Luther, one of two remaining speakers of Kawaiisu

OGMIOS Newsletter 73: — 30 June 2022
ISSN 1471-0382  Editor: Christopher Moseley

Published by:
Foundation for Endangered Languages,
129 High St., Hungerford
RG17 0DL Berkshire, England
OGMIOS Newsletter 73
30 June 2022

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

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

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

Table of Contents

OGMIOS ........................................................................................................................................... 1

1. EDITORIAL .................................................................................................................................. 3

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE FOUNDATION .................................................................................. 3

   Conference for 2022: Albuquerque NM  FEL XXVI 2-4 November ................................................ 3
   CALL FOR REGISTRATIONS ............................................................................................................ 3

3. ENDANGERED LANGUAGES IN THE NEWS .............................................................................. 4

   MEDICINAL KNOWLEDGE VANISHES AS INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES DIE ................................ 4
   THE LAST WORD .......................................................................................................................... 6
   A VANISHING VOICE AT THE SMITHSONIAN ........................................................................... 6
   THE VANISHING VOICES PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT .............................................................. 7

   LIVING-LANGUAGE-LAND: CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH MINORITY AND ENDANGERED LANGUAGES ........................................................................................................ 10

      INTRODUCTION TO THE GOJRI LANGUAGE, BY SHAHID-UR-REHMAN................................. 11
      Preface ....................................................................................................................................... 11
      History of Gojri ........................................................................................................................... 11
      The Modern Era ......................................................................................................................... 13
      Conclusion ............................................................................................................................... 14

4. NEW PUBLICATIONS ................................................................................................................... 14

   New books on endangered languages of India ................................................................................. 14

5. EVENTS ....................................................................................................................................... 15

   Seminar on India’s New Education Policy: implications for endangered languages ..................... 15

6. AN APPEAL ................................................................................................................................... 15

   Surviving genocide: The Man of the Hole ...................................................................................... 15
1. Editorial

In this issue you’ll find the announcement of our next international conference, this time to be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in November 2022. In this, our quarter-century year, it promises to be an exciting event. You’ll see the details below in our ‘Development of the Foundation’ section.

Apart from that, this issue has a decidedly ‘Subcontinental’ flavour! More than the usual amount of news from India.

Chris Moseley

2. Development of the Foundation

Conference for 2022: Albuquerque NM
FEL XXVI 2-4 November

Call for Registrations

Theme: Community ownership of language education for endangered language revitalization

Venue and Date:

- The conference events will take place at the Science and Technology Park Rotunda, at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico, November 2-4, 2022.
- 801 University Blvd SE
- Albuquerque, NM 87106
- https://realestate.unm.edu/science-and-technology-park/meeting-facilities.html

Organization and sponsorship:

- Local organizers: Siri Tuttle and Wafa Hozien, Navajo Technical University
  s.tuttle@navajotech.edu, whozien@navajotech.edu
- Sponsors: Navajo Technical University and the University of New Mexico

Selection Process:

- All speakers must register for the conference
- Abstracts (in English) of up to 600 words will be submitted in PDF format through EasyChair: https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=felxxvi2022
- The FEL Executive Committee will blind-review all abstracts. The abstracts should not contain names, affiliations or email addresses of the authors.

Timeline:

- Abstracts due August 1, 2022.

- Notification of acceptance: September 10, 2022
- Authors of accepted abstracts will be invited to submit an updated version of their abstract for inclusion in the pre-conference proceedings. Updates due: September 20, 2022
- Authors of accepted abstracts confirm attendance/participation: September 20, 2022
- Conference program available: October, 2022
- Please contact Dr. Siri Tuttle, Co-Chair of FEL Albuquerque Conference, s.tuttle@navajotech.edu if you have questions regarding the content of your submission.

More about the Venue:

Sessions will take place in meeting rooms at the UNM’s Science and Technology Park and each session will be attended by up to one hundred (100) registered conference attendees.

Albuquerque is one of the largest cities in the sparsely populated, but stunningly beautiful, state of New Mexico. This state is home to 23 Indigenous tribes: nineteen Pueblos, three Apache tribes and the Navajo Nation. Indigenous languages spoken in these communities belong to the Keresan, Kiowa-Tanoan, and Dene (Athabaskan) language families and also include Zuni and the unique variety of Spanish spoken by descendants of early European immigrants.

The conference will include an optional trip on Day 1 to the organizing institution, Navajo Technical University (NTU) in Crownpoint, New Mexico. 131 miles west of Bee’eldiil dahsinil (Albuquerque), NTU is a fast-growing and innovative tribal university serving Diné and Ashiwi (Navajo and Zuni) students up to the Masters level. Day 1 will conclude with an evening reception at the conference site. Papers and posters will be presented on Days 2 and 3, with a conference dinner on Day 3.

Indigenous and minority language communities have experienced many types and styles of external control and intentional manipulation of their language use. In order to reverse the language shift that has resulted from these practices, communities increasingly turn to different approaches for language learning, looking both to indigenous or traditional methods and to innovative ideas. Making such choices demands community ownership, not just of methods of language learning, but also of the entire infrastructure of language education. In many cases this option is not freely available and is even hindered by those in control (governments, institutions); communities will, in addition, seek ways of successfully enacting their choices.

This radical change will naturally lead to innovative descriptions of language, as well, and these will inevitably change linguistic description and theory.

The conference will address community owned, and alternative forms of, language education and community initiatives
which aim at, or have successfully reversed, language shift resulting from external control of educational methods and systems.

Related questions and sub-themes:

- Traditional learning methods and innovative approaches
- Endangered language learning in state educational systems
- Non-school learning
  - Language nests
  - Master-apprentice schemes
  - Language in traditional culture
  - Re-introducing indigenous languages into family life
  - Endangered languages in sports
  - Endangered languages in journalism
- Critical periods / environments for language learning
- Effective reference and data sources for languages not currently spoken
- Endangered languages and mass media
- Recent achievement and trends in reversing language shift, especially through alternative and innovative models and approaches
- Case studies of endangered language community struggles and outcomes to change or own the language education process, methods and materials
- Using arts and culture to support language maintenance
- Traditional arts and culture as a means for language revitalization
- Education/knowledge transfer through women’s work

Proceedings: Accepted abstracts will be included in the pre-conference proceedings. Authors will be invited to submit full papers after the conference, which will be peer-reviewed for possible inclusion in the FEL Yearbook for 2022, to be published by Brill after the conference.

Accommodation: UNM’s Science and Technology Park is located in the middle of the lively University neighborhood of Albuquerque. Hotel rooms are available with prices ranging from $80 to $300 per night. A block of rooms will be reserved at a nearby hotel for reservation on a first-come, first-serve basis.

REGISTRATION

- All participants must register
- Registration opens soon on [https://www.ogmios.org](https://www.ogmios.org)
- Registration fee includes reception, field trip, reception and conference dinner

Rates for FEL members:

- Concession, Community and Solidarity members: $100
- All other FEL members: $220
- Virtual attendance for FEL members: $20

Rates for Non-members:

- Standard rate: $350
- Virtual attendance for non-members: $50

TRAVEL SUPPORT:

In keeping with our theme of language community leadership, FEL XXVI - 2022 seeks to support participants from endangered language communities. To do this, we are creating a travel support fund to help these participants come to the conference. For more information about receiving support, please write to s.tuttle@navajotech.edu.

FAQ:

- FEL will provide special accommodations upon request to ensure that the conference is accessible and inclusive.
- We encourage organizations and educational institutions to support presentation and attendance by your members at this conference.

COVID PROTOCOLS

New Mexico continues to be very watchful regarding pandemic conditions. To ensure everyone’s safety and wellbeing, FEL will monitor United States Center for Disease Control or CDC guidelines and COVID trends and will notify participants of its vaccination and testing requirements as needed. If, in the very worst case, in-person meeting is not possible, we will work with our IT team to make it possible to share our work virtually.

3. Endangered Languages in the News

Medicinal knowledge vanishes as Indigenous languages die

By Sofia Moutinho, from the Internews Earth Journalism Network

**Davos, Switzerland:** Uldarico Matapi Yucuna, 63, is often called the last shaman of the Matapi, an Indigenous group of fewer than 70 people living along the Miriti-Paraná River in the Colombian Amazon rainforest. His father was a shaman and taught him ancestral knowledge, including how to use plants to treat all kinds of maladies. But Uldarico rejects the title because instead of living with his people, for the past 30
years he has been in Bogotá documenting what is left of this knowledge.

Once a nomadic people, in the 1980s the Matapi were forced to live on a reservation with five other ethnic groups, where traditions and language, already threatened by colonization, withered further. “We are losing the essence of our spiritual knowledge of medicinal plants,” says Uldarico, whose last name is that of his tribe. “A knowledge that cannot translate into other languages.”

A study presented at the 2022 World Biodiversity Forum here last week reveals that many Indigenous groups face Uldarico’s dilemma. By linking linguistic and biological information, the authors show that most Indigenous knowledge about medicinal plants is linked to threatened languages, and that language loss is an even greater danger to the survival of such knowledge than biodiversity loss. “Every time an Indigenous language dies, it’s like a library is burning, but we don’t see it because it’s silent,” says study co-author Rodrigo Cámara Leret, a biologist at the University of Zürich (UZH).

Of the 7000 Indigenous languages still spoken, 40% are in danger of disappearing, according to the United Nations. And 80% of the world’s remaining biodiversity is in Indigenous territories.

In the new study, researchers scoured the literature, including early records by colonizers, to map medicinal plant uses and Indigenous languages in three regions—North America, the northwestern Amazon, and New Guinea. They found about 12,000 medicinal uses for more than 3000 plants, known to people who speak 230 Indigenous languages in these regions. But more than 75% of this knowledge resides in only one of these languages.

Such knowledge is diverse. The Tucano of the Rio Negro in Brazil, for example, use bark from the tree Leptolobium nitens in arrows to paralyze animals they hunt. The Siona people in Colombia and Ecuador apply a milky latex from the tree Euphorbia hirta to treat fungal foot infections.

“The majority of this knowledge is unique,” says Jordi Bascompte, an ecologist at UZH and co-author of the study, which was also published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. “If the language disappears, it’s lost.”

The United Nations lists all Indigenous languages in the western Amazon as endangered—making the accumulated botanical knowledge of those groups endangered too. In North America, endangered languages account for 86% of the unique knowledge about medicinal plants; the figure is 31% in New Guinea, according to the study.

The authors say such knowledge starts to erode even before languages go extinct. In some groups studied, current speakers no longer recognize medicinal plants or don’t know what mixtures to make and how to prepare them, Cámara Leret says.

“‘There are no apprentices,’” he says. “‘With oral traditions, if you don’t tell it to others while you are alive, it disappears.’”

Uldarico adds that translation isn’t enough to transmit his culture’s knowledge of how to use plants to heal. A shaman is like a pharmacist as well as a physician, with knowledge that goes well beyond plant identifications that could be translated or simple matching of a plant to a symptom, he says.

Much knowledge may already have vanished without being recorded, the researchers note. “We only covered the tip of the iceberg,” says Cámara Leret.

In contrast to the high proportion of threatened languages, less than 4% of medicinal flora in the three regions covered by the study is at risk of extinction. “We are losing knowledge at a higher rate than biodiversity,” Bascompte says.

The results are consistent with previous research, says Victoria Reyes-García, an anthropologist at the Catalan Institution for Research and Advanced Studies. Her team’s study with the Tsimane people of Bolivia showed adults have been losing about 3% of their knowledge about plant uses every year, much higher than estimated rates of overall biodiversity loss in the world.

Without Indigenous knowledge, precious natural compounds that could generate drugs might get lost. Fewer than 5% of the medicinal plants used by the Ticuna people, whose ethnobotanical knowledge is one of the best-studied in the Amazon, have been screened for their biological activities, Cámara Leret says.


“The loss of culture is also a loss of our ability to adapt and find solutions to the increasing environmental problems,” adds Tania Eulalia Martínez Cruz, an Ayuuk Indigenous woman from Mexico and a social science researcher at the University of Brussels. She notes, for example, how Indigenous people from Oaxaca in Mexico have developed ways to grow plants during droughts.

For Uldarico, threats to culture and the environment are two sides of the same coin. “The complexity of medicinal plants is a territorial knowledge,” he says. “When you destroy a territory, you destroy nature, knowledge, our practices, and our life.”

This story was produced as part of the Internews’ Earth Journalism Network’s Biodiversity Media Initiative travel grant to the 2022 World Biodiversity Forum.
The Last Word

By Anvita Abhi, originally published in Outlook magazine

“Hold on to your language, don’t let it slip away.” These prophetic words of Boa Sr, one of the last speakers of the Great Andamanese languages, kept ringing in my mind for a very long time. “Once I am gone who will you talk to?” Boa spoke in Bo, one of the vanishing languages of the Great Andamanese language family which had no living speakers other than her. Other members of the community who were not more than ten, spoke another language, Jeru, or a mixture of four mutually intelligible dialects known as the present-day Great Andamanese, as a code language. Once spoken vibrantly by 5,000 members across the Andaman Islands at the turn of the 20th century, by the time I encountered the language in 2001, it had turned into whispers. How does it feel to be the last speaker of a language? Or to witness a situation where the person talking to you is the very last speaker of her mother tongue? I witnessed the gradual loss of not only the national heritage but one of the oldest traces of human civilisations that colonised this part of the Earth 70,000 years ago. Languages of the Great Andamanese language family of India are unique as they represent a distinctly evolved variation of the human capacity for language. It was a Herculean task to initiate and inspire speakers to remember all that they had lost, not used, and not shared among themselves for decades. My constant persistence evoked revitalism, at least in three of the speakers that helped me to capture the world of the Great Andamanese by digging deep into their oral tradition, their language and word power and thus, helped me to write a grammar, a talking dictionary, document the indigenous knowledge about avian fauna, about their worldview and a book of stories and songs with videos among others.

It is sad to see the gradual extinction of the most man-made wonders—the Language. Languages are the witness to the diverse and varying ways the human cognitive faculties perceive the world. Each language has unique lexical stock and unique signification. Various manifestations of language are ecological and archaeological signatures of the communities that maintain close ties to their environments. Languages carry evidence of earlier environment, habitat, practices, way of living, the worldview and secrets of survival which may or may not be in the memory of the community. Hence, language death signifies the closure of the link with its ancient heritage. When a language is on the verge of extinction, a mammoth treasure dies along with it. Its history, its culture, its ecological base, its knowledge of the biodiversity, its ethnomusicological practices, and above all the identity of the community. I was a helpless mute spectator of the death of speech forms. Each speaker was knowledgeable in their own right but either could not find another speaker to talk to or was forced to forget the speech to claim to be “modern”. Modern languages, especially English, had been like a eucalyptus tree, killing the possibility of undergrowth as well as of anything surrounding it. It is not merely the spoken form that is lost but all the genres of a language—singing, scolding, talking, narrating, referring capabilities. But foremost, the cognition of unique specimens in nature and thinking that vanish along with the vanishing language. Language death is not an isolated phenomenon. It is a result of loss of vitality of a language due to subjugation of the community, change in environment, the punctuation of the long-arrived equilibrium of ecology and humanity, the declination of the populations and above all making the indigenous speeches redundant in the society. As an ethnohistorian, I felt like watching terminal patients sitting in an emergency ward of a hospital without much hope as the system was deprived of infrastructure to save them. I have shared the anguish, the anger, the frustrations, and the despair of the last speaker of a language. It’s the feeling of utter disgust but more of sheer helplessness that engulfed me. I wished I could turn the clock backwards! However, there is a silver lining in the clouds. The same technological advances that served as the instrument for the catastrophic situation of language death, can be used to document languages in original verbal forms with all their manifestations and made available on as small as little gadgets like mobile phones to be heard, used, and revive a language.

A vanishing voice at the Smithsonian

By Laura Standage Combrink (‘20) in the Fall 2019 Issue of Y Magazine (Brigham Young University)

Florence Pestrikoff flew from her remote home in Akhiok on Alaska’s Kodiak Island to have her picture taken. Her BYU photographers came even farther—driving more than 40 hours and riding a ferry for 10. And now her image is on display 3,500 miles away in the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery.

Pestrikoff is one of the last speakers of Alutiiq, an endangered language in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska, and one of 16 people photographed so far by recent BYU photography grad Jordan K. Layton (BFA ’17) and professor Paul S. Adams (BFA ‘94) for their ongoing project, Vanishing Voices.

Vanishing Voices began as Layton’s capstone project, inspired by his realization that hundreds of languages are disappearing in North America alone. “Disappointment in my own ignorance,” he says, made him want to raise awareness. He enlisted his professor’s help, and the photographers elected to capture their last-of-language subjects on whopping 20-by-24-inch tintype metal plates rather than digitally or on film. “Tintypes are one of the most permanent and archival kind of prints,” says Layton. “That, in juxtaposition with how quickly these languages and cultures are dying out, just felt really symbolic and important.”

Since then, Layton and Adams have continued to photograph endangered-language speakers throughout North America. They have been to 10 locations, including Arizona, California, and British Columbia, and have photographed speakers of nine different Native American languages.
Tintypes are created in old-fashioned cameras—the kind with the folding accordion bellows. Layton and Adams use a massive one—big enough to hold their gargantuan plates—modeled after 1800s cameras, with an authentic handmade lens from the 1860s. The plates, coated with collodion and liquid silver to make them sensitive to light, are placed inside the camera, exposed to light through the lens, and developed. The team uses a cargo trailer for a darkroom, but when they photographed Marie Wilcox, the last speaker of Wukchumni, in Woodlake, California, they ended up using an ice-fishing tent in the pouring rain.

There are lots of ways to mess up, and even the best tintypes have blemishes. “You put so much effort into something that has so many opportunities for failure,” says Adams. But sometimes, he continues, “you get one plate and one image and you fall to your knees.”

When Lucille Hicks saw hers, she recited a prayer in her native Kawaiisu—a prayer that is rarely said out loud, her daughter told the crew.

“A lot of these elders that we’re photographing don’t really consider themselves to be all that special,” says Adams. “And then when they see themselves photographed the same way that they have seen their ancestors photographed, . . . they are moved to tears.”

The Vanishing Voices photographic project

Ogmios asked Jordan Layton, co-ordinator of the Vanishing Voices project, to tell us about its aims, motivations, and achievements.

What was the motivation for the project?

Raising awareness to language preservation issues has always been a major motivation for this project. Personally, however, it has grown to become a more poignant and educational journey. I often use photography as a way to approach an issue or topic I personally want to better understand. Having grown up and lived in various regions of the United States, I was quite ignorant of both the number of endangered languages around me and the complicated reasons behind their decline. That ignorance was something I wanted to correct.

What are its objectives and what are you hoping to have achieved by its end?

Our objective is a celebration of the individual subjects and the cultures and world views they represent. By the end of our endeavor, we hope to have an expansive and impactful collection of portraits of endangered language speakers that can act as a visual representation of this important issue. We aim to connect different communities, organizations and audiences through this artistic medium.

How many languages will you feature?

We are unsure at the moment, but we are anxious to feature as many as we can.

Do you intend to continue the project and/or widen its scope beyond North America?

Paul and I have definitely entertained the idea of taking this project outside of North America. However, the photographic process of Wet Plate Collodion Tintypes is a laborious and equipment heavy endeavor. We create tintype portraits that are 20x24 inches and plates of that scale increase cost and transportation issues exponentially. We’ll remain focused on North America unless we can find a sustainable way to travel further.

Photographer and activist Poulomi Basu has said that “Empathy is not a destination”: it is important to give agency to the viewer. Do you have plans to involve audiences in the protection and nurturing of the languages you highlight? Can you describe these?

That is an excellent quote, and a very valid point that is ever present in our minds while we continue on this project. We understand that the story of Indigenous language preservation is not really ours to tell, and we are currently working on different ways that this project can be a more collaborative experience for not only those of us working on it, but also the viewers. We are hoping to work hand in hand with language-focused academics and organizations like the Foundation for Endangered Languages to help amplify the voices of endangered language speakers in the telling of their stories. We then hope that the audience is moved to action via further education or supporting the organizations we have collaborated with.

How did you go about choosing the languages and the subjects to feature and how did you settle on the ones featured?

We cast a wide net when trying to find a speaker to photograph and we happily meet with as many subjects as possible. We approach this project as photographers and at a certain point we sometimes have to narrow down which portraits to feature based on artistic discretion. Some portraits are more successful than others due to the complex tintype process.

What challenges did you face in:

• finding appropriate subjects for the portraits
• identifying the languages to highlight
• the logistics of the photographic process (as I assume the subjects are geographically separated and possibly remote) and how did you overcome these?
Finding subjects has been one of the more difficult aspects we’ve faced. Word of mouth advertising to personal connections is the most successful solution, but at times we’ve resorted to countless cold calls and emails to different organizations and individuals. Gaining a subject’s trust is imperative to our process, but the lack of a previous relationship and geographic distance makes that difficult sometimes. Logistically our project can be very tough. We have met with speakers from Arizona to Kodiak Island in Alaska and everywhere in between, all while towing our trailer that has been converted into a mobile darkroom. We’ve been fortunate to receive several grants that have helped to pay for the travel and materials necessary to accomplish these trips.

Do you have a message for our members/ or readers?

Yes! If you happen to know of anyone who might be interested in collaborating with us in any way please reach out to us via email at jordan@jordanlayton.com We are always open to research help or suggestions, and of course new subjects to meet, photograph and learn from.

(These notes by Victor Golla from the first edition of the Routledge Encyclopedia of the World’s Endangered Languages (2008).)
Arvid, one of the last speakers of Halkomelem (Hul’q’umi’num’). Halkomelem is a Central Salish language, spoken in southwestern British Columbia in a number of small communities along the lower Fraser River and on the east coast of Vancouver Island. The combined population of all Halkomelem groups is 6,700, of whom about 120 speak the language with some degree of fluency, with another 100 passive speakers. Three dialects are recognised: (1) Island Halkomelem, on the southeast coast of Vancouver Island, is spoken in local varieties at Malahat, Cowichan, Halalt, Chemainus, Penelakut, Nanaimo, and NanOOSE. There are up to 100 active speakers, and several community language programmes. (2) Downriver Halkomelem, at the mouth of the Fraser River in and around the city of Vancouver, has six elderly first-language speakers. The language is being revived on the Musqueam Reserve through a programme based at the (closely adjacent) University of British Columbia. On the Tsawwassen Reserve language courses are offered for adults through Simon Fraser University; the Katzie Reserve has a programme for elementary school children; and both the Tsawwassen and Katzie bands have summer immersion camps in language and culture for children. Although no fluent speakers have resulted from these programmes, several people have acquired good transcription and pronunciation skills and are teaching the language to others. (3) Upriver Halkomelem (Sto:lo) in the Fraser River valley, has between five and ten fluent speakers, the youngest over seventy. Band-sponsored language classes have produced an additional ten to twenty second-language speakers, a few of whom are able to read and write the language. The principal use of the language is for religious ceremonies and songs, and literacy is restricted to language class settings.

Norbert, another of the last speakers of Halkomelem

Luther, one of two remaining speakers of Kawaiisu

Kawaiisu is the Southern Numic language of a small unrecognised tribe of the Tehachapi region between the Mohave Desert and the San Joaquin valley in south-central California. Fewer than ten speakers
were reported in 1994, but this is a significant proportion of the total population of this culturally conservative group, which is less than 100.

Maire, the last known speaker of Wukchumni

Marie Wilcox, born 1933, was the last native speaker of Wukchumni, a variety of Yokuts. She died on 7 October 2021. Yokuts is a large complex of dialects, spoken aboriginally in the San Joaquin Valley of south-central California and the foothills of the Sierra Nevada to the east. There were over forty local varieties of Yokuts, each associated with a small independent community, often only a single village or close-knit group of villages. Although the classification is somewhat arbitrary, six emergent languages are usually distinguished, three of which (Palewyami, Buena Vista, and Gashowu) are extinct. Still spoken until recently are Tule-Kaweah, a cluster of dialects originally spoken in the Sierra Nevada foothills along the Tule and Kaweah Rivers, east of Porterville. Fewer than ten speakers of the Wukchumni (Wikchumni) dialect of Tule-Kaweah remained at the turn of this century, most of them on the Tule River Reservation. A Wukchumni preschool was started, weekly adult classes were given by elders, and several speakers and learners participated in master-apprentice teaching. Kings River is a cluster of dialects originally spoken in the Sierra Nevada foothills east of Fresno. Half a dozen elderly speakers or semi-speakers of the Chaumunme(Chaumimni) dialect lived in scattered locations and around their traditional homeland. Valley Yokuts is a large complex of shallowly differentiated dialects spoken mainly in the San Joaquin Valley. There are speakers of at least three Valley Yokuts dialects, including up to twenty-five fluent and semi-fluent speakers of Yoolumme (Yavelmuni) on the Tule River Reservation, a few semi-speakers of Chukchansi at the Picayune and Table Mountain Rancherias in the foothills northeast of Fresno, and a few speakers of Tachi at the Santa Rosa Rancheria near Lemoore.

Living-Language-Land: creative engagement with minority and endangered languages

“In our language, they left all of the lessons for us” Jessie ‘Little Doe’ Baird, Wampanoag Nation

With the international climate talks (COP26) taking place in Glasgow in November 2021, the British Council is supporting a series of projects that engage different audiences with the unfolding crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. One of these projects - Living-Language-Land - deals directly with the connections between language and relationship to land and nature, and there is a warm invitation to members of the FEL community to help guide and shape this project with their endangered language expertise.

The project’s instigators - UK-based artist Neville Gabie and creative producer Philippa Bayley - explain the focus and purpose of the project:

“The languages we speak shape how we understand the world around us, including our connections to land and nature. But as fast as we’re losing species from our planet, so we’re losing languages that offer different ways of seeing. What connections, ideas and wisdom are we losing as those languages are lost? What powerful strategies for sustainable living might they offer, to help us look afresh at the climate crisis?”

Part of the stimulus for the project was Neville and Joan Gabie’s engagement with the Wampanoag Nation of Mashpee, Massachusetts. They were led there by a 1663 printing of the Bible, translated into Wampanoag, which preceded a near extermination of the people and language. Efforts to reclaim the language have been led by Jessie ‘Little Doe’ Baird and other members of the Nation, as reflected in the short films Neville and Joan made. It was Jessie’s articulation of the importance of reclaiming the language and its messages of how to live that resonated with us. As Jessie says, “In our language, they left all of the lessons for us”.

Living-Language-Land is a creative project that invites people to see beyond the confines of their own language as we journey through minority and endangered languages that reveal different ways of relating to our planet.

The project will share 26 words from different minority and endangered languages – and the stories behind them – in the weeks leading up to COP26. Contributors from across the world will share, in their own voices, what the words mean to them and their communities. And they will explain how climate change is challenging the deep bonds with land and nature that their words express.

The project will take place online, using social media to engage a wide audience with these illuminating words. A dedicated website will share the stories behind the words and artistic and creative responses to the concepts that are shared. The project
also hopes to have a presence at the COP26 conference itself, to engage directly with policymakers, researchers and NGOs.

Together the words will form the beginnings of a rich word bank that offers a fresh, evocative perspective on our environmental crisis – one that’s beyond the scope of the Western-dominated conversation.

Living-Language-Land is already working with Colombian organisation Pedagogias Ancestrales and Muisca linguist Facundo Saravia on contributions from the Muisca language. The project is also working with linguist Matthias Brenzinger (University of the Free State) on a contribution from the Khwe of Northern Namibia, and with artist Virginia MacKenny (University of Cape Town) on wider engagement in Southern Africa. We are exploring connections in Australia, India, Bhutan, Canada, USA and Russia, among others. We would welcome any other ideas or connections for the project to follow up.

Please contact Philippa Bayley (pipbayley@gmail.com) or Neville Gabie (NevilleGabie@gmail.com) with your ideas and suggestions.

https://www.nevillegabie.com/works/the-edge-of-things/
https://www.wlrp.org/project-history

Introduction to the Gojri language, by Shahid-ur-Rehman

Note from the Editor:

Our Foundation has a category of membership called Community membership. Occasionally we ask a member of an organisation representing a particular speech community with this status to write an article for us about their language. This time our guest author is Shahid-ur-Rehman, who represents the Gojri language, an Indo-Aryan language spoken in India, and also in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Chris Moseley

Preface

Language is a natural phenomenon and a systematic behaviour by which people communicate, exchange their thoughts and feelings with one another. Language is used not only for communicating ideas, feelings, emotions; it also reflects culture, civilization and other aspects of life.

Before going into the discussion about the Gojri language, let’s have a look at the word “Gujjars”.

Identity

Colin P. Masica writes in his book The Indo Aryan Languages: “Some of them (scholars) are of the opinion that the Gujjars are the descendants of the “Kushan” and “Yuechi” tribes who belong to the Eastern Tatars, while others think that their origin is from indigenous tribes. In the light of recent research and literary, archaeological, linguistic, and geographical evidence, the Gujjars may be the descendants of the Gurgis (Georgians) who inhabit a territory between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, South of the Caucasus Mountains...” (p-52)

In the Urdu Dictionary written by Syed Ahmed (1986), it is stated “the word ‘Gujjars’ is an ancient nation that belongs to the Aryan Tribes. This nation was famous because of its valour. It ruled over India for a long time.” (p-190)

History of Gojri

One view suggests the Gujjars came in with the Aryan Tribes. These tribes, including the Gujjars, were speaking an “Indic” language. Those tribes who came in were called Aryan (“stranger”) because they were newcomers there. In the subcontinent that language (Indic) developed into the language known as Sanskrit.

Then it became the main language of the aristocratic class. Some researchers say that in the end of the Vedic period, when the last sacred text, the “Upanishads”, were written down, after which Pani, a descendant of Pani and a grammar and linguistic researcher, introduced the refined version of the language which received the title Sanskrit, “perfected”.

It was spoken in different areas with a variety of dialects which were known as “Prakrits” (modified languages) or Indo-Aryan languages. Later these Prakrits developed with the inclusion of new words, and became standard languages of the areas where they were spoken.

Developed forms of the Prakrits were known with the names of those areas, i.e. a Prakrit which was spoken in Gujarat was known as “Gujrati”, that which was spoken in the Deccan (“South”) was known as Bakni “Southern” etc. Prakrits were considered to have been the regional spoken (informal) languages while Sanskrit was considered the standardized (formal) language used for literary, official, and religious purposes across Indian kingdoms of the subcontinent.

The developed Prakrit spoken in Gujarat was known as Gujarati or Gojri. So, we can say that the origin of Gojri is Sanskrit. Graphically, with vertical dimension as the advance of time:

Sanskrit
{ Prakrits }
E. Shauraseni Apabhransh W. Shauraseni Apabhransh
including Gojri

Apabhransh literally means “Decayed”, giving an idea of the normative attitudes that were traditionally taken to this process of language change.

Another diagram gives a background to this bifurcation, placing the Indic languages within the wider world of Proto-Indo-European:

Indo-European
Indo Iranian
Iranian Indo Aryan (Old Sanskrit)
{ Western Eastern }
Gojri Singers

Both diagrams represent Sanskrit as the origin of the “Gojri” language, but the second, presuming an ancestry outside India, remains a contentious ascription among scholars there, since they believe that no authentic claim has been presented for it by researchers. (In the above diagram the “Western” and “Eastern” shows different and many languages.)

Another view sees Gojri as more ancient than Sanskrit. When the Gujjars were first known in India, with the Aryans, they would have been speaking an earlier form of Gojri. Many historians are of the opinion that Gojri is one of the Prakrits that were spoken in different regions in India with a slight difference from Sanskrit.

Sabir Afaq, in his book “Gojri Zuban-o-Adab” writes: “The time of those Prakrits is from 500 to 600 BC.”

When the ancient Khastari families of Mathra, Hastinapur, and Ejodha came into Dwarika, they brought this language with them. Their nickname was Gujjars and their residential area was known as Gujarat.

This language was also spoken in the reign of a Gujar knight, Bakramageet Paanwar, in Gujarat and other regions such as Sindh Sorasrigh, Kuch, Malwah and Bahawalpur. The growth of Gojri at this initial stage continued. It was the last ascendency of the Gujar rulers and their government in India.

The linguist W.E. Losey writes in his thesis “Writing Gojri”: “Masica (1991:48), following Grierson (LSI IX:925), states that Gojri’s closest relation is the Northeastern Rajasthani language, Mewati. The Rajasthani languages have been classified as belonging to the central group of Indo-Aryan, along with Hindi-Urdu and other languages (Masica 1992:453-456).

J.C. Sharma also notes the close relationship between Gojri phonology and that of Punjabi (1982:8-9), the latter’s inclusion in the central group being the subject of some dispute (see Shackle 1979).

The inner classification of the Indo-Aryan languages, including Gojri is by no means settled, and it should be noted that Gojri’s stated connections with Rajasthani and Punjabi are made on the basis of phonological and morphological observations which do not hold in the same way for both of the two main Gojri dialect types.”

In the BC era, the origin of Gojri is not clear, but after AD we find some reliable resources about its emergence. Gujar Pertiha was a Gujar dynasty whose founder was Harichandra and Gujar rulers ruled from the 7th to the 11th century AD. During this time Gojri borrowed words from Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit and other languages and flourished under the Gujar dynasty. They gave it importance and made it an official language. Before the 6th century AD it was not very comprehensive and was growing. Gojri literature cannot be traced in that era but between the 8th and 12th centuries AD was the golden time for its development. Some literary work had been done earlier but it was rare.

Documentation and compiling literary work started after the 10th century AD. Many poets and scholars played a role to spread their messages by using Gojri for their unique socio-cultural fraternity in their verses to communicate and spread the message of brotherhood, peace and secularism.

With the passage of time, this language came to be seen as having literary elegance. From the 10th to the 12th century AD the Gujjars ruled over Delhi and Qanooq. They also brought Gojri with them. In this way, Gojri spread into major parts of India. Most of the literary work was poetry. Famous poets, including Persians whose mother tongue was not Gojri, wrote poetry in it.

Dr. Sabir Afaq (2004) writes in Pajabi, Pahari or Gojri Zuban-o-Adab. “Gojri was the only language of the subcontinent that was spoken and understood everywhere in India.” (p.324)

The 13th century AD was also the golden century for Gojri because on the one side poets were working, and on the other side, the Gujjar rulers were creating a situation for its enhancement. Then along with poetry, some Gojri folk stories were also included in the literary wealth of Gojri. These folk stories people used to tell one another on special occasions.

After the 13th century, the Gojri downfall began, due to Mehmo Ghaznavi’s attacks on the Gujar realm in Gujarat, where it flourished and developed. Consequently the Gujjars scattered and sought refuge in safe and hilly areas, and some migrated to Punjab, Rajasthan, Kathiawar, Mewat, Mewar, Kaghan, Sawat, and from there they entered Kashmir.

A major group of Gujar scholars sought shelter in Dakan and again started their work there. Before the incursion of Ghaznavi, Gujarat and the Deccan had strong relationships while the Dakhni had been influenced by Gojri during the reign of Gujar rulers. Ch. Mohammad Ashraf Advocate (1998) writes in his book Urdu kee Khaliq Gojri Zoban.

“Dr. Jamil Jalbi, in his book History of Urdu Literature, writes, ‘if anyone compares Gojri with Dakhni he will find that both are the same to a large extent. He also mentions many words of the Dakhni language that have been borrowed from Gojri such as parvi (remaining), satya (to throw), bolta (to speak), etc.’ (p. 63)

When Gujjar scholars came to the Deccan, Dakhni scholars adopted their style of writing because they thought that Gojri had a good standard and it was suited for writing literature. They adopted the qualities of Gojri literature to make their work standardized. Thus, Dakhni literature was based upon Gojri literature.

In short, Gojri influenced Dakhni literature and language. It seemed that both had the same culture, speaking style and ways of living.
In the 14th and 15th century AD Gojri decline continued because it had lost its official support, but in spite of all this, some poets continued their exertion to develop the Gojri language through their literary work in the shape of poetry.

Though Gojri had lost its Governmental protection at the public level, it developed and spread through those who used to migrate from one place to other. Ismael Zabeh writes in the preface to *Monthly Deeo Lahore* (1999):

"Gujarat, Rajasthan, Ganga, and Jamna and from there it reach Punab, Northern Areas, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Assam. It is found in some regions of Afghanistan, Russia, and Sinking (China) as well. A century ago, the Gujarars of Punjab were speaking Gojri, then gradually changed to Punjabi". (p. 10)


"This region (where Gojri is spoken) consists of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Kathiawar, Rajasthan, Ganga and Jamna, Punjab, Hima- chal Pradesh, hilly areas of Jammu and Kashmir, U.P. India, Gharwal, Chakrata, Dehradun, Nepal, Hazara, Sawat, and Chatral". (p-75)

Some linguists are of the opinion that languages like Mewati, Mewari, Rajasthani, and Marwari are dialects of Gojri, while others disagree and argue that Gojri borrowed words from the aforesaid languages. Though the above-mentioned languages are different from one another, Gojri dominated them. They were not completely Gojri but they were influenced by it. Then another view has been presented by historians, that the language of these regions was Gojri but Arabic historians called Gojri according to regional names e.g. that language that was spoken in Rajasthan called Rajasthani, the language that was spoken in Mewat called Mewati etc. Originally these were not different languages but these were the dialects of Gojri which were being spoken in different regions with little difference.

In 1282 AD Jalal-ud-Din Akbar attacked Gujarat and ruined this land. At this time Gojri lost its remaining value, because Akbar wanted to introduce a new language that played the role of a bridge between Persian and other minor languages which were spoken in different regions. His aim was to introduce a new source language through which could be created interaction among the people of different races, castes, societies and regions and it could be understood by everyone. In this respect, he decided to merge Gojri with Persian. When the Gujarars did not allow him to do so, he rushed upon them to take revenge and ruined them. In that war, the Gujarars were defeated and they left their native land. In Akbar's time, Persian was given the status of official language and Gojri was treated as an inferior language. In spite of lack of leadership the Gujarars tried their best to keep Gojri alive, and some Gojri scholars and poets tried to write Gojri but they were not allowed. Even they were not respected in the court of the king.

That was the worst time for Gojri. None could give attention to preserving it because of the lack of leadership. During that time many words of other languages mixed with Gojri, from Turkish, Persian and Arabic. Though Akbar did not give prestige to this language and treated it as a secondary language, it was said that he used to listen to Gojri songs of Mera Bae from Tann Seen, a famous musician. In short, Gojri suffered a great loss in his reign but it did not lose its existence and did not vanish from the subcontinent.

Then another language came into existence which was known as Urdu. Ahmed-ud-Din in his book *Gojri Gian* (1984) states: "The present Urdu language is the modern shape of Gojri. Because of the mingling of Turkish, Persian and Arabic words in Gojri, it was named Urdu. Languages of India such as Tilgo, Malaban, Marhiti, Madrasi, Sindhi, Hindi and Punjabi were originated from Gojri". (p.7)

In *History of Urdu Literature* (1975) by Dr. Jameel Jalbi, it is mentioned "in the subcontinent, at that time, Gujarar was the first center of Urdu. When it spread to other regions like Dakin, then Dakni writers followed Gojri scripts for writing their books. It is the nature of humans that when they start working on something, they follow methods of previous work done before." (p.129)

Another argument has been given that in the past, poets used to praise the king through their poetry and receive awards and rewards from them. In the kingdom of Akbar poets followed a new way of praising the king. They knew that now Gojri had not any leading personality so they added Turkish, Arabic and Persian words in Gojri and started flattering the king by that new mixture of words thinking that in that way they could win Akbar's attention and he would give them money and rewards. Later that language was known as Urdu. Thus "Urdu Moalla" (courtier Urdu) came into existence. Before Akbar, there was not such type of language found.

The origin of Gojri is more ancient than Urdu. It is considered that Urdu came into existence in the 17th century AD, not before. All ancient manuscripts of Gojri are witness of this claim.

From the 17th to the 19th century AD some work had been done in the shape of poetry and folk tales. This nation was continuously attacked by many invaders like Mehmoon Ghaznavi, Akbar and then British rulers till 1857. In spite of all invasions and attacks they did not leave their literary exertion. It was because of the sincere efforts of medieval scholars that Gojri is still alive and some ancient fragments still exist.

From the 17th century AD to 1950, many poets performed their duty well to serve their language. Mohammad Quli Qotab Shah was one of the famous poets and was king as well. He was born in 1556 and died in 1611. His collection of poetry was known as "Quliyat-e-Qotab". He is considered the first poet of Urdu. He also wrote his poetry in Gojri.

A shining star of the 18th century was Wali Dakni (d. 1720), who lived in Orang Abad Dakan. According to different historians, he brought and served Gojri in Dakin and introduced the Gojri civilized style of literary writing. His book "Kolyate Wali" is still appreciated in Urdu and Gojri literature.

In that period, people started to give attention to folk tales as well. Some of them were "Nooro Taja’ss," "Sobo Jangbaz," and "Barso." These stories were not documented but the people used to recite them on the occasion of marriages or other ceremonies or when they used to gather at one place in the evening.

The Modern Era

The work which has been done in the 20th century was never done before. The problem was that at that time Gojri scholars did not find a peaceful environment, but in spite of all this whatever they did is praiseworthy. We discuss the development of Gojri Language in the modern era in the following headings.

1901 to 1950:

During this time, Gujarars woke up from the sound sleep of negligence. They started to contribute to political life. The people who worked in literature are Abdulla Ponchi, Noon Ponchi, Elm Dins Bin Basi, Ismael Zabeh, Israel Mehoor and Khuda Balsh. When Gojri scholars woke up and started to improve their language, then eastern writers turned their attention to this language. In this respect
Grahame Bailey wrote a study of north Indian languages in 1907. He discussed Gojri in it as well. Then George Grierson wrote “Linguistic survey of India.” In it he also discusses Gojri.

1950 to present time:
This time is important for the growth of Gojri in all fields of language, literature, etc. The 20th century is known as the golden era for Gojri, during which thousands of books on different genres have been written in and about Gojri.

Print, Electronic and Social Media
Media are the backbone of states, playing a vital role in all fields. The following programmes are presented on radio and television.
AK Radio Muzaffarabad Azad Kashmir
Radio Kashmir Jammu
AK Radio Trarkhal AJK
AK Radio Mirpur AJK
AJK Television Muzaffarabad Azad Kashmir
Pakistan Television
Social media is an emerging source of conveying messages and for publicity. Thousands of web pages, web channels and groups are working to promote Gojri.

Films and drama
Many dramas, films and songs have been recorded in Gojri.

Literary Boards and organizations
Gojri Literary Board Muzaffarabad AJK
Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art and Culture Srinagar
Gojri Literary Board Lahore Pakistan

Curriculum and Mobile Schools
A curriculum has been prepared in Gojri for children in Mobile Schools. This project is a Mother tongue-based multilingual education project which provides free education to migratory Gujjar nomads (Bakarwals) in their mother tongue up to grade five where both boys and girls have equal opportunities to get education.

This is a revolutionary step taken for the revitalization and protection of their mother tongue, respect for their culture, and preparation for successfully interacting with the ever-changing modern world, without losing their identity. These schools move with them according to their migration and educate their children even on the mountain tops. Because they learn to read in their mother tongue of Gojri, these Bakarwal children are successful scholars and their achievement, in many cases, is higher than children in government schools.

Conclusion
Now Gojri has made rapid progress and still people who have literary taste are working on this language. It made progress after 19th century. Before that Gujjar scholars neither were common nor was peaceful environment in which work could be done. But in spite of that crucial situation it continued even in mountainous areas. After 19th century people woke up from their slumber. They developed sense of writing, and work and research on Gojri started. When Gujjar scholars did so, Western writers also paid attention towards this language. However, it was gradual existence and history Gojri. Now it is spoken and understood by those who can speak and understand Urdu.

Gojri is a rich and vibrant language with a distinguished heritage and is now fighting for respect and preservation. With the advent of modern methods of communication, the recent work of linguists, and the pride of the Gojri tribes, it is starting to enjoy the dignity it deserves.

4. New publications

New books on endangered languages of India

Anvita Abbi is the co-editor, with Kapila Vatsyayan, of an important new book entitled Linguistic Diversity in South and Southeast Asia, published by Primus Books, Delhi, in 2022 (ISBN 978-93-91144-18-0), 372 pages, hardback. The publisher says of it:

Globalization, by incessantly promoting uniformity, is not only destroying biological and cultural diversity but also leading to language shift’s because linguistic imperialism and linguistic marginalization are two ends of the same spectrum. Linguistic Diversity in South and Southeast Asia brings together the contributions of scholars concerned with this loss from Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Myanmar, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, and India. It is a compendium on the depleting linguistic diversity, loss of oral cultures, erosion of indigenous knowledge system, and the widening gap between dominant and dominated languages which has created a situation of linguistic apartheid in this part of the world. Interestingly, these essays also reveal that despite globalization some communities have managed to retain their languages, which must now be sustained and treasured and not allowed to die out. Documenting the first-hand experience of working with the diverse and obscure linguistic communities of South and Southeast Asia, this volume not only delves into the complexities of issues but also suggests measures to arrest the loss of languages and to revive those that are on the brink of extinction, that have recently been published by the Central Institute of Indian Languages:

Anvita Abbi, an eminent linguist and social scientist, identified the sixth language family of India. A recipient of the Padma Shree and Kenneth Hale Awards, she was a Guest Scientist at the Max Planck Institute, Leipzig, and Leverhulme Professor at the University of London.

Kapila Vatsyayan (1928-2020) served as founding Director of Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and as Secretary, Department of Arts, Government of India. A Padma Vibhushan, she spearheaded programmes of art history, education, Sanskrit, Buddhist and Pali studies.

With Rahul Pachori, Anvita Abbi has also compiled the Sanenyö Dictionary, and with Vysakh R., the Lurö Dictionary, both published by the Central Institute of Indian Languages. Both are languages of the Nicobar Islands; the latter is the language of Teressa island. We hope to feature them in more detail in a future issue.
5. Events

Seminar on India’s New Education Policy: implications for endangered languages

India has the largest number of endangered languages in the world. India has adopted a National Education Policy in 2020 (NEP-2020) in which it has been recommended that all children will be educated for the first five years (3 years pre-school and 2 years school) of their life in their mother tongues. This is a very significant development, and a challenge for its implementation. As UNESCO’s International Decade for Indigenous Languages has begun this year, Panchanan Mohanty convened a seminar on the topic “The National Education Policy-2020 and Conservation of the Endangered Languages of India” from 13th to 15th July 2022. Speakers, both Indian and international, covered a wide range of topics, addressing issues of endangerment generally and the particular challenges faced by India’s minority languages and their adaptation to the new education policy.

6. An Appeal

Surviving genocide: The Man of the Hole


The Man of the Hole (Portuguese: indio do buraco) was not a voluntary recluse; he was forced to live alone after his people were destroyed in the ongoing genocide of indigenous peoples in Brazil. The majority of his people are believed to have been killed by settlers in the 1970s, around the same time that nearby peoples such as the Akuntsu and Kanoê experienced similar massacres. The remaining survivors, apart from the Man of the Hole, were killed in an attack by illegal miners in 1995. The Fundação Nacional do Índio (FUNAI), Brazil’s government agency for indigenous interests, later discovered the remains of their village, which had been bulldozed in 1996. They had remained isolated up until this point, so it is not known what they were called, what language they spoke, or what the Man of the Hole’s name was. FUNAI first became aware of the Man of the Hole’s isolated existence in 1996.[1] They observed that he periodically moved his home, building straw huts for shelter. He hunted wild game, collected fruits and honey, and also planted maize and manioc. Over the years, more than 50 huts built by him were identified by FUNAI.[1] His nickname derives from the deep hole found in each home that he abandoned. It was originally believed that these holes were used to trap animals or to hide in,[9][10][8] but some observers have also speculated that they might have been of spiritual significance.[4] The holes were narrow and more than 1.8 m (5 ft 11 in) deep.[4][9] 14 similar holes were found in the ruined village discovered by FUNAI in 1996.[8] Under Brazil’s constitution, indigenous peoples have the right to lands they “traditionally occupy”. In 2007, FUNAI officially demarcated 31 square miles (8,000 ha) of his land as a protected indigenous territory,[8] the Tanaru Indigenous Territory.[9] After its establishment, FUNAI monitored him and tried to prevent intrusions into the area.[4] Despite this, the Man of the Hole was attacked by gunmen in November 2009 but managed to survive.[10][11][12][13] Although he avoided further direct contact with others, the Man of the Hole was aware that he was monitored by outsiders. FUNAI occasionally left gifts of tools and seeds for him, and thus “engendered a certain level of trust”.[14] He sometimes signaled to observing teams to avoid pitfalls he had dug either as defense or to trap animals. In 2018, FUNAI released a video of him in order to raise global awareness of the threats to the uncontacted peoples in Brazil.[4] In the video, the man, who was presumed in his 50s at the time, appeared to be in good health.

On 24 August 2022, the Man of the Hole was found dead in his last home by FUNAI agent Altair José Algayer.[1] He was found “lying down in the hammock, and ornamented with macaw feathers, as if waiting for death”. There were no signs of violence or any other disturbance before his corpse had been discovered by FUNAI. It was estimated that he had died in July and was about 60 years old at the time of his death.

Fiona Watson, Research and Advocacy director for the campaigning group Survival International, writes:

When I heard the news last week that the Indigenous man known as “The loneliest man in the world” had died, I felt a profound sadness. He’d lived entirely alone for 26 years, deep in the Brazilian Amazon, and had resisted every attempt by government teams to make contact with him. When you knew his story this was entirely understandable, because everyone else close to him – his family, his friends, all the other members of his tribe – had been killed in a series of attacks that would have gone unnoticed by the rest of the world had he not managed, somehow, to survive.

Contributions to the cause can be made at https://www.survivalinternational.org/campaigns/uncontacted
Navajo Sand Painting