FOUNDATION FOR ENDANGERED LANGUAGES

OGMIOS

An ancient model in gold of the raft which carried the Chibcha *zipa* to his inauguration in the waters of the circular lake at Guatavita, north of Bogotá. This ritual was the substance behind the legend of *El Dorado*, the Gilded One, which so drew Spaniards (and Englishmen) into South America in the 16th century. The last zipa, Sagipa, was deposed and killed in 1538 by the Spanish conquistador, Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada. The Chibcha language was the adopted as a *lengua general* for the new Spanish dominion, the *Nuevo Reino de Granada*. Chibcha's subsequent career, and present prospects for revival are discussed in an article by Nicholas Ostler and Facundo Saravia.

OGMIOS Newsletter 51: — 31 August 2013

ISSN 1471-0382 Editor: Christopher Moseley

Published by:
Foundation for Endangered Languages,
172 Bailbrook Lane,
Bath BA1 7AA, England

OGMIOS Newsletter 51
31 August 2013

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

1. Editorial

As an international charitable organization, our Foundation tries to spread the geographical range of its annual conferences: thus, last year we were in New Zealand, this year (see the repeated announcement below) we are in Canada, and plans are afoot for our 2014 conference, to be held in yet another direction. Of course, in each case, we are dependent on invitations from willing hosts. Miraculously, willing hosts keep turning up, and the geographical spread of our conferences has just been fortuitous; and so the message of language endangerment and its possible solutions continues to be spread evenly around the world. If you or your institution would like to consider hosting an FEL conference in the future, we would always be glad to hear from you, and can offer you our past experience and logistical support.

In this issue we note the passing of the last native-born speaker of Livonian – not on her native soil in Latvia, but in a retirement home in Canada, with no-one to talk to in the language. What is interesting about the terse newspaper report is the assumptions that journalists make about endangered languages. We reproduce some of the discussion in a linguists' blog about those assumptions. Livonian is a subject dear to your editor's heart, but the press treatment of this issue of dying languages, in Britain at any rate, applies to any language that loses its last native-born speaker.

Even languages at the safer end of the scale of endangerment can find themselves threatened by hostile legislation. You might have thought that the future Catalan is assured and that that language is one of the success stories of Europe, but to judge from an appeal printed in this issue from a society of prominent Catalan linguists, the language is under threat again, now from stealthy legislation to redefine its nature, status and territory.

This journal of record is not meant to be merely a digest of already printed and posted articles, but a forum for discussion of endangered languages. May I again appeal for more original articles from our body of talented and knowledgeable subscribers – whether a book review, a report of an event of interest to us all, or an article on a language on which you're working – maybe your fieldwork experiences, unexpected findings – the sort of thing that doesn't find its way into the more technical linguistic journals.

Chris Moseley

2. Development of the Foundation

FEL XVII: Ottawa 2013: Endangered Languages Beyond Boundaries

The 2013 FEL Conference, FEL XVII, will be held at Carleton University, in Ottawa, the capital of Canada and headquarters of the country's national Aboriginal organizations.

The conference's full title gives some insight into its theme:

Community Connections, Collaborative Approaches, and Cross-Disciplinary Research.

The many endangered Indigenous languages across Canada make Ottawa an excellent setting for a conference that will explore collaboration, community involvement, and cross-disciplinary research on endangered languages. The conference will highlight community connections, collaborative approaches, intergenerational cooperation, technological and social media related innovations, and community-researcher alliances. We seek to bring together speakers, activists, and researchers, from a range of disciplines, organizations, and governments, all striving to understand and improve the situation of endangered languages, and to broaden awareness of the importance and implications of language maintenance and revitalization for individual and community well-being overall.

The conference will include a prior trip to Kitigan Zibi. The Anishnabe of Kitigan Zibi have been working since 1980 to recover and promote the Algonquin language in their community. They have implemented language programs in their community schools and have used technology to promote it on their website. Kitigan Zibi School offers a half-day Algonquin Immersion program to students from grade 1 to 6.

More details of the conference, including a **Registration** page, are now available at:

http://www6.carleton.ca/fel2013/

Annual General Meeting 2013

As Secretary of the Foundation for Endangered Languages I hereby give notice that:

1. The 17th Annual General Meeting of the Foundation will take place on 3 October 2013 at Residence Commons, Fenn Lounge, Carleton University, Ottawa, starting at 11:45 am.

All members are entitled to attend and vote at this meeting.

2. The Agenda will comprise:

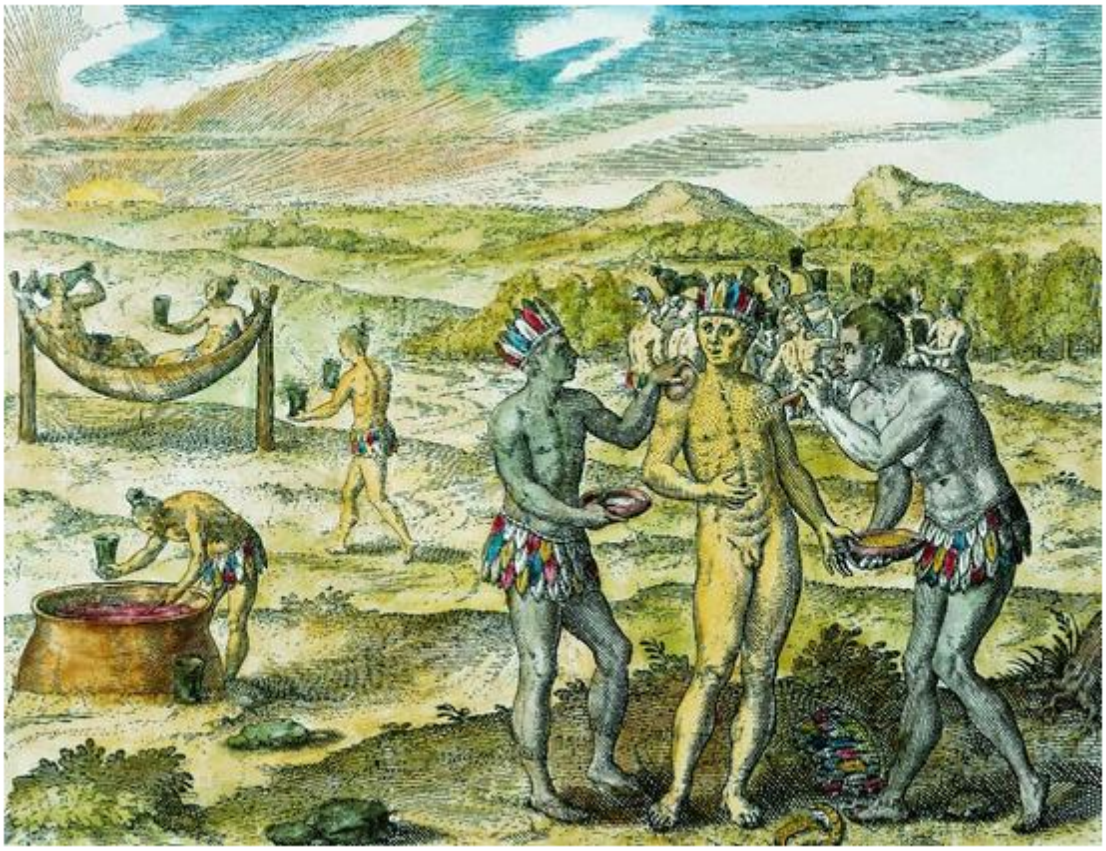
1. Minutes of the 16th AGM and Matters Arising
2. Chairman's Report
3. Treasurer's Report
4. Announcement of Officers elected for the year beginning October 2013
5. Any other business

Any additional items for the agenda should be sent to reach the President (nicholas at ostler.net) by 5 September 2013

3. The membership of the Executive Committee for the year beginning October 2013 will be chosen at this meeting.

Nominations for election to Offices (Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary) and the Executive Committee should be sent to reach the President by 5 September 2013.

There are up to 15 places on the Committee (including the named Officers) and should nominations exceed vacancies, election will be by ballot. *Salem Mezhoud, FEL Secretary*



El Dorado. Theodor de Brys engraving, from 8th book (1599) in his series of travelogues, published 1590-1634 by himself and his sons. The book illustrates Sir Walter Raleigh's expedition to Guiana in 1595, in search of El Dorado.

3. The Chibcha language: Discovery to Recovery

Nicholas Ostler (nicholas@ostler.net) Bath, England
Facundo Saravia (uba_we@yahoo.com.ar) Bogotá, Colombia

Discovery of Chibcha and the Muysca

muysca puenynga – muysca fien aguene

two ways to say "the people are many" in Chibcha.

This is what the Spanish conquistadores were told by locals when they inquired how significant were the producers of salt cakes, a developed product they had not expected to encounter, on their trip into the interior. Somehow, they managed to hear the first word, which meant 'person' or 'people', as the Spanish *mosca* 'fly': a happy way to demean the citizens of the local kingdoms, and it stuck. For themselves, however, the people were all *muysca* "people" , speaking *muysc cubun* "people's language", and worshipping the great god Chibchachum, "staff of the Chibcha province".

In 1536-37 a Spanish expedition was travelling up the Magdalena river from the Caribbean, along the Andean foothills in search of a new route to Peru. Discovering signs of a people who traded in salt cakes, they diverted towards the east, and eventually reached the highlands known to the Incas as Cundinamarca (< *kuntur marqa* "condor's land"), where they dispossessed the indigenous lords, the Zaque and the Zipa, and in 1538 founded the "Nuevo Reino de Granada", with its capital at Bacatá – or as they piously renamed it Santa Fé de Bogotá "holy faith". It was soon to become famous, not so much for salt (*nygua*), as as for what the Muysca bought with it – gold (*nyia cho*). This was the kingdom of the legendary *El Dorado* "The Gilded One", the prince anointed with gold to inaugurate his reign. Actually he was anointed with resin, and then blasted with gold dust[1]: And gold, it emerged, was the material of choice for Muysca sacred effigies (known as *chunsua*, which the Spanish heard as *tunjo*).

Image 1: Dualistic tunjo from Carmen de Carupa, Cundinamarca (MO 32.866): 9.1 x 5.7 cm

[1] It is notable that just as the stem of the Chibcha word for the verb 'to blow' *is cu-*, so in the language of the modern Uwa (Tunebo), the word stem is *ku'w-*. And blowing medicine through pipes remains a characteristic treatment of the Uwa people's wise men, the *werjayá*. Likewise, the Uwa word for 'silver or money' is *raiya*, and for 'salt' *rauwa.*

The Uwa (Tunebo) live to the north-east of the ancient Muysca territory, as shown on the map below.

But the Spanish conquest marked the end of Muysca goldworking, for the Spaniards wanted its substance and nothing more, and they took it; and the people, now consigned to forced labour estates known as *encomiendas*, no longer had the means to acquire it in exchange. This was a classic case of killing the goose that laid golden eggs - the story of early Spanish imperialism distilled into a single case.

Chibcha as a Lingua Franca

In the new dispensation, Spanish government must be imposed, and as usual, this was done through selecting a local language that was widespread, and using that officially for civil administration and to preach the Catholic faith. This they called the *lengua general*. The Spanish had successfully applied Nahuatl in Mexico and Quechua in Peru, and now they tried to adopt Chibcha, or " Mosca" (*muysc cubun*) as a single language for the New Kingdom of Granada.

This did not work out as well as hoped. (Indeed, Chibcha is the only language adopted officially by the Spanish as a *lengua general* which later went totally extinct.) A generation later, the Archbishop of Bogotá was already writing to the King on 12 February 1577:

> And to take them by the hand and gather them by good means I have arrived at the best way for it, and none that I have found will compare with preaching and declaring the Holy Gospel in their own languages. I say "in their own languages", because in this Kingdom every valley or province has its own language different from the others; it is not like Peru or New Spain (i.e. Mexico), where although there are different languages, they have a *lengua general* in use throughout the land

Documentation of Chibcha

Nonetheless, in this generation, a cátedra, a professorial chair, for instruction in the language was established. The Royal *cédula* for this (emanating from Spain) was issued in 1580, and by 1582 the first appointment had been made, of a priest named Gonzalo Bermúdez. The earliest works on the language, beginning with Bermúdez's Grammar, have not survived, nor have another eleven early works, to which we know the titles. Bernardo de Lugo, who held the chair at Colegio del Rosario from 1615 wrote the oldest one that survives (published in 1619).

Stella González de Pérez[2] offers a masterly analysis of the relations among the four known missionary grammars. The latter three all clearly come from a common tradition, distinct from Lugo, but are not identical: each contains some unique material. (There is a strong, but unconfirmed, case that this tradition derives from the work of José Dadey, an Italian Jesuit and gifted linguist, who held the chair from 1633 to 1655.) Together, the four works (including three extended glossaries [MS 158, MS 2922-II, MS 2923]) give us our full remaining knowledge of Chibcha, giving – so it appears – a full account of the morphology and grammar, and a few thousand lexical items.

Decline of Chibcha

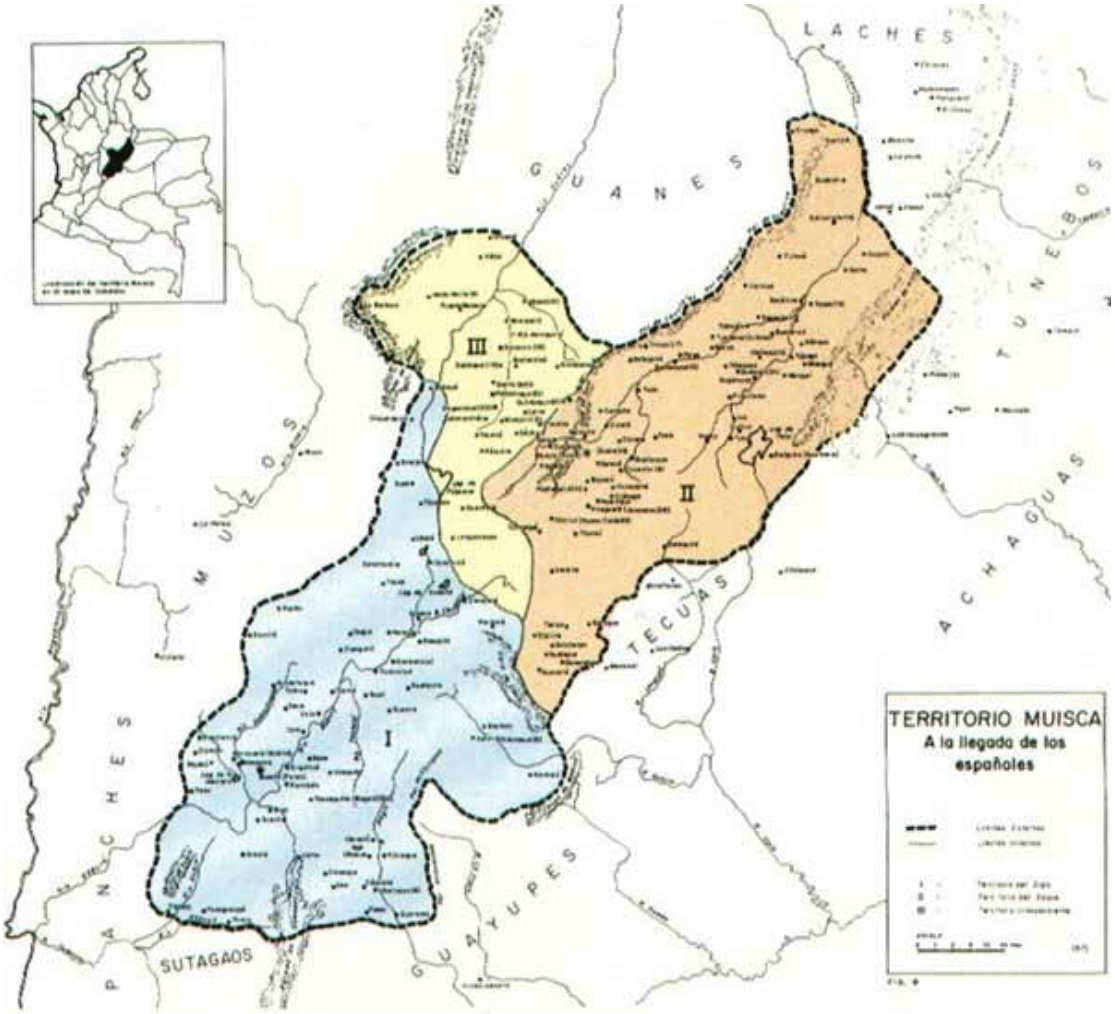
Chibcha soon went into decline as competence in Spanish spread. There is evidence that it was still in use in the Muysca's original territories in 1691, but by 1770, when King Carlos III issued his notorious later *cédula*, to abolish all languages but Spanish in the empire, it seems it was already extinct. Filippo Gilij, an Italian missionary in the Eastern Plains, wrote shortly after 1773: "Of the Muiscas and many others it is believed they have lost their language."

It is clear that the demise of Chibcha had not been only a matter of 'natural death', whatever that is. Indigenous languages were evidently seen as a link with the pre-Christian practices of the native population, and their use actively discouraged. On occasion, bilingual facility had been seen as a special threat politically, e.g. in the case of Don Diego de Torres, the chief of Turmequé (a town 25 Km south of Tunja), who was the son of a conquistador and the elder sister of the pre-Hispanic native chief. He distinguished himself as a defender of his people's rights, and in the correspondence with the Spanish king, his detractors emphasized the especial danger of his being *lengua de su nación* [tongue – i.e. interpreter – of his nation].

Location of the Muysca

The Muysca people, according to Pedro Simón (who came to live in the area in 1604), were bounded in the north-west by the Colima and Muzo, in the west and south-west by the Panche, in the east by the Plains (*Llanos*) Indians, and in the north-east by the Lache (Simón 1625 [1981]: III, 159). These are all peoples who are no longer identifiable, and whose languages are unattested. From the evidence of place names, the area is the eastern Andes, bounded in the north by the Chicamocha river, in the east by the Sierra Nevada del Cocuy, in the south-east by the Upía and Guavio valleys, in the south-west by the Sumapaz and Rio Blanco, and in the west by the valley of the Magdalena: broadly the departments of Cundinamarca, Boyacá and Santander in modern Colombia..

[2] in "Diccionario y Gramática Chibcha", Bogotá, Instituto Caro y Cuervo 1987 (pp. 76-80). She had previously documented the course of Chibcha studies in Trayectoria de los estudios sobre la lengua chibcha o muisca. Bogotá, Instituto Caro y Cuervo 1980..



Muisca territory: the Zipa's realm centred on Bacatá [Bogotá] (I) is in blue, the realm of Sugamuxi [Sogamoso] (II) in orange, and the Zaque's, on Hunza [Tunja], (III) in yellow.

Combining previous estimates of various sub-populations, Hernández Rodriguez (De los Chibchas a la Colonia y a la República. Bogotá 1949) assessed the population of the Muysca lands at the time of the conquest at 800,000. (Compare this to an estimate for Spain, at the time, of 7.5 million.)

Related peoples

It is notable that the most closely related language to Chibcha that has survived today is that of the Tunebo or Uwa (to the north-east in the map above), a language which is now known as Uw Cuwa. This is a living language with some 7,000 speakers, still spoken in isolated communities living their traditional life around the Sierra Nevada del Cocuy in Boyacá, Arauca y Casanare, on Colombia's eastern border with Venezuela. More live in the departaments Santander and Norte de Santander.

They have been less isolated than they wish, since 1988, when there have been repeated attempts by oil companies to obtain concessions to drill for oil on their territory. Nevertheless, despite the mighty forces ranged against them, these have largely been resisted. There have been recent attempts to introduce literacy into the community through public schools and the *Kajk-rasa Ruyina* programme.

(64.76.190.173/archivos/KAJKRASA_RUYINA.pdf)

Chibcha Literature

It is a tragedy of the preservation of Chibcha that there are scarcely any indigenous texts in it. The grammars and dictionaries do preserve phrases of everyday conversation, but what we know of contemporary Muysca culture, for example its mythology, comes to us from the accounts in Spanish-language chroniclers, such as Juan Castellanos (*Elegías de varones ilustres de Indias*), Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo (*La Historia General de las Indias*), Pedro Simón (http://tinyurl.com/kqfmvuo) and Fernando Piedrahita (http://tinyurl.com/kd38p7s).

The extended texts preserved in the grammatical literature are all works of Catholic liturgy — confessionals, lists of commandments, and prayers. The only partial exception to this comes in the opening pages of Bernardo de Lugo's printed grammar.
A touching feature of this work is that it begins with three sonnets, one in Spanish, and then two in Chibcha. The authorship is unclear, but they are so fulsome in their praises of Lugo that one can only hope that Ortega is right in attributing them to his "compañeros", and not the author himself.

The Spanish sonnet (spelling modernized) runs as follows, with an English translation:

SONETO.	SONNET
¿quien eres tu que tan lijera vuelas?	Who are you who fly so light?
La lengua chibcha soy. ¿Ado caminas?	I am the Chibcha tongue. Where are you bound?
Del Nuevo Reino a tierras peregrinas.	From the new Kingdom, to exotic lands,
Que tendrá mis verdades por novelas.	Which will take my truths for new ones.
Dices muy bien que a todos nos desvelas	You well say that you distress us all
Con tu profundidad, di que imaginas?	With your depth; say, what do you imagine?
Que estudiando sabrás lo que adivinas.	That by studying you will know what you intuit,
Que el docto Lugo preside en mis escuelas	That the learned Lugo is foremost in my schools.
Pusome en Arte siendo yo intricada.	He put me in a Grammar, since I am intricate.
Y de chontal me hizo tan ladina	And from a rude thing he made me so urbane
Que causo admiración al mundo todo.	That I cause admiration throughout the world.
Por el pienso quedar eternizada	Thanks to him I expect to remain immortalized,
Y su opinión de hoy más será divina	And his repute from today on will be godlike,
Que el solo alcanza mi sustancia y modo	In that he alone attains my substance and mode.

In the spirit of taking up where the master left off, we have provided a Chibcha equivalent of this very poem. It runs:

mue ua xies supqua guec fibas mamiscabe?
chibcha cubunc zeguene. epquaco umna?
Nuevo Reinon fac zans uchas quycac ina.
ys quyca guaca zocasa fihizac aguenynga.
zitaz ynie apuyquyne, ys nzona mimuysa zebgusqua
choquie umgasqua. masunsuca uzu.
umchichuagosie umpuyquy yc misca umucanynga.
Docto Lugo zescuel apabac aguene.
intricarac zeguensan artec chabga
nga chontarc zeguenan nohocan hata ladinac chabga quihichan
quycagua azonuca apuyquyz aiansuca
achicac yscuque zeguenynga
nga fan aian ys cubun chiez ynia apuyquynynga
ys achquisa ichiez apquasqua

New Life?

It is precisely by carrying out a comparative study between Chibcha's living relatives and the colonial grammars and vocabularies that modern researchers are trying to reconstruct Chibcha, the ancient tongue of the Muysca.

This type of study has enabled the authors of this article to keep up a correspondence in a language which has been officially dead for around 300 years, a task which has shown us that when the existing corpus of lexical items is increased by knowledge of word formation mechanisms, communication in Chibcha no longer remains confined to missionary purposes. Of course we are well aware of the fact that two foreigners communicating in written form can scarcely be considered a successful revival process, but it is a starting point nonetheless.

A good next step would be to write a learners' manual of the language, comparable to what has been achieved for Ancient Tupi (of Brazil) by Eduard do Almeida Navarro, in his 2004 publication, *Método Moderno de Tupi Antigo* São Paulo: Global.

It is clear that interest in the Muysca civilization has grown in recent years. Although there are not yet large-scale and intellectually well-founded attempts to revitalize Chibcha in Colombia, we believe that the time for them is not far off.

There is an increasing number of modern descendants of the Muysca (sometimes called 'Neomuisca') who have set themselves to revitalize their ancestors' culture. Some have even achieved an almost impossible task, to regain recognition on the part of the State of their traditional territories and reservations (*resguardos*).

The Neomuisca campaign involves active use of the provisions of the new Colombian constitution of 1991. There has been some press coverage of the organizing efforts of Mariana Escribano in Cota (north of Bogotá) in November 2007 (http://tinyurl.com/nx8fc86) and José Cristiano Lizarazo and Alexandra del Pilar Gonzalez in Sogamoso, Boyacá, in June 2012 (called the Cabildo Muisca Suamox) (http://tinyurl.com/ldspd22). Most of them gladly welcome the opportunity to include language revitalization in their activities. And Alfonso Fonseca Balcero, once styled "Gobernador de la Comunidad Indígena de Cota", has provided an online course (using Escribano's orthography) in vocabulary and simple sentences, spelling the language and peo-

ple's name as Mhuyska or Mhuysqa. http://tinyurl.com/l3kxzhp However, these groups have so far ignored the analysis which is now available (e.g. at the *Muysccubun* site, see below) of the language's (highly inflected) grammar, needed to complement their enthusiasm with a historical sense of how Chibcha really was.

Modern studies

Meanwhile, in the academic field there are two processes worth highlighting: the Chibcha language research group *Muysccubun*, and this year's "Chair of Colombian Thought" (*Cátedra de Pensamiento Colombiano*) at the National University of Colombia.

The *Muysccubun* project began in 2008 and became public a year later through its webpage (http://chb.cubun.org). Its members are anthropologists and linguists from several Colombian universities. Their objectives are to transcribe all the primary sources (the Colonial grammars and vocabularies), create a Chibcha-Spanish online dictionary and to collect and register Spanish words of possible Chibcha origin. They work in close cooperation with ICANH (Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia) and most of their transcriptions are at: http://www.icanh.com.

Even though the design and implementation of revitalization activities fall beyond the scope of the group, their transcriptions are undoubtedly a contribution of paramount importance to the study of Chibcha and greatly facilitate access the manuscripts which have so far been very difficult to consult. Their online dictionary already includes more than 1700 entries. They are assisted in its development by Miguel Angel Quesada Pacheco, a renowned Costa Rican linguist, currently established at the University of Bergen, Norway. And the work is partly financed by his university.

The *Cátedra Pensamiento Colombiano* has as its mission to document and analyse ideas, culture, art and science in Colombia, as well as to contribute to the construction of the national self-image. It takes place annually in the second semester of the year, addressing both the academic community and a general audience. This year, the Linguistics Department of the National University has decided to re-assert the spirit of the Chibcha *cátedra* held for the first time in 1584, and address "Lengua y cultura muysca".

Over a period comprising every Saturday from August 24th to December 14th, 2013, more than 20 lectures will be given by experts in the fields of Archaeology, History, Ethnology, Linguistics and Anthropology. The last session will be a talk about the role of language in native indigenous ways of life, and modern Muysca communities. The complete list of lectures and topics can be consulted at www.humanas.unal.edu.co/catedramuisca.

Conclusion

Facundo has written a rejoinder to that last sonnet in the light of hindsight. It gives Chibcha hope to live again, through taking to heart the *Artes* of the old Spanish teachers:

mue ua sie umpuyquyz asucansuca?
ipquo quihichan mabie ai umgasqua?
chibcha cubunc zeguene. mipquo iusuca?
hycha tohoni! ichygua spquin abgysqua.
muysca mabie acubun amahaquysuca.
hycha maguasca aguezac agasqua.
ys quihichan zepuyquyc atyzynsuca.
nga ie yn chaquybynyngac apquasqua.
haco umgas umzac umzazinga?
sis quyquy fihizca zemuyiac aguenan
hatac ubuca sinaca isucunynga.
yscuque zequybac zemizinga.
aica achuta zyhyca abzinganan,
apuyquyna hycha amistynynga.

This is an original composition in Chibcha, but it already has translations into Spanish (by the author) and English (by Nicholas Ostler).

¿Quién eres tú que estás tan afligida?	Who are you, friend, so sad and miserable?
¿Cuál es el dolor que estás sintiendo?	What calls from you such piteous lament?
La lengua Chibcha soy. ¿Cuál es tu herida?	"I am the Chibcha tongue." What is your trouble?
Ai de mi!, el eco de mi voz está muriendo.	"The echo of my voice will soon be spent."
Ya mucha gente su propia lengua olvida.	"So many now forget what my words meant,
Quienes me alimentan están desapareciendo.	While quickening voices fail to load my table.
Por eso es que mi alma está partida,	Alas! I feel a sore presentiment
Y llega la hora en que me iré durmiendo.	of gathering sleep too soon inevitable."
¿Qué harás para no caer en la oscuridad?	What can you do, to emerge from that fell night?
Con esta tierra mi alma es una sola esencia.	"I and this land share one eternal spirit:
Por siempre jamás juntas estarán.	From this home I can never take my flight.
Escucha, no dormiré por toda la eternidad.	Fear not: to wake again's no losing fight:
Los hijos del mañana pedirán mi presencia,	Tomorrow's children, yearning to inherit,
Y en su corazón me encontrarán.	will find me in their hearts, their deathless right."

4. Endangered Languages in the News

Switzerland's fourth language under pressure

By Julia Slater, from the Swissinfo.ch web-site, 5 August 2013

"Stand up, and defend your ancient language, Romansh!" says a 19th century slogan. The language is still around, but as the number of speakers is diluted by incomers to the region where it is spoken, it is an ongoing struggle to preserve it.

"The Romansh-speaking area is not strong enough to integrate speakers of other languages sufficiently – a finding that is unfortunately not new, and which continues," the most recent government report lamented.

In its analysis of the state of the languages of Switzerland drawn up after the 2000 census, the Federal Statistics Office points to a striking contrast: while the proportion of German, French and Italian speakers increased within their heartlands thanks to the integration of new arrivals who have learned the local language, the proportion of Romansh speakers shrank, even in the parts of the south-eastern canton of Graubünden where it is widely spoken.

Primary school teacher Andreas Urech, who is responsible for bilingualism in the village of Samedan in the Upper Engadine, 18 per cent of whose population comes from 33 foreign countries, is aware the situation hasn't improved since the 2000 report.

Since German is spoken at work, it's normally the language of integration for those outsiders who don't have it as their mother tongue, he told swissinfo.ch

But language acquisition is surprisingly pragmatic. Construction at building sites in Urech's area tends to be in the hands of Italian speakers.

"The Portuguese speak it, and of course the Spaniards too. But at one time we had a lot of people from former Yugoslavia, and those working in construction spoke Italian too. I don't know how good this Italian is, but it works very well."

Jostling for position

The phenomenon of one language pushing out another in the area is hardly new. Romansh is descended from the Latin brought by the Romans – replacing the ancient Raetic language, about which practically nothing is known - but German speakers started taking up positions of influence in the area more than a thousand years ago, and over the centuries the Romansh-speaking areas have shrunk.

Graubünden is a canton of mountains and valleys with small scattered villages. As typically happens with languages in isolated areas, Romansh is splintered into a myriad of dialects, each belonging to one of the five written variants, or idioms.

But mountains also mean passes, and passes mean transit traffic.

Barbara Riedhauser works for the Lia Rumantscha - the umbrella organisation for the language as a whole - promoting Sutsilvan, the idiom spoken along the route that leads to the Splügen pass and into Italy. In some parts of its original heartland it is barely spoken at all any longer; in the valley where it is strongest it is spoken by perhaps 20 per cent of the population.

"People had to understand the languages of their neighbours in order to earn money. Perhaps that's why Romansh has declined here," she told swissinfo.ch.

"I would say that now the overwhelming majority of Romansh speakers speak German better than they do Romansh. In the old days Romansh was the language people used every day, but today they are so connected with the outside world, what with internet and the media, that they get much more input in German about more complex issues."

"You can in fact say everything you want to in Romansh – although if you compare it with Italian, for example, it has certainly been influenced by German."

Outside pressure

Indeed, Romansh is liberally sprinkled with recognisably German words – but that is nothing new. There's a fine dividing line between the natural linguistic process of word formation, which enriches the language, and the steady impoverishment which happens when speakers with an imperfect knowledge of their mother tongue seize the first word that comes to mind and end up speaking a mixture of Romansh and German.

Urech admitted that Germanisms are entering the spoken language all the time, and English words are also creeping in – but pointed out that literary Ladin (his local Romansh dialect) endeavours to retain "genuine" Romansh.

Interestingly, there was a time when the Ladin literary language, traditionally oriented towards its southern neighbour, was full of Italianisms. They were largely purged in a conscious move about 100 years ago.

Sursilvan, the idiom with the most speakers, has always had a lot of contact with German. The result goes deeper than vocabulary.

"They use structures that hurt my ears, because I know they've been taken over from German," Ladin-speaker Urech explained. "But by now they are completely normal, and even grammatically correct."

Teaching

Schools have a major role to play in keeping the language alive – but in an area where Romansh is spoken by a small minority, as in Samedan (about 16 per cent) this can be quite arbitrary, as Urech's experience has shown.

"When a class has lots of children from German-speaking families, it's quite different from when there is a large proportion of Romansh speakers. The composition of the class has an impact on the language they use to communicate in. That's not something you can do anything about. And the children of the new arrivals follow the trend."

This applies even to those whose home language – Italian, Spanish and "more and more" Portuguese - is Latin-based, for whom Romansh is in principle easier than German.

While children follow the flow, some adults take a conscious decision to learn Romansh, even if they don't need it to survive. But in the Sutsilvan area, Riedhauser struggles to get a class together. There are rarely more than six in a beginners' group, and – for whatever reason - many give up after a year. Those who want to continue may have to wait until there are enough pupils to form a class.

Nevertheless, she thinks they are still making a contribution to keeping the language alive.

"When someone decides to take a course, and tells everyone so, it makes Romansh speakers feel: 'Ah, our language and culture are special, other people are interested. We have something they don't have.' And that's really good."

Sursilvan, being more widely spoken, has far less difficulty in attracting learners – mainly people who have settled in the area, have a Romansh-speaking partner, or have Romansh roots.

Tessa Meuter, a professor of English in Winterthur, bought a house in a largely Romansh-speaking village eight years ago and has been attending a Sursilvan summer course for four years.

She knows she will never speak like a native, but it has transformed her relationship with her neighbours. They are interested to hear what she has learned each day – sometimes things they don't even know themselves. And they appreciate her effort. One woman brought along old parish minutes to share with her, giving her an insight into village problems and how they were solved. Another, whom she consulted about the names of fruit and vegetables, then put together a collection of recipes for her to try out.

"It's so positive. Before, it was a holiday place. Since I started learning, I really feel it's become a home," she told swissinfo.ch.

Livonian language dies

From the Times, London, 16 June 2013: see also Obituaries section
The last native speaker of Livonian, an ancient Baltic language, has died aged 103. Grizelda Kristina, who fled Latvia to escape the war in 1944, died in Canada. She helped recently to document a language that modern Latvians cannot understand.

She was born in Vaide, one of the dozen Liv fishing villages on the northern coast of Latvia where the thousand-strong pre-war community was devastated first by the Nazis and then by the Soviets.

Rosetta Project: summer interns document endangered languages

Mike O'Sullivan, from the Voice of America web-site, 30 July 2013

SAN FRANCISCO — There are about 7,000 languages in the world, and half of them could disappear by the end of the century. An effort called the "Rosetta Project," however, is preserving a key to understanding them for future generations.

These two American linguistics students can speak multiple languages, including French. They are among a dozen taking part in a summer internship with the Rosetta Project - working with professional linguists to expand a digital record of endangered languages. It's inspired by the Rosetta Stone, which contained an ancient inscription in Greek and two different Egyptian writing systems - providing scholars with the first key to understand Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Started by a nonprofit group called the Long Now Foundation, the project is creating an online archive and is also preserving parallel texts on an optical disc - a kind of Rosetta Stone for linguists in the future. The small hand-held disc is etched with tiny print and plated with nickel. There are 13,000 pages, sampling 1,500 languages in microscopic text, according to the foundation's Alexander Rose.

"A single parallel text, a description, a map of where it's from, these types of things that just give you enough that you can compare to another language that you know or have studied or scholars have figured out, you can start pulling parallels between the two and reconstruct the basics of a language," said Rose.

A recent demonstration of endangered languages sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington featured the Hawaiian language and other vanishing tongues, including Tuvan, which can still be heard in southern Siberia.

Many languages like this are spoken by small groups, said Rosetta Project director Laura Welcher.

"They're spoken by thousands of people or even smaller-sized groups, and a lot of those languages are in remote parts of the world. They haven't been well documented," she said.

Linguists at universities and research institutes are in a race against time to record these languages before they die out.

Welcher said that linguists and students at the Rosetta Project are doing their part.

"The idea is to purposely create a massively parallel linguistic collection that is broadly representative of all of our human languages, that can be that kind of secret decoder ring for human languages and what we leave for the future," she said.

And it may be the key to helping reconstruct today's dying languages.

New 'mixed' language discovered in northern Australia

By Denise Chow, from the LiveScience web-site Arbor, 18 June 2013

A new language, one that combines elements of English with traditional indigenous speech, has been discovered in northern Australia, according to a new study.

The language, now known as Light Warlpiri, is spoken by approximately 300 people in a remote desert community about 400 miles (644 kilometers) from Katherine, a town located in Australia's Northern Territory, said Carmel O'Shannessy, a professor in the department of linguistics at the University of Michigan in Ann. O'Shannessy documented the discovery of Light Warlpiri in a study published online today (June 18) in the journal *Language.*

Light Warlpiri is known as a "mixed language," because it blends elements from multiple languages. Traditional Warlpiri, which is spoken by about 6,000 people in indigenous communities scattered throughout the Tanami Desert in the Northern Territory; Kriol, an English-based Creole language spoken in various regions of Australia; and English.

"The striking thing about Light Warlpiri is that most of the verbs come from English or Kriol, but most of the other grammatical elements in the sentence come from Warlpiri," O'Shannessy told LiveScience.

In English, the order of words in a sentence generally indicates the grammatical relationship between the various entities. For example, in the sentence "Mary saw Jim," it is understood that Mary is the one doing the seeing, because her name precedes the verb. In the Warlpiri language, however, words can be placed in any order, and grammatical interpretations are based on suffixes that are attached to the nouns, O'Shannessy explained. Light Warlpiri represents a mixture of these structural rules.

"In Light Warlpiri, you have one part of the language that mostly comes from English and Kriol, but the other grammatical part, the suffixing, comes from Warlpiri," O'Shannessy said.

'Non-future' time

Another innovation of the newfound language is a word form that refers to both the present and past time, but not the future. For example, in English "I'm" refers to "I" in the present tense, but Light Warlpiri speakers created a new form, such as "yu-m," which means "you" in the present and past time, but not the future. In other words, this verbal auxiliary refers to the "non-future" time, which is a word form that does not exist in English, Kriol or traditional Warlpiri, O'Shannessy said.

"That structure doesn't exist in any of the languages that this new code came from, which is one of the reasons we see this as a separate linguistic system, though it comes from other languages that already exist," she explained.

O'Shannessy first discovered Light Warlpiri when she began working in a school in the Northern Territory where traditional Warlpiri was being taught to children. She noticed that some of the students appeared to switch between several languages in conversation. "After a while, I realized this switching took place in every sentence, and I

decided to investigate it," O'Shannessy said. "Once I recorded children speaking, I looked at the patterns and I could see that there were very striking systematic patterns. It was then that I realized this was a system of its own."

O'Shannessy thinks Light Warlpiri likely emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, when children went from switching between English, Kriol and Warlpiri to speaking the mixed Light Warlpiri language on a primary basis.

"It seems that the people who are about 35 years old are the ones who created the system and brought in the innovation in the verbal auxiliary," O'Shannessy said. "They then passed it on to their children, and it will probably get passed on to subsequent generations."

Mixed languages are not altogether uncommon throughout the world, but the types of grammatical innovations seen with Light Warlpiri are considered rare, O'Shannessy said.

Other examples of mixed languages include Gurindji Kriol, a blend of Kriol and traditional Gurindji, which is spoken by communities in Australia's Northern Territory; and Michif, which is spoken by communities along the U.S.-Canada border, and combines verbal structures from Cree, an Algonquin language, and noun structures from Métis French, a type of Canadian French dialect.

Welsh Twitter: Capturing language change in real time

From the University of Cambridge Research web-site, 29 May 2013

Twitter keeps millions of people in touch, whether it's sharing their politics with followers or updating their mates with the trivia of everyday life. These tweets are in Welsh: 'loaaaads o gwaith i neud a di'r laptop 'cau gwithio!' 'dio cau dod on!' Mar bwtwm di tori.' Roughly translated, they read: 'loads of work to do and the laptop won't work,, and 'it won't come on! The button's broke.' How do you capture changes as they take place in the language we use in everyday life – from buzz words such as 'sweet' to tags such as 'innit'? One answer is to look at tweets. Because they don't follow the conventions of written language, tweets provide an authentic snapshot of the spoken language. By analysing the content of the 140-character messages, linguists can get to grips with the dynamics of the language played out in real time. Welsh is spoken by 562,000 people in Wales; 8% of the country's children learn it at home as their first language and 22% are educated in Welsh.

Like all living languages, Welsh is constantly changing and new varieties are emerging. When Dr.David Willis of Cambridge's Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics set out to research the shifts taking place in Welsh, he used a database of Welsh tweets as a means of identifying the aspects of the language that were changing, and then used that information to devise the questionnaires used for oral interviews.

He explained: "When your intention is to capture everyday usage, one of the gre4atest challenges is to develop questions that don't lead the respondent towards a particular answer but give you answers that provide the material you need." "If I want to find out whether a particular construction is emerging, and where the people who use it come from, I would normally have to conduct a time-consuming pilot study, but with Twitter I can get a rough and ready answer in 30 minutes as people tweet much as they speak," he said. "My focus is on the syntax of language – the structure or grammar of sentences – and my long-term aim is to produce a syntactic atlas of Welsh dialects that will add to our understanding of current usage of the language and the multi-stranded influences on it. To do this relies on gathering spoken material from different sectors of the Welsh-speaking population to make comparisons across time and space."

In the late 17th century, the antiquarian Edward Lhuyd conducted an investigation into the dialects of Wales. By the 19th century, Welsh was attracting the attention of European historical linguists such as Johann Kaspar Zeuss. Later, scholars all over Europe, realising that local dialects were receding in the face of industrialisation, sought to record variations in language. Large dialect atlases were undertaken in Germany and France, and speech archives were begun, such as the one that laid the foundations for the National History Museum at St.Fagan's near Cardiff.

In the nineteen-sixties the attention moved away from rural areas to the cities where most people by then lived – and researchers started to look at sentence structure, an area of language that presents particular challenges for investigators. Willis's interest syntax stemmed from his study of a wide range of minority languages – including Breton, which is, like Welsh, a Celtic language. To create the biggest possible picture of syntactic changes in Welsh as it's spoken today, he decided to take an inclusive approach and set out to investigate day-to-day speech patterns of a broad range of speakers, aged 18-80. British Academy funding for a year-long study has enabled Willis and assistant researchers to interview around 160 people across Wales, beginning his analysis with North Wales where the language is thriving and a significant number of children use Welsh as their home language. The study included those who have acquired Welsh both at home and at school.

The spoken questionnaire asked interviewees to repeat in their own words sentences that were in deliberately 'odd' Welsh that mixed different dialects, inviting the interviewee to rephrase the awkwardly phrased sentence to sound more 'natural'. An example in English might be 'we've not to be there yet, don't we?' which a British speaker might be expected to rephrase as 'we haven't got to be there yet, have we?'

The data from these interviews are a treasure trove of information in terms of the light their content can shine on how and why the structure of language shifts over time – and give the researcher a valuable database not just for the present study but also for future research.

Changes identified so far include use of pronouns and multiple negatives. An analysis of usage of the Welsh words for 'anyone', 'someone' and 'no-one' reveals that there are differences between those who learnt Welsh in the home (who are more likely to say the equivalent of 'did someone come to the meeting? ' and 'I didn't see no-one') and those who learnt it at school (who are more likely to say 'did anyone come to the meeting?' and 'I didn't see anyone').

One example of multiple negatives reveals a shift in the meaning of the Welsh word for refuse, 'cau'. "We knew that people in the north used the word 'cau' to mean 'won't', saying the equivalent of 'the door refuses to open' for 'the door won't open'. Negative concord – such as saying 'I haven't not seen no-one' for 'I haven't seen anyone' – is a strong feature of Welsh. We've now identified two groups in the north: one that still says 'the door refuses to open' and the other that have begun to say 'the door doesn't refuse to open'. The next step is to work out when and how this change occurred."

In tracking shifts in the language, GIS mapping is used to plot where interviewees were brought up and enables researchers to look at the geographical spread of particular aspects of syntax, making comparisons between age groups, gender and mode of acquisition.

The research has revealed that, while Welsh does not vary much by social class, there are interesting differences between the variety of Welsh spoken by those who learn it as their first language in the home and that spoken by those who are first exposed to it in nursery or primary school.

"Those who acquire Welsh once they reach school are more likely to use English sentence constructions, which are perfectly good Welsh but differ significantly from the constructions used by those who acquired Welsh at home. For example, they tend to prefer standard focus particles – words that correspond to a strong stress in English sentences like 'I know YOU'll be on time' – over the ones from their local dialect," said Willis. With around 22% of the population educated in Welsh at school, and all children learning it as a second

language, data on this aspect of language acquisition may prove valuable in developing Welsh teaching policy –for example, in determining which forms to teach second language learners or in promoting both dialect and standard written Welsh in schools.

Evolution of spoken language decrypted and reconstructed by computer algorithm

By Mark Hoffman, from Science World Report, 11 February 2013

Archaeologists will gain a powerful new tool in their quest to recover ancestral, disappeared languages: Connecting machine learning algorithms with Big Data in this field proved successful and will automate a process that until now took decades. Spoken language changes continuously, and ancient languages eventually die out and disappear - but only apparently, since even modern languages still contain the roots of those proto-languages.

Computer scientists at the University of California, Berkeley, succeeded in creating an automated "time machine," by feeding huge amounts of modern and ancient known vocabulary and grammar to their self-learning algorithms in order to cross reference and find patterns in the chaos.

The computational model, which uses probabilistic reasoning (exploring logic and statistics to predict an outcome), was indeed able to reconstruct more than 600 Proto-Austronesian languages, which for example lead to the languages spoken in Polynesia, from the existing database of more than 140,000 words. While manual reconstruction is a meticulous process that can take years, the computer system can perform the large-scale reconstructions in a matter of days or even hours, replicating with 85 percent accuracy what linguists had done manually. This could benefit the accelerated reconstruction of many hundred more proto-languages (Proto-Indo-European, Proto-Afroasiatic, Proto-Austronesian), the linguistic ancestors from which all modern languages have evolved and the earliest-known languages.

"What excites me about this system is that it takes so many of the great ideas that linguists have had about historical reconstruction, and it automates them at a new scale: more data, more words, more languages, but less time," said Dan Klein, co-author of the paper published online on February 11 in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The new program, developed in cooperation with University of British Columbia researchers, could not only boost our understanding of ancient civilizations based on their vocabularies by reconstructing the world's proto-languages on a large scale, but it would also provide clues to how languages might change years from now.

"Our statistical model can be used to answer scientific questions about languages over time, not only to make inferences about the past, but also to extrapolate how language might change in the future," said Tom Griffiths, associate professor of psychology, director of UC Berkeley's Computational Cognitive Science Lab and another co-author of the paper.

The theoretical background of the computational model is the established linguistic theory that words evolve along the branches of a family tree – much like a genealogical tree – reflecting linguistic relationships that evolve over time, with the roots and nodes representing proto-languages and the leaves representing modern languages.

Based on this structure, the program sorts through sets of cognates, words in different languages that share a common sound, history and origin, to calculate the probability of which set is derived from which proto-language, using an algorithm known as the Markov chain Monte Carlo sampler. In endless iterations, while storing a hypothesized reconstruction for each cognate and each ancestral language per step, it comes closer and closer to the precise evolution of languages.

"Because the sound changes and reconstructions are closely linked, our system uses them to repeatedly improve each other," Klein said. "It first fixes its predicted sound changes and deduces better reconstructions of the ancient forms. It then fixes the reconstructions and re-analyzes the sound changes. These steps are repeated, and both predictions gradually improve as the underlying structure emerges over time."

Silent Plains: the fading sounds of native languages

By Frederic Briand, of the Mediterranean Science Foundation, from the National Geographic News Watch web-site, 28 February 2013

'All things must pass,' sang George Harrison. With time, suns turn into ice, civilizations into dust, and species go extinct. And so 'black dwarfs,' 'biodiversity loss,' not to forget 'Armageddon,' have all become part of our daily alphabet.

Strange planet… though the risk of a 6th species extinction wave is quite real and that of a future collision with a large asteroid not entirely negligible.

At the same time, native languages throughout the world are vanishing, fast.

But that does not rate as headline news. If the power of James Fennimore Cooper's narrative still makes *The Last of the Mohicans* a most present, although rather erroneous (1) memory, who knows of the recent disappearance of dozens of languages, like Kanoe (Brazil), Iowa (central USA), Mangala (western Australia), or Kamassian (Siberia, Russia) – each replaced by the dominant tongue of their administrative rulers?

There are interesting parallels to draw, up to a point, between linguistic and biological diversity. On a world map, their hotspots are distributed in roughly comparable ways, owing to the same causes and effects: the protection afforded by dense forests, habitat heterogeneity, forbidding mountain ranges, climate stability, the remoteness of ocean islands, etc. No wonder then that Papua New Guinea, which combines all these attributes, would emerge as the top location for both *species* (8% of world total) and *linguistic* richness, with 830 living tongues (12% of world total). No wonder either that in the high mountains of the Caucasus – another biodiversity hotspot – one finds on a territory no larger than the Iberian peninsula as many as five distinct linguistic *families,* compared to only three for the whole of Europe.

But the similarities between biological and linguistic diversity end there, as other patterns have nothing in common. Every ten years, on average, two species of mammals go extinct (a high rate spun by global environmental degradation) compared to … 250 languages that vanish in the same time span. This is not trivial, and it reminds us that the life and death cycle of human tongues has more to do with the historical extension of agriculture, emergence of centralized states, colonialism, cultural imperialism, and global communication networks than with Darwinian evolution.

Close to 7,000 distinct languages are still spoken today, more than half originating from just eight countries: Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Nigeria, India, China, Mexico, Cameroon, and Zaire. It is expected that by 2100 nearly half of today's living tongues will have disappeared. If so, humanity will be considerably poorer. For each time a native language dies out, it is a distinct universe of mental constructs, with unique ecological wisdom acquired through millennia of direct contact with nature, which is lost. Gone is the refined Cheyenne technique of prairie management by fire in the dry midsummers, almost gone the mysterious understanding of Namibian

savanna animals by !Kung San hunters, and highly endangered the immense knowledge of the sea and its resources inherited by traditional fishing peoples from Oceania to the Arctic.

Among the thousand languages that will soon vanish, some are incredibly original, 'language isolates' on their own, others incredibly complex. Consider the way in which we count cattle, fish, or stars. By counting on their own fingers (and toes), humans have devised numerical systems with base 5, 10, or 20, which in turn shape how the world around us is expressed. For the Melpa, in the western New Guinea highlands, the word for '10' is 'two-thumbs' – our eight fingers augmented by two thumbs.

In Central America, the Maya for their part used a base-20 numerical system, the core of complex cycles in their astronomical calendar. This characteristic, together with the very rare VOS (Verb- Object – Subject) word sequence that survives in extant Maya tongues, proved essential to decipher the syllabic hieroglyphs that the pre-Columbian Maya left behind on stelae and temples in the dense Peten and Yucatan jungles.

The complexity, the very richness of a language is not immediately obvious. It is not even a function of the number of distinct words it contains. In so-called 'polysynthetic languages' (Caucasus, Himalaya, New Guinea mountains), the sophisticated addition of countless prefixes and suffixes will allow the speaker to express in just one word what would require a full sentence in English. One extreme example of that was related by Georges Dumezil, a French ethnolinguist who studied Ubykh in the 1930s (2). In this north-western Caucasian tongue one word sufficed to say: "If only you had not forced him to take once more all that I had prepared for them." One long word, only one, could express that. I used the past tense as Ubykh died twenty years ago in October 1992, when its last elderly speaker passed away.

If a Museum of Extinct Languages did exist, Ubykh would be in good company. I lost count of the many spoken tongues that vanished during the last century but it must approach one thousand. Today some 600 native languages are just about to go extinct, each spoken by less than fifty elders and no longer transmitted to children. The diagram below, composed on the basis of the latest available data (3), is cause for worry.

NB: *the vertical axis represents the number of nearly extinct indigenous languages; the number in blue its relation (in percent) to the total number of native languages still spoken in same country*.

The continental USA, distantly followed by Australia, hold the dubious distinction of having the highest number of vanishing endemic languages. The narrative thread is the same: in recent years, or decades, their First Nations have massively shifted to English. A few tongues still resist, like Apache, Cherokee, Dakota, or Navajo, each with quite safe population levels above 15,000 speakers. But, as I write these lines, only one or two elders are left to speak Pawnee, Wichita, Osage, etc. Listen to these haunting words by Anita Edrezze, a (half) Yaqui Indian poet, lifted from a dusty issue of the *National Geographic* (4) that I kept through the years: 'All the dark birds, / but one, / rush from the river / leaving only the stillness / of their language.'

Will a few of the 'major' languages now spoken by millions and millions of people ultimately dominate and squash all others? Only the future will tell. But it would be an ironic twist of history if our world, in the end, resembles the gigantic Tower of Babel where – founding myths tell us – only one tongue prevailed.

---

(1) J.F. Cooper used literary license, distorting the name of the Mahican people, an Algonquian tribe originally living in the Hudson Valley and now settled in Wisconsin. Mahican was spoken until the 1930s and is now extinct.

(2) Nicholas Evans. *Dying Words. Endangered languages, what they tell us*. Wiley, 2010

(3) This analysis is based on data extracted from the 2009 edition of *Ethnologue – Languages of the World* and the *Atlas of the World's Languages* by Christopher Moseley, Routledge, 2007.

(4) *National Geographic*, October 1991. Special issue '1491 – America before Columbus'.

Push to preserve the Tibetan language in China

By Lumbum Tashi, from Radio Free Asia web-site, 25 Feb 2013

Tibetans marked a special day this month to promote the use of traditional Tibetan language in China, calling for a return to a spoken language unmixed with Chinese in an attempt to reassert Tibetan identity, according to sources.

The move comes amid reports of a revival of the Tibetan mother tongue in Beijing-governed Tibetan areas.

Flyers posted in advance of the Feb. 21 Tibetan Mother Language Day in Gansu province's Kanlho (Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture urged readers to "defend their mother tongue and give up impure mixed speech forever," an area resident told RFA's Tibetan Service.

Language rights have become a particular focus for Tibetan efforts to reassert national identity in recent years, with Chinese authorities frequently closing language classes taught outside the state-controlled education system and Tibetan students protesting against the use of textbooks written in Chinese.

Posters describing the Tibetan language as "the golden cup that holds the essence of Tibetan culture" have now appeared in public places across Kanlho's Luchu (in Chinese, Luqu) and Machu (Maqu) counties, RFA's source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Meanwhile, in Chigdril (Jiuzhi) county in neighboring Qinghai province's Golog (Guoluo) prefecture, Tibetan organizers of a Mother Tongue Protection Association observed the Feb. 21 event by setting up a portrait of exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, the source said.

Several hundred Tibetans gathered before the portrait, and some read poems aloud on the need to protect our language," he said. "Local authorities discourage activities related to the preservation and propagation of the Tibetan language, and at times they openly express their dislike and try to put restrictions in place. But the Tibetans were determined and went ahead with their programs," he added.

China has jailed scores of Tibetan writers, artists, singers, and educators for asserting national and cultural identity and civil rights since widespread protests swept Tibet and Tibetan-populated areas of China in 2008.

"China has spent the last six decades trying to eradicate the Tibetan language by portraying it as an old language that has outlived its use," Tenzin Dorjee, executive director of Students for a Free Tibet, said.

"As a result, the very act of speaking Tibetan has become a form of resistance," Dorjee said.

“Now we are seeing an unexpected revival of the Tibetan language as Tibetans embrace their mother tongue as a marker of distinct Tibetan identity in a movement to overcome China’s cultural imperialism.”

Reported by Lumbum Tashi for RFA’s Tibetan Service. Translated by Karma Dorjee. Written in English with additional reporting by Richard Finney.

Concern as minister rejects Welsh language plan

From the BBC News Wales web-site, 26 February 2013

Campaigners have accused the Welsh government of caving in to pressure over a set of rules which would require services to be available in Welsh.

Proposed standards on when public and some private bodies should use the Welsh language were rejected for being too complicated by ministers.

The proposals were made by the Welsh Language Commissioner.

A former chief executive of the Welsh Language Board has questioned the need for the commissioner's role.

The Welsh government will propose a new set of standards and hold a statutory consultation with the public sector.

But campaigners and Plaid Cymru fear it will lead to delays.

Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg (The Welsh Language Society) described the decision as "bad news", saying the proposals and consultation by the Welsh Language Commissioner was thorough.

It said: "Naturally, it leads one to the conclusion that the government has decided that the interests of organisations and the profit of large companies like BT, British Gas and Arriva, are more important than the Welsh language."

But Leighton Andrews, the Welsh language minister, said on Monday that the proposals would not provide Welsh speakers with clear rights and many were unreasonable.

'Make a difference'

The standards place binding duties on the public sector and some private companies, such as phone and water firms, so people can use Welsh while receiving services.

They were the centrepiece of the Welsh Language Measure which was designed to strengthen the language when it was passed by the Welsh assembly in 2011.

Plaid Cymru Welsh language spokesperson Simon Thomas said: "The government and the language commissioner seem to be looking at alternative ends of the telescope and this suggests that we may face many more months of delay.

"We need an explanation about what went wrong and we must move quickly to achieve the standards. It's surprising that we are in this dilemma."

The commissioner, Meri Huws, published 37 draft standards in November after holding a non-statutory consultation over the summer.

But Mr Andrews found some were contradictory and many appeared to be "unreasonable or disproportionate".

He told BBC Wales: "It wasn't about utility companies or any other group, it was question of standards that would be reasonable and could be held to be reasonable in court, whether they were applying to private companies, the public sector or indeed the third sector."

Responding to his decision, Ms Huws said: "The minister's officials and my officials will now work together in order to develop a set of standards which will ensure that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language in Wales.

"I welcome the minister's commitment to work towards the target of imposing standards before the end of 2014, and making them specifically applicable to bodies, as well as his desire to work with my office to realise this."

The 2011 measure wound up the former Welsh Language Board and created the office of commissioner.

Ms Huws, the first commissioner, was previously chair of the board.

John Walter Jones, chief executive of the Welsh Language Board until 2003, questioned the need for the role of language commissioner.

He told BBC Radio Wales the campaign needed more supporters like Welsh sports personalities George North and Becky James to encourage use of the language rather than laws.

"It's people like them that we need on board, not necessarily Welsh speakers. You should assume their support," he said.

"What we want to garner is the support of the non Welsh speaker and I don't think that by going down the route of legislation and the 'thou shalt' approach are we going to get them on board."

‘More supporters, not laws’ call for Welsh language campaign

From the BBC Wales News web-site, 26 February 2013

John Walter Jones, chief executive of the Welsh Language Board until 2003, said campaigners need more supporters like sports personalities George North and Becky James to encourage use of the language rather than laws.

"It's people like them that we need on board, not necessarily Welsh speakers. You should assume their support," he told BBC Radio Wales.

"What we want to garner is the support of the non Welsh speaker and I don't think that by going down the route of legislation and the 'thou shalt' approach are we going to get them on board."

Welsh language rally marks 50 years since Trefechan Bridge protest

From the BBC Mid Wales news web-site, 5 February 2013

Welsh language campaigners have staged a rally in Aberystwyth to mark 50 years since their group tried to bring the town to a standstill with its first protest.

Members of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg (Welsh Language Society) sat in the middle of a main road in the town across Trefechan bridge in 1963.

The society says about 500 turned out for the anniversary event.

A theatre production in Aberystwyth marked the anniversary.

The bridge protest was the first of dozens to be staged by Cymdeithas over the following decades.

Gwilym Tudur was one of the protesters who sat in the middle of the road on Trefechan bridge on 2 February, 1963, to raise awareness about the lack of official status for the Welsh language at the time.

He said sitting in the road on a busy Saturday afternoon was never part of the plan, but it attracted attention.

"The locals didn't like it very much," said Mr Tudur.

"It hadn't been planned very well - it hadn't been planned at all, so people didn't know what was happening.

"We blocked the traffic which was quite serious and quite dangerous really.

"There was one post office van which kept revving and trying to drive through us, so it could have turned out worse, I suppose."

Society chair Robin Farrar said: "I don't like to think what would have happened to the Welsh language had protestors not been ready to take a stand, to break the law and take responsibility over the past 50 years.

"We must continue to take action today in order to ensure that Welsh has a future as a living community language, not merely a symbolic minority language."

To mark the 50th anniversary of the Trefechan bridge protest, Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru is staging a theatrical production in Welsh on the streets of Aberystwyth.

Five hundred people are expected to attend the event on Sunday called Y Bont (The Bridge).

The mobile performance starts at Aberystwyth Arts Centre before moving around Aberystwyth's streets and cafes.

The sell-out performance combines various media so the audiences can experience live performance, enjoy video clips at various venues and get a sense of the thrill and tension of the original protest.

More than 60 students from Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol (National Welsh-medium College), Glamorgan University, Aberystwyth University and University of Wales Trinity Saint David's..

The commemorations come as census results suggest the use of the Welsh language is declining even in its traditional heartlands.

They revealed there had been a fall in the number of places where over half the population can speak Welsh

There are 157 council wards with over 50% of residents who are Welsh speakers in 2011, compared to 192 in 2001.

Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg accused the Welsh government of failing to halt the decline of Welsh speaking communities.

A Welsh government spokesperson admitted it needed to do more to "promote and facilitate" the language.

Census figures released by the Office for National Statistics in December showed an overall drop of 2% in the number of people who speak Welsh to 19% of the population in Wales.

It also suggested Welsh was now a minority language in two heartlands, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion.

Scientists strive to save dying spoken language of Jesus

From the rt.com web-site, 28 January 2013

British scientists are attempting to preserve the Aramaic language spoken by Jesus and tied to Hebrew and Arabic.

Professor of linguistics at the University of Cambridge, Geoffrey Khan, has begun a quest to record the ancient language that's been around for three thousand years before it finally disappears.

Prof Khan decided to record the language after speaking to a Jew from Erbil in northern Iraq. *"It completely blew my mind,"* Khan told Smithsonian.com.

"To discover a living language through the lips of a living person, it was just incredibly exhilarating," he added.

By recording some of the remaining native Aramaic speakers, the linguist hopes to preserve the 3,000-year-old language on the verge of extinction. Speakers can be found in different parts of the world, from America to Iraq.

Over the past twenty years Prof. Khan has published several important books on the previously undocumented dialects of Barwar, Qaraqosh, Erbil, Sulemaniyya and Halabja, all areas in Iraq, as well as Urmi and Sanandaj, in Iran. He is also working on a web-based database of text and audio recordings that allows word-by-word comparisons across dozens of Aramaic dialects, Smithsonian.com reported.

Aramaic which belongs to the Semitic family of languages is known for its use in large sections of the biblical books of Daniel and Ezra. It is also the main language of Rabbinic Judaism's key text, the Talmud. Parts of the ancient Dead Sea scrolls were written in Aramaic

The language was used in Israel from 539 BC to 70 AD. According to linguists it was most likely spoken by Jesus.

Half of India's 1600 languages yet to be traced

Ramaninder K.Bhatia, from the Times of India web-site, 21 Feb 2013

VADODARA: February 21 is the International Mother Tongue Day, chosen after the date in 1952 when students demonstrating for recognition of their language as one of two national languages of then Pakistan were killed in Dhaka.

In India, the day arrives with both, bad as well as good news.

Concluding his ambitious marathon Peoples' Linguistic Survey of India,(PLSI) which took four years of field work preceded by nearly 15 years of conceptualization and planning, Prof Ganesh Devy, the Sahitya Akademi award winner, literary critic and founder of the Tribal Academy at Tejgarh declares that out of 1,600-odd languages listed in the 1961 survey of India, they have been able to trace not more than 850 languages during their survey. The survey was initiated by Vadodara-based Bhasha Research and Publication Centre founded by Prof Devy.

Zambia grapples with language challenge

From the Deutsche Welle web-site in English, www.dw.de, 14 February 2013

Almost 50 years after independence from Britain, English is still Zambia's main official language. But the government has now promised an overhaul, giving more priority to local languages.

"The world is English" is a common saying in Zambia and many Zambian parents evidently believe the sooner their children learn to speak English the better.

Yet their country has a rich linguistic heritage and seven out of an estimated 70 local languages have official status: Bemba, Nyanja, Lozi, Tonga, Kaonde, Luvale and Lunda.

Spoken language is far more than just a medium for day-to-day communication. It is also a vehicle for handing down sayings, teachings and even wisdom from one generation to the next.

Many people will find it truly alarming that Zambia now has a generation of young people who haven't mastered any language properly. They can't speak their mother tongue and their command of English is faulty.

Nine-year-old Natasha Banda from northern Zambia can't speak any of her country's local languages. "My mum never taught me my traditional language," she told DW. "I am just sitting at the table and they are speaking this certain language, I am not sure (which). All I know is English," she said.

Phylis Chibuye, a mother of two small children, believes parents need to expose their offspring to both English and local languages, but need to keep the balance right. "I always ensure that when we are at home we speak our local language," she said.

Mweetwa Maimbolwa works for Zambia's Ministry of Education and evidently believes the problem is not as serious as many might fear. He said that the country needs "to ensure we have a program where local languages will be used as a medium of communication from grade one to twelve."

Global language

So how did Zambia's local languages end up languishing in the shadows? Friday Mulenga is a historian at the University of Zambia. He explains that Bemba, Lozi and Tonga were unacceptable as national languages and English was therefore accepted as the best possible compromise.

"English is just a language which we use to instruct pupils in schools and students in colleges," he said. Rising to the language's defense, he added "If parents don't teach their children their mother tongue, it is not the fault of English. English is a global language, we need it whether you like it or not!"

Zambia is governed by President Michael Sata's Patriotic Front party, which was swept to power in elections in 2011. The party's general secretary Wynter Kabimba said that the country's education system was still steeped in colonialism and did not meet the challenges of a developing country. The government, he added, intended to change this.

Local Zambian media reported on Thursday, 14 February that the government had launched a revised school curriculum under which English would be the language of instruction from grade five (age 11) upwards. Primary teaching for younger children would be in one of the official seven local languages.

New dictionary preserves fading Mien language and culture

By Stepehen Magagnini, from the Sacramento Bee, 18 February 2013, on-line edition

More than 200 Mien refugees from across California poured into south Sacramento on Saturday to hear from the man they hope will save their ancient language.

Herbert Purnell, an American missionary and linguist, spoke of his 26-year journey to compile the comprehensive Mien-English dictionary, an 855-page compendium of more than 5,600 words, 28,000 phrases and 2,100 cultural notes laced with myths, poetry and ceremonies.

Dozens of Mien seemed in awe that the 78-year-old scholar could speak their language. They shelled out $32 apiece for the hard-bound volume and lined up to have him sign it at the Iu-Mien Community Services office in the Lemon Hill neighborhood.

They hope it will become the Bible of a culture they say is fading fast in the United States, where their children and grandchildren are steeped in English and western ways.

"Thank you for devoting your life to the Mien people," said translator Koy Saephan. "Identity is not stable in the face of assimilation. I don't think our culture will last beyond this generation."

For centuries the Mien, who originated in central-eastern China and migrated to Southeast Asia, passed on their history and beliefs orally. They fled Communist Laos and settled in the United States in the 1970s and '80s after the Vietnam War. But they've struggled to hang on to the language and traditions, including animist beliefs that rely on shamans, or spirit healers, to cure ailments of body and soul, and guide spirits into the afterlife.

Chiem-Seng Yaangh, one of the first Mien to earn a doctorate, said he and his wife speak Mien to their three teenagers, "but it's a losing battle. They talk English to us, we talk Mien to them, but eventually we forget."

Yaangh is one of several Mien scholars who helped Purnell compile the dictionary. He said "it's one piece of the puzzle to preserve the Mien language worldwide."

In introducing Purnell, Yaangh said: "Here's a non-Mien who's dedicated his life to the Mien as a labor of love. Join me in keeping the Mien language alive. It's not hopeless. It's a glimpse of what's possible."

The Mien – often Iu-Mienh in their own language – "will tell you they are the original Chinese, dating back 4,000 years," said Yaangh.

They originated around the city of Nanjing, but according to legend were forced to leave when drought ravaged China.

"To survive, the Mien people crossed the sea in seven boats, and during our exodus, we were so hungry we tore up the Mien books to eat, and that's how we lost our written language," Yaangh said. "It's a story we've told for centuries."

In about 1400 A.D., the Mien sailed down the Chinese coast to Guongdong province, then spread across China and into Vietnam, Laos and Thailand, Purnell said.

The Mien were able to preserve their spoken language "because we lived in isolation in the mountains of Laos," Yaangh said.

But during the Vietnam War, the Mien, along with the Hmong, were recruited by the CIA's jungle army to battle the Communists. When Laos fell, thousands of Mien fled to Thai refugee camps. About 35,000 crossed another sea, Yaangh said, to start over in the United States.

Today about 12,000 Mien live in the Sacramento area, Yaangh said, making it the Mien capital of the United States.

In the 1950s, a linguist, William Smalley of the American Bible Society, worked with other missionaries in Southeast Asia to create the first romanized Mien script, Purnell said.

"That script was used by a small community of Mien Christians, but other Mien weren't interested," he said.

In 1982, 80 Mien leaders met in Portland, Ore., to create a new romanized, nonsectarian Mien script to help the Mien become more literate, said Purnell.

There are more than 1 million Mien in China, so one of the Portland leaders wrote a letter to Mien in China, Purnell said. He didn't know where to send the letter, but as luck would have it, he bumped into a woman at the post office who was headed to China and agreed to take it.

The woman went to Beijing's minorities university, stopped a Hmong woman and showed her the picture.

"The Hmong lady shook her head 'no' but pointed to a nearby apartment where the woman found professor Bienh, the foremost Mien scholar in China," Purnell said. "He invited four Mien from the U.S. to work on it, and they brought me as their linguist."

For 26 years, Purnell worked on the dictionary. At one point, he lost everything in a fire, but two of his Mien consultants still had drafts.

The dictionary contains terms such as *ling daan ndie* – a magic herb the Mien thought could restore a corpse to life – and *baac-baac*, an adverb that means deliberately.

The Mien alphabet is based on English letters, but isn't pronounced the same, so the dictionary has a pronunciation key. The next step is to create an English-Mien dictionary.

The existing dictionary was published by the Center for Lao Studies in San Francisco, which sold 150 copies at Purnell's appearance. A dozen were purchased by Randy Saechao and his wife, Nai, of the Mien First Baptist Church of Oroville. Tzeng Saechao, who works for the Merced City School District, bought eight copies.

The Iu-Mien Community Services agency purchased copies for its free Iu Mien classes on Monday and Tuesday nights.

Fay Saechao, a UC Davis graduate who co-chairs the Iu Mien Student Conference, said: "It's not only a dictionary, it's a history of who we are. I hope to keep this book forever and pass it on to my kids someday."

Zimbabwe: mother languages and identity

From the Herals, quoted on AllAfrica web-site, 13 February 2013

DO Zimbabweans look down on their mother languages? If that is the case, can we then say that we are facing an identity crisis? What do you call yourself if you cannot write and speak your own mother language? What is your major language of communication at home and in other spheres? If your mother tongue plays second fiddle, is it progressive or it is retrogressive?

Before the brickbats are hurled at me, think carefully and answer the questions and then revisit some of the most recent statistics we have on the state of our mother languages - not just Shona and Ndebele.

One of the highlights of the draft constitution that was recently passed by Parliament is that 16 languages in Zimbabwe will be recognised as official languages?

For argument's sake, I will use Wikipedia's definition of official language since it is inclusive: "An official language is a language that is given a special legal status in a particular country, state, or other jurisdiction. Typically a country's official language refers to the language used within its government - its courts, parliament, administration and so on - to run its operations and conduct its business. Since "the means of expression of a people cannot be changed by any law", the term "official language" does not typically refer to the language used by a people or country, but by its government".

Which would mean that if the draft constitution is adopted by the people, these 16 languages, among them Shona, Ndebele, Kalanga, Shangaan, Tonga, Venda, Nambya, Tswana will be used by Government and its various arms - the courts, parliament, administration, etc.

This is quite a task considering that with the exception of English, which has enjoyed the official language status for more than a century, the implementation of such a legal framework for other languages will not be as easy as it sounds on paper.

At face value, it sounds very easy and doable to achieve such an enviable task, but when we see a majority of meetings around the country addressed in English, how will the language section be implemented?

This statement is not different from what Christians wanted - that the constitution clearly spells out that Zimbabwe is a Christian country.

Manx: Bringing a language back from the dead

By Rob Crossan, from BBC News web-site, 31 January 2013

Road signs, radio shows, mobile phone apps, novels - take a drive around the Isle of Man today and the local language is prominent.

But just 50 years ago Manx seemed to be on the point of extinction.

"If you spoke Manx in a pub on the island in the 1960s, it was considered provocative and you were likely to find yourself in a brawl," recalls Brian Stowell, a 76-year-old islander who has penned a Manx-language novel, The Vampire Murders, and presents a radio show on Manx Radio promoting the language every Sunday.

The language itself has similarities with the Gaelic tongues spoken in the island's neighbours, Ireland and Scotland. A century ago, "Moghrey mie" would have been commonly heard instead of good morning on the island.

"In the 1860s there were thousands of Manx people who couldn't speak English," says Stowell. "But barely a century later it was considered to be so backwards to speak the language that there were stories of Manx speakers getting stones thrown at them in the towns.

"I learnt it myself from one of the last surviving native speakers back in the 1950s."

Recession in the mid 19th Century forced many Manx residents to leave the island to seek work in England. And there was a reluctance among parents to pass the language down through the generations, with many believing that to have Manx as a first language would stifle job opportunities overseas.

There was a decline in the language. By the early 1960s there were perhaps as few as 200 who were conversant in the tongue. The last native speaker, Ned Maddrell, died in 1974.

The decline was so dramatic that UNESCO declared the language extinct. But the grim prognosis coincided with a massive effort at revival. Spearheaded by activists like Stowell and driven by lottery funding and a sizeable contribution (currently £100,000 a year) from the Manx government, the last 20 years have had a huge impact.

Now there is even a Manx language primary school in which all subjects are taught in the language, with more than 60 bilingual pupils attending. Manx is taught in a less comprehensive way in other schools across the island.

In an island where 53% of the population were born abroad, it's perhaps surprising that there seems to be as much enthusiasm among British immigrants for Manx language as there is among native Manx people.

"These days it's actually come-overs' like me [the local term for people who have come to the island from other parts of the British Isles] who have more interest in Manx than the locals," says Rik Clixby, a music blogger who moved to the island a decade ago from Middlesbrough in order to marry his university sweetheart.

"It's never going to be at the point where you will hear a whole pub full of people talking in Manx," says Clixby. "But it's becoming more high profile. I'm really interested in learning the language and it's good to see articles now being written in Manx in the local newspapers - not that I can understand more than a few words.

"But it seems to be more of a passion among people who have come here from elsewhere. 'Come-overs' like me are looking for a cultural

identity and, now they've found one here, are particularly attached to it."

Donna Long, a lifelong resident of the island, has four sons who all attend the Manx-language school. She thinks that having her children learn Manx as well as English is a hugely positive experience for them.

"Our friends think that it's a slightly eccentric decision to send all our boys there but they all really enjoy it," she says.

"The best thing is that it will hopefully unlock their brain to learn other languages easily too. They were all completely bilingual in Manx and English by the age of six.

"I don't think Manx will ever be useful outside of the island but I certainly think that in terms of getting jobs, if they do stay on the island - particularly in the public sector - then attending this little jewel of a school and being fluent in Manx can never be a disadvantage."

Mexican Constitution to be translated into 10 indigenous languages

From the Voice of Russia web-site, 5 February 2013

The Mexican government has decided to have the country's constitution translated into 10 indigenous languages, the Education Ministry has announced.

On the first Monday of February Mexicans mark the anniversary of their Constitution.

The authorities believe the translation will help the country's indigenous population to better integrate into the country's economic and social life, develop their mother tongues and give them a bigger role in the life of their country.

Iranian Kurdistan: Restriction on use of minority languages

From the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (www.unpo.org), 23 January 2013

The Iranian government has once again restricted the use of minority languages in the country. Kurdish teachers have been told to refrain from using any other language than Persian at the schools. -

The Iranian government's recent restrictions on the use of minority languages are in clear violation of the constitution, says the country's opposition Green Movement.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the Coordination Council of the Green Path of Hope, an important body within the movement, voiced its criticism of government measures aimed at curbing the use of Kurdish in the Province of Kermanshah.

The statement, which addresses the Iranian people, is in response to a leaked Education Ministry letter that calls on teachers to refrain from using any language other than Persian at schools in Kermanshah Province, where the majority of the population speak Kurdish. The letter, which is dated 29 December 2012 and marked "confidential," is signed by Jalal Amini, the head of Education Ministry's Kermanshah bureau.

The Coordination Council said that the move was a clear breach of the Iranian constitution's Article 15, which designates Persian as the "official and shared language of Iran," but at the same time allows for the use of local languages in press, media the education system.

The Council called the Education Ministry's move "provocative" and went on to add: "This is despite the fact that preserving and strengthening the security and national unity of the country and [its] territorial integrity necessitate the realisation of the fundamental rights of all citizens, while identifying and guaranteeing the rights of all ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities."

"Such actions are against human rights norms, the articles of the constitution, the country's international obligations, and the will of the majority of Iranians from all ethnicities, languages and religions," the statement continued.

Such actions, the Council members argue, ultimately weaken solidarity, national unity and the country's national interests.

According to a 2010 report by the International Federation for Human Rights, Iranian Kurds suffer from discrimination and their plight has not improved since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

They have suffered harsh political oppression throughout their struggle for their rights and have been denied their political, economic and cultural rights, including their right to use their own language. For Sunni Kurds, their right to freedom of religion has also been violated ever since the revolution.

Despite some improvements in Kurdish rights during the presidency of Mohammad Khatami, the ascent to power of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005 saw a further suppression of Kurdish rights.

5. Appeals, News and Views from Endangered Communities

Petition to save Australia's Aboriginal cultural heritage sites

The following petition is being circulated in response to a plan to review the legal protection of Australia's Aboriginal cultural heritage sites; the petition is run by the campaigning group AVAAZ. See the following link:

http//:www.avaaz.org/en/petition/Save_Australias_Aboriginal_Cultural_Heritage/?email

Frisian dialects in the *World of Languages*

From Prof Tjeerd de Graaf, 18 August 2013

In September 2013 the new building of the Frisian Museum in Ljouwert/Leeuwarden will be opened. One of the special expositions there is "Ferhaal fan Fryslân" (Story of Fryslân), which contains material about the Frisian language and culture. One item is devoted to historical sound recordings, made in 1928 by the German linguist and field worker Theodor Siebs. He had great interest in and published important books about the Frisian language and its history. During a few weeks in Fryslân he recorded more than twenty dialects, such as from Hylpen (Hindeloopen), Skylge (Terschelling) and Skiermuontseach (Schiermonnikoog), which in that time showed much more regional variation than at present. Due to the standardisation of the Frisian language and the influence of the state language Dutch some of these dialects disappeared. The same holds for the Frisian dialects of Germany, where for instance the last speaker of Wangeroog Frisian (on one of the German Wadden islands) has been recorded by Siebs. Since then the interesting acoustic data about these extinct and highly endangered languages are available on historical gramophone records in the Berliner Lautarchiv, the sound archive of the Humboldt University.

For more than 20 years Tjeerd de Graaf, research fellow at the Fryske Akademy and the European Mercator Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning, has been working on the reconstruction and study of endangered languages and sound archives. His interest in this topic started when he got hold of the old recordings made by Siebs and contacted the Berliner Lautarchiv, in that time in the German Democratic Republic. He was invited by Prof. Dieter Mehnert, phonetician at the Humboldt University to visit this archive and together they started joint projects on endangered archives, most of them in Russia. Later he got digital copies of the old Frisian recordings, which will soon be shown at the special exposition in the Frisian Museum.

In the future the Berliner Lautarchiv will be part of the new Humboldt-Forum, which will be situated within the rebuilt Berlin Palace. The reconstruction work for this palace, which was destroyed during and after the war, started this summer and it will become a fascinating centre in the middle of Berlin, showcasing the world's cultures and art forms from ancient times to the present day. One of the initiatives taken by the organisers is the creation of a section "Welt der Sprachen" (World of Languages), an new library format with interactive components related to specific topics such as Language and Identity, Multilingualism, Languages of the World and Endangered Languages. It will be important for Frisian institutions, such as the Fryske Akademy, the Frisian Museum and the Provincial Library and Archive to follow this development with great interest: in Fryslân similar plans could probably be realized. In the near future Tjeerd de Graaf is going to discuss these plans with his colleague in the Foundation for Siberian Cultures, Prof. Dr.Michael Dürr, deputy-director of the Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin (the largest public library in Germany) and main organiser of the "Welt der Sprachen".

For information about the Humboldt-Forum, see: http://www.humboldt-forum.de/

Photo from the website

https://picasaweb.google.com/111275366861645401960/201307BerlinHumboldtForum?authkey=Gv1sRgCLPky8qHwNWVaw#

Declaration in relation to the political offensive against the use of Catalan by the authorities of the Kingdom of Spain

The SOCS is a scientific society that brings together scholars in sociolinguistics from the Catalan-speaking territories. As such, we have felt that it is our duty to inform the scientific community that the Kingdom of Spain is in breach of several international treaties that concern the protection and respect of cultural and linguistic diversity as well as minority language rights, especially in relation to the Catalan language. This statement is sent for informative purposes to international scientific societies and journals so that they contribute to disseminate the information and also manifest their concern to international organizations and bodies devoted to the safeguard of human rights and cultural heritage.

Several public institutions of the Kingdom of Spain have launched a political offensive against the Catalan language. The offensive is led by the central government, the regional governments of Aragon, the Balearic Islands and Valencia, as well as some municipalities. In all cases, these policies and the various legislative and administrative initiatives are carried out by the Popular Party, which is one of Spain's two major parties in both the central government and in most autonomous regions and local authorities.

In the Balearic Islands and Valencia, where the Catalan language is compulsory in education, the regional governments now promote a Catalan-Spanish-English trilingual model intended to disrupt the use of Catalan as a medium of instruction in many schools. The Balearic government is exerting pressure on teachers and parents to increase the use of Spanish in the classroom. It has also recently eliminated the requirement of proficiency in Catalan to work in the regional administration. The Valencian regional government pursues the same objective through passive resistance: it presently dispenses only 25% of the demand by families who demand an education in Catalan to which they are entitled to by law. However, the aspect that displays more blatantly the political intention to undermine the teaching and use of Catalan is the concerted strategy to promote divergent linguistic varieties. In Valencia, the regional government has for years treated "Valencian" as a separate language to the point of banning the use of the term "Catalan" in different contexts and not recognizing university degrees in "Catalan Philology" awarded by Valencian universities or certificates of knowledge of the Catalan language issued by other authorities and schools. On 19 June 2013, the parliamentary Popular group in the Valencian Parliament presented a proposal urging the Real Academia Española to change the definition of "valenciano" in its dictionary, arguing that it is a language separate from Catalan. In the Balearic Islands, the regional government has declared the intention to scrutinize textbooks to include "Balearic" colloquialisms. In Aragon, the parliament has just passed a language law that proposes a new name for the Catalan "Lengua Aragonesa Propia del Área Oriental" 'Eastern Aragonese Language'. This initiative has resulted in concerted protests among linguists and scholars from around the world. [1]

In 2007, the regional government of Valencia illegally decreed the closure of the broadcasts of TV3, the most widely watched Catalan television channel, in its territory. Currently, the Spanish Parliament is processing a state-wide educational reform bill that aims to marginalize Catalan from the curriculum in the regions where it is currently on an equal official footing with Spanish (in Catalonia, Valencia and the Balearic Islands). [2]

In Valencia and Aragon, right-wing agitation groups have a long tradition of sabotages to local cultural and political organizations, and assaults and threats to writers and Catalan activists. In recent years reports of police harassment by citizens who claim false accusations and threats for speaking Catalan have increased. In none of these cases policemen have been sanctioned by the Spanish judicial authorities, which extends amongst the population an impression of having no effective legal protection.

The international academic community knows that Catalan is the language spoken in the Pyrenees Orientales in France, in the state of Andorra, in the Princi-

pality of Catalonia, in the Eastern Aragon Strip, in Valencia, in the Balearic Islands and in the

enclaves of Alghero (Italy) and el Carxe (Spain). The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages commits authorities (Articles 7.b and 7.1.e) to respect the geographical area of each language and the relations between the regions in which it is spoken. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (20053 and 20084) has recommended Spain to apply a specific legal framework to protect the Catalan and Aragonese languages spoken in Aragon, using exactly these names. In the third report of the Expert Committee (24 October 2012), it called on authorities to maintain the current level of legal protection for Catalan and Aragonese before the current law was passed. In particular, given that Spain must deliver its fourth report on the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages to the Council of Europe in July 2013, we ask that the Board and its Committee of experts carry out a thorough investigation over the policies undertaken by regional governments regarding the Catalan language. The aforesaid actions also contravene the spirit of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. [5] We believe that the Kingdom of Spain operates in contravention to the spirit of the fundamental rights to cultural diversity contained in the international legal order. In particular, the Kingdom of Spain operates contrary to UNESCO's mission to "create the conditions for dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples, based upon respect for commonly shared values" and "contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information." At the same time, it ignores the recommendations emanating from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, mainly from the Oslo Recommendations [6] and the Recommendations of The Hague. [7]

We believe it is necessary that the international community takes a stance in the face of the fact that the Spanish authorities flagrantly pursue the weakening of the linguistic vitality of the Catalan-speaking community through the implementation of policy measures that impede communication between users and the diffusion of cultural production and media in Catalan. At the same time, the existence of groups causing unrest and sabotage in complicity with these policies should be cause for concern.

In view of these developments, we ask scientific bodies and scientific societies of the world to send their requests to UNESCO and the Council of Europe so that they investigate and, where appropriate, formally condemn the policies that clearly seek to harm the Catalan-speaking community.

Barcelona, 4th July 2013

Notes

1. Manifiesto de la comunidad científica internacional a favor del reconocimiento y dignificación de las lenguas minoritarias de Aragón. http://www.roldedeestudiosaragoneses.org/manifiesto-de-la-comunidad- cientifica-internacional-a-favor-del-reconocimiento-y-dignificacion-de-las-lenguas-minoritarias-de- aragon-93/
2. http://www.mecd.gob.es/servicios-al-ciudadano-mecd/participacion-publica/lomce.html 3
3. http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/report/EvaluationReports/SpainECRML1_es.pdf
4. http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/report/EvaluationReports/SpainECRML2_es.pdf, and also Recommendation 5 of the 3rd Report (http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/report/EvaluationReports/SpainECRML3_en.pdf, 24 October 2012, ref. ECRML (2012) 5, p. 16.
5. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001325/132540e.pdf
6. The Oslo Recommendations regarding the Linguistic Rights of National Minorities, http://www.osce.org/hcnm/67531
7. The Hague Recommendations regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities, http://www.osce.org/hcnm/32180

Letter template

Ms. Irina Bokova

Director General

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

7, place de Fontenoy 75352 Paris 07 SP France

Dear Madam,

I am writing on behalf of NAME OF ORGANIZATION. We have been informed by the Catalan Society of Sociolinguistics of recent developments in matters of language policy in Spain, particularly in relation to the Catalan language. We fear that Spain may be on a regressive course in relation to its management of linguistic and cultural diversity. We understand that regressive policies are put in place in the areas of education, the media and even in the standardization of the language.

We would be thankful if you could do everything in your power so that UNESCO investigates whether Spain is contravening UNESCO's fundamental principles as well as the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which Spain has signed.

As you know, the international community has been working for decades to promote intercultural understanding through cultural and educational policies. It is also our duty to send clear messages to those who at times seek to opt out of the principles, declarations and legal provisions that we have given ourselves.

Yours sincerely,

Judeo-Spanish (Ladino) to be taught at University College London

The Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at UCL is delighted to be offering a new introductory course on the Judeo-Spanish language and its literature starting in October 2013.

Judeo-Spanish (also known as Ladino) is the traditional language of the descendants of the Jews expelled from Spain in 1492. It flourished in the Balkans, Greece, Turkey, and parts of North Africa and developed a rich literary culture. Today it is a highly endangered language with a very low rate of transmission. The course, which is open to the general public as well as to UCL students, is the sole one of its kind currently offered in the UK and one of only a small number of Judeo-Spanish language courses available worldwide. It is designed to equip students with basic grammatical structures and introduce them to various literary genres including poetry,

theatre and narrative. The course will consist of lectures, interactive language work in class, and reinforcement through texts of both folk and religious literature as well as the writings of renowned Judeo-Spanish authors. The class will be taught over two terms (October-March) on Tuesdays 2-4pm. If you would like any more details about the course, please do get in touch with us at jewish.studies at

ucl.ac.uk. To register, go to our website www.ucl.ac.uk/hebrewjewish and click on the following links: Students -> Continuing Education -> click for more info -> Application form.

New technology: a lifeline for endangered languages

By William Brennan, from 'Elements' in on-line edition of The New Yorker. 12 June 2013

During a gruelling interview at the All Things Digital conference, on May 28th, Walt Mossberg cut off the Apple C.E.O. Tim Cook mid-sentence to raise an uncomfortable subject for the company. "There is a level of control that you exercise—curation, one might say, not just in your app store but in other things," Mossberg said. He then gave an example: Apple's mobile operating system, iOS, offers a single keyboard, in a tightly controlled number of languages, whereas Google's Android, iOS's biggest competitor in the phone market, allows user-developed changes—including multilingual keyboards—to be integrated with the operating system. With Android, "third parties can actually give you a choice," Mossberg said. "Have you given any thought to a little bit less control?" It's a question the endangered-language advocates of FirstVoices, a digital-technology initiative based in British Columbia, have been asking for three years.

Last June, FirstVoices launched an iPhone app that allows indigenous-language speakers to text, e-mail, and chat on Facebook and Google Talk in their own languages. Users can select from keyboards serving more than a hundred languages; the app supports every indigenous language in North America and Australia. (By default, iOS supports just two: Cherokee and Hawaiian.) The app accomplishes this through mimicry. When a text box is selected, a keyboard identical in form and function to iOS's appears. The keyboard includes the characters necessary to write in, say, Cree, and follows a layout unique to the chosen language. (Cree's equivalent of QWERTY would be ᐃᐱᑎᑭᒋᒉ). But the keyboards cannot exist outside of FirstVoices's app. You can't use it while surfing the Web; using it for e-mail is complicated. In this sense, the keyboards, like many of the languages they represent, are marginalized.

It is widely believed that the world's languages number about seven thousand, with half of those predicted to die off by the end of this century. The threats to these languages are many—globalization, political and religious turmoil, climate change, disease—but, in recent years, awareness of the impending cultural loss has grown, along with efforts to stop it. A year ago, Google announced its Endangered Languages Project, a global crowdsourcing initiative that hopes to collect documents and recordings of endangered languages directly from speakers. FirstVoices, meanwhile, has provided language teachers and learners in British Columbia—home to sixty per cent of Canada's indigenous languages—with online games, dictionaries, and now, the chat app.

The app débuted in February, 2012, before four hundred people, at a conference for the First Nations Technology Council. Its first official messages were exchanged by Steven Point, then the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, and Gwendolyn, his wife, who are speakers ofHalq'eméylem. "The first message was, 'Hi, I'm at the store. Is there anything you need?' " Peter Brand, the coördinator of FirstVoices, told me in excitement. "And she says, 'Yeah, pick me up some fish.' It was just a shopping list!" Ordinariness is an integral feature of the app. The language of legends and spiritual ceremonies, after all, can only do so much to save a culture; most of the responsibility falls on everyday communication.

David Underwood, a young SENĆOŦEN speaker, told me that he uses the app most often with his uncle, John Elliott, a co-founder of FirstVoices, and with Elliott's son, PENÁWEN, who, like Underwood, learned SENĆOŦEN during an apprenticeship with an elder, just four years ago.The Master-Apprentice Program, administered by the First Peoples' Cultural Council, which also oversees FirstVoices, aims to create new, fluent speakers of British Columbian native languages through immersion. For the young people making that leap—Underwood calls this a "personal revolution"—the ability to compose your thoughts through text as you gain footing in the new language can be edifying. The app, Underwood said, "bridges that gap—that social gap—of the pressures of having to be able to articulate yourself in person, on the spot. Text allows you to compose yourself a bit more."

A keyboard app may fail to impress those who text or e-mail in English (or any of the forty-some other languages whose keyboards are supported by iOS), but it must be seen within the context of the languages it supports, many of which were exclusively oral until a documentation push in the nineteen-seventies. Lorna Williams, the chair of the First Peoples' Cultural Council, created the writing system of her language, Sťáťimcets, in 1973, by changing the Roman script to represent her language's sounds. When the writing system was complete, she sent the details to a man in Hawaii, who modified an electric typewriter so that the language could be typed. The process was painstaking, and it marked a breathtaking technological leap: in the span of two years, Sťáťimcets went from a language of the tongue to one of the IBM Selectric.

The iPhone app launched in 2012, but no Android app has been built yet. Chris Harvey, a linguist who has been making free indigenous-language keyboards since 1995 (his first was for Cree), and who input the app's language data, told me this is because Android poses programming challenges, despite the ability to use custom keyboards through its operating system. (The difficulty of making indigenous-language keyboards for Android is a bit ironic, given Google's efforts with the Endangered Languages Project.) Of course, even on the iPhone, the app isn't perfect. To send an e-mail or text message, you have to write the entire message in a form in the app and then copy and paste it into the field you'll actually use to send. (Again, this is due to Apple's restrictions on incorporating third-party keyboards into iOS.) When I interviewed one young SENĆOŦEN speaker over Facebook chat on the app, messages were slow to send and receive. Even the app's biggest champions admit its shortcomings: Lorna Williams said it was "not a sophisticated system," while Brand referred to it as "clunky."

Simply embedding endangered languages into the keyboards of smartphones will not save them. But, keeping these languages enmeshed in the fabric of daily life—which, particularly for the newer, younger speakers who are key to these languages' survival, means being a viable way to communicate through technology—is the only way they will have even a slim hope of surviving. One of those new speakers—and texters—will be David Underwood's daughter who, at two and a half, is fluent in English and SENĆOŦEN. Underwood has yet to speak to her in English, he said, and, depending on how you look at it, her first word was either extraordinary or completely unremarkable. "She said 'EWE,' " Underwood told me. "It means 'no.' "

6. Obituaries

Last native speaker of Livonian dies aged 103

By Asya Pereltsvaig, Geocurrents web-site, 11 June 2013; see also 'Endangered Languages in the news' for the terse newspaper report which provoked this blog comment

On June 5, 2013, *The Times* published a brief article on the death of the last speaker of Livonian, Grizelda Kristina, at the age of 103. While it is heartening to see a major popular media outlet taking notice of the issue of language endangerment and death, it is discour-

aging to see even a short piece such as this one riddled with errors, inaccuracies, and misleading statements. For example, the title of the article claims that Ms. Kristina was the "last ever speaker of Livonian"; however, she was actually the last speaker who had *native fluency* in the language. A number of remaining Livonians can be considered *heritage speakers*, as they picked up bits and pieces of the language in their childhood from grandparents or great-grandparents of the pre-war generations. According to the Wikipedia article on the Livonian language:

"There are not very many of them, but all in all, there are a few hundred ethnic Livonians in Latvia now who are interested in their Livonian roots. Some young Livonians not only sing folk-songs in Livonian but even strive at actively using Livonian in everyday communication. One such younger generation Livonian speaker is Julgī Stalte, who performs with the Livonian-Estonian World Music group Tulļi Lum."

The error on the "last ever" speaker of Livonian does appears to be corrected in the first sentence of *The Times* article itself. Yet this same sentence introduces two other major mistakes, on which the remainder of this post will focus. This sentence reads: "The last native speaker of the ancient Baltic language of Livonian has died aged 103"—but calling Livonian (or any other language, for that matter) "ancient" is meaningless, while calling it a "Baltic language" is simply erroneous.

Let's begin with the second issue. In linguistics, "Baltic language" refers to members of a particular language family, that is a grouping of languages descended from a common ancestral tongue. The Baltic family—which is often regarded as forming a branch of the broader Balto-Slavic family within the even larger Indo-European language family—includes two living languages—Latvian and Lithuanian—and one extinct language: Old Prussian.

Note that another national language of a Baltic state, Estonian, is *not* a Baltic language. Instead, Estonian belongs to the Finnic subgrouping within the larger Finno-Ugric language family, which in turns nests within the Uralic family. Finnic languages include Finnish, Karelian, Veps, and other related languages.

Older maps of the Finno-Ugric languages often show Livonian as spoken across much of the coastal area of Latvia, whereas more recent maps of the family often do not show Livonian at all, as it is either too localized to be shown on maps of that scale (hence some of the maps show it with a number rather than a colored area) or because it has long been nearly extinct. The fact that Ms. Kristina, the last native speaker, lived in Canada does not help with mapping the language either.

7. Publications, Book Reviews

At The Foot of The Snows by David Watters, 2011, Seattle, WA: Engage Faith Press, $16.95, 375 pages.

Reviewed by Craig Soderberg

For a brief time—from 1966 to 1976—the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) had the unique privilege of pursuing linguistic fieldwork in the Himalayan kingdom of Nepal and documenting some of endangered languages there. These endangered

languages had no writing systems and were spoken only in isolated pockets of the Himalayas.

SIL was in Nepal under the auspices of Nepal's Tribhuvan University, and their contract was to seek out and live with remote, tribal groups of the mountainous hinterlands—some as yet undiscovered. They were to document Nepal's exotic languages: devising alphabets, writing dictionaries, and making grammatical descriptions available for the use of future language historians and linguists.

Watters researched the 'occupational caste' of the Kham people group who speak a hybrid form of Nepali as their mother tongue, and a notable feature of their language is its inclusion of dozens of Kham verbs governed by Nepali affixes. To understand this creole, one needs not only a good command of both languages but also an innovative imagination.

In English, we distinguish between different kinds of smells—fragrance, stench, aroma, etc. However, the Kham language has only one word for smell, but several ideophones. Rotten meat smells 'chyachya chichi', roasted meat smells 'mhur mhur', and liquor smells 'phang phang'.

In a public speech at the end of his service in Nepal, Watters spoke to a large crowd of Kham speakers and he spoke about their language and what a beautiful thing it was, that even though other people had no regard for it, he thought it was worth something—so much so that he translated the Bible into their language. He said that he did this not to force them to believe—the choice was theirs—but because he could think of no better gift to give them than this.

I recommend this book to anyone considering long term linguistic research and/or applied linguistics. My only problem with the book is that in the Amazon Kindle version of the book, the photos are very tiny and some photo captions don't line up

with the photos.

Breogán's Lighthouse: An anthology of Galician literature. Edited by Antonio Raúl de Toro Santos. Francis Boutle Publishers, 2010.

654 pages. .ISBN 978 1 903427 51 4.

Francis Boutle Publishers are to be congratulated on ploughing the lonely furrow they have chosen: to make accessible the literatures of the smaller languages of Europe to English-speaking readers, without compromising on quantity or quality. We have already reviewed 'Manana's Cloak', their anthllogy of Manx literarture, on these pages; there are several more volumes on Cornish, Norman French of the Channel Islands and others. Now comes this handsome and large volume of writing in Galician.

8. Places to go on the Web

Reviving Yurok: Saving one of California's 90 languages

On 13 June 2013 BBC News On-line posted a report by Alasdair Leithead on the effort to revive Yurok in California:

http://bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-23053593

First Languages Australia

Announcement from Eastern States Aboriginal Languages Group (easternstateslanguages.org.au), November 2012:

Following a lengthy period of consultation and planning, we are pleased to let you know that a national advocacy group for Aborigi-

nal and Torres Strait Islander languages will begin operating from early December. It was decided that this new national body will be known as First Languages Australia.

The aim of this group will be to advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in Australia, through discussions with a broad range of relevant government and non-government departments and organisations.

First Languages Australia will aim to provide a collaborative link between community and the organisations charged with serving them.

On the national level, this is a time of great changes and opportunities, and the members of First Languages Australia will be keen to tackle these challenges as it begins operations, establishing itself with key partners both here and internationally.

Rapping to preserve a nearly extinct Arctic language

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news-magazine-23497131

Nils Rune Utsi is the founding member of Slincraze, a rap group from Maze, a village in northern Norway. They rap in Sami, a language spoken by less than 20,000 people. Their goal is to save their language and culture and to fight stereotypes about the people of the region.

The BBC caught up with Utsi in New York City. He discussed his love of music, his creative process, and why rap could save his region's ancient cultures and traditions.

9. Letter to the Chairman

Nicholas Ostler (President), Foundation for Endangered Languages

Dear Dr. Ostler,

I am the president of the Catalan Society of Sociolinguistics (

http://blogs.iec.cat/socs/). Our executive board has felt it necessary to inform linguists and social scientists around the globe about developments in Spain in relation to language policies. We denounce the renewed persecution of the Catalan language by Spanish authorities, and we attach a declaration providing the details of the matter. [*See Section 4: Appeals – ed*.]

You are probably aware that Spain outlawed the use of Catalan for many centuries up until 1980 in a bid to create cultural uniformity within the country. The memory of General Franco's dictatorship is still fresh amongst most Catalan adults. And there are good reasons to believe that the current

authorities may seek to achieve the same goals through less violent means by taking advantage of the fact that Catalan speakers are demographically in the minority. During the last few years, Spanish authorities have conducted a sustained strategy to decrease education in Catalan, prevent media circulation and broadcasting and even create *ad hoc* regional standards to divide the community. Such behaviour is not deemed acceptable by the international community and is in contravention of UNESCO's fundamental principles as well as the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, all of which Spain has signed.

We would be thankful if you could do everything in your power to disseminate our declaration and/or its contents. There are a number of ways in which we would appreciate your help:

- Publish the declaration in your journal or e-mail list.
- Send a letter to UNESCO or the Council of Europe expressing your concern (a letter template is attached)
- Forward the declaration to colleagues you believe may be especially interested in this issue.

We hope this letter provides an early warning before the situation in Spain deteriorates and develops in loss of cultural and human rights in a way that may send a poor signal to all the countries and organizations working for a future of peace, prosperity and equality.

Yours sincerely
Joan Pujolar, President
Societat Catalana de Sociolingüística
Institut d'Estudis Catalans, C./ Carme 47
08001 Barcelona

10. Forthcoming events

International conference: The Intellectual Benefits of Bilingual Education

Educational Society of the European Regions and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Halliwell Theatre, University of Wales Trinity Saint David

12-14 September 2013

Guest speakers include:

- Professor Jim Cummins, University of Toronto, Canada
- Professor Piet van de Craen, Vrije University, Brussels and the European Council
- Ann Keane, Chief Inspector, Estyn
- Meirion Prys Jones, Network to Promote Language Diversity
- Dr.Julia Barnes, University of Mondragon, Basque Country

For further details, contact Dr.Hywel Glyn Lewis, School of Welsh and Bilingual Studies, University of Wales Trinity Saint David h.lewis at tsd.ac.uk

International Conference: Contested Languages of the Old World

Bangor University, Wales

9-10 September 2013

Only a fraction of European languages listed in the 2010 "UNESCO Atlas of World's Languages in Danger" enjoy some recognition within the state(s) in which they are spoken. There thus remain many European bilinguals who have linguistic rights only in one of their two mother tongues, often not their preferred one.

This international conference will bring together linguists, political scientists, legal experts, writers, activists and other scholars working on the current status and future prospects of such 'contested' languages, as well as on issues of corpus and status planning and how these impact on both speaker communities and the academic world.

- Christopher Moseley, UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger
- Mairead Nic Craith, Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh

School of Linguistics and English Language, Bangor University, College Road, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2DG (clow at bangor.ac.uk)

Conference announcement

On **Friday 13 December 2013,** on the occasion of the end of the research project "Tundra Yukaghir", the **Amsterdam Center for Language and Communication of the University of Amsterdam (ACLC)** will hold a one-day International Conference

"Voices from the Indigenous Siberia, with an Emphasis on Yukaghir"

Programme

chair: Kees Hengeveld, director of the Tundra Yukaghir Project

0915-0945	coffee/tea
0945	Opening by **Cecilia Odé**
1000	Keynote lecture by **Bernard Comrie** (MPI Leipzig): *Is Siberia a linguistic area?*
1100	coffee/tea
1130	**Tjeerd de Graaf** (Fryske Akademy): *Endangered Languages and Traditional Knowledge in Siberia and the Russian Far East*
1200	**Irina Nikolaeva** (SOAS, University of London) and **Dejan Matić** (MPI Nijmegen) *Embedded Questions in Yukaghir*
1230	**Samona Kurilova** (Institute of Humanities, Problems of Minority Peoples of the North, Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Yakutsk) *Pronouns in Kolyma Yukaghir and the Influence of Russian*
1300-1400	lunch
1400	**Eugenie Stapert** (Leiden University) *On Dolgan*
1430	**Mark Schmalz** (Amsterdam University) *Curious Phenomena in Tundra Yukaghir*
1500	**Cecilia Odé** (Amsterdam University) *Tundra Yukaghir Intonation*
1530	coffee/tea
1600	**Tatiana Ignatieva** (Arctic State Institute of Arts and Culture, Yakutsk) and **Cecilia Odé** *Traditional Tundra Yukaghir singing*
1630	**Audovisual presentation** *The Tundra Yukaghir People, Their Culture and Their Environment*
1700	Walk (10 min.) from the VOC-room to the main building of Amsterdam University, Maagdenhuis
1715-1800	Reception for all participants in the Maagdenhuis and visit to an exhibition of photo's by Cecilia Odé
1900	Dinner (restaurant t.b.a.) for speakers and invited guests

Venue:	VOC Room, Oost Indisch Huis, Kloveniersburgwal 48, Amsterdam
Reception:	Maagdenhuis, Spui 21, Amsterdam
Exhibition:	Maagdenhuis, Spui 21, Amsterdam

For all information please contact Cecilia Odé at c.ode@uva.nl
http://www.uva.nl/profiel/c.ode/