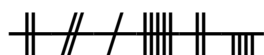


FOUNDATION FOR ENDANGERED LANGUAGES

OGMIOS



Statuettes of fertility goddesses, Menti and Mali.
(Page 3)

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Assistant Editor: Adriano Truscott

Contributing Editors: Roger Blench, Joseph Blythe, Serena D'Agostino, Christopher Hadfield, Francis M Hult, Nicholas Ostler, Andrea Ritter

Contact the Editor at:
Christopher Moseley,
9 Westdene Crescent,
Caversham Heights,
Reading RG4 7HD, England
chrismoseley50@yahoo.com

Published by:
Foundation for Endangered Languages,
172 Bailbrook Lane,
Bath BA1 7AA, England
nostler@chibcha.demon.co.uk
<http://www.ogmios.org>

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Mavis Chubby
Warriyangga and Thargarri

"Language is saviour...[When speaking my language] I feel like myself. I feel welcome inside, pujungga kurlgayinu, nhurra pagalya (Listen to your heart and you're good)."

Mavis Chubby is a Warriyangga and Thargarri lady. She was born in the river bed, down from Gifford Creek station over 80 years ago in Warriyangga country. Her parents - Molly Butler (Thargarri) and Alec Eagles (Warriyangga), brought her up speaking both languages. She then learnt English, among other languages, as a child growing up on the station.

Warriyangga is very important to Mavis, but Mavis is also very important to Warriyangga: she may be the last full speaker of the language.

Image above: Banner from the *Nganhungu Wangga* exhibition currently on show in Western Australia. (Page. 13)

1. Editorial

With this issue we welcome an important new development in the production of your *Ogmios* newsletter. All being well, this issue should reach you near to its scheduled date of issue, and not with the increasingly long delays you have had to endure with recent issues. This will be thanks to the help of our new Assistant Editor, our committee member in Western Australia Adriano Truscott, who has offered his services for the time-consuming job of final copy-editing. Electronic communication has made this international collaboration possible, and I hope you approve of the result. Of course, the newsletter can only be as good as its contributions, and these you should continue to send to me at the contact addresses given on the cover. Don't forget that FEL is the only endangered-language organisation to regularly publish a newsletter that covers the entire spectrum of activities on behalf of threatened languages around the world.

You should be receiving this issue in time to prepare for our 12th annual conference, in Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, Friesland, the Netherlands. This year's conference theme is Endangered Languages and Language Learning, and the dates are 24 to 27 September. Details were given in the previous issue of *Ogmios*, and if you wish to know more about the conference, you will find a link to our hosts, the Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning and the Fryske Akademy, on our web-site www.ogmios.org.

Chris Moseley

2. Development of the Foundation

FEL Ogmios web-site has new web-master

Not only do we welcome our new Assistant Editor, but we also have an important addition to the Committee in the form of David Nathan, who is now in charge of actively developing the Ogmios web-site of FEL (www.ogmios.org). David has a wealth of experience, most recently with HRELP in London, and we look forward to seeing a number of improvements to the site, as well as the assurance that it will be kept up to date.

3. Endangered Languages in the News

A partnership: The "Association Dogani" in the Poiyo-speaking villages of Dogani, Mali

Dogani is a *commune* of five villages situated at the far north-eastern tip of the Dogon plateau, some 40 miles north-north-east of Bandiagara, and I first visited it during a walking holiday with some French friends in February 2005. I will always remember arriving at Dogani-Bere, after a hard day's climb and trek from Borko, the late afternoon sun shining orange on the beautiful modern mosque in the centre of the village (photo 1 on back page) among the few remaining fan-palms - Dogani, an unknown, little-visited green haven, with its two pools and resident crocodiles (the *Damaa* of Dogani, meaning that they are protected or sacred). Later that evening, we held what was to be our first informal meeting with the mayor and his councillors, the school headmaster and teachers, talking in the dark around a cup of *bissap*.

A few days later in Mopti, before flying back to Paris, we met Yaya Sangalaba, one of the councillors, quite by chance. We discussed ways to help the village and kept in touch via erratic mobile phone conversations and SMS messages. (In order to phone from Dogani, you have to climb a steep rocky outcrop to pick up a signal from the nearest mast, down in the plains.) One year later, we founded "Association Dogani" (<http://www.dogani-mali.org>) and we have since returned there 3 times (March 2006, March 2007 and December 2007) accompanying the headmaster to Bandiagara where we buy school books, pens and paper, and delivering dictionaries and medical supplies, donated in France.

The name of Dogani apparently comes from the terms *dowe* (meaning *abandoned*) and *gwann* (*land*) meaning "the land of those who abandoned their original land"¹. It is populated by the Doganmbo, also known as the Bondu (variant: Bondun), and is one of five regions where Poiyo is spoken. The others are Nadiamba, Tondifere, Tintam and Touré, with an estimated total of some 20,000 speakers. The name Poiyo comes from the local greeting *po'o* (*po*, greetings, 'o to you) and the ritual answer *i yo'o* (*i* our, *yo* voice, 'o to you), but their non-Poiyo neighbours call the language *Bundu So* (*so* meaning *language*). Poiyo is syntactically similar to other dogon dialects (SOV, six subject pronouns, nouns precede adjectives, etc.) and it also uses a complex base ten numeral system, but lexically it is very dissimilar and I am currently collecting this data.

The pronunciation of Poiyo also differs greatly from the Toro So dialect that has been chosen by the Mali government as the "unifying" or standard dogon dialect that is spoken around Sangha on the Bandiagara cliffs. For example, *bilou* (meaning *ladder*) in Toro So is pronounced *binou* in Poiyo, and *toguna* (the traditional meeting place for the men of the village) in Toro So is pronounced *tingnan* in Poiyo. However, Poiyo speakers do not understand Toro So. As far as I can tell after such a short time of study, certain consonants can take two values: one informant pronounced the word for *thank you* both as *kadima* and *kadjima*, and in French – which he speaks well – he pronounced *merci* both as *mersi* and *mershi*. This would help explain the multiple spellings of one of the variants of Poiyo: Nadiamba, Nadyamba, Najamba, etc.

Dogani itself comprises five villages, but each has an old deserted village nearby, always located on the surrounding summits. These were abandoned at the beginning of the 1960's "for easier access to water supplies lower down". These old sites seem to be revered by the present villagers, and signs of past animist practices are still visible: the derelict façade of a Hogon's house here, a sacred fetish or altar there (photo 2). Nowadays each district of each village has its own mosque, but Islam – present for over 100 years in the area – appears to cohabit peacefully with some of the old ways: the goddesses of fertility are brought out on festive occasions (photo on front cover) and the traditional rites of circumcision (photo 3) are respected. Excision is no longer performed in the region, we are told.

There is no electricity supply nor plumbing system in Dogani, but water is plentiful thanks to the many wells and a few ponds and recently-built dams, although the latter run very low at the end of the dry season, in June. There are two schools for the *commune* (some 10,000 inhabitants). A stone road is currently being built through the centre of the main village, Dogani-Bere (called *Dogani-Bele* in Poiyo), financed by the German technical cooperation enterprise GTZ.

Dogani-Bere has around 5000 inhabitants, living in traditional family groups or clans, the names being Diombebe/Djombebe (healers), Gaaba (hunters), Molba (wise men), Ogolba (healers) and Sangalaba

¹ According to a personal communication by Boubacar Diombebe, Ali Diombebe and Modibo Biombebe, (of the group ULDP - Union de Lutte pour le Développement du Plateau Dogon): "Connais-tu ma belle commune : la commune de Dogani-Bere, Arrondissement de Kendié, Cercle de Bandiagara, Région de Mopti", novembre 1997, 33 pages.

(hunters). The villagers are mainly farmers and are more or less self-sufficient but dependent on annual rainfall.

They grow millet, sesame, cow-pea, onions, pimentos, local aubergines, and so on. However, millet is also delivered via the World Food Programme, currently providing one lunch per schoolchild per day. There are 6 classes in the village state school (*école fondamentale* in French) with 350 students aged 6 to 14, but only 3 teachers, who teach French and other subjects via Poiyo. The (non-Poiyo-speaking) Tuareg headmaster uses French and Bambara for the "top" class, around 15 of whom pass the exam to continue studying, after age 14, at the *collège* in Kendiê, fifteen miles to the south-west. These numbers mean classrooms of 110 children and a blackboard divided into two – one half for each class in the room (photo 4)! Girls, traditionally busy with domestic chores and work in the fields, are encouraged to attend school by means of free food to take home after attendance. This "positive policy" means that over half the students are girls, and some even go on to the *collège*. However, in spite of the fact that all the children who attend school are taught French, any real conversation turned out to be impossible. No wonder, with so many students per class.

The next largest village is Sirou, about 6 miles away, which we reach through the bush on motorbikes. We are met, as usual, by chanting women and gunshots, and there are lines of schoolchildren waving home-made French and Mali flags, a symbol of our partnership. The village school is newly-built, with a headmaster and two teachers, all from the Poiyo-speaking region, but there are no chairs or tables, just makeshift furniture made out of banco and planks of wood. The Sirou villagers bear the family name Goundouba (meaning "people of Goundou", a place-name) and, apart from farmers, there are sculptors who make wooden statues, statuettes, sceptres and other wooden objects that are sold on the markets in Mopti.

The next largest village is Koundé, a 3-hour walk there and back. Here, they have the family names Poulioba/Pouryoba, Oureingmba and Toloba, the latter being leather workers. The Diambel district of Koundé is well-known locally for its leather goods, and for its indigo cloth cottage industries. We are shown the various steps in skinning, tanning, dyeing and sewing leather goods: shoulder bags, backpacks made from whole goatskins and conical dogon hats. This process is performed by the men. We also meet a very old lady who dyes the locally woven cotton cloth, to be made into skirts and tops by the women. On the way back to Dogani-Bere, we pass through Gobina, a very small village with the family names of Boloba and Diambilaba/Djambilaba (from the place-name Diambila). We are shown an ancient site among the rocks – a secret hiding place which could hold all 200 villagers in times of raids and whose tunnels, we are told, run right up into the village square. None of us is intrepid enough to test this route, though.

The last village is Menti, with the family name Pielaba/Peliyaba (meaning "those who destroyed Peliya", the name of a village). This is the village that, as *toubabs*, we find the most fascinating. Each time we visit, we are welcomed with singing and gunfire, but also the re-enactment of past battles fought alongside or against the Obele, who historically was a wealthy protector of the village, "a representative of god on earth" (until the late 19th century). The men dress up in special costumes (photo 5) to act out the scene, surrounded by a thick wall of villagers, men, women and children: theatre in the round. The old village of Menti is situated at the highest point of the Bandiagara plateau, at 790 metres' altitude, with breath-taking views of the plains below towards Bore, and beyond to Lake Debo.

Traditional dancing is accompanied by two or three male drummers (photo 6) using curved sticks, one or two female cowrie-calabash shakers (photo opposite) and women chanting. Dancers come into the ring in twos or threes, mainly groups of girls or women, babies on their backs, but sometimes men who play to the crowd, either with their stylish display or clowning to make the onlookers laugh. The girls, in particular, blow plastic whistles while dancing, sounding a single note that is repeated in long or short blasts in time to the mu-

sic. At the end of a group's performance, they sometimes dance towards us, touching the ground at our feet "in respect".



Photo: Cowrie-calabash tambourines. By Janet Ormrod

The five villages share a weekly outdoor market on Saturday afternoon where vendors come from miles around to sell food, goats, cloth, pots and pans.

Health-wise, things are grim as the dispensary and maternity buildings built five or six years ago are still empty. They await the arrival of the male nurse, appointed one year ago but not yet authorised to practise on a permanent basis. He visits the village from time to time to carry out vaccination campaigns, but not much more. Moreover, he does not speak Poiyo - his home town is Bandiagara - so his patients have to be assisted by a local translator. This situation seems catastrophic to me since the only fluent translators are all men. On the positive side, a young woman from the village is currently being trained as a *matrone* (local term in French for *midwife*) at the hospital in Bandiagara. The infant mortality rate is very high, either at or after birth but also due to malaria: one in five children do not survive beyond age 5. While I was in Dogani in December, one mother died in childbirth. Women marry from the age of 16 and have seven living children on average, but after a dozen or more pregnancies.

To conclude on an economic note, all people over 14 years old pay taxes in the village amounting to 1400 CFA or £1.40 p. per annum. Exempt are those aged over 60, women with 4 children, and students over 14 still at school. Salaries, when they exist, are very low: teachers earn between £75 and £80 (75,000 - 80,000 CFA) per month; the Mayor of Dogani is paid £50 per month, half being paid by the state and the other half by the *commune*; masons building the road get £3 per day; the minimum wage is £30 per month; our association paid the local carpenter £8 for 3 days' work repairing dilapidated school benches and tables.

If any *Ogmios* readers are interested in our association's work or my linguistic study, please do contact me.

Our next trip is planned for the end of 2008, to renew school and medical supplies and continue my study of Poiyo.

Janet Ormrod

aka "Teria Sangalaba" (*Teria* is a common first name in Dogani and means "the eldest daughter in the family, born before any sons are born".)

Senior Lecturer (Dept. of Modern Languages, ENST Bretagne, France)

[janet.ormrod at telecom-bretagne.eu](mailto:janet.ormrod@telecom-bretagne.eu)

<http://www.dogani-mali.org>

Voices from Tundra and Taiga: The Use of Sound Archives for the Study and Teaching of Endangered Languages

Contribution to the International conference "Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Cyberspace", Yakutsk, Russian Federation, July 2-4, 2008

Tjeerd de Graaf

Introduction

The work of the Fryske Akademy (Frisian Academy) and the Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning is devoted to the study of minority languages in Europe. The primary involvement of the Fryske Akademy lies in the domain of history, literature and culture related to the West-Frisian language. The users of its nearest relatives, the East- and North-Frisian languages in Germany are less numerous and these languages are included into the list of endangered languages of Europe. This list increased significantly after the extension of the European Union with new member states in Central and Eastern Europe. Further eastwards, in the Russian Federation a large number of endangered languages can also be found. This report presents existing and potential projects related to some of these endangered languages, in particular those based on the use of material from sound archives and fieldwork data. In most of these projects the use of the internet plays a very important role.

Minority Languages in Europe

The Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning has been established in 2007 with the principal goal of acquiring, storing and disseminating information on minority language education in the European region (Van der Meer 2006). This centre successfully implemented a computerised database of bibliographic data and information about people and organisations involved in this subject. The series of Regional Dossiers published by the Mercator Centre provides descriptive information about minority languages in a specific region of the European Union, such as characteristics of the educational system and recent educational policies. These dossiers can be ordered in print and can also be downloaded from the following website, where additional information can be found: www.mercator-research.eu. This information can serve various purposes and it is widely used by policy makers, researchers, teachers, students and journalists to assess the ongoing developments in European minority.

For the preparation of teaching materials, such as grammars, text books, collections of stories in the language, use can be made of archive material, such as sound recordings. The historical data are particularly useful when a language is endangered and few present-days speakers are available. In the following pages we shall present some case studies related to the use of these materials, which form the background of our project activities.

Historical Data in Sound Archives

In the last half of the 19th century a great invention was made by Thomas Edison which changed the possibility of doing linguistic research drastically (De Graaf 1997, 2002c). This was the phonograph which since 1880 was used for recording sounds. For the first time in human history people were able to store and rehear acoustic data, in particular speech, and to reproduce it to other sound carriers. It was not long after this invention that ethnologists, folklorists, linguists, composers, and amateurs began to use the new machine to collect information on the oral data and music of cultural groups at home and abroad.

Using the phonograph over the years from 1902 to 1905, the Polish anthropologist Bronisław Pilsidski recorded the speech and songs of the Ainu people on Sakhalin and Hokkaido on wax cylinders in order to study their culture. These wax cylinders were discovered in Poland and taken to Japan, where the research group of Prof. Toshimitsu Asakura contributed to the reconstruction of this valuable material (Asakura et al. 1986). For best results in the reproduction of sound from the old wax cylinders, several modern cylinder players have been built which employ light weight pick-up cartridges for mechanical extraction of the signal. In order to minimise further degradation of cylinders by replay, and also to make contents retrievable from broken cylinders, several optical methods for contactless, non-destructive replay have been developed. The first was introduced by the Japanese research group of Asakura. In 1988 I was invited to work a few months with this group in Sapporo (Japan) and there I could apply this method to some of the wax cylinders and learn from the experience of my Japanese colleagues.

During my stay in Japan Prof. Kyoko Murasaki introduced me to the last speakers of Sakhalin Ainu, who were living on Hokkaido (Murasaki 2001) and suggested that we might go together to Sakhalin in order to do fieldwork there. In 1988 Sakhalin was completely isolated from the outside world, but Gorbachov's perestrojka made it possible to organise the first international ethnolinguistic expedition to the island, which I could join in 1990 (De Graaf 1992). There we did not find any remnants of the Ainu population, but we could visit various parts of Sakhalin where the Nivkh people are living.

The Languages of Sakhalin

The island of Sakhalin belongs to the Sakhalin area (Sakhalinskaya Oblast'), one of the most eastern territorial units of the Russian Federation with a size of 87,100 sq.km and a distance from North to South of 980 km. The Kurile Islands are also part of this territory: a chain of 1200 km length with 36 islands. A long-time dispute exists between Japan and the Russian Federation about the ownership of the most southern of these islands. At the moment, they are Russian territory, but before 1945 they belonged to Japan, and were inhabited by Japanese people (in earlier times also by Ainu, who were the original population). In the past the situation of disputed ownership has had important demographic consequences for the island as a whole.

From 1905 to 1945, after the Russian-Japanese war, the southern part of the island (Karafuto) was a Japanese colony and during this period many Japanese immigrants (about half a million) settled there. The original population of Sakhalin consisted of some Paleo-Siberian and Tungusic tribes, in particular the Nivkh (Gilyak) and Uilta (Orok) in the North and Center, and the Ainu in the South. Their numbers were rather small and during the colonisation process by the Russians from the North and by the Japanese from the South, they became soon numerically dominated by these stronger nationalities. Due to their isolated life far from the political center, they could keep their native language and culture for a long time, but since the beginning of the 20th century the assimilation process has gradually become stronger.

In the summer of 1990, I took part in the first international field work expedition to Sakhalin, with the aim to investigate the linguistic and ethnographic situation of the smaller nationalities on the island. The idea was to look for the remnants of the Ainu population and for the other small minority groups, in particular Nivkh (Gilyak), Uilta (Orok).

Unfortunately, during our expedition no more Ainu people could be found and the only person representing the Sakhalin Ainu language and culture was probably the informant we met on Hokkaido, Asai Take san (De Graaf 1992, Murasaki 2001).

The dramatic events in 1945, after the Soviet occupation of the whole island, had enormous consequences for the ethnographic and linguistic situation: practically all Japanese inhabitants left Sakhalin for Japan and together with them many of the Sakhalin Ainu. From all parts of the Soviet Union new immigrants arrived.

These were not only Russian people, but also many members of other ethnic groups. Some of them still speak their native language; others have shifted to Russian. Due to these developments, the Sakhalin Ainu population disappeared from Sakhalin and the only Ainu people left are now living in Japan. In Japan the Ainu culture is stimulated in many ways, but there is only a very small number of speakers left after the earlier repression. This makes it very difficult to obtain a real revival of the Ainu language and culture.

Ainu is the only small endangered indigenous language of Japan, whereas Nivkh is one representative of the many minor languages of Russia. From the available demographic data we could conclude, that in 1989 the aboriginal Peoples of the North formed a very small minority within the total population of Sakhalin: for the Nivkh ethnic group, which is the largest group, the percentage is only 0.3 % (De Graaf 1992). Among the small nationalities in the Russian Federation, the Minority Peoples of the North play a special role. There are nearly thirty different groups, all living in the northern parts of the country bordering the Arctic Ocean from Scandinavia to the Bering Sea and the Pacific. The Peoples of the North were the last ones to be put under effective Soviet rule. The Soviet regime tried to extend its grip on these peoples and to encourage Russian culture and literacy among them. With this aim a "Committee for the Assistance and Protection of the Small Peoples of the North" was founded in 1923 and a writing system was developed for many of the minority languages.

Schools in the northern regions brought education to the native population. Most subjects were taught in Russian and therefore the schools became media of russification. The northern nationalities are so small, that even a very moderate introduction of (mainly Russian) manpower from outside into their territories could adversely affect their national survival. In the case of Sakhalin, we saw earlier that the number of people belonging to the original population has diminished considerably. This leads to further russification: Russian civilisation is pushing forward into the remote corners of the Russian Federation and more and more non-Russian natives are forced to adopt the Russian language and culture.

The Nivkh Language

The Nivkh language is classified as Paleo-Siberian and spoken by people inhabiting the lower reaches of the Amur river in the Far East of the Asian continent and the northern and central parts of Sakhalin island (Gruzdeva 1998). One of the linguistic complications is the fact that the language has two (or maybe more) rather different dialects: the Amur dialect and the Sakhalin dialect. Both groups are rather small: all together about 4400 people have the Nivkh nationality, and less than 15 % of them are speakers of the Nivkh language. A very small group speaks the southern Poronaisk dialect and for this dialect it is very difficult to find speakers. After the war, several of them went from their homeland in Southern-Sakhalin to Japan, where Japanese and other non-Soviet linguists studied their language.

The first all-Russian census was organized during the czarist regime in 1897. In that year, the total number of people on Sakhalin, belonging to the Nivkh ethnic group, was counted as 1969. They all gave Nivkh as their mother tongue and probably most of them were monolingual. In the second census mentioned, the one of 1926, which was organized for the first time in the Soviet Union, the total number of Nivkh people was lower, due to the fact that the inhabitants of the Japanese southern part of Sakhalin were not counted.

Practically all of them still had Nivkh as their mother tongue.

Since that year, however, a decrease in the percentage of Nivkh speakers has set in, whereas the total number of Nivkh on Sakhalin stayed more or less stable (about 2000). In 1989, most Nivkh people (more than 80%) who were not speaking Nivkh any more, mentioned Russian as their first language.

The transition from the Sakhalin Nivkh to the Russian language can be explained in a number of ways. One of the most important factors was the growing contact of the Nivkh population with the other inhabitants on the island. Many of them were Russian-speaking people from the motherland, who came to the island to exploit the many natural resources (oil, coal, wood, fish, caviar). Before that time, the Nivkh people were living as fishermen and hunters in their isolated villages, but they increasingly came into contact with the immigrants, who also started an active policy of educating and influencing the aboriginal inhabitants of the eastern parts of the Russian Federation.

From the early sixties of the 20th century, the Nivkh on Sakhalin, like other small minority people, were (in many cases compulsorily) resettled from their small villages to larger settlements (Chir-Unvd and Nekrasovka), and towns (Poronaisk, Nogliki). These developments intensified the contact between minorities and the Russian speaking population. Important changes took place in the life of the Nivkh: they had to give up many of their national customs, and to adapt to Russian habits and life style. In particular, the arrival of Russian radio and television in their homes had a great influence. The traditional professions of the Nivkh (fisherman or hunter) were also more and more replaced by other occupations, where the possibility to keep the native language and culture was very limited.

After the Russian revolution, in order to abolish the illiteracy of the native peoples writing systems were introduced. For the Nivkh language, this was initially based on the Latin alphabet, and was created in 1932. According to some linguists, this might have been most suited to the sound structure of the language. In 1953, however, the Cyrillic alphabet replaced this system, which also increased the influence of Russian. Furthermore, the creation of boarding schools for the Peoples of the North played a special role. In the fifties, their children were taken to such schools in places far away from their home village. They could rarely see their family and lost contact with their language background. In most cases, instruction in these schools was only provided in Russian.

In recent times a development is taking place in favour of the native language and culture of the small minorities in the Russian Federation, in particular the Nivkh (De Graaf and Shiraishi 2004). Attempts are being made to revive the Nivkh language, for example by introducing language classes in Nivkh in several schools. In 1980, the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation initiated a program for primary and secondary schools, for which text books and dictionaries were edited. Special instruction was given to teachers of Nivkh descent about the education of Nivkh children in their own language. This teaching program was introduced in the special boarding schools for children from the ethnic minorities in Nogliki, Chir-Unvd and in Nekrasovka. We were able to visit these schools and to learn about the teaching methods for Nivkh used in the primary education.

During our fieldwork expeditions on Sakhalin, important linguistic material was collected on the languages of the minority groups. Most of the subjects for our research project were elderly people with a strong motivation to use their language, for example as members of a folkloristic group. Practically all young people we met had no active knowledge of the language, and they only communicated in Russian with their parents. During the interviews we made with Nivkh informants, they were very positive about the value of keeping and cultivating their own culture in this way and they want to combine this with a future life as members of the group of nations in the Russian Federation. They agree that Russian language and culture play a very important role in their lives, but they would like to see the survival of their native language and culture stimulated by all possible means.

The edition of a special newspaper (Nivkh Dif), the writing of more books and journals in Nivkh, and the organisation of special language courses will make this possible. Here the use of information technology and cyberspace plays an important role.

European Projects related to Endangered Languages and Sound Archives in Russia

From 2007 onwards, work of the Mercator European Research Centre will not only be restricted to members of the European Union and in the future also contacts with other countries will be established, such as across the Eastern border of the EU in parts of the Russian Federation, where Uralic languages, related to Finnish and Hungarian, are spoken. It can be shown that in this sense European culture has many links with Russia and Siberia. The study of these languages is essential in order to preserve their unique cultural heritage for future generations.

Our research group pays attention to various aspects of the languages spoken in the Russian Federation. In this report we shall describe a few projects, which have been undertaken by the research group and elsewhere for the study of the minority peoples of Russia and for the description of the endangered languages involved. For this purpose data from archives have been used and combined with results of modern fieldwork in several parts of the Russian North, Siberia, the Russian Far East and the border areas of Russia and Japan. Since 1992 these projects have been financially supported by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), the Organization INTAS of the European Union and the Sakhalin Energy Investment Company Ltd. We have collaborated with colleagues in Russia and Japan and part of our work is simultaneously related to Japanese research projects.

When recordings were made, it became obvious that a central facility was needed for the preservation of the valuable data which had been collected. At the beginning of the 20th century this led to the establishment of sound archives, the earliest of which in Europe were located in Vienna, Berlin and St.Petersburg. The sound archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences in the Museum of Russian Literature (Pushkinsky Dom) in St.Petersburg contain about 10,000 wax cylinders of the Edison phonograph and more than 500 old wax discs. In addition, an extensive fund of gramophone records and one of the largest collections of tape-recordings of Russian folklore represent the history of Russian ethnography and contain a wide range of materials (De Graaf 2001, 2002a). Many of these recordings form one of the basic collections used in our joint projects with St.Petersburg.

The first of these projects on the *Use of Acoustic Data Bases and the Study of Language Change* (1995-1998) has been financially supported by the organization INTAS of the European Union in Brussels. We were able to reconstruct some of the many recordings in the Pushkinsky Dom and to make them available for further research, which is not only important for historical and cultural reasons, but also for language description and for the study of possible direct evidence of language change. In a second INTAS project, *St.Petersburg Sound Archives on the World Wide Web* (1998 - 2001) some of the sound recordings were placed on the internet and are now available at a special web site for further study (De Graaf 2004a). In both projects, the Phonogrammarchiv of the Austrian Academy of Sciences was both partner and responsible for the technical aspects. For these projects we first completed the reconstruction of the sound archive material of the Zhirmunsky collection. Zhirmunsky was a famous linguist who worked in St.Petersburg/Leningrad in the early years of the 20th century. One of his main interests was the study of German dialects spoken in Russia. In the period between 1927 and 1930 he recorded many utterances, in particular songs by German settlers in Russia, on waxed cardboard discs, which were transferred to the Vienna Phonogrammarchiv. Within the framework of the INTAS project, this collection has been copied onto tape and part of the material is now stored in a special database. A special study covered the language of the Siberian Mennonites (De Graaf 2005).

For our third INTAS Project on *The construction of a full-text database on Balto-Finnic languages and Russian dialects in Northwest-Russia* (2000 – 2003) we prepared an inventory of the Finno-ugric minority languages in the vicinity of St.Petersburg and the southern and middle parts of Karelia. They represent a specific linguistic picture of an area where endangered languages such as Vepsian, Ingrian, Votic, Ingrian-Finnish and Karelian and various types of Russian archaic dialects are spoken in close proximity to this day.

The St.Petersburg sound archives also contain important data on Yiddish, the language of the Jews in Eastern Europe, which at the beginning of this century was spoken by millions of speakers in the Russian empire. In the archives we found an unpublished manuscript *The Ballad in Jewish Folklore*, together with material on corresponding wax cylinders. Together with specialists in St.Petersburg, we further explored the acoustic data in the sound archives and prepared the edition of the book. This took place in the framework of a project with the title *Voices from the Shtetl, the Past and Present of the Yiddish Language in Russia* (1998 - 2001), for which we have obtained financial support from the Netherlands Foundation for Scientific Research NWO (De Graaf, Kleiner and Svetozarova 2004).

Modern fieldwork and reconstructed data from sound archives provide important information for the preparation of language descriptions, grammars, dictionaries and edited collections of oral and written literature. During fieldwork expeditions to Northern Yakutia, the Altai Region and Sakhalin we have studied the processes of language shift and language death of the aboriginal populations of Russia, providing us with a lot of interesting data. Part of it is now available on the internet.

Voices from Tundra and Taiga

Important activities related to linguistic databases in St.Petersburg concern the recordings of Russian dialects and minority languages in the Russian Federation, such as Nivkh, Tungus, Yakut, Yukagir and other ones (De Graaf 2004a). One of our aims is to use these recordings for the construction of a phonetic database of the languages of Russia, which will have many scientific, cultural and technical applications. Within the framework of the research program *Voices from Tundra and Taiga* which started in 2002, we combine the data from old sound recordings with the results of modern fieldwork, in order to give a full description of the languages and cultures of ethnic groups in Russia. The endangered Arctic languages and cultures of the Russian Federation must be described rapidly before they become extinct. Our earlier work on the reconstruction technology for old sound recordings found in archives in St.Petersburg has made it possible to compare languages still spoken in the proposed research area with the same languages as they were spoken more than half a century ago, which provided a fortunate start of these projects. The sound recordings in the St.Petersburg archives consist of spoken language, folksongs, fairy tales etc., among others in Siberian languages (Burykin et al. 2005, De Graaf 2004a).

In these projects the techniques developed earlier are applied to some of the disappearing minority languages and cultures of Russia, such as Nivkh (Gilyak) and Uilta (Orok) on Sakhalin and Yukagir and Tungusic languages in Yakutia. Our goal is to set up a phono- and video-library of recorded stories, folklore, singing and oral traditions of the peoples of Sakhalin and Yakutia. Thus the existing sound recordings in the archives of Sakhalin and Yakutia will be complemented by new fieldwork results. The data obtained will be added to the existing archive material in St.Petersburg and partly available on the internet and CD-ROM.

This research project and related documentation is carried out in close co-operation with scholars in local centers such as Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk who participate in the archiving of sound recordings and fieldwork expeditions. They are trained at the St.Petersburg State University. Specialists from St.Petersburg and the Netherlands also visit them setting up new centers for the study and teaching of local languages and related subjects.

For this purpose we organised a special seminar for Nivkh teachers in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk in October 2003. In the future elsewhere – e.g. in Yakutia – similar seminars can be organised.

Spontaneous speech and the reading of prepared texts is collected for (ethno)linguistic as well as for anthropological, folkloristic and ethno-musicological analysis. These data are (video)recorded and analysed and they will thus illustrate the art of story telling and language use. The above described texts will be published in scientific journals and books with audiovisual illustrations on CD-ROM and/or on the internet. The materials will thus become available for further analysis to scholars working in the field of phonetics, linguistics, anthropology, history, ethno-musicology and folklore.

Using a phrase book for school children of Nivkh (Taksami et al. 1982) we recorded a native speaker during our fieldwork trip in 1990. The texts with the illustrations of the book are now shown on the internet together with the acoustic data. The separate phonemes are also supplied on a special table and by selecting one of them the student can listen to various speech sounds. This has as the advantage that students will be able to learn the distinction between various separate phonemes (e.g. four k-sounds) of Nivkh, which are variants (allophones) of one phoneme in Russian. One of our research students and his Nivkh colleague published a series of books with Nivkh stories, songs and conversation in which for the first time the corresponding texts are recorded on a CD. The series, *Sound Materials of the Nivkh Language I - III* (Shiraishi and Lok 2002, 2003, 2004) appeared as a result of the Japanese program on Endangered Languages of the Pacific Rim (ELPR) and the research program *Voices from Tundra and Taiga*. This unique material – which is available on the internet – is not only used by linguists, but also by the language community itself, where it can be applied for teaching purposes. In 2006 Hidetoshi Shiraishi finished a dissertation on this topic with the title *Aspects of Nivkh Phonology*, which he defended in September 2006 at Groningen University (Shiraishi 2006).

Endangered Archives

In the summer of 2005, we reported on the NWO research project *Voices from Tundra and Taiga*, and we published a catalogue of existing recordings of recorded stories, folklore, singing and oral traditions of the peoples of Siberia (Burykin et al. 2005). This material has thus become available for further analysis by researchers working in the field of phonetics, linguistics, anthropology, history, ethno-musicology and folklore. The information is also highly important for the development of teaching methods for representatives of the related ethnic groups and for the conservation and revitalization of their languages and cultures.

At present, many old recordings still remain hidden in private archives and places where the quality of preservation is not guaranteed. In a new project, which from September 2006 has been financially supported by a special Programme on Endangered Languages at the British Library, we propose to make part of these recordings available and to add them to the database developed in St.Petersburg. The St.Petersburg Institute for Linguistic Studies (ILS) is one of the most important Russian centres for the investigation of minority and regional languages in the Russian Federation. Many researchers in this institute have collected sound material and many of these recordings (primary data) are not stored in safe places, whereas the related field notes, manuscripts, card files (secondary data) can be found in the institute or also in private archives.

Partner in this new project on Endangered Archives is again the Phonogrammarchiv of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. The aim is to re-record the material on sound carriers according to present-day technology (Schüller 2005) and store them in a safe place together with the metadata, which will be obtained from the related secondary data. The storage facility provided by the project will modernise the possible archiving activities in the Russian Federation and bring them up-to-date according to present world standards. It will be important

to co-ordinate this with the staff of the Pushkinsky Dom, where a collection of great historical value (selected by UNESCO in its programme Memory of the World) can be enriched with the new data. In the project we are concentrating on a selection of recordings, especially those of some Siberian languages, such as Nivkh, Even, Evenki, Aleut, Nenets, Udege and other ones. Thus far we have produced a list of the available recordings in private possession. Most scholars who have collected these data, have approved the use of their recordings and are going to contribute to the project with the preparation of the required metadata. Some of them also have good links with the Pushkinsky Dom and were members of the project group for the program *Voices from Tundra and Taiga*.

In other parts of Russia similar important collections can be found, not only in established institutions, but many of them are in private hands and often endangered, for example the private collections on Nivkh, which are available in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, in Vladivostok, in London and elsewhere. For most of these, it can be said that the quality of preservation is below standard. Following our long-standing collaboration with scholars from Sakhalin, we are also planning to create facilities in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk for the storage of sound material related to the aboriginal languages of the island. Most important are the above mentioned Nivkh collections, but we should also like to add material on Sakhalin Ainu and Uilta. Of some of these private collections the size is approximately known, but in other cases this first has to be estimated. Within the framework of our project and future new projects, we would like to obtain access to these collections, copy them on modern sound carriers, make a catalogue available and publish part of the material together with the related recordings in St.Petersburg. On Sakhalin and in other parts of Russia – e.g. Yakutia – the local scholars will be involved in the preparation of these projects with the support of colleagues in St.Petersburg, Austria, the Netherlands and Japan.

The technical challenge of the project lies in the transfer of the (historical) sound documents into a safe, professionally organised digital repository. The main objectives are to retrieve signals in the best possible quality from their original, transfer them into a true file format (wave) and store them onto computer back-up tapes. It must be mentioned in this context that recordable optical discs (CD-R, DVD-R), though widely used, are not safe digital target carriers. Logistically, such work can only successfully be organised in a central place where some kind of technical infrastructure is available. The St. Petersburg Phonogrammarchiv (Pushkinsky Dom) will serve for this purpose. From co-operations within earlier projects this institute is already equipped with basic audiovisual machines. The various collections to be safeguarded will be brought to St. Petersburg, where they will be transferred along with relevant linguistic materials from the collection of the Archive itself. Copies will be provided to the British Library and the Vienna Phonogrammarchiv.

Concluding Remarks

As we have described in the foregoing parts of this review, in a joint effort researchers from Russia and the Netherlands analyze data from audio archives and at the same time apply modern fieldwork techniques in studying endangered languages such as Nivkh, Nenets and Yukagir. The results are language descriptions, grammars, dictionaries and edited collections of oral and written literature on and in these languages. In seminars, the use of these learning and teaching materials within the modern facilities of information technology is passed on to local teachers. Formal language teaching of former mother tongues is directed to those younger members of the communities who have not learned their native language informally at home. Special methods for teaching the former mother tongue as a foreign language have to be applied. Selected parts of the acoustic databases used for these projects are available on the Internet and provide an opportunity for the exchange of information on these languages with institutions in other parts of the world.

At the local community level and over the past several decades many people have been working to develop language education programmes, usually with extremely limited technical resources.

Unlike teachers of major languages of the world, they lack not only formal training in language teaching, now often required by local governments, but also language curricula and, even more crucially, usable basic language descriptions. The Mercator European Research Centre has the intention to be instrumental in co-ordinating these activities. It will be important to exchange ideas with similar institutes in other parts of the world, such as in the Russian Federation. Together we shall be able to develop an effective and viable strategy for sustaining the world's endangered languages.

Paterswolde, July 2008

Court Says Yup'ik Not Written Language

Elizabeth Pyatt, 23 July 2008, from the Linguist List

'A Federal Judge has [made a preliminary ruling] that Yup'ik is not an historically written language. The ruling is part of a lawsuit brought on by Yup'ik elders and tribes against the State of Alaska and the City of Bethel. The ruling by Judge Timothy Burgess could limit the kind of language assistance the state is required to provide.' The audio file on the site explains that this lawsuit was brought up by the Alaska ACLU because the tribe was seeking further support in translating voting materials into Yup'ik and more support is mandated for 'historically written languages.'

However the story says that this ruling may not preclude additional translation support (in fact the final ruling may clarify what is needed).

Also, the state may actually record CD-ROMs.

The normative content of language rights of minorities in international human rights law

by Innocent Maja, reprinted from AfLaT (African Language Technologies) newsletter, February/March 2008

Two preliminary points are worth noting before analysing the human rights instruments that protect minority languages. Firstly, true democratic states are obliged to promote substantive equality through laws that enable minorities (including linguistic minorities) to preserve their characteristics. The Minority Schools in Albania Advisory Opinion 6 of the Permanent Court of International Justice brilliantly sums this up as follows:

The idea underlying the treaties for the protection of minorities was to secure for them the possibility of living peaceably alongside of the population, while preserving their own characteristics. In order to attain this objective, two things were regarded as particularly necessary. The first was to ensure that members of racial, religious and linguistic minorities should be placed in every respect on a footing of perfect equality with the other nationals of the state. The second was to ensure for the majority elements suitable for the preservation of their own characteristics and traditions... These two requirements are indeed closely interlocked, for there would not be true equality between a majority and a minority if the latter were ... compelled to renounce that which constitutes the very essence of its being a minority.

Secondly, there is a distinction between standards that are part of international law and principles that are morally or politically desirable. The former indicate the language rights that are protected by international human rights law and the latter are not binding on states but can be of persuasive value in advocating for law reform. Such non-binding principles are sometimes referred to as 'soft law', and may shape the practice of states, as well as establish and reflect agreement of states and experts on the interpretation of certain standards.

International law, unlike domestic law, depends on the consent of the state concerned for it to be binding. Such consent is expressed where a state ratifies a treaty or can be inferred from established and consistent practice of states in conducting their relationships with each other. Put differently, states are bound by the provisions of treaties that they ratify as well as practices that constitute customary international law. Other sources like declarations, principles, recommendations, resolutions and writings of eminent scholars are not binding on states.

(a) Customary International Law: Customary international law refers to 'general practice of states accepted as law.' In other words, customary international law results when states follow certain practices generally (state practice) and consistently out of a sense of legal obligation (*opinio juris*). Customary international law binds all states (except those that may have objected to it during its formation) irrespective of whether they have ratified any relevant treaty.

Many scholars argue that some standards laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (which in formal terms is only a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly and as such not legally binding) have become part of customary international law as a result of subsequent practice; therefore they would be binding upon all states.

United Nations Human Rights Committee General Comment No. 24 summarises the rights in the Universal Declaration that have become part of customary international law as:

[A] State may not reserve the right to engage in slavery, to torture, to subject persons to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, to arbitrarily deprive persons of their lives, to arbitrarily arrest and detain persons, to deny freedom of thought, conscience and religion, to presume a person guilty unless he proves his innocence, to execute pregnant women and children, to permit the advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred, to deny to persons of marriageable age the right to marry, or to deny to minorities the right to enjoy their own culture, profess their own religion, or use their own language...

What emerges from this discourse is that under customary international law states cannot deny linguistic minorities the right to use their own language. However, it is not yet clearly established that customary international law affords minority language speakers a positive right to use their own language.

(b) Treaties: Treaties are legally binding and oblige states to respect, protect and fulfill human rights (the tripartite typology). Sepúlveda et al cogently summarise the meaning of the tripartite typology as:

...The obligation to respect requires the state to refrain from any measure that may deprive individuals of the enjoyment of their rights or of the ability to satisfy those rights by their own efforts... The obligation to protect requires the state to prevent violations of human rights by third parties.... The state is obliged to prevent violations of rights by any individual or non-state actor; to avoid and eliminate incentives to violate rights by third parties; and to provide access to legal remedies when violations have occurred in order to prevent further deprivations... The obligation to fulfill requires the state to take measures to ensure, for persons within its jurisdiction, opportunities to obtain satisfaction of the basic needs as recognised in human rights instruments, which cannot be secured by personal efforts.

Binding treaty are adopted and ratified under the United Nations and regional human rights systems and interpreted by treaty bodies established by them through general comments, resolutions and decisions. Accordingly, the dissertation will use general comments, resolutions and decisions of treaty bodies as useful tools to clarify the normative content of minority language rights.

The Normative content of minority language rights under the United Nations system

There is no specific United Nations human rights instrument exclusively devoted to the protection of minority languages.

Different treaties make reference to minority languages. Interestingly, a study of these treaties reveals that international law does not provide for an unqualified right to use a minority language. Instead minority language rights can be gleaned from existing rights that affect minority languages. According to Fernand de Varennes

There is not in the present state of international law an unqualified 'right to use a minority language' but there are a number of existing rights and freedoms that affect the issue of language preferences and use by members of a minority or by the state.

Accordingly, this paper will review rights that make specific mention of minority languages and those from which minority language protection can be inferred.

Rights that make mention of minority languages

Article 27 of the ICCPR obliges states not to deny linguistic minorities the right to use their language.

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.

The question that inevitably arises is: what is the nature of protection afforded to minority languages by article 27? Pejic argues that article 27 is ambiguous in the following respects

First, by employing the words "in those States in which . . . minorities exist," Article 27 leaves states the option of declaring that they have no minorities, thereby excluding its application to persons within their territory or subject to their jurisdiction... Secondly, the rights provided for in Article 27 are conferred on persons belonging to ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities. It is left to interpretation whether citizenship is a precondition for invoking Article 27 and whether indigenous groups are entitled to the rights for which it provides. The third limiting element is that Article 27 is the only provision in the Covenant which is negatively phrased. Instead of stating that persons belonging to minorities "shall have" the rights specified, it declares that they "shall not be denied" those rights. The exact meaning of this phrase has been the subject of much debate, carried on to this day. Finally, the text also leaves ample room for interpretation regarding the subjects--individuals or groups--to which it applies. While it obviously confers rights on individual members of minority groups, the phrase "in community with the other members of their group" suggests that a collective element was intended as well.

With respect, Pejic's concerns are more apparent and of an academic interest than real. The United Nations Human Rights Committee General Comment No. 23 clarifies the ambit of article 27 of the ICCPR:

The Committee observes that this article establishes and recognizes a right which is conferred on individuals belonging to minority groups and which is distinct from, and additional to, all the other rights which, as individuals in common with everyone else, they are already entitled to enjoy under the Covenant... The terms used in article 27 indicate that the persons designed to be protected are those who belong to a group and who share in common a culture, a religion and/or a language. Those terms also indicate that the individuals designed to be protected need not be citizens of the State party... Just as they need not be nationals or citizens, they need not be permanent residents... The existence of an ethnic, religious or linguistic minority in a given State party does not depend upon a decision by that State party but requires to be established by objective criteria... Although article 27 is expressed in negative terms, that article, nevertheless, does recognize the existence of a "right" and requires that it shall not be denied.

In short, article 27 of the ICCPR affords individuals belonging to linguistic minorities (whether citizens or non-citizens) in a state the individual and collective right to use their language among

themselves, in private or in public. General Comment 23 further stipulates that the rights protected under article 27 depend in turn on the ability of the minority group to maintain its culture, language or religion. Accordingly, positive measures by states may also be necessary to protect the identity of a minority and the rights of its members to enjoy and develop their culture and language, in community with the other members of the group. Article 27 should be distinguished from other instances where a minority language may be used irrespective of whether a minority group maintains its culture or language. For example, the right to be informed of any criminal charges in a language that you understand and to an interpreter during trial is a general right that can be exercised by anyone irrespective of whether they belong to a minority group or not.

Other explicit rights granted to linguistic minorities include a qualified right of members of national minorities to carry on their own educational activities, including the maintenance of schools and, depending on the educational policy of each state, teaching of their own language. Children of migrant workers and indigenous peoples have a right to be taught in their mother tongue. It is important to note in this regard that International Labour Organisation Convention 107 encourages 'a progressive transition from the mother tongue or the vernacular language to the national language or to one of the official languages of the country' (linguistic assimilation) and International Labour Organisation Convention 169 encourages preservation of the mother tongue concurrently with attainment of fluency in the national or official language (linguistic diversity). This paper advocates for the latter approach.

Rights from which protection of minority languages can be inferred

The right to use a minority language can be implied in the rights to private and family life, freedom of expression and non-discrimination. It therefore follows that a government which, by legislation or other conduct, forbids family members to use a language amongst themselves would be in breach of the right to private and family life as well as freedom of expression. Fernand de Varennes gives very interesting examples. He argues that where a government authority bans the private use of a minority language in public areas (for example banning individuals from having a private conversation in their own language in public streets, or banning the use of a particular language in a public park, etc), this breaches the right of freedom of expression and amounts to discrimination on the basis of language.

He argues further that a state cannot forbid individuals to use a minority language in private correspondence or communications (including private business or commercial correspondence by telephone, electronic means, etc). He avers further that a prohibition making it illegal to play any song, or to stage theater presentations, operas, etc, either in private or in public, in a particular language would be violation of rights that already exist in international law. He contends further that a government that prevents an individual from having a name or surname which is not in an official language or which does not feature in a prescribed list violates the right to use one's name which falls under the ambit of article 27 of the ICCPR. In any case, he argues, names and surnames constitute a means of identifying persons within their families and the community, and as such are an inseparable part of private and family life.

It is worth noting that under international law, freedom of expression includes the right to linguistic expression. Fernand de Varennes states that members of linguistic minorities (as well as all other individuals) have the right to use their language of choice in private activities involving expression. This includes the use of outdoor commercial signs and posters and applies to the language used in the private display of signs, posters, or other notices of a commercial, cultural and even political nature. Private broadcasting in a minority language is permitted. There is also a right to create and operate private educational facilities in which a minority language may be used as a medium of communication.

Minority languages may also be used during religious worship or other religious practices, during a private part of a marriage ceremony, in private economic activities, within private groups and organisations and by political associations or parties.

An emerging discourse is whether the state is obliged to guarantee use of minority languages in public. One school of thought believes that such 'right' does not exist and the other emphasises that such a 'right' exists but should only be exercised by members of national minorities. However, this matter was authoritatively decided in the Diergaardt case in which Afrikaans in Namibia alleged discrimination on the basis of language. The Human Rights Committee held that minority Afrikaans speakers in Namibia were victims of a violation of article 26 of the ICCPR and were entitled to the use of their mother tongue in administration, justice, education and public life.

The Normative content of minority language rights under regional human rights systems

Only the Inter-American and European systems of human rights will be discussed here. The Inter-American system has neither a specific treaty dealing with minority languages nor any specific provision expressly providing for minority languages. However, minority language rights can be inferred from rights like freedom of expression and freedom from discrimination on the ground of language.

The European system has two specific conventions dealing with protection of minority languages. The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities provides for specific rights and obligations. Articles 5 and 6 oblige states to be tolerant to, take measures and promote the conditions necessary to promote linguistic diversity. Article 11(1) recognises the right of every person belonging to a national minority to use his or her surname (patronym) and first names in the minority language and the right to official recognition of such names. Article 14 provides for the right to learn in a minority language. Minority language rights are also inferred from freedom of expression and freedom from discrimination on the ground of language.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (European Language Charter) uses the words 'regional' and 'minority' languages interchangeably and obliges states to take measures to protect minority languages (in addition to official languages) in the regions where they are spoken most. It defines minority languages and confirms the value of language as an expression of cultural wealth. It enjoins state parties to encourage and or facilitate the use of minority languages in speech and writing, in public and private life and promote study and research on minority languages at tertiary institutions in areas where regional languages are spoken.

It is imperative to note that the European Language Charter does not provide for specific rights but state obligations. This distinction is significant in showing that a breach of the treaty does not entitle any individuals to make any 'legal claims' and remedy at the international or domestic level but would have to be treated as a failure of a state's obligations in international law. The explanatory document from the Council of Europe and the plain wording of the treaty reveal that the European Language Charter is not directly enforceable and does not grant any right to any individuals. The European Language Charter therefore creates legal obligations on states, but does not award any 'language rights' to individuals (or minorities).

Article 8 obliges states to make available a substantial part of pre-school, primary, secondary, technical, vocational, university and higher education in the relevant regional or minority languages. The curriculum should also include the history and the culture that is reflected by the regional or minority language. Article 9 obliges states to ensure that, if the interests of justice are not hampered, minority languages are used in criminal and civil proceedings and

proceedings before the courts that involve administrative matters in both procedural and substantive issues.

Article 10 provides for the use of minority languages by administrative authorities and in public service including use of minority languages in family names, documents used, deliberation, and recruitment.

Article 11 obliges states to guarantee the use of minority languages in the media. States should ensure that there is at least one radio station and television channel in a minority language and must encourage the training of journalists in minority languages. Article 12 enjoins states to facilitate the use of minority languages in all cultural activities. Article 13 obliges states to guarantee the use of minority languages in economic and social life that includes public and private companies and hospitals. It even encourages state parties to enter into bilateral agreements that benefit regional language speakers who speak a similar language. The Convention further obliges states parties to submit periodic reports which are examined by a committee of experts.

Summary

Five points can be drawn from the above discourse. Firstly, the United Nations human rights instruments do not define a minority language. Secondly, the definition enshrined in the European Language Charter is narrow because it is restricted to citizens when international law recognises non-citizens as minority language speakers. Thirdly, both customary international law and the United Nations human rights instruments protect the minority languages of citizens and non-citizens through a hybrid of individual and collective rights. Fourthly, these rights are either expressly or implicitly provided for. Express rights include the right to use a minority language among linguistic minorities in private and public life, right to be taught in a mother tongue, run educational institutions even in a minority language, the right to informed of allegations of criminal charges in a minority language and the right to an interpreter. Minority language rights can be inferred from the rights to a private family life, freedom of expression and freedom from discriminated on the basis of language. Fifth, even though the European Language Charter is the most comprehensive instrument devoted to minority or regional languages, it only enumerates state obligations and does not afford individuals rights.

Government of Bolivia launches three universities to strengthen indigenous cultural identity

Mabel Azcui, - La Paz – 15 August/2008, from El Pais

Share to learn and know. This basic principle of Callaway culture and native peoples of Bolivia will be incorporated into the lives of the three Indian universities, created by decree of the Bolivian president, Evo Morales, to strengthen the identity of native peoples and recover the valuable knowledge of their settlers. The Ministry of Education and Culture has reported that the project will conclude in September with definitions of academic plans, materials and regulations for each of the faculties of higher study in Aymara, Guaraní and Quechua. The three universities will operate from January next year.

First offerings include career subjects such as altiplano and tropical agronomy, fish-farming, food and textile industries, veterinary and animal husbandry, forestry and hydrocarbons. "These are careers that are in high demand and that, by consensus, the communities consulted requested beforehand," explained the head of communication at the Ministry of Education and Culture, Fabiola Rollano.

The president, Evo Morales, has ruled that the historic school Wari-sata, founded in 1931 by Elizardo Perez, should house the Tupak

Katari University for teaching in Aymara (with a speaker population that is estimated at 1.3 million people).

The decommissioned military base in Chimore in Cochabamba, operated by the U.S. DEA to control drug trafficking, will house the Quechua university Casimiro Huanta, and the Apiaguaiki Tupa college in Kuruyuki will teach in Guarani. An estimated 1.5 million speak Quechua and about 100,000 people from eight Tupi-Guarani villages also speak Guarani.

The creation of the three universities has been questioned in some sectors of Bolivian education, mainly for the poor training of university teachers, but also for the limitations which might be entailed by teaching exclusively in indigenous languages.

The Academic Unit Multi-Ethnic Conception, Santa Cruz, has intensified its work in training teachers in Guarani, the fourth most widely spoken language in the country, after Spanish, Aymara and Quechua.

The Bolivian Government is convinced that the universities, claimed by indigenous peoples, will "decolonize" Bolivia ideologically, culturally, socially and economically, as well as accessing principles and ways of production and life of indigenous people who for centuries had resisted the "humiliation of colonialism".

Bolivia is a nation composed of about thirty peoples, most of them with Amazonian roots - Arawak, Tacano, Mataco, Mosetén, Chiquitano, etc. but all agree to share their knowledge so that all may learn from everyone, and the knowledge and the wisdom of their peoples may be gathered up.

Bolivia: initial grant for work with endangered Jaqaru and Kawki languages

From The Latinamericanist (Univ. of Florida) Spring/Summer 2008

The National Science Foundation recently awarded a three-year grant of approximately \$155,000 to M. J. Hardman (Linguistics) and Elizabeth Lowe (LAS) to create a linguistic research database in the endangered Jaqi languages. This project, entitled "An Accessible Linguistic Research Database of the Endangered Jaqaru and Kawki Language," will be under the direction of M. J. Hardman, Howard Beck and Sue Legg. The award begins in July 2008. The team will transform a corpus consisting of 50 field notebooks of texts, corresponding audiotapes, 450 photographs and related linguistic data into an accessible, archived linguistic research database. A dictionary of the languages will also be created and entered into the database. The linguistic database will build on existing computational and linguistic work and will conform to the appropriate recommendations and standards. The materials will be archived and linked through two digital archives, the Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America at the University of Texas, Austin (AILLA) and the UF Libraries Digital Collections. This project will make the field notes collected by Hardman over 50 years of linguistic field research in Peru available to the linguistic community. It also builds on the work of the "Aymara on the Internet" program funded by the U. S. Department of Education from 2004–07. The broader impact of the project will be to preserve and make available the texts, dictionary and grammar of two highly endangered Andean languages for linguistic research and for the use and future collaboration of heritage speakers. The linguistic material will be translated from Jaqaru and Kawki into Spanish and English. It is anticipated that the government of Peru will want to utilize this project for broader dissemination for bilingual education and language preservation purposes. The intellectual merit of the project lies in the rarity and scope of the linguistic material and the fact that it will reside in a multifunctional, widely accessible and web-based database. The coordinated archiving plan developed with AILLA and UF Digital Collections ensures that the materials will be accessible to diverse interdisciplinary and international user groups.

Aymara on the Internet Programme Introduced to Bolivian Ministry of Education and Culture

Elizabeth Lowe (LAS) and Howard Beck (Agricultural & Biological Engineering) travelled to La Paz, Bolivia at the invitation of the Ministry of Education and Culture in April. The purpose of the trip was to introduce the Aymara on the Internet programme to Ministry officials and to discuss possible implementation plans for using the Aymara program in multiple settings in Bolivia. The new Bolivian constitution mandates bilingual education (Aymara-Spanish) for government workers, school teachers, K-12 education and other users. Prior to the trip, the technical teams at UF and at the Ministry were able to successfully install the program on the government server. It now resides on the Ministry education portal (Educabolivia), which in turn links to a larger Latin American education portal (Relpe). The program can be accessed at <http://aymara.educabolivia.bo/aymara>. During the four-day visit, Lowe and Beck had meetings with the Ministry and gave two half-day presentations on the Aymara project in public settings in La Paz and Cochabamba. Denise Arnold and Juan de Dios Yapita (Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Aymara-ILCA, a Bolivian NGO) participated in the Ministry meetings and in the presentation in La Paz. Attendees included representatives of universities, public and private institutions, government agencies and labour unions. The presentations covered the history of the project, an introduction to the student interface, pedagogical considerations, evaluation of the programme and the structure and function of the database powering the interface. There was a high level of interest among the audience. Some can use the program immediately, while others are interested in modifying the program to meet the needs of local audiences and in adding other local languages, such as Quechua. The Ministry would like to add an assessment component to be able to award certification to users of the programme.

There is also an interest on the part of the Ministry in training for schoolteachers in the use of technology for language education, development of online materials and for training in database development for IT students in local universities. The Aymara on the Internet program (M.J. Hardman, P.I. and Elizabeth Lowe, Co-P.I.) was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education Title VI International Research and Studies Program from 2004–07 and is the compilation of 50 years of research on the Aymara language by M.J. Hardman (Linguistics). The multidisciplinary project team included Howard Beck, Justino Llanque-Chana (Latin American Collection), Gillian Lord (RLL), and Sue Legg (LAS). It is a freely accessible online program offering twelve units of Aymara grammar, equivalent to two semesters of university-level instruction. The program contains exercises, cultural notes, a dictionary, a resource section, recorded dialogues and images. (*also from The Latinamericanist*)

Peru: women learn to use computers in Quechua

Zoraida Portillo 15 August 2008, from the SciDev (Science and Development Network) web-site

1500 rural women speakers of Quechua are receiving training in their own language to use information and communication technologies (ICT), as part of a project that seeks to bridge the Digital Divide in the Americas.

The women belong to 33 communities in the Andean province of Pampa Cangallo, in Ayacucho, one of Peru's poorest areas. The project is called 1@+tú=1€ and is promoted by the CTIC (Technology Center for Information and Communication) Foundation of Asturias, a not-for-profit institution that (according to a press release of late

July) has since 2007 trained more than 7,000 people in Latin America.

Its aim is to bring the information society to people without easy access to it. In Peru, the project is called "Incorporating ICT in the Community Action of Casas del Bien Estar (Welfare Houses)" and is implemented by the NGO "Movimiento Manuela Ramos" (MMR), with its more than 30 years' experience in projects promoting gender equality.

Claudia Rose, project assistant, confirmed to SciDev.Net that the project has proved highly beneficial for women, who now feel "less vulnerable, more empowered and with better communications" and are now teaching ICT to more men and women within their communities.

Thanks to the training they now know, for example, what to do and where to look for information on their rights. As for domestic violence and family desertion, they are able to proceed with demands, find new sources of revenue and engage in community development, especially in health.

As the training is given in Quechua, they feel comfortable and find it easy to learn, Rosas explained.

Las Casas del Bien Estar (Welfare Houses) have been equipped as infocentres. The women call them Rimanacuyta Yachana Wasi (Houses where they teach you to communicate). The project, ending in late August, has even allowed many people to locate their families displaced from the area by the political violence that shook Ayacucho in the eighties.

4. Appeals, News and Views from Endangered Communities

Finding Our Talk: Production of series tracing aboriginal languages around the world

Press release from Mushkeg Media Inc.

Montreal, Quebec - Mushkeg Media Inc., a Montreal-based production company, is gearing up to begin production of FINDING OUR TALK 3 a new series of 13 documentaries on the state of aboriginal languages this fall. This exciting third season will explore innovative language recovery programs within Canada and the broader indigenous world. From September to December 2008, the production crew will be traveling to Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii, Guatemala, Bolivia and Norway as well destinations within Canada to bring you the most captivating images and inspiring stories from at home and across the globe.

It is predicted that by the year 2100, more than half of the world's languages will disappear. That's a tough statistic, but it doesn't have to be that way. Indigenous people everywhere are fighting to beat the odds. It's a remarkable story. The series will discover the linguistic challenges and opportunities faced by individuals and their communities and explore current initiatives to maintain indigenous languages.

FINDING OUR TALK 3 is produced by Mushkeg Media in association with APTN, the Aboriginal People's Television Network. Mushkeg is also working in conjunction with Maori TV for a Maori version of the series.

Mushkeg Media Inc. is a ten-year-old production company specializing in films and videos about the Native experience. It has a solid track record that provides comprehensive mentorship and training to aboriginal filmmakers as part of the production process. Paul M.

Richard, an independent Cree filmmaker, heads the company along with partner George Hargrave, a veteran producer and director.

For more information, visit our website at www.mushkeg.ca or please contact Sherren by email sherren@mushkeg.ca or by phone at 514-279-3507.

Nganhungu Wangga: An exhibition of identity through language

From Adriano Truscott

Aboriginal languages in the Mid West of Western Australia are still numerous, but continue to be severely endangered. The future is far from hopeless however, as community revival projects (like languages classes, language radio shows), school curricula and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community reconciliation groups are just some examples of initiatives that are slowly being embraced by more and more people. In Geraldton, a rural town 500 kilometres north of Perth, the *Nganhungu Wangga* community exhibition aims to increase this awareness and understanding of Aboriginal languages for the whole society.

Nganhungu Wangga means *our language(s)* in Wajarri - a Western Australian Aboriginal language currently fully spoken by only a handful of people². Wajarri is one of the language groups featured in a series of 14 banners that make up the main part of the exhibition. The intention is to raise awareness of the state of Aboriginal cultures today through powerful personal stories from speakers of local regional languages including Ngarla, Badimaya, Wajarri, Malgana, Nhanda, Yinggarda and Warriyangga. These language groups' names are largely unknown to the wider community, so it is hoped that this exhibition will foster a clearer understanding of these local cultures in their own terms and encourage appreciation of the Aboriginal cultural diversity.

The exhibition gives the audience an opportunity to gain a first-hand understanding of the significance of knowledge of one's land and culture, and to reflect upon the 20th century cultural imperialism and exclusivity that existed then as it does today in many parts of Australia. Institutions like schools and religious missions, and (sometimes forceable) separation policies contributed to a severe decline of language use: Dora Dann, for example, an elderly Wajarri lady who is featured in the display, was forbidden to teach her children her language by the Native Welfare. She recalls some 50 years ago being told by a civil servant to "dig a whole and put [her] language in there, and leave it there." She listened to him and this is something she still regrets to this day.

The exhibition also encourages the audience to directly engage with Aboriginal languages: the banners (like the one on page 2 of this edition) show some of the languages in their written form; a 10 minute audio-visual documentary lets people hear other languages and watch elders talk about their connection to their own family and heritage through their own language; and a Malgana, Nhanda and Wajarri language trail goes around the museum and exhibition allowing the audience to become intimate with the languages by learning certain words for local flora and fauna, and interacting more closely with the banners.

The exhibition is an acknowledgement of all language speakers who manage to keep their language alive in the face of enormous challenges in their communities and society as a whole. *Nganhungu Wangga – Our Languages* is a joint initiative of the Irra Wangga Geraldton Language Programme and the WA Museum to celebrate UNESCO's 2008 International Year of Languages and NAIDOC Week (a yearly national event of celebrating the history, culture and

² Wajarri is currently taught primary and secondary schools in Geraldton, Western Australia as a "Language Other Than English" as well as an accredited course.

achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people). The exhibition is funded by a reconciliation grant from the Department of Indigenous Affairs and will be travelling the region until 2009.

News from the Isle of Man: Manx classes thriving

From Adrian Cain, Manx Language Officer:

What better way to start September than enrolling for a Manx Gaelic Class. Moreover, there's so much to choose from! For lessons in St Johns then contact Joan Caine on 843436. For lessons in the north then check out Pam Naylor on 838377 or Fiona Mcardle who will be holding conversational Manx classes in Thie ny Gaelgey, St Judes. Brian Stowell will be holding classes at the College. These will be on a Tuesday night from the 30th of September. We will be holding an intermediate and conversational class on a Monday night in Ballabeg: more details of the exact date of this to follow but contact me if you're interested. Finally, keep checking out our website at www.learnmanx.com for all that's going on whilst there are some interesting pieces at the IOM Newspapers site that you may not have seen <http://www.iomtoday.co.im/skeelnygaelgey>

5. Allied Societies and Activities

PARADISEC collection holds 2000 hours of field recordings

PARADISEC (<http://paradisec.org.au>) is very pleased to announce that it now houses over 2000 hours of field recordings. A blog entry discussing the 2000th hour can be found here, and includes a note by Mark Durie about Acehnese dialect material he has deposited in the collection: http://blogs.usyd.edu.au/elac/2008/06/2000_hours.html

PARADISEC staff have digitised 83 collections (or 5917 files) and a further 27 collections (or 21614 files) have been provided to us in digital format.

6. Overheard on the Web

Report says Germany's minority languages in danger

From the EurActive web-site, published: Friday 11 July 2008

Minority languages in Germany are in danger of extinction and legislation must be drawn up to protect them, according to a Council of Europe report released on 9 July.

The report, which is the third on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in the country, identifies North Frisian, Sater Frisian and Lower Sorbian among those particularly at risk.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages was adopted by the Council of Europe in June 1992 and came into force in 1998. It seeks to promote threatened languages as part of Europe's cultural heritage and facilitate their use in daily life. So far, it has been ratified by 23 countries and signed by a further 10.

Based on the report, the Council calls on the German government to introduce "specific legal provisions" to preserve its threatened languages, lamenting that many of the recommendations of previous reports have not been acted upon.

Primary and secondary education should be made available in regional and minority languages and steps taken to boost their use on radio and television, urges the report, which calls on the German government to provide adequate education in Upper Sorbian, Low German and Romani in particular.

Moreover, the Council asks Germany to ensure that all its languages currently under the charter's protection – among which Danish features in addition to the above – can be used in dealings with the administration and the courts.

In response, Germany said its "competent authorities do not invariably share the views and evaluations" of the Council. But it would not do the report justice to comment further before consulting with the *Länder*, said the Interior Ministry in a statement, explaining that the government will be able to react in detail when the next such report is published.

French regional languages: a threat to national unity?

Meanwhile, language issues also caused a stir in France last month, where a bid to include the statement "regional languages are part of France's heritage" in the constitution stalled in Parliament. Such tongues include Breton, Corsican, Occitan and Alsatian, but Article Two of the constitution states that "the language of the Republic is French".

Despite passing the lower house, the amendment was rejected by the Senate after the *Académie Française* – an influential cultural body – warned that it constituted an "attack on national identity" and a threat to "national unity". France is yet to ratify the European Charter, while the amendment bill was returned to deputies for second reading.

At the European level, the Commission is set to publish its new Multilingualism Strategy in September. At its heart is a recommendation that EU citizens learn two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue – one for professional reasons and alongside another 'personal adoptive language'.

7. New Publications

New SIL-PNG grammar sketch published

Lote Grammar Sketch by Greg Pearson with René van den Berg (Data Papers on Papua New Guinea Languages, volume 54). 2008. Ukarumpa: SIL. vii + 160 pages.

Lote is a Western Oceanic language of the Mengen family, a small and largely undescribed subgroup in East New Britain province. This grammar sketch is the first description of Lote and is based on some twenty years of interaction with speakers of Lote. Like the other volumes in this series, it is thoroughly data-driven and covers the most important structural features of the language. Three interlinearised texts complement the description.

Lote is lexically highly innovative. Of the basic numerals (1-5, 10) only *limé* '5' reflects a POC etymon. Its structure is not particularly complex, with a small phoneme inventory and limited morphology. Unusual for Oceanic languages is the lack of duals in the pronouns, the absence of articles and numeral classifiers, two types of nominalisation (both involving the same morpheme *-nga*) and the use of *ia* as an oblique preposition. Of typological interest is the presence of infixing reduplication and a set of interrogative deictics, e.g. *kai* 'here?'

Paper copies can be obtained from lr-acpub@sil.org.pg at US\$15. Postage from PNG is unfortunately rather high: \$15 for Australia and \$20 for the rest of the world.

Archi Dictionary

Created by the Surrey Morphology Group, University of Surrey, UK

Long-standing FEL member Professor Greville Corbett and his team in the Surrey Morphology Group have created this first “living dictionary” of Archi, a Caucasian language of the Lezgian group spoken in just one village community in Dagestan.

The dictionary is for use on-line, both as a computer file and as a DVD. The dictionary is accompanied by illustrations taken from the artefacts of Archi cultural life, useful as an illustration of many of the culture-specific terms found in it.

Archi has actually been the subject of a paper at an FEL conference: see “Multilingualism in Archi: Communication, Self-Identification and Social Prestige” by Nina Dobrushina, in the proceedings of FEL X, Mysore, 2006, for an informative discussion on the social background to the use of this language. The important thing for the user of this dictionary to know is that the language is unwritten, and its use is confined to the home and informal situations; education and public life are conducted in Avar and of course Russian.

That means that the renderings of the words given in this comprehensive-looking dictionary are thus in a phonetic transcription. Words in the dictionary may be looked up from an alphabetic key on the title page of the work – both Cyrillic and the IPA-based transcriptions are available. (The work makes no claim that the Cyrillic spellings are in any way ‘official’, as far as I can see, but as the first English-Russian-Archi dictionary to be published, this could be a normative landmark for the language.)

Archi morphology is laid bare in terms of the forms of the verbs and nouns provided under each head-word: verbs are divided into dynamic and stative, with interesting conjugations; while, as one might expect with a Caucasian language, nouns have ergative as well as nominative case; the only other case form systematically given is the locative. Each of these forms, not just the head-word, is made audible by clicking on the form in question.

Adjectives, adverbs and idiomatic phrases are also presented as part of the dictionary, though not all in audible form. All in all it is most encouraging to see this little-known but morphologically extremely interesting language being given such thorough and meticulous treatment.

Available in three formats: as a CD (with sound files in MP3 format), as a DVD (with sound files in WAV format) and as a web-page. Incidentally, in September 2008 the Group plans to give a tutorial in Archi at Surrey University, based on materials collected as part of the three-year dictionary project. Copies of the dictionary are available from, and enquires can be made to, Marina Chumakina (m.tchoumakina@surrey.ac.uk). *Chris Moseley*

Why Languages Matter

From the UNESCO web-site 29 August 2008

Published in this 2008 International Year of Languages, “Why Languages Matter” provides readers with real life stories about how literacy programs in local languages are helping to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In Indonesia for example, a program in mother-tongue prompted villagers to replant mangroves to stem the destruction of coastal areas. In Togo, a farmer began a chicken breeding business after learn-

ing about how to manage finances and resources in an Ifè adult literacy class.

In indigenous communities of Mexico, bilingual teachers are noting that students who begin primary school in their mother tongue acquire literacy skills more quickly.

In Benin’s Waama community, literacy classes in mother tongue are giving people access to basic health information and leading to improved overall health.

The brochure also highlights how partnerships can revitalize local languages. In Viet Nam for example, speakers of several closely-related languages now have a font that is usable on computers and the Internet, an initiative supported by UNESCO.

The MDGs were officially adopted by 189 United Nations member states in 2000. These goals seek to eradicate extreme poverty, universalize primary education, promote gender equality, improve health and ensure environmental sustainability by 2015.

Peter K Austin’s top ten endangered languages

The linguistics professor and author makes his personal selection from among the languages on the brink of disappearing

From the Guardian web-site 1 September 2008

Peter K Austin has published 11 books on minority and endangered languages, including 12 Australian Aboriginal languages, and holds the Märit Rausing Chair in field linguistics at the School of Oriental and African Studies where he is also director of the Endangered Languages Academic Programme. His most recent book is *1000 Languages: The Worldwide History of Living and Lost Tongues*, which explores the state of languages around the world.

There are more than 6,900 languages used around the world today, ranging in size from those with hundreds of millions of speakers to those with only one or two. Language experts now estimate that as many as half of the existing languages are endangered, and by the year 2050 they will be extinct. The major reason for this language loss is that communities are switching to larger politically and economically more powerful languages, like English, Spanish, Hindi or Swahili.

Each language expresses the history, culture, society and identity of the people who speak it, and each is a unique way of talking about the world. The loss of any language is a loss to both the community who use it in their daily lives, and to humankind in general. The songs, stories, words, expressions and grammatical structures of languages developed over countless generations are part of the intangible heritage of all humanity.

So how to choose a top 10 from more than 3,000 endangered languages? My selection is a personal one that tries to take into account four factors: (1) geographical coverage - if possible I wanted at least one language from each continent; (2) scientific interest - I wanted to include languages that linguists find interesting and important, because of their structural or historical significance; (3) cultural interest - if possible some information about interesting cultural and political aspects of endangered languages should be included; and (4) social impact - I wanted to include one or more situations showing why languages are endangered, as well as highlighting some of the ways communities are responding to the threat they currently face.

1. Jeru

Jeru (or Great Andamanese) is spoken by fewer than 20 people on the Andaman Islands in the Indian Ocean. It is generally believed that Andamanese languages might be the last surviving languages whose history goes back to pre-Neolithic times in Southeast Asia and possibly the first settlement of the region by modern humans moving

out of Africa. The languages of the Andamans cannot be shown to be related to any other languages spoken on earth.

2. N|u (also called Khomani)

This is a Khoisan language spoken by fewer than 10 elderly people whose traditional lands are located in the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park in South Africa.

The Khoisan languages are remarkable for having click sounds – the | symbol is pronounced like the English interjection tsk! tsk! used to express pity or shame. The closest relative of N|u is !Xóõ (also called Ta'a and spoken by about 4,000 people) which has the most sounds of any language on earth: 74 consonants, 31 vowels, and four tones (voice pitches).

3. Ainu

The Ainu language is spoken by a small number of old people on the island of Hokkaido in the far north of Japan. They are the original inhabitants of Japan, but were not recognised as a minority group by the Japanese government until this year. The language has very complicated verbs that incorporate a whole sentence's worth of meanings, and it is the vehicle of an extensive oral literature of folk stories and songs. Moves are underway to revive Ainu language and cultural practices.

4. Thao

Sun Moon Lake of central Taiwan is the home of the Thao language, now spoken by a handful of old people while the remainder of the community speaks Taiwanese Chinese (Minnan). Thao is an Austronesian language related to languages spoken in the Philippines, Indonesia and the Pacific, and represents one of the original communities of the Austronesians before they sailed south and east over 3,000 years ago.

5. Yuchi

Yuchi is spoken in Oklahoma, USA, by just five people all aged over 75. Yuchi is an isolate language (that is, it cannot be shown to be related to any other language spoken on earth). Their own name for themselves is Tsoyaha, meaning "Children of the Sun". Yuchi nouns have 10 genders, indicated by word endings: six for Yuchi people (depending on kinship relations to the person speaking), one for non-Yuchis and animals, and three for inanimate objects (horizontal, vertical, and round). Efforts are now under way to document the language with sound and video recordings, and to revitalise it by teaching it to children.

6. Oro Win

The Oro Win live in western Rondonia State, Brazil, and were first contacted by outsiders in 1963 on the headwaters of the Pacaas Novos River. The group was almost exterminated after two attacks by outsiders and today numbers just 50 people, only five of whom still speak the language. Oro Win is one of only five languages known to make regular use of a sound that linguists call "a voiceless dental bilabially trilled affricate". In rather plainer language, this means it's produced with the tip of the tongue placed between the lips which are then vibrated (in a similar way to the *brrr* sound we make in English to signal that the weather is cold).

7. Kusunda

The Kusunda are a former group of hunter-gatherers from western Nepal who have intermarried with their settled neighbours. Until recently it was thought that the language was extinct but in 2004 scholars at Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu located eight people who still speak the language. Another isolate, with no connections to other languages.

8. Ter Sami

This is the easternmost of the Saami group of languages (formerly called Lapp, a derogatory term), located on the Kola Peninsula in Russia. It is spoken by just 10 elderly people among approximately

100 ethnic Ter Sami who all now speak Russian as their daily language. Ter Sami is related to Finnish and other Uralic languages spoken in Russia and Siberia, and distantly to Hungarian.

9. Guugu Yimidhirr

Guugu Yimidhirr is an Australian Aboriginal language spoken at Hopevale near Cooktown in northern Queensland by around 200 people. A wordlist was collected by Captain James Cook in 1770 and it has given English (and the rest of the world's languages) the word kangaroo. Guugu Yimidhirr (like some other Aboriginal languages) is remarkable for having a special way of speaking to certain family members (like a man's father-in-law or brother-in-law) in which everyday words are replaced by completely different special vocabulary. For example, instead of saying *bama dhaday* for "the man is going" you must say *yambaal bali* when speaking to these relatives as a mark of respect and politeness.

10. Ket

Ket is the last surviving member of a family of languages spoken along the Yenesei River in eastern Siberia. Today there are around 600 speakers but no children are learning it since parents prefer to speak to them in Russian. Ket is the only Siberian language with a tone system where the pitch of the voice can give what sound like identical words quite different meanings. (Much like Chinese or Yoruba). To add to the difficulty for any westerner wishing to learn it, it also has extremely complicated word structure and grammar.

And here is Peter Austin's 1 Sept. postscript to this article:

After some delay due to a backlog of other "Top 10s", my promised article entitled *Top 10 Endangered Languages* (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/aug/27/endangered.language>) appeared on the Guardian website on Tuesday last week. It has been attracting some attention and comment. Several things seem to have happened to the article in the blogosphere:

1. The content was copied whole (with citation) by a number of bloggers (<http://pipocaglobal.blogspot.com/2008/08/languages-linguas.html> and <http://chisblassternardone.blogspot.com/2008/08/peter-k-austins-top-10-endangered.html>);
2. Only part of the content attracted the attention of some bloggers, eg. Ainu (here: <http://jonathanshipley.blogspot.com/2008/08/top-ten-endangered-languages.html> and http://freakangels.com/whitechapel/comments.php?DiscussionID=3434&Focus=79351#Comment_79351), Ket (here: <http://opendotdotdot.blogspot.com/2008/08/words-fail-us.html>), Yuchi (here: <http://chroniconmundi.blogspot.com/2008/08/one-of-thousands.html>), the loss of cultural heritage (here: <http://casualappearance.wordpress.com/2008/08/29/most-endangered-languages/>) and the reasons for choice (here: <http://blog.andeanaymara.com/2008/08/top-10-endangered-languages.html>);
3. Claire Bowern was prompted to come up with her own list of Top 10 endangered languages on her blog (angarrgoon.org);
4. David Crystal mentioned it on his blog (here: <http://david-crystal.blogspot.com/2008/08/on-top-ten-of-endangered-languages.html>) which resulted in a comment linking to Claire's list, and a snappy commentary on Claire's choice of Mapundungun as an endangered language;
5. It was listed on Deliggit.com, which claims to track "the social sites most interesting urls";
6. It was dug (digged?) on Digg.com (digg.com/arts_culture/Top_10_Endangered_Languages_in_the_World) with 1059 diggs and 154 comments so far. It

is currently on the first page of Digg, which is apparently a cool place to be.

Some of the comments on the Digg page will be familiar to anyone who has tried to discuss endangered languages with predominantly English-speaking members of the general public: "let 'em all die", "death is a sign of progress", "proper English is an endangered language", and so on. A few are more positive, with a number urging documentation for the future. It is interesting to see that despite there being a whole slew of popular books (see: <http://www.hrelp.org/languages/resources/books.html>) on the topic published since 2000, members of the general public, or the people who use Digg at least, remain quite uninformed about endangered language issues.

I guess we can but keep on trying by publishing things like a Top 10 list when the opportunity arises, as it did for me last month.

Post script: My colleague, David Hughes from the SOAS Music Department, is currently in Japan and wrote me as follows when he saw the Guardian posting:

"there have been two articles about young Ainu musicians in the paper in the past ten days or so. These musicians are trying hard to learn to sing in Ainu (while understanding the meaning, of course, not just mouthing the sounds). As in Okinawa in the south music is one important mechanism for encouraging language learning among the young, BUT only if that music is sufficiently popular or at least not scorned among the majority populace.

Okinawan music is very popular and relatively prestigious; Ainu music, not yet, but the smallish popularity of performers like Oki (half-Ainu, didn't know it till he was an adult, had to learn the language), or the Ainu Rebels (see: www.ainurebels.com) will help young Ainu get interested.

For a sample of this new music take a look at the video (http://riwkakant.blogspot.com/2008/06/blog-post_6842.html) Toko Emi's haunting Ainu song "yay-sama" from her album Upopo.

The role of popular music in language revitalisation in Australia and elsewhere has been noted before.

collaboration in language documentation and revitalization and will include sessions on interdisciplinary topics.

TOPICS

We welcome abstracts on the issue of a retrospective on language documentation - an assessment after a decade, and on topics related to collaborative language documentation and conservation which may include:

- Community-based documentation/conservation initiatives
- Community viewpoints on documentation
- Issues in building language documentation in collaborative teams
- Interdisciplinary fieldwork
- Collaboration for mobilization of language data
- Technology in documentation - methods and pitfalls
- Graduate students and documentation
- Topics in areal language documentation
- Training in documentation methods - beyond the university
- Teaching/learning small languages
- Language revitalization
- Language archiving
- Balancing documentation and language learning

This is not an exhaustive list and individual papers and/or colloquia on topics outside these remits are warmly welcomed.

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Abstracts should be submitted in English, but presentations can be in any language. We particularly welcome presentations in languages of the region.

ABSTRACTS ARE DUE BY SEPTEMBER 15th, 2008 with notification of acceptance by October 17th 2008. Abstracts will be SUBMITTED ONLINE via the conference webpage (available July 2008).

We ask for ABSTRACTS OF 400 WORDS for online publication so that conference participants can have a good idea of the content of your paper and a 50 WORD SUMMARY for inclusion in the conference program. Selected papers from the conference will be invited to submit to the journal Language Documentation & Conservation for publication.

8. Forthcoming events

Call for Proposals: 1st International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation (Honolulu, Hawaii - March 12-14, 2009)

1st International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation: Supporting Small Languages Together. Honolulu, Hawaii, March 12-14, 2009

The 1st International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation (ICLDC) will be held at the Hawaii International Conference Center, on the east side of the University of Hawaii at Manoa campus, from March 12th-14th, 2009. There will also be an optional opportunity to visit Hilo, on the Big Island of Hawai'i, in an extension of the conference that will focus on the Hawaiian language revitalization program, March 16th-17th. It has been a decade since Himmelmann's article on language documentation appeared and focused the field into thinking in terms of creating a lasting record of a language that could be used by speakers as well as by academics.

This conference aims to assess what has been achieved in the past decade and what the practice of language documentation within linguistics has been and can be. It has become apparent that there is too much for a linguist alone to achieve and that language documentation requires collaboration. This conference will focus on the theme of

FEL Manifesto

1. Preamble

1.1. The Present Situation

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.2. The Likely Prospect

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

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

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

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

1.3. The Need for an Organization

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

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

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

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

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

2. Aims and Objectives

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

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



Photo 1: Main mosque in Dogani Bere



Photo 4: Blackboard in Yacouba's classroom



Photo 2: A villager from Menti dressed up as a warrior, standing by a sacred fetish (stone)



Photo 5: Another villager from Menti, dressed up as a warrior



Photo 3: Circumcision rock



Photo 6: Drummers