum was always so patient in explaining everything to me, including all of the sounds and everything... That being said, at school we did study all three dialects of Seediq, and we would be chastised when we didn't get things right. It was a very different experience." When asked what can be done to help the situation, the three women couldn't think of a solution to the pervasive awkwardness they described, but did provide several suggestions pertaining to language learning and contexts of language usage. They want patient teachers, and for the older generation to explain the importance of the language. They want to know that others are also studying the language, to make them feel less alone in their predicament. But most fundamentally, they want to have a feeling of safety during their study, so that they feel that regardless of how they learn, they will not be chastised. And ultimately, they want the chance to share with the older generation, and to talk about how to continue their traditions. *Pitay uses the term 沒有講完 "not been fully spoken / discussed", which is hard to translate. It indicates that people haven't gotten things off their chests, or that there are still latent disagreements.

The World's Last Aramaic Speaking Ethnic Community: A Translation and Archival Exhibit Project

By Eden Naby

Thanks to the efforts of FEL, in 2007, at the Kuala Lumpur conference, a resolution was drafted and adopted recognizing Aramaic, the oldest continuously written and spoken language alphabet of the world, as an endangered language. That resolution offered morale support for the globally scattered Assyrian community to look for and find ways to bolster the continuity of the language.

Creating conditions for continuity were adversely affected when the rise of the Islamic Caliphate from a fringe Islamic extremist movement related to Al Qaeda established territorial control in northeast Syria. Between 1914 and 1916 ISIL fighters overran the Khabur river valley where Assyrians had established 35 villages during the French Mandate of Syria, and spilled over into western Iraq devastating many centuries old Assyrian and Yezidi communities. Unforgettable are the images of ISIL zealots taking sledgehammers and power tools to ancient Assyrian palaces excavated during the 19th century. This ISIL period led to further flight of Christians from their ancient villages such that less than one-third of the pre-ISIL population remains. Schools that had been laboriously established to teach standard vernacular Aramaic by the diaspora community suffered destruction that is only now being repaired.

But this was not the first time these last Aramaic speakers have had to scatter across the globe in recent history.

During the 19th and 20th centuries they had left the Urmia region of northwest Iran, and the eastern part of the Ottoman Empire for Tsarist Russia. They had hoped to escape the regular persecution and attack in Muslim areas where, as Christians, their Dhimmi status gave them little chance of cultural or economic advancement. In Tsarist Russia, despite the autocratic nature of that empire, many succeeded on both the economic and cultural fronts: they settled in close communities, established churches and schools and named several of their new locations after the towns and villages they had left.

Then came the Russian Revolution, the Russian Civil War, and the Bolshevik victory that preserved the geographic borders of the Tsarist state by creating "nationalities" of the various ethnic groups colonized by the Tsars. And in the wake of this broad cultural policy, the Aramaic language succeeded as never before: schools, newspapers, cultural organizations flourished – for a time.

Little of this history has been documented or known – largely because of the Cold War and the Iron Curtain that separated Assyrians in the Middle East and those in western diaspora

from the Assyrians in the Russian sphere. One man however, has documented, diligently, this history up to 1953. And it is now possible to make the history known by translating the third, expanded Russian language edition of his book into English, a language from which, it is hoped, other translations can be published as needed, possibly into Arabic and German.

The project to produce an English language edition of Archmandrite Stefan Sado's book, *Materialy k biograficheskomu slovariu assirijtsev v Rossii: XIX-seredina XX veka* [Materials for the biographical dictionary of Assyrians in Russia: XIX – the middle of the XX centuries], from the 2021 edition is being undertaken with the help of several persons, among them Vasili Shoumanov, trained at the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences, and Dr. Anahit Khosroeva, a researcher at the Institute of History in the Republic of Armenia.

Sado documents the lives of 553 men and (some) women who took active roles in the Assyrian community as teachers, school superintendents, newspaper editors and other cultural, political or military roles. For over 100 such individuals, life ended with a bullet in the head after a sham Stalinist purge related trial, or under the freezing, disease and starvation plagued Siberian penal colonies. The promise of cultural advancement that the Soviet nationality policy held for these Aramaic speakers was short-lived. But they persisted in running schools, creating cultural organizations that helped maintain the language and finally, after the 1990 dissolution of the Soviet Union, they began to bridge the political divide and meet their co-ethnics scattered in the West and the Middle East.

Perhaps to compensate for the reduction of schools in places like Iran and Syria, some schools are appearing in immigrant locales like Sydney and Chicago where Assyrian Aramaic has been accepted in two high schools as a world cultural language and is part of a four year language curriculum. The history that Stefan Sado documents so meticulously is an example of how important archival preservation and research can be to the lifting of language and culture from a political abyss.

Below is a sample of one of the entries in this book seeking funding for finalizing it for publication:

Sarkisova, Sophia (Sonya) Mikhailovna (Babaeva), Urmia Region. She was born in 1911 and until 1930, she lived in Armavir. She graduated from the Assyrian school in Armavir and from 1930 on she lived in Moscow. During 1932-1935 she was the head of Housing Association No. 3 located at 3rd Samotekny Lane in Moscow. In 1935-1937 she worked as a controller in the Truzhenik Artel. In 1937-1938, she worked in the Assyrian section of school book publishing house Uchpedgiz. Her husband Georgy Sarkisov was arrested in Moscow on March 23, 1937. And Sophia also was tried and sentenced to eight years in a labor camp as a "family member of national traitors". She was released from the camp in March 1946, and rehabilitated in 1956. Following her release, she returned to Moscow and passed away in 1986.

4. New publications

All in the same canoe

Koe: An Aotearoa ecopoetry anthology. 316 pages. Otago University Press (New Zealand). Janet Newman & Robert Sullivan, editors. NZ\$50, £24.

Review by C.K. Stead, from the Times Literary Supplement, 18 October 2024

A “koe” is a cry or a shriek. It can be, for example, the cry of a kiwi from the bush. Māori names for birds are often homonyms for the sounds they make. So “kiwi” is not unlike that bird’s “koe”. In a long poem included in *Koe: An Aotearoa ecopoetry anthology*, the great nineteenth-century warrior chief Te Kooti has the bush wren, the “matuhituhi”, pronouncing itself to call for “hui” – a meeting of the people, a gathering. In the English translation it is a call to “unite, bond together”. This is a frequent call to a tribal society, not always answered or welcome, but one recently repeated and urged on Māori during the “tangihanga” (funeral rites) of the Māori king, Tuheitia, and the coronation of his daughter.

“Koe” can also mean “you”. This collection of eco-poetry is a call to you or to us – from the bush, the hills, the waterways – that means to alert us to the harm that has been done and is happening now. New Zealand’s (conservative coalition) government has chosen to reverse the previous (Labour) government’s ban on mining and oil exploration, which makes the implications of the book under review more topical than its makers can have anticipated. Poets in New Zealand in the nineteenth century often lamented the destruction of beautiful native bush to make way for farmland, as in the final stanza of “The Passing of the Forest” by William Pember Reeves:

The axe bites deep. The rushing fire streams bright;
Swift, beautiful and fierce it speeds for Man,
Nature’s rough-handed foeman keen to smite
And mar the loveliness of ages. Scan
The blackened forest ruined in a night,
The silver Parthenon that God will plan
But builds not twice. Ah, bitter price to pay
For Man’s dominion – beauty swept away.

More recently this has been viewed globally, in terms of climate change and the huge amount science is teaching us about the effect we have on our world.

Eco-poetry concerns itself with nature, the environment, its protection and preservation, and its relation to human psychology and health. In New Zealand, English-language poetry of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was often influenced by the spirit of Wordsworth. The flora and fauna and the landforms were different, of course, and there were no Tintern Abbeys. But as Romantic attachment to landscape has been at times an instrument of English nationalism, so it was of New Zealand nationalism. Twentieth-century poets such as Allen

Curnow, A. R. D. Fairburn, Denis Glover and James K. Baxter wanted severance from British colonial identity. Of that strong quartet, who wrote some of the finest poems in the country’s short literary history, only Baxter considered the Māori population an important part of the national equation and included that consciousness in his poems.

Because pre-European Māori had no written language, and because of the depredations of colonialism, including the fact that the use of Māori spoken language was discouraged and even suppressed by both Māori and Pākehā leaders (in the interest of advancing English), there is a middle period in New Zealand’s history when Māori seem less vividly present. Many of their most notable writers (Hone Tuwhare, Witi Ihimaera, Patricia Grace, Keri Hulme, the Māori editor of this volume, Robert Sullivan, and even the just-deceased king, Tuheitia) grew up with English as their first language and without Māori. All that has changed in the past four or five decades, owing to what has been called “the Māori renaissance” and to the reassertion of their language, so that even people like myself, who were familiar with it only as place names, names of birds, fish and trees, and a few useful words and phrases – Pākehā (European New Zealander), “kia ora”, “tēnā koe” (greetings) “ka pai” (very good), “waka” (canoe), “kai moana” (seafood), “aroha” (love), “mana” (prestige, pride) and so on – find it creeping more and more into our daily vocabulary. This has been encouraged, even enforced, by government departments renaming themselves in “Māori” words invented or misapplied for the purpose – the transport department has become Waka Kotahi, which, literally translated, would mean roughly that we are all in the same canoe. For the moment, however, New Zealand’s significant literary writing, and most of our daily conversations, are in English.

The overview of this anthology, which offers samples of New Zealand eco-poetry over several centuries, is that Māori poetry (songs, chants and stories preserved in the memory of an oral culture) differs from its English-language counterpart because it is based on “whakapapa” – the memorized line of forebears, which, taken far enough, must always go back to a particular place, a feature of landscape, a forest, a mountain, a river, a stretch of coastline. This is your “whenua”, your spiritual home; so the human and natural worlds are interrelated. Neither one rules the other: as a Māori proverb has it, “I am my river and my river is me”.

Māori are represented as “kaitiaki” – protectors of local flora and fauna. This is true in the sense that each tribe guarded its own fishing grounds, shellfish beds and rivers; but none of the commentary notes that, before European colonization, Māori collectively had burned off vast tracts of forests and hunted the moa, a large (ostrich-sized) flightless bird, to extinction.

Māori ideas of the natural world have affected New Zealand law. A mountain range (Urewera), a river (the Whanganui)

and a mountain (Taranaki) have been accorded personhood and human rights by act of parliament. The intention is to make eco-protection of those land features enforceable by law. It seems a strikingly original piece of legislation, and possibly unique in the world.

Koe, regrettably I think, includes too many poets in its 300 pages, and consequently allows itself only one poem by each. It is therefore uneven, but offers many gems and much valuable commentary, especially from Janet Newman on New Zealand's cultural and ecological history. As much as it is a record of the harm we do to ourselves by harming our environment, it also records how we slowly learn, and how we might correct some of our errors.

C. K. Stead's most recent collection of poems is In the Last Light of a Dying Day, 2024.

A Grammar of Elfdalian

Yair Sapir & Olof Lundgren. **A Grammar of Elfdalian**. 402 pages. University College London. 2024. ISBN 978-1-78735-541-5.

Elfdalian is the language traditionally spoken in Övdal (Älvdalen), central Sweden. Due to its linguistic differences to Swedish, coupled with the determination of the speech community, several attempts have been made to acquire an official recognition of Elfdalian as a minority language in Sweden. However, despite growing interest in documenting and revitalising Elfdalian, it is still regarded as a dialect.

As one of the best-preserved members of a larger but lesser-known Dalecarlian (or Dalmål) sub-branch of the Scandinavian languages, Elfdalian is a unique language to study. The purpose of the grammar is to account for Late Classical, or 'Preserved', Elfdalian from linguistic, historical and sociolinguistic angles, and to make the language, including both its archaic and innovative features, accessible to a wider audience.

The grammar has multiple target groups: people in Övdal who wish to revitalise or reclaim their language in a more original form than the one it was transferred into through language decline and Swedish influence since the beginning of the twentieth century; those who wish to transmit the language to others through preschool, school or adult instruction; and likewise others who wish to study a lesser-known North Germanic language. Linguists may find Elfdalian interesting from the angles of comparative historical linguistics, language structure, as well as sociolinguistics and language planning.

Daily Dawn newspaper in Pakistan reviews latest FLI publication

From the fli-online.org web-site of the Forum for Language Initiatives

Rauf Parekh, a renowned linguist and lexicographer, has reviewed FLI's latest publication on Chitral's languages, "**Chitral Ki Zabanen: Maazi, Haal, Mustaqbil**", published in the paper on 2 December 2024. The book, authored by the Executive Director of the Forum for Language Initiatives, Fakhruddin Akhunzada, has garnered significant attention for its comprehensive coverage of the linguistic diversity in Chitral.

In his review, Rauf Parekh highlights the book's valuable references and research-based approach. Akhunzada's work surveys the valleys of Chitral to collect data on the 12 languages spoken in the region, including Dameli, Gawarbari, Gojari, Kalasha, Kateviri, and Khowar. The book provides an in-depth look at these languages, many of which belong to the Dardic group of Hindu-Kush Indo-Aryan languages.

Parekh emphasizes the importance of preserving these languages, many of which are endangered or facing extinction. He praises FLI's efforts in promoting linguistic diversity and supporting research on indigenous Pakistani languages.

This review underscores the critical role of organizations like FLI in preserving and promoting the rich linguistic heritage of Pakistan. Akhunzada's book serves as a valuable resource for linguists, researchers, and anyone interested in the languages of Chitral.

Annual report of Forum for Language Initiatives issued

FLI has once again presented an overview of its last year's achievements highlighting some important gains of the year. FLI is celebrating Ms. Iram Jafar, a FLI trainee from Shina language community who has published her debut book. FLI has reached out to Saraiki speaking government primary schoolteachers with a program of training them in Saraiki training based on its pilot project, it executed in Upper Chitral. FLI has a plan to train at least 100 schoolteachers from Saraiki language. FLI has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Al-lama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad.

5. Forthcoming events

Eleventh Cambridge Conference on Endangered Languages

We are delighted to announce that the eleventh Cambridge Conference on Language Endangerment will take place on July 9th 2025. The theme will be 'Language Contact and the Community'.

Full details, a call for papers, and a registration form for the conference are available from the conference website:

<https://www.mml.cam.ac.uk/centres/celc/conference-series>

We look forward to seeing you there!

With warm wishes, and thanks for your support,

Mari Jones and Oliver Mayeux.

Discussions on Legacy Materials

April 24 to 25 2025 at the Department of Linguistics, University of Bern

Organizer and contact: Dr. des. Pascal Gerber (pascal.gerber@unibe.ch) and Dr. des. Selin Grollmann (selin.grollmann@unibe.ch, selin.grollmann@linguistik.uni-freiburg.de)

Background and theme

The numerous political and ecological crises of the last years have palpably demonstrated that access to field sites can quickly be severely restricted for linguists engaged in language description around the world. Furthermore, issues of environmental responsibility and sustainability are motivating linguists working on languages that require long-distance flights to reconsider their workflows and data sources. Those factors have resulted in a renewed interest in utilizing legacy materials to supplement one's own field data.

Legacy materials, which may result from colonial, missionary, earlier scientific enterprises or other activities, can present a number of challenges. From a contemporary perspective, they may seem deficient both with regards to content and methodology. Modern trained linguists may be faced with unfamiliar terminology, ontological systems, frameworks, presentation style or typographies.

At the same time, legacy materials may provide numerous valuable insights for contemporary descriptive projects, so that consideration of their inclusion in such projects can be advisable. They may contain otherwise inaccessible or unattested lexical and grammatical information or textual materials in registers or genres absent from the contemporary corpus. Additionally, legacy materials are often the only source on an extinct or dormant language and therefore play a major role in revitalization efforts.

For these reasons, legacy materials should, where they exist, be part of the methodological toolbox of descriptive linguists. However, depending on the region and language family, there are considerable differences in how thoroughly and compre-

hensively legacy materials are accessible, developed and utilized. Furthermore, the evaluation and use of legacy materials is a time-intensive task and requires the support of experts, e.g. library and archive scientists, specialized philologists and historians of linguistics.

The objective of this workshop is to facilitate a dialogue between descriptive linguists who engage with legacy materials of different language (families) and with different levels of experience. This exchange shall help to establish legacy materials as a relevant data source for descriptive projects and to improve sharing of best practices among researchers. The workshop also responds to the increasing emphasis on sustainability by encouraging the reuse of existing resources and by addressing the methodological challenges that descriptive linguists may face when working with legacy data.

We invite presentations on specific findings or challenges related to the use of legacy materials. Questions that may be addressed in the presentations include:

- What are the reasons that legacy materials are dismissed and why are these hard to deal with from our current perspectives on data and data collection?
- What are possible ways to make these materials usable and how can they be fruitfully integrated into a description project? What sort of elements can be extracted, both in terms of primary data and in terms of a meta-grammaticographical analysis of older practices? Do textual, grammatical and lexicographical legacy materials require different approaches?
- How do we deal with questionnaires, which were not necessarily collected long ago, but in a specific framework or with a specific goal?
- How do we deal with unprocessed / raw field notes of other linguists?
- How do we deal with lay publications such as school materials or language course books?

- How can we extract metadata where no explicit metadata information is given? Equally, how can data be “stripped off” of a certain framework? How can this framework be identified?

Format and target audience

The workshop consists of presentations by the participants. The target audience are descriptive linguists of any language family and career level; the workshop is designed as a bridging event which brings together knowledge from different areas, but also more advanced, experienced researchers with junior researchers at the beginning of their career. In this sense, the workshop is also intended to be of educational importance for the new generation of descriptive and documentary linguists who want to enhance their skill repertoire and to acquire tools for dealing with legacy materials. The participation of people working with legacy materials for the first time is particularly encouraged.