



Letter of protest on behalf of the Kurds

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Mr Mesut Yilmaz  
Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey  
Basbakanlik  
Cankaya, Ankara  
Turkey.

and

Mr Hikmet Ulugbay  
Minister of National Education  
Bakanliklar  
Ankara  
Turkey.

We are alarmed at the news that the course in the Kurdish language offered by the Foundation for Kurdish Culture and Research has been banned by Turkish authorities, and proceedings initiated against the Chair and Deputy Chair of the organisation, Yilmaz Camlibel and M. Celal Baykara.

There are at least some 7.000 spoken languages in the world. Kurdish is among the 100 largest languages in the world, even according to minimalist accounts of numbers of Kurdish speakers. "Globalization carries with it a danger of uniformity [...] Peace means diversity [...] it means multi-ethnic and multilingual societies", according to U.N.E.S.C.O.'s The Human Right to Peace Declaration by the Director-General, 1997, p. 9). Denying the existence of several ethnic groups and languages in Turkey is not only counterfactual -- these groups DO exist, despite the official denial -- but economically disastrous and politically counterproductive, internally and externally. Already now the percentage of the G.N.P. that Turkey uses for the military and the police is among the largest in the world. Much of the cost goes to fighting the Kurds. Peace and conflict research shows clearly that it is almost impossible for a state to win a war against a people who think that they are being treated unreasonably. Physical force, especially against a group with large numbers, is an expensive undertaking and not cost-effective. Human rights violations in general and especially the lack of linguistic and cultural rights create and feed tension which then becomes "ethnic" conflict. Granting linguistic and cultural rights to minorities is in no way opposed to protecting national sovereignty and territorial integrity -- quite the opposite. We would like to remind you of the preamble of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, from 22 June 1992. The preamble

- considers "that the right to use a regional or minority language in private and public life is an inalienable right",
- stresses "the value of interculturalism and multilingualism" and
- considers "that the protection and encouragement of regional or minority languages should not be to the detriment of the official languages and the need to learn them" but rather "an important contribution to the building of a Europe based on principles of democracy and cultural diversity within the framework of national sovereignty and territorial integrity."

Likewise, the positive impact of linguistic diversity for the economy is getting increasing acknowledgement:

It is especially important to note that supporting interaction between localities and regions will not only help to build a European identity, but pave the way for a stronger European economy which takes account of cultural and linguistic diversity. An economy, even a strong one, based on these principles will not lead to a greater similarity in European ways of life but will instead reinforce the distinctive traditions and characteristics of Europe's localities and regions (from the Preface, by Pascan Maragall ! Mira, to the book "The Diversity Dividend: Language, Culture, and Economy in an integrated Europe", by Adam Price, Caitriona O Torna and Allan Wynne Jones, and published by the E.B.L.U.L. (European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages).

For Turkey, seeking stronger ties with Europe, not only leaving the Kurds alone but in fact encouraging the flourishing of Kurdish language and culture makes also economic sense.

The absence or denial of linguistic and cultural rights are today effective ways of promoting "ethnic" conflict and violence, of the type which leads to both separatism and the emergence of totalitarian states. This has been acknowledged by many researchers from several fields. Professor J. J. Smolicz from Australia has (in 1986) formulated the argument as follows:

... attempts to artificially suppress minority languages through policies of assimilation, devaluation, reduction to a state of illiteracy, expulsion or genocide are not only degrading of human dignity and morally unacceptable, but they are also an invitation to separatism and an incitement to fragmentation

into mini-states.

It has also been acknowledged by politicians. Dr. M. Xulu, the South African Deputy Director-General of D.A.C.S.T. (Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology), said in his opening address on 4 November, 1997, at a seminar in Pretoria (where Terralingua's Vice-President was the main speaker), that one of the popular myths that has to be exploded is "that promoting multilingualism and respecting language rights will lead to language conflict and ethnic conflict". If South Africans can recognise this as a myth (which they have), Turkey can do it too.

There are strong reasons why states should support rather than try to eliminate linguistic and cultural diversity, not only in the name of human rights, but also in their own political and economic interest. It is in fact the Turkish state itself which "incites to separatism" and "incites to racial or ethnic enmity" (Article 312 of your Criminal Code) and transmits separatist propaganda, through violating basic linguistic and cultural human rights. The banning of the Kurdish course and the ensuing proceedings against Mr Yilmaz Camlibel and Mr M. Celal Baykara are examples of these state violations of linguistic human rights where it is these violations themselves which lead to conflict and incite separatism.

Terralingua, Partnerships for Linguistic and Biological Diversity, is a non-profit international organization devoted to preserving the world's linguistic diversity and to investigating links between biological and cultural diversity. Our Board of Directors and Advisory Panel consist of some of the most respected researchers in the field worldwide. We work with all other international organisations interested in linguistic, cultural or biological diversity, including U.N.E.S.C.O. and U.N.E.P. (the U.N. Environmental Programme).

As an organisation, devoted to preserving the world's linguistic diversity, we are of course concerned with the promotion of the teaching and learning of ALL languages in the world, including Kurdish. We urge you to allow the Kurdish language to be freely taught in Turkey, on courses, in schools and universities, to be used as the medium of education in schools and other educational institutions, and to be freely used in media. Likewise, we urge you to drop the allegations against not only Mr Yilmaz Camlibel and Mr. M. Celal Baykara, but against all those who are imprisoned or face charges for learning and using Kurdish and discussing peaceful solutions to the Kurdish question.

On behalf of Terralingua,  
Dr.Tove Skutnabb-Kangas



of indigenous peoples, governments and the Working Group on Indigenous Populations and provides a critical legal analysis of the term 'indigenous people'. The question of defining the term "indigenous" has engaged me for several years, and I am happy to have the opportunity to essay the problem briefly now. I tackled a similar problem last year in my paper on law and custom (see Rigsby 1996) as anthropological and legal terms.

The term "indigenous" has at least two senses that we scientists and scholars and educated lay people use. One sense derives from biogeography (the study of the areal distribution of lifeforms) and the second one derives from the social sciences (e.g. anthropology, political science, sociology, etc.) and the humanities (e.g. history and cultural studies). In the first sense, lifeforms are said to be indigenous to an area if they originated as biological taxa in that area. For example, it is generally agreed that the genus *Homo* originated in Africa, and that its earliest representative is that species we designate as *Homo habilis*. In the second sense, cultures, societies and peoples are said to be indigenous to an area if they originated as distinct cultures, societies and peoples, respectively, in the area -- and if they were the first or amongst the first to do so.

Let me expand: the phrase "indigenous people(s)" has gained academic and popular currency over the past decade or so. To a considerable extent, the peoples whom we call indigenous are the same peoples who were called "savages" or "barbarians", "primitive people", "non-literate people" and "tribal people" by previous generations of anthropologists, other scientists and lay people. These earlier phrasings have deficiencies relating to their lack of precision or specificity and to their negative or pejorative connotations. The new labelling as "indigenous" is meant to overcome these.

It helps to provide further perspective if we include the term "(to) colonise" in our analysis of "indigenous" as they are contrastive to some extent. In the biogeographical sense, we say that a species has colonised an area when it moves or migrates into another area than the one of its origin as a species. Thus, the consensus of scientists and scholars is that the biological species *Homo sapiens* originated in the Old World. We can say that *H. sapiens* is indigenous to the Old World and that *H. sapiens* colonised the New World (of North, Central and South America) at some unknown time or period in the prehistoric past.

However, in the social science and humanities sense, we say, for example, that a people (N.B. -- a people, not a species or a race or sub-species) has colonised an area when they move into an area already occupied by a people or peoples and the former people take up a position of political domination and economic advantage over the latter people(s). The term

"indigenous people" is conventionally reserved to signify the colonised, not the colonisers. Thus, we say that the British, for example, colonised the eastern seaboard of North America from the sixteenth century and in so doing, they gained a position of domination and advantage over the American Indian or Native American peoples who were and are indigenous to that region.

It is important to note that in this second sense, simply originating in an area is not sufficient to qualify a people as indigenous to it, but they must also have been colonised. See the first part of the appended United Nations Working Definition of Indigenous Peoples. Thus, contemporary Americans and Australians, considered as peoples or as nations (a kind of people or ethnic group), originated in their respective countries, but they are not thereby indigenous to America and Australia because they were neither there first nor were they colonised. On the other hand, speaking at a higher level of generalisation, we say that the American Indian, Inuit (formerly, Eskimo) and Aleut peoples are indigenous to the New World because their significant cultural and social origins lie within the New World and because they were colonised by the several European states and nations from the late fifteenth century, and in turn, the original colonisers developed settler cultures and societies which maintained the colonial relationships of political domination and economic advantage over the indigenous peoples. One of the great social movements of the current period is that one which seeks to re-order those unequal relationships and put them on a more equitable basis.

My understanding of the phrase "Native American" is that it is synonymous with the phrasing "indigenous people of America (or the United States)". The phrase "First Nations" has a similar signification in Canada, whereas we tend to speak of "Indigenous Australians" in Australia, which term signifies the indigenous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, but not the immigrant South Sea Islander people (also known as Pacific Islanders and "Kanakas") who were brought to Australia as indentured labourers in the past century, or their descendants.

#### References:

Daes, Erica-Irene. 1996. Working Paper by the Chairperson-Rapporteur, Mrs. Erica-Irene Daes, on the concept of "indigenous people". *Australian Indigenous Law Reporter* 2:1:162-174.

Rigsby, Bruce. 1996. Law and custom as anthropological and legal terms. Pp. 230-252, in J. Finlayson and Ann Jackson-Nakano, eds., *Heritage and Native Title: Anthropological and Legal Perspectives*. Canberra: Native Title Research Unit, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait





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Topics covered in this issue include:

- 1) 3rd. Intl. Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, by Department of Zoology  
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- 2) 3rd. Intl. Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, by Anil Gupta  
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The International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity is a coalition of indigenous representatives working at the meetings of the state parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. These recommendations were made to the Fourth Conference of the Parties (C.O.P.IV). The indigenous representatives ask for the establishment of an Open-Ended Working Group as a new, independent body under the Convention to provide unfiltered contributions to the Convention. Currently, indigenous contributions are filtered through the Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (S.B.S.T.T.A.). S.B.S.T.T.A. has proved a poor vehicle for making recommendations on incorporating indigenous knowledge in national workplans. I.K. is rarely mentioned in the workplans, and where it is mentioned it is framed in non-indigenous terms and concepts. An Open-Ended Work Group will allow indigenous groups to set the terms of reference for making recommendations to the States in the implementation of Article 8j and related articles, and in the mainstreaming (jargon for widespread application) in all aspects of the work plan of the convention and in national implementation of state obligations under the convention.

- Preston Hardison.

Third International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity  
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Bratislava, Slovakia: 4 - 6 May 1998.

The Indigenous Peoples and local communities of the world, meeting in the Third International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity in Bratislava, Slovak Republic, from 4 to 6 May 1998,

Whereas:

1. The General Secretary of the United Nations states as very limited the participation of Indigenous Peoples in his report on the existing mechanisms and procedures for participation of Indigenous Peoples in the system of the United Nations (A/..../..)

2. The Workshop on Traditional Knowledge and Biological Diversity was held in accordance with paragraph 9 of decision III/14 of the Third Conference of the Parties to the C.B.D. in Madrid, Spain, from 24 - 28 November 1997;

3. We, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, are convinced that constructive dialogue on an equal footing between Governments and Indigenous Peoples and local communities, is the proper way to achieve respect and recognition of our rights;

4. Our cultures are based on the principles of harmony, peace, sustainable development and balance with nature. Therefore, the conservation and use of resources form part of the cosmovision and daily life of the Indigenous Peoples and local communities;

5. The Convention on Biological Diversity recognizes the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to control access to our traditional knowledge, innovations and practices, which constitute the basis for the maintenance of our lifestyles and our future;

6. At stake are not only Western technical and scientific models or forms of natural resource conservation but also the cultural and spiritual relationship and the natural world in which all human beings live;

#### WE THEREFORE STRONGLY RECOMMEND:

Establish an Open-Ended Intersessional Working Group on the implementation of article 8j and other articles related to indigenous and local communities.

#### MANDATE

The open-ended intersessional working group should provide recommendations and guidance on issues related to knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities.

To elaborate guidelines and principles and establish mechanisms with an international scope for the application and implementation of article 8j of the Convention on Biological Diversity and other articles related to the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

To elaborate guidelines and principles and establish mechanisms for international co-operation between Indigenous Peoples and local communities and for the co-operation policies between governments and international organizations in technological and economic matters.

To define the relevant conceptual implications embedded in the C.B.D. in matters of prior informed consent, fair and equitable sharing of benefits and in situ conservation in indigenous lands and territories.

To review national legislation in accordance with the C.B.D. with respect to article 8j and related articles.

## REPORTING

The Working Group should report directly and present periodic reports to the Conference of the Parties.

## DURATION OF THE BODY

The group will develop its tasks over an initial three-year period, until the Conference of the Parties again reviews the status of the implementation of article 8j and other relevant articles relevant to Indigenous Peoples and local communities

## FREQUENCY OF THE MEETINGS

The Working Group will meet between the sessions of the Conference of the Parties, for one week.

## COMPOSITION AND PARTICIPATION

The intersessional Working Group will include the full and effective participation of representatives of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

## FINANCING OF THE WORKING GROUP

The Working Group will function on the basis of the budget allocated by the Convention. Voluntary financial contributions may also be made by the developed countries and by other countries and sources.

## COLLABORATION AND FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The Working Group will take into account the work carried out by other



\* Linguistic and cultural diversity may be eroding even more rapidly than biological diversity. Languages, the carriers of culture, are today disappearing at a much faster pace than ever before, mostly as a result of linguistic genocide (as defined by the U.N. in 1948). The main agents of linguistic and cultural genocide today are mass media and formal schooling, along with market and other forces which shape these and other opportunities for the use of indigenous languages outside the home. Therefore, linguistic and cultural human rights in education for indigenous peoples are crucial for the survival of indigenous languages and cultures and for the future of the planet.

\* The formal schooling of indigenous (and minority) children is today conducted in most cases through the medium of a dominant language, not through the children's own language. Worldwide, the bulk of those indigenous and minority children who are in schools -- many are not -- are judged to have "failed" to achieve, and often are pushed out of the educational system early. Later on, they are commonly over-represented in figures for unemployment, youth criminality and other statistics that portray them as "deficient" or "deviant."

\* This "failure" results, in most cases, from the education of indigenous and minority children being organised in ways that contradict sound scientific evidence. This evidence indicates that mother-tongue-medium education for indigenous and minority children, with good teaching of the dominant language as a second language, is the most secure way to achieve multilingualism without loss of the mother tongue. Despite the availability of this evidence, the persisting choice of an inappropriate language medium of education is the main pedagogical reason for "illiteracy" in the world. Indigenous and minority parents are routinely told that their children will learn the dominant language better (and thus perform better in school) by being exposed to it as early and as much as possible, even at the cost of sacrificing their own language. Moreover, most "development aid" for indigenous and minority education supports these scientifically unsound educational choices.

\* Therefore, the promotion of linguistic human rights in education must take place at two levels. People must have rights, and they must have access to the knowledge needed for making informed educational choices.

## 2. Terralingua's Recommendations

### A. INDIGENOUS AND MINORITY CHILDREN MUST BE GRANTED BASIC LINGUISTIC HUMAN RIGHTS IN EDUCATION.

\* Minorities and indigenous peoples have the right to exist and to reproduce themselves as such, with their own languages and cultures. This is a self-evident, fundamental COLLECTIVE HUMAN RIGHT (as laid out in the Draft Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples). For indigenous peoples, self-determination includes the right to decide about their education.

\* At the individual level, everyone has the right to identify with, to maintain and to fully develop one's mother tongue(s), (the language(s) a person has learned first in life and/or identifies with). This is a self-evident, fundamental INDIVIDUAL LINGUISTIC HUMAN RIGHT.

\* Necessary individual linguistic human rights have to do with access to the mother tongue(s) and an official language; the relationship between them; and language-related access to formal primary education. Thus, a

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF LINGUISTIC HUMAN RIGHTS should guarantee at an INDIVIDUAL LEVEL, in relation to:

THE MOTHER TONGUE(S): that everybody can

\* identify with their mother tongue(s) and have this identification accepted and respected by others,

\* learn the mother tongue(s) fully, orally (when physiologically possible) and in writing. In most cases, this requires indigenous and minority children to be educated through the medium of their mother tongue(s),

\* use the mother tongue(s) in official situations (including schools).

OTHER LANGUAGES:

\* that everybody whose mother tongue is not an official language in the country where they are resident, can become bilingual (or multilingual, if they have more than one mother tongue) in the mother tongue(s) and (one of) the official language(s) (according to their own choice).

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGES:

\* that any change of mother tongue is voluntary, not imposed (i.e., it includes knowledge of long-term consequences and is not due to enforced language shift).

PROFIT FROM EDUCATION:

\* that everybody can profit from education, regardless of what their mother tongue(s) is/are.

(See Skutnabb-Kangas, T. 1998. Human rights and language wrongs -- A future for diversity. In P. Benson, P. Grundy and T. Skutnabb-Kangas (eds.). Language rights. Special issue, Language Sciences 20:1, 1998, pp. 5-27).

\* Some recent human rights instruments can be drawn on to support linguistic human rights in education according to these principles. In addition to those specifically geared toward indigenous peoples, of particular relevance are the The Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities & Explanatory Note (October 1996), issued by The Foundation on Inter-Ethnic Relations for the O.S.C.E. (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoep. These Recommendations, applicable to indigenous children as well, are built on scientifically sound pedagogical principles and on the provisions of international human rights law concerning minority education.

#### B. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND MINORITIES NEED TO KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT THE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF EDUCATIONAL CHOICES, ESPECIALLY CHOICE OF MEDIUM OF EDUCATION, IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO MAKE FREE, INFORMED DECISIONS.

\* Indigenous and minority peoples' ability to make free, informed educational choices is mainly hampered by ideologies that stigmatize and devalue these groups' languages, cultures, norms, traditions, institutions, level of development, observance of human rights, etc., while glorifying those of the majority/dominant group. These ideologies rationalise and legitimate the unequal relationship between the dominant and the dominated, by portraying the actions of the dominant group as always functional, as well as beneficial to the subordinated groups, who are instead portrayed as "primitive", "backward", not able to adapt to present-day technological information society.

\* Such ideologies also diagnose the problems indigenous and minority children face at school as due to the children's, their parents' and their groups' "deficient characteristics". Attributed deficiencies on which school failure is blamed include second-language (L2)-related deficiencies (the children do not know the dominant language well enough); cultural deficiencies (the parents' culture is not conducive to supporting school achievement); social deficiencies (the parents represent low-ranking social groups); and even first-language (L1)-related deficiencies (the children -- and parents -- do not know their own language well enough, and this leaves the children without a proper base for learning the dominant

language).

\* The "remedies" adopted by most majority educational systems have been geared towards "helping" children to overcome "their deficiencies", in particular, by increasing the focus on the teaching of the dominant language and dominant cultural norms, through submersion programmes or at best early-exit bilingual programmes, in which the mother tongue is used initially as the medium of education, until the children are supposed to "know" enough of the dominant language in order for a complete transition to it to take place. These "remedies", based on a wrong diagnosis of the problem, try to "remedy" the child, parents, and the indigenous or minority community, instead of changing the educational system. The evidence shows that such measures do not work. Furthermore, they do not respect linguistic human rights in education.

\* Education leading to high levels of multilingualism and school achievement and respecting linguistic human rights in education would conform to the following principles:

- expect all children, not only indigenous or minority children, to become high-level bilinguals;
- expect all teachers to be bi- or multilingual, so that they can be culturally appropriate models for the children, and adequately support them in language learning;
- equalise the status of the mother tongues of all children in the organisation of schooling: in the rôle of the languages on class schedules and in higher education, in testing and evaluation, in marks given for the languages, in use in school administration, meetings and assemblies, as well as in the status and salaries of the teachers, in their working conditions and career patterns;
- teach all children through grades 1-12 both the dominant and the indigenous or minority languages as compulsory subjects (language learning);
- use as the main language of instruction (content learning), for at least the first 8 years, the language which is least likely to be used in official domains outside school (for indigenous and minority children, this means being taught most subjects through the medium of their own mother tongue (L1) during this phase; for dominant group children, it can mean instruction through the medium of a minority language;
- use both languages (L1 and L2) as media of education in some phase of the children's education (for indigenous and minority children, at least some subjects must be taught through L1 all the way up to grade 12, while other subjects can begin to be taught through L2 after the initial phase of instruction through L1 only);
- adopt educational systems that promote equality in the children's knowledge of the language(s) of instruction: mother-tongue-medium education (where everybody in the class knows the language); immersion

programmes for majorities learning through the medium of a minority language, as well as indigenous and minority children first learning L2 as a subject, and later learning content through L2 (where everybody in the class is in the process of learning the language); "two-way" programmes (where 50% minority children, with the same mother tongue, and 50% majority children are taught together by a fully bilingual teacher, initially through the medium of the minority language, later through both, with both languages taught as subjects to both groups).

## TERRALINGUA: PARTNERSHIPS FOR LINGUISTIC AND BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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\*\* Editor's note: the following report is published anonymously, at the request of the author, due to active repression of protestors by several of the authorities involved. All communications to the author should be sent to me, and I will forward them. Thank-you for your understanding. \*\*

### Report from South Australia: a focus on the Ngarrindjeri ~~~~~

24 March, 1998.

The Board of the Australian peak representative body for indigenous people, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (A.T.S.I.C.), has passed a unanimous vote of no confidence in the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator Herron. Herron has had a difficult rôle working for the Howard Government with its obviously negative reform agenda for A.T.S.I.C. and indigenous people's rights as a whole. His statement in 1997 that many aboriginal children benefited from being taken by force from their families in 1950s and 60s, was a prime example of his peculiar lack of empathy with indigenous people, and therefore, cynically, his preparedness for this portfolio within the Howard Government. The A.T.S.I.C. Board said they wanted him replaced with someone they could talk to.

26 May, 1998.

"National Sorry Day!", Senator Herron shouted across the parliament floor in Canberra, calling the opposition Labor party politicians "Whimps!!".

They were calling for an apology by the Commonwealth of Australia to the indigenous people affected badly by the nation which formed out of a federation of British colonies in 1901.

#### A report introducing the Ngarrindjeri in South Australia

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The Ngarrindjeri are the First Nation people who have lived for many thousands of years in the regions around the Murray River and its lake system where it meets the Southern Ocean in South Australia. The Murray is Australia's largest river, and owing to the plentiful food supply associated with it, the Ngarrindjeri culture in the area represents one of Australia's oldest, locationally fixed, traditional lifestyles. That is, until the British invasion in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Some of the complexities of issues relating to the plight of the Ngarrindjeri in contemporary South Australian politics are probably familiar to other people around the world who have experienced colonial invasion. The following is a brief discussion under a number of headings that illustrate only some of the kinds of racist and culturally ignorant sabotage against which the Ngarrindjeri are battling. The peculiar place which language politics has held in this history of cultural genocide is worth noting, and ought to be of interest to many Terralingua members.

The headings are:

1. Colonisation, genocide and the "terra nullius" concept
2. Language loss and discrimination
3. Public mockery
4. Recent regressive legislation
5. The newspaper and the Royal Commission

Many people living ostensibly innocuous lifestyles in Australia do not want to dwell upon the past. There is good reason for this. The past is a big liability. For the sake of cheap land, and the transient wealth taken from it, culturally rich traditional lifestyles, with their time proven wisdom have all but vanished. The remedy for this huge blunder is apparently too complex for most contemporary politicians, hence the resistance to progressive reconciliation policies in Australia's current government. Being traditionally located in what is now either farm or residential areas, the Ngarrindjeri have experienced terrific cultural disturbances. The effort which people like the Ngarrindjeri must sustain to keep their heritage alive against all odds is not appreciated, is undervalued, and is taken for granted by politicians and corporate figures who have the power to change things, but lack the commitment to cultural diversity as a good.

#### 1. COLONIZATION, GENOCIDE AND THE TERRA NULLIUS CONCEPT

A history of demeaning treatments at the hands of British colonisers,

driven by their historically held beliefs on matters of race, scientific progress and economic modernisation, has had a continuous negative impact on the Ngarrindjeri, and has gone unreconciled even to this day in 1998. After the earlier conflicts involving brutal killings, further genocidal processes can be identified if the broader context of the colonial mission-based christianisation and assimilation policies are properly scrutinised. A common denial of this genocide is based on the argument that the colonists have only ever done what they believed to be in the best interests for everyone. This view, apparently held by the current Prime Minister of Australia John Howard and many of his ministers, ignores the unacceptably low standard of intercultural diplomacy on the part of the South Australians, past and present, who have meanwhile profited greatly from the pervasive doctrine of "terra nullius" -- a belief that land in Australia belonged to nobody. Land has always been at the centre of this colonial intercultural conflict. It may come as a surprise to some that the "terra nullius" doctrine was only overturned by the High Court as recently as 1992 in MABO vs. THE STATE OF QUEENSLAND. So, for only five or six years now has Australian law acknowledged that British Common Law -- the source of law in Australia -- recognised indigenous customary law as basis for Native Title. This title applied from the very first contact with Europeans, and ought to have been acknowledged for there to have been legitimate land acquisitions in the Australian colonies under Common Law.

## 2. LANGUAGE LOSS AND DISCRIMINATION

The colonial doctrine of "terra nullius" coincided with certain measures which have helped to suppress in the minds of the wider colonial community any sense of there being a pre-existing lawful culture; any sense of a pre-existing, legally recognizable, rights of land ownership. Particularly effective to this end were the informal policies prohibiting the use of language and the practice of customs on missions. Missionaries instructed Ngarrindjeri to surrender their traditional language and customs, and substitute them with Christian beliefs and English speech and literacy. Fortunately, not all Ngarrindjeri succumbed to the mission camps and even in the late 1960s small defiant groups dwelled outside the missions, enabling them to retain some of their customary lifestyle.

Notwithstanding their resistance, contemporary Ngarrindjeri now find themselves largely dispossessed of their oral linguistic and customary heritage, and are significantly disadvantaged and discriminated against in land rights disputes. White authorities use white anthropologists in the South Australian Museum as the expert authority on Ngarrindjeri heritage, and these "experts" recently used interpretations of the writings of white pioneer anthropologists to make legal judgements about the true nature of Ngarrindjeri culture. This discrimination and disadvantage of the

Ngarrindjeri is also evident where people use language privileges in the largely English monolingual South Australian society -- including media editorial sympathies -- to discredit, disavow and suppress Ngarrindjeri culture. Ngarrindjeri people are sometimes described as having "unreliable" dispositions. The implications of linguistic dispossession and the associated disadvantages experienced by the Ngarrindjeri in the course of their heritage claims go generally unmentioned in most fora outside of the Ngarrindjeri community. This is where expertise among the membership of Terralingua may provide some useful advice on how to approach this dilemma.

### 3. PUBLIC MOCKERY

The "authenticity" and cultural integrity of the Ngarrindjeri community is being sarcastically mocked by some media personalities and politicians. In 1994, highly confidential evidence was submitted by Ngarrindjeri women, for the purpose of supporting their claim for a federal heritage protection order to prevent the construction of a bridge from the town of Goolwa to Kumarangk (Hindmarsh Island), a Ngarrindjeri sacred site. That same year, Ian McLaughlin, a federal Liberal Party politician (currently the Minister for Defence) who also happens to be a land owner in the district, was forced to stand down from the shadow cabinet after flagrantly mocking, brandishing and distributing the highly confidential "for-women's-eyes-only" information on his side of the house in the male dominated Federal Parliament. In 1995, the South Australian Liberal Party Government funded a Royal Commission which arrived at a finding that there was sufficient evidence to prove that the "women's business" supporting the claim was wholly "fabricated" for the purpose of stopping the construction of the bridge. Significantly, the Commissioner took no evidence from the women whose secret sacred beliefs were being investigated, because out of respect for their spiritual and cultural traditions these women boycotted the Commission. The Commission's motive, not to mention its finding, remains questionable, yet it is now frequently used as a landmark reference, even after a later federal inquiry commissioned by the Labor Government disproved some of its main assumptions.

### 4. RECENT REGRESSIVE LEGISLATION AND POLICY

The 1984 federal Aboriginal heritage legislation which gave ministerial power to provide protection for such sacred sites was amended by a law introduced in 1997 by the Howard Government -- The Hindmarsh Island Bridge Act. In a manner which suggests that no aboriginal heritage site is now ever fully protected if it interrupts development interests, this law removed those ministerial powers specifically within the limits of the physical area surrounding the proposed site for the construction of the Hindmarsh Island bridge. Such legal precedent is extremely detrimental for

indigenous rights in Australia. On the 1st. April 1998, in *KARTINYERI vs. THE COMMONWEALTH*, the High Court ruled 5 - 1 against an appeal that the Act was unconstitutional in that it discriminated against, and was to the detriment of, the Ngarrindjeri. The Ngarrindjeri are, understandably, feeling very mistreated by the laws and processes of the Commonwealth of Australia. Domestic legal measures having been exhausted, international mechanisms and support actions will play an important part in persuading the development stakeholders to refrain from pushing ahead with their bridge construction regardless of the cost to Ngarrindjeri heritage and the viability of their culture. Legal action by developers against non-indigenous supporters of the Ngarrindjeri has begun. An organisation known as the Kumarangk Coalition, which has supported the Ngarrindjeri in their fight against the building of the bridge, has had to almost halt its work due to law suits against individual members and the organisation itself. Funding cuts to both legal aid services and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission make the legal system increasingly treacherous for the less financially stable members of society.

## 5. THE NEWSPAPER AND THE ROYAL COMMISSION

On Friday, 22nd. December, 1995, the sole South Australian daily newspaper, "The Advertiser" (a Murdoch company), published an extraordinarily bold front page headline in very large type:

'Lies, lies, lies'.

It was heralding the release of the report of the Hindmarsh Island Bridge Royal Commission inquiry into the Ngarrindjeri "secret women's business". Yet the following statement, made through the Ngarrindjeri women's counsel on the first day of the commission proceedings, was barely mentioned:

"We are deeply offended that a Government of this day and age has the audacity to order an inquiry into our secret, sacred, spiritual beliefs. Never before have any group of people had their spiritual beliefs scrutinised in this way".

-- T19-22 transcript of the H.I.B.R.C., cited in Mead, G. 1995 p.3.

Below the "Lies, lies, lies" headline was an image montage composition of the Hindmarsh Island marina developers Tom and Wendy Chapman facing each other and smiling as if they had just been married again, with a background of colourful images of their development hopes and dreams, encircled poetically in a green wreath symbolizing justice and prosperity. Their marriage had been suffering due to business problems when the bridge was stopped. The 'photo suggested all would be well for them and other developers in South Australia, now that the Royal Commission had produced a

finding which would work in their favour. The political agency of this newspaper, its hostility, coupled with the hostility of the Royal Commission towards the Ngarrindjeri heritage, is further evidenced by their publishing of a comment by South Australia's Premier Dean Brown (Liberal Party) on this same front page:

"The South Australian community is entitled to be very angry about the elaborate fabrication exposed in the royal commission report".

But were the Ngarrindjeri entitled to be angry about anything? No, not in "The Advertiser", South Australia's only daily newspaper. Considering that the only Ngarrindjeri who have been represented positively in "The Advertiser" are those not supporting the "secret women's business" heritage claim, it seems this main media player in South Australia will continue to interact only negatively with Ngarrindjeri culture, making survival ever more difficult. Such powerful mass media editorial prerogative needs to be made more accountable where the delicate nature of cultural diversity is at stake.

Readers are urged to write to some of the addresses below to voice their concern about the way the Ngarrindjeri are being treated. It is time to check the culturally undermining role of the media towards groups such as the Ngarrindjeri, not to mention the insidious legislation which the Australia democracy is condoning.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Ngarrindjeri Nation is seeking financial support in the way of contributions towards the Ngarrindjeri Justice Fighting Fund, which is being raised by the Ngarrindjeri Nation. For further information on the fighting fund, please contact The Ngarrindjeri Lands & Progress Association Inc., which is administering the fund on behalf of the Ngarrindjeri Nation -- (Tel.) 61 08 8575 1557; (FAX) 61 08 8575 1448.

Donations may be made to:  
Ngarrindjeri Justice Fighting Fund  
c/o Ngarrindjeri Lands & Progress Association Inc  
P.O. Box Association Inc.  
P.O. Box 126  
Meningie, 5264. South Australia.  
(this is a postal address for Camp Coorong)

A Ngarrindjeri language and cultural project is being run in the Murray Riverland by Agnes and Bessie at:  
Winmanti Arts Centre  
Tel.: 61 08 8535 2027

FAX: 61 08 8583 2188  
P.O. Box 91  
Glossop, 5344. South Australia.

Other addresses for making Ngarrindjeri contacts:

~~~~~  
Ngarrindjeri Heritage Committee  
Attn.: Peter Rigney  
22 Margaret Street  
Murray Bridge 5257. South Australia.

Point McLeay / Raukan Community Council  
Attn.: Henry Rankine OAM  
c/o Post Office  
Point McLeay 5259. South Australia.  
Tel.: 08 8574 0064

State Aboriginal Heritage Committee (a division of State Dept. for  
Aboriginal Affairs)  
Attn.: Garnett Wilson OMA  
G.P.O. Box 3140  
Adelaide 5000. South Australia.  
Tel.: 8226 8974

Kalparin Nunga Farm (Drug and Alcohol rehabilitation)  
Attn.: Victor Wilson  
P.O. Box 319  
Murray Bridge 5253. South Australia.  
Tel.: 08 8532 4940

Ngarrindjeri language and cultural program  
Attn.: Agnes and Bessie  
Winmanti Arts Centre  
P.O. Box 91  
Glossop 5344. South Australia.  
Tel.: 61 08 8535 2027  
FAX: 61 08 8583 2188

Yaitya Warra Wadli (Aboriginal Language Centre)  
P.O. Box 1652  
Port Adelaide 5015. South Australia.  
tel: 8244 5644

Nunkuwarnin Yunti  
Attn.: Polly Sumner

182-190 Wakefield Street  
Adelaide 5000. South Australia.  
Tel.: 8223 5217

Commonwealth Parliament in Canberra -- Federal Political Party Leaders  
~~~~~

**\*\*Hon. Prime Minister John Howard (Liberal Party Leader)**

FAX. 61 2 6271 5414

Tel. 61 2 6277 7700

Hon. Tim Fisher, Minister for Trade (Leader of the National Party)

FAX. 61 2 6273 4128

Tel. 61 2 6277 7420

Hon. Kim Beasley, Leader of the opposition (Labor Party leader)

FAX. 61 2 6277 8495

Tel. 61 2 6277 8495

Sen. Meg Lees (Leader of the Australian Democrats)

FAX. 61 2 6277 3996

Tel. 61 2 6277 3991

Federal Aboriginal Affairs Ministers  
~~~~~

**\*\*Sen. John Herron, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
Affairs (Liberal)**

FAX. 61 2 6273 4142

Tel. 61 2 6277 6720

Hon. Daryl Melham, Shadow Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islanders Affairs (Labor)

FAX. 61 2 6277 4476

Tel. 61 2 6277 2054

Sen. John Woodley, Australian Democrats in the Senate, Aboriginal Affairs

FAX. 61 2 6277 3728

Tel. 61 2 6277 3725

State Parliament in Adelaide -- South Australian Political Party Leaders  
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**Premier John Olsen (Leader of the South Australian Liberal Party)**

FAX. 61 8 8303 2283

Tel. 61 8 8303 2290



behave with impunity. WHAT CAN WE DO TO STOP THIS EVIL? \*\*

From: Matthew McDaniel  
The Akha Heritage Foundation

## BLACK FRIDAY IN AN AKHA VILLAGE

~~~~~

Extract: DRAFT DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

### "ARTICLE 12

Indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature, as well as the right to the restitution of cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property taken without their free and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs".

\*\*\*\*

A friend and me fought our way up mud track roads after a four hour trip to reach one of Northern Thailand's most remote Akha villages, Hur Mae Khom.

We had a gift of writing books and pencils for the last traditional families in the village. Two weeks before, the headman had told me that the Chinese Baptists had come and convinced three quarters of the village to become Christian. From personally checking with the families they had told me that it was required that they abandon all of their traditions in the process. Finished.

So when I climbed the ladder to the headman's porch and sat down I was greatly concerned as he sadly poured me tea. My friend and me drank while he related the events of the last two weeks.

There had been five or six families that stuck with him. There was one village elder living up the hill that was helping to hold it all together. The headman had not invited the missionaries and did not approve of their demands. But then some time in the last week they had convinced the elder to join their forces below and abandon the headman. So he moved down to those huts. The other families soon followed along. What could he do? With the last elder gone from the tradition there was no one left to teach the old ways to the families. He was more than just a little sad, the saddest that I had ever seen him. Though the huts had not moved, he was

now a headman without a village, and the new puppet pastor the new functional headman. He knew that the missionaries always promised to give lots to the people if they converted. Meanwhile, the villagers were still asking for medicine that the missionaries apparently weren't including in the deal.

I went down into the other huts and was immediately struck by all the changes being imposed on the people. Numerous women were no longer wearing their headresses, as they had been so proudly doing all the years that I had supplied medicine to this village. I asked them why and they said they couldn't any more. Some of the older women still hung on. But the pressure was now definitely there to abandon them. There would be no traditional practices, songs, or dances at all now, possibly something would be allowed at Christmas. The woman who practices the traditional knowledge and medicine for the village was stopped. She was told that it was evil and that she could no longer treat people's illnesses.

In the name of their religious beliefs, and quite in contradiction with the spirit of those beliefs, the missionaries are eradicating Akha culture in village after village. The Akha, with probably 98% written illiteracy, their books the elders, have no way or perspective by which to judge this method that comes with all the promises of prosperity. Prosperity that seldom materializes. From a standpoint of incredible rapid economic change and severe poverty they are being robbed of their rich heritage. Children are taught that their parents are living under the power of darkness and bondage, teaching disrespect to parents in direct contradiction of the missionaries' own religious texts.

Such practices could not be gotten away with without much criticism in the west, but people who enjoy the freedoms of their own individual traditions and beliefs in the west do not believe in offering those same freedoms to others if they can exploit them for the agendas of their mission agencies.

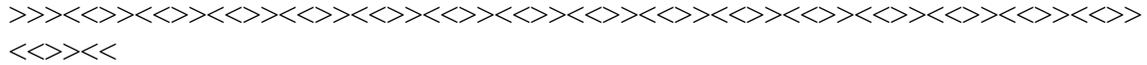
We believe this has everything to do with endangered languages. If you ban the culture, what exactly is the language then good for? A religious ban imposed on culture is just as powerful as a governmental ban on culture, if not more so.

We find these repeated actions to eradicate Akha culture from among the Akha people as going against standards set forth in the United Nations Draft of Human Rights for Indigenous Peoples.

Anyone who would like an entire copy of the U.N. Draft on Indigenous Rights, please send me an e-mail.

There is a whole lot going wrong here.

Matthew McDaniel  
The Akha Heritage Foundation



[Editor's note: this report is on a conference advertised in our last newsletter].

From: Carla Paciotto <cp3@dana.ucc.nau.edu>  
Center for Excellence in Education, Northern Arizona University.

Encuentro Internacional sobre Lenguas Indígenas e Interculturalidad  
(International Symposium on Indigenous languages and Intercultural  
Communication)



Creel, Chihuahua, Mexico. 21-23 May, 1998.

Last month, over 250 representatives from indigenous communities around Mexico, the U.S. Southwest, New Zealand, Australia and Hawai'i converged on Creel, Chihuahua, in the Sierra Tarahumara, for the first Encuentro Internacional Sobre Lenguas Indígenas e Interculturalidad. Sponsored by the Ford Foundation, the Coordinación Estatal de la Tarahumara, the Dirección de la Educación Indígena, the Escuela Nacional de Antropología y Historia, the Northern Arizona University and the Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua, the conference dealt with issues of native language maintenance and revitalization, bilingual education for indigenous groups, indigenous rights, and the connections of native language, culture and environment.

The gathering included presentations on "El registro y la recopilación de la tradición oral de las comunidades de habla nahuatl en Tlaxcala: un recurso para la revitalización de la lengua y la cultura" (Pablo R. Navarrete Gómez); "Educación indígena en el Valle del Mezquital" (Enrique Hamel & Antonio Carillo); "La lingüística descriptiva y los proyectos de educación bilingüe en el noroeste de México" (Zarina Estrada); "Discursos secundarios en la oralidad y escritura: narración tradicional, alfabetización y aprovechamiento escolar" (Norbert Francis); "Hopi terrace restoration and (agri)cultural sustainability: the next generation" (Miguel Vasquez, Lyle Balenquah, Lorenzo A. Sotelo); "Los derechos lingüísticos en Nuevo México: el llamado bilingüismo oficial estatal" (Eduardo H. Chávez).



You may be interested to note that our common concern receives some basically favourable coverage (under the above title) in a recent issue of The Economist (6 June, 1998).

Ubykh and its last speaker, Tevfik Esenc, lead the way, and the article contains some interesting new facts, some of them tantalising: e.g., what is the new E.L. organisation set up in the Netherlands?

I must apologise to the Endangered Language Fund that the Economist journalist has conferred their acronym ("E.L.F.") on the Foundation for Endangered Languages, but this will give us an immediate opportunity to re-address the issue in the correspondence column.

Either way, it should do us all a fair amount of good, I think. Two organisations will turn up in Web searches for the price of one.

\*\*\*\*\*

To: letters@economist.com  
From: Nicholas Ostler <nostler@chibcha.demon.co.uk>  
Subject: ELL: Steady as They Go: Economist speaks with forked tongue

Sir,

You praise California's voters for their steadiness in ending their state-assisted bilingual education programmes even as you declare, bluntly even by your own standards, that "English Kills" (6 June).

What English is killing, more than anything else, is the ability to acquire other languages at an early age; and if Californian children, as you say, "at present stumble through America's first language", that won't stop when they are prevented from learning at school how to read and write the language they speak at home. Paradoxically, the Spanish-speaking elite of Latin America deliberately send their children to bilingual schools, with no worries about any dire effects of English on pre-teens.

And what about that unthinking use of the phrase "America's first language": its First Nations would disagree with that as a term for English, in simple logic. At least 200 living languages got to North America before English (Spanish among them).

It is gratifying to see a good discussion of language endangerment itself in that issue, hardly a problem either for English or Spanish. But our organisation is the Foundation for Endangered Languages (F.E.L.); the E.L.F. is the Endangered Language Fund, led by Doug Whalen, engaged in the same struggle from the U.S.A., to preserve and encourage our heritage of







environmental experts, the scientists, people of  
knowledge, approach, come near, welcome, welcome, welcome.  
Welcome to Aotearoa, New Zealand, to the  
land circumnavigated by our ancestors, to the rivers flowing  
out to sea, to the mountains standing tall, to the  
forests covering the land, to the rolling country spread  
out here and to the people of this land. Welcome,  
welcome, welcome.

Dr. Hirini Moko Mead, Chairman, Te Runanga o Ngati Awa (Ngati Awa Maori  
Trust Board).

Dr. Graham Hingangaroa Smith, Chairman, Council of Te Whare Wananga o  
Awanuiarangi (Awanuiarangi Centre of Higher Learning ).

[Editor's note: the above is extracted from the I.C.E. Web site, the  
address for which is listed below].

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## CALL FOR PAPERS

Dialogue between cultures -- Forging Meaningful Partnerships

~~~~~

23-28 November, 1998

6th. International congress of Ethnobiology  
Whakatane, Aotearoa, New Zealand.

The International Congress of Ethnobiology (I.C.E.) is held under the  
auspices of the International Society of Ethnobiology (I.S.E.). I.S.E. was  
founded by Darrell Posey in 1988, and is committed to serving humans and  
their biological environments. Emphasis is placed on the direct  
involvement of indigenous and local peoples.

The congresses have two main functions. First, they provide a scientific  
forum for the review of ethnobotanical research results. Second, they  
provide an opportunity for scientists, environmentalists and community  
representatives to address the larger issues of the conservation of  
biological and cultural diversity.

"Dialogue between Cultures":

Most of us would agree that respectful communication among the earth's  
inhabitants is a requirement for planetary healing. Whether between humans  
and their natural environments or humans of different cultures, we must  
learn to understand and respect one another.

The aim of this year's International Congress of Ethnobiology is to go one

step further and form partnerships which will strengthen our individual cultures and our ability to protect our natural environments.

We are fortunate enough to be hosted by the Maori people of Aotearoa, New Zealand, and are looking forward to sharing in their unique spirit.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*Pending funding\*, Terralingua will be participating in this conference. At the time of press, we are scheduled to provide two sessions:

(1) "Supporting cultural and environmental diversity through Indigenous language development and protection of linguistic human rights", on 26 November -- this will be a Marae (Maori community) session;

(2) the third Plenary Session, on 27 November -- "Terralingua: integrated perspectives on linguistic, cultural and biological diversity: a report on Maori Community Working Sessions".

Separately from official Terralingua presentations, a member each of Terralingua's Board of Directors and Advisory Panel will also be giving presentations -- Gary Martin; and Darrell Posey, founder of the International Society of Ethnobiology (I.S.E.).

\*\*\*\*\*

For more information on the conference, please contact the following persons in their respective capacities:

For travel & accommodations:

Hohepa Mason

P.O. Box 76

Whakatane, Aotearoa. New Zealand

Tel.: 64-7-307-0762

FAX.: 64-7-307-0762

For pre-congress workshop information:

Tom Carlson

213 E. Grand Ave.

South San Francisco, CA. 94080. U.S.A.

E-mail: tcarlson@shaman.com

FAX.: 650-873-8367

For conference and registration information:

Bioresources Development and Conservation Programme -- I.C.E.

11303 Amherst Avenue, Suite 2



Since 1988, dozens of other institutions, professional societies, and organizations have followed suit.

#### Declaration of Belém (1988)

SINCE -- tropical forests and other fragile ecosystems are disappearing, many species, both plant and animal, are threatened with extinction, indigenous cultures around the world are being disrupted and destroyed and GIVEN -- that economic, agricultural, and health conditions of people are dependent on these resources, that native peoples have been stewards of 99% of the world's genetic resources, and that there is an inextricable link between cultural and biological diversity;

WE, members of the International Society of Ethnobiology, strongly support the following actions:

#### HENCEFORTH:

- 1) a substantial proportion of development aid be devoted to efforts aimed at ethnobiological inventory, conservation, and management programs;
- 2) mechanisms be established by which indigenous specialists are recognized as proper authorities and are consulted in all programs affecting them, their resources, and their environments;
- 3) all other inalienable human rights be recognized and guaranteed, including cultural and linguistic identity;
- 4) procedures be developed to compensate native peoples for the utilization of their knowledge and their biological resources;
- 5) educational programs be implemented to alert the global community to the value of ethnobiological knowledge for human well being;
- 6) all medical programs include the recognition of and respect for traditional healers and the incorporation of traditional health practices that enhance the health status of these populations;
- 7) ethnobiologists make available the results of their research to the native peoples with whom they have worked, especially including dissemination in the native language;
- 8) exchange of information be promoted among indigenous and peasant peoples regarding conservation, management, and sustained utilization of resources.



"Minority Languages in Context: diversity and standardisation"

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21- 23 September, 1998  
Regional Assembly Building in Chur (Switzerland)

The provisional programme of the "Colloque 1998 de la VALS/ASLA" is available on the following Web site:

[http://www.romsem.unibas.ch/vals\\_asla/Colloque98/colloque98eng.htm](http://www.romsem.unibas.ch/vals_asla/Colloque98/colloque98eng.htm)

The final programme of the Congress will be available around the middle of June.

Themes addressed by the Congress:

The aim of the congress is to stimulate the study and discussion of contextual dimensions within which minority languages are spoken, shared and taught. The congress will provide a forum for the exchange and discussion of descriptive and comparative reports from a variety of regional and national settings, including those in Switzerland. The contexts within which minority languages evolve can be described from differing points of view along a continuum between two opposing poles. At one end of the continuum lay attempts to achieve stability and homogeneity, which are usually articulated through projects aiming at the planning and normalisation of minority languages in order to present these codes as having equal status to adjacent majority languages. At the other end of the continuum we find de-stabilisation and heterogeneity, observable at points of contact and overlap between minority and majority languages and often leading to hybrid forms which challenge traditional notions of linguistic code. These two poles involve a variety of actors and agents of differing social and institutional status, all exercising varying degrees of influence on the language situation in question. The congress will address three thematic areas highlighting the full range of this continuum:

Thematic area one: Standardisation of minority Languages

Thematic area two: Minority and majority Languages: co-existence, relationships and overlap.

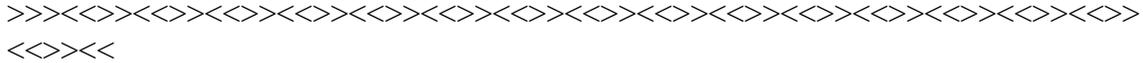
Thematic area three: Minority languages at school

For more informations, contact:

Lorenza Mondada, Romanisches Seminar, Stapfelberg 7/9, CH 4051 Basel.

FAX.: +41/61/267.12.86

E-mail: [mondada@ubaclu.unibas.ch](mailto:mondada@ubaclu.unibas.ch)



From: Piet Van Avermaet <pvanaver@onyx.arts.kuleuven.ac.be>

THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MAINTENANCE AND LOSS  
OF MINORITY LANGUAGES

26-27 November, 1998  
Koningshof Conference Centre, Veldhoven, The Netherlands

CALL FOR PAPERS AND REGISTRATION

INTRODUCTION

In line with the two previous international conferences on Maintenance and Loss of Minority Languages (Noordwijkerhout, the Netherlands; 1988 and 1992), the aim of this conference is to bring together recent developments from various disciplines. The ambition of this third conference is to offer a major contribution to a theoretical discussion on the determinants of language shift and language loss, supported by the exchange of new research data. While the two preceding conferences concentrated mainly on the questions "What is lost of the language?" (structural-linguistic aspects) and "Why does shift occur?" (sociological and social-psychological explanatory factors), the Veldhoven conference will focus on two questions: "Why does shift occur?" and "How is a language lost?", i.e., what are the psycholinguistic processes involved in language loss? Emphasis will be on the interaction between the process of transferring from the first to the second language and the gradual decline of skills in the first language, at the individual and group levels.

The conference takes place on two consecutive days. Plenary speakers are invited to make inspiring and thought-provoking remarks on the two conference themes outlined above, as well as on the broader theoretical framework. Together with the contributions of the free paper presenters, the interaction between plenary speakers and participants forms the data for workshops and a round-table discussion on the development of an integrated theoretical framework. This framework can then serve as a renewed starting point for continued research into language shift and loss in the new millennium. The organising committee is also open to contributions from disciplines that have recently entered or touched upon the field and may shed a new light on the language change processes involved.

The organising committee will determine the best manner in which the

results of the conference can be published.

## PROGRAMME

The conference will consist of three sections. The first section addresses the sociological and social-psychological explanatory context in which language shift processes take place. The second section deals with language attrition from a psycholinguistic perspective, and the third is fully devoted to the building of an integrated explanatory framework for processes of language shift and loss. In memory of Willem Fase, one of the initiators of the First and Second Conference on Maintenance and Loss of Minority Languages, who died in 1997, a new forum called the Willem Fase Lecture has been set up. This plenary lecture forum will be granted to a promising scholar, to be selected from the abstracts submitted.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Conference Secretariat  
Tilburg University  
Research Group on Language and Minorities  
c/o Heleen Strating-Keurentjes  
P.O. Box 90153  
NL-5000 LE Tilburg  
Tel +31 13 4662588  
Fax +31 13 4663110  
E-mail: [language.loss.98@kub.nl](mailto:language.loss.98@kub.nl)

Organizing Committee

- Dr. Ton Ammerlaan, Arnhem School of Business
- Madeleine Hulsen, University of Nijmegen
- Dr. Jetske Klatter-Folmer, Tilburg University
- Heleen Strating-Keurentjes, Tilburg University
- Piet Van Avermaet, University of Leuven
- Dr. Kutlay Yagmur, Tilburg University

Scientific Committee

- Prof. Kees de Bot, University of Nijmegen
- Prof. Michael Clyne, Monash University, Melbourne
- Prof. Joshua Fishman, Stanford University, California/Yeshiva University, New York
- Prof. Koen Jaspaert, University of Leuven
- Dr. Sjaak Kroon, Tilburg University

## Location

The conference will be held at Koningshof Conference Center, Veldhoven, the





The question is often raised of how these outsiders can really help the cause that they have identified. Language communities must have inner strength in order to survive, or at least the will and the means to go on using their traditional tongues. Outside organisations, however well-meaning, cannot supply such qualities directly. Some ask whether the organisations even have the right to try to interfere.

This conference, the second organised by the Foundation for Endangered Languages, is seeking answers to one part of this question. How can language specialists, whether professional linguists, educators, media professionals or whoever, actually contribute to language maintenance?

We shall be looking for testimony on the actual effects of professional involvement on small language communities throughout the world: both community members, and the professionals themselves will have their tales to tell.

We do not expect a common set of conclusions to emerge from this sharing of experience and analysis. But we shall be looking at the variety we find, and asking if it points to a good way to define the rôles of the support organisations: how they can complement one another, perhaps sharing techniques, perhaps transmitting knowledge?

Some themes that need to be addressed:

When does the professional best act as an external consultant, when as a team-player?

What are useful relations:

- among grammarians, lexicographers and sociolinguists?
- among community-leaders, language-activists and language-scientists?
- among ordinary speakers, creative users, broadcasters and publishers?

What have been great successes in specialist language work, and what motivated the people responsible?

How does local work benefit from E.L. support organisations with a global or continental view? Is there a need for technical assistance, production of materials, publicity, funding, political agitation?

Should E.L. support organisations themselves specialise? If so how: regionally, or by function?

A preliminary volume of proceedings distributed at the Conference. Presentations will last twenty minutes each, with a further ten minutes for





of language planning, thereby replacing the unanimous "Roman first/computer first" view with a "language first" view:

1.

First priority is given to the needs of the languages in question. All phonemic distinctions should be kept in writing.

2.

As for existing written languages, they should not need to adjust themselves to existing computer systems. On the contrary, the standardizers must see to it that the computers adjust to the existing languages, so that the users do not need to change their habits. This is especially crucial in the case of minority languages, where there is enough instability already, without unnecessary disputes over changing graphemes.

3.

New written languages should restrict themselves to the grapheme repertoire of ISO/IEC 10646-1

(<http://charts.unicode.org/Unicode.charts/normal/Unicode.html>), possibly also to ISO/IEC 8859-1 (=Latin 1; i.e. the C0 and C1 sets of the above), the most important Internet standard), or (when creating cyrillic-based etc. written languages: to 8859-5 (<http://www.indigo.ie/egt/emono/latincy.jpg>) etc.).

4.

When there are more phonemes than there are symbols in the basic (Latin or Cyrillic or Arabic or...) alphabet, this can be solved in three ways:

- a. by modifying letters by diacritic marks
- b. by using digraphs
- c. by creating new letters

All three techniques have been used. From a computer technology point of view, a. and b. are to be preferred. 10646 already consists of most of the diacritic possibilities that will be needed.

Comments to these principles:

Ad 1:

Written languages are powerful instruments. If this principle is not respected, the written language will come back for a revenge. Thus, a bad orthography that fails to distinguish, e.g., between long and short vowels, between different tones, etc., **IN CASES WHERE THESE DISTINCTIONS ARE PHONEMIC** (systematically utilized to distinguish between word forms), may come back and take revenge, so that younger speakers fail to learn their languages properly. I have seen several instances of that in the Soviet

Union. Russian orthography does not mark stress, but stress very seldom is the only cue to distinguishing words (the context fixes it). I guess that they figured they should treat the diacritic length marks of minority languages as they did with Russian stress marks -- use them in dictionaries and perhaps in primers, not otherwise. Today, the young speakers have often lost the fundamental length distinction.

If the new Akha orthography has other means of marking tone, fine. In Norwegian, we have approximately 5000 minimal pairs of the type "lande" (to land) "landet" (a land). The final /t/ is not pronounced, but the forms are different, since they have different tone. Thus, the distinction can be marked in many ways, but when it is systematic it really should be marked (well, perhaps it does not necessarily have to in Norwegian, but that is a different story not relevant here).

But if Akha is a tone language (as I understand from Matthews' earlier remarks) and this distinction is not respected, then that is BAD, and should be corrected. Look to Vietnamese. They have both the software and the linguistic groundwork you need (evidently the missionaries did get something right, at least in the 1600 c.!).

Ad 2:

Contrary to what people speaking 7-bit-languages (a-z) may think, it is possible to cope with other grapheme repertoires. I know only #two# a-z languages: English and Indonesian. And this is important -- threatened languages (like human patients) need stable conditions in order to recover. In case of a written language reform, there will ALWAYS be some stubborn people refusing to change their habits, and due to human nature many of them will be old, and again due to the ecology of the language, many of these old-timers will be the ones that have the best knowledge of the language (when language loss is going on, that is). Thus, I would really think twice before changing anything. If the old orthography is REALLY BAD, and if the people support the new (or if a new orthography can eliminate several orthographies for the same language, then o.k.). But NEVER change orthographies because of computer problems. Give them Macintoshes instead... :-)

Ad 3:

With "tabula rasa", new graphemes should of course be chosen from within the already standardized repertoire. Latin 1 has many vowels but few consonants, so very often Latin 1 is not enough. With ISO/IEC 10646 around the corner (already there in Windows NT, you only have to purchase the fonts) I do not see the need to stick to Latin 1 at any price.

Ad 4:

Czech chose the first, English the second and Russian the third of these







## The Akha Heritage Foundation

Dear Friends of The Akha Heritage Foundation:

Due to a generous gift of one individual we have been able complete numerous projects that we have been working on here in Maesai, Chiangrai, Thailand. Here are just a few of them:

- 9 meter deep well with concrete casing and washing station in one village, along with some play equipment for the children
- Sewing machine and hemming machine for our training efforts
- Improvements to our Web page
- Emergency surgery for a 1 year old boy with a groinal hernia, successful.
- Income-making project for one family in Burma, motor-cycle to be used as a taxi for household of 9, one member who is a full-time transcriber for our language work
- Translation work for the children's book paid
- TV and VCR for our video presentations
- All of our staff paid (these are costs for people who come in on projects. We have no full-time, in-house staff at this time)
- All of our administrative costs paid up in full
- A photograph exhibit completed
- A motorcycle purchased for getting out in the hills without the costly expense of renting
- Dental work for numerous Akha paid for

..... and the list goes on.

Two projects that we have not yet completed are as follows:

### Project Number 1:

The printing of the Children's Book

Total cost \$2500

5,000 copies

100 plus pages.

50 cents U.S. each

220 drawings to go with the words

card stock cover

sewn binding to prevent rusting (as when staples are used)

Alphabet, tone and penmanship drills

Cultural notes

Color cover

Time to print, three weeks from delivery of proofs

(About 20% of the total number needed for Thailand alone, and we need books for Burma, Laos and China as well).

## Project Number 2

### Ambulance Project

4x4 Toyota 4 door Pickup Truck Equipped with Winch -- \$20,000 at current exchange rates of 45 baht to U.S. dollar (was \$16,000 at 56 to U.S. dolllar.)

For use in mountains of Thailand and Burma, taking people out to hospitals for medicine and surgery.

We have been greatly cheered here by our late success and progress on the part of language and people.

If anyone can organize help or donate on these two projects we will be very thankful.

Our overall projects areas at this time are Medical, Literacy and Wells - Safe water. So we are getting very close to having our infrastructure needs met for the first round.

In addition, we are in need of three good, up and running Apple desk-top computers for an Akha Language Historian and Editor (Akha National) and his two apprentices.

We have numerous books in the works; a growing collection of writings are being hampered by not having computers for them to write on, so that the work does not have to be farmed out in hand-written form to a typist. Can anyone help with this matter?

The computers need to be set up for 220v, 50hz, preferrably for electric here in Asia.

The books that we are working on now are:

Akha children's work book, which has now grown to include a cultural reader (see above)

Akha language grammar

Akha herbal medicine

Akha Geneologies

English-to-Akha Handbook

Akha Dictionary, which will be the foreunner for an Akha Cultural Encyclopedia.

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By the way, has anyone in a university, someone with pull, thought of contacting, say, Apple, and seeing if Apple or another computer









