खोनसाइ

KHONSAY: POEM OF MANY TONGUES

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Background Information

खोनसाइ *(Khonsay): to pick up something with care as it is scarce or rare. (Boro language written in Devanagari script, India)*

Introduction

"There are nine different words for the color blue in the Spanish Maya dictionary, but just three Spanish translations, leaving six [blue] butterflies that can be seen only by the Maya, proving that when a language dies six butterflies disappear from the consciousness of the earth."

- Earl Shorris

Poetry, then, is precisely what is least translatable about a language – it is the ineffable, the things that only a set of words in a particular language can say. Translated into English from many languages, "Khonsay" is an act of audacious and unabashed imagination. It imagines the ecology of languages through a world poem. It seeks to capture the luminous originals in refracted light. The voices of the indigenous speakers are beautiful, even if we cannot fully understand what they are saying. Yet, what cannot be translated, what we cannot do justice to, is a measure of what is being lost with the disappearance of many of these languages.

Though definitions differ, poetry exists in every culture: the crystallization of experience into words, word into art, the engaging patter of consciousness itself. "Khonsay" is a tribute and call to action to support the diversity of the world's languages. The poem is a "cento," a collage poem; the name in Latin means "stitched together," like a quilt — each line of the poem is drawn from a different language, appearing in that language's alphabet or transliterated from the spoken word, followed by an English translation.

The poem

Invocation

(1) Ch'a tlákwdáx si. áat, tlél ch'as yá táakw
It didn't just start yesterday
- Nora Marks Dauenhauer *(Tlingit, U.S.)*

(2) Li' to bu nakal le jme'tike
Come to the source of the word
- Alberto Gómez Pérez *(Tsotsil, Mexico)*

(3) An xi chjinie sié'an. 'An xi chjinie tsaki'an.
I am the wise chanter. I am the wise healer.
- Juan Gregorio Regino *(Mazatec, Mexico)*

(4) We:s ha'icu 'at hahawa 'i-hoi
Everything is now moving and alive
- Ofelia Zepeda *(Tohono O'odham, Mexico)*

(5) Ni eiya
yaah ni
You breathe earth sky
- Rex Lee Jim *(Navajo, U.S.)*

(6) O tca tsi kxa/ho o cua
E kokxuisi ta'ma
This is what our land looks like and this is how our speech sounds
- !Unn/obe Morethlwa *(Ju/'hoan, Botswana)*

(7) Namawi ruwi, namawi tapatawi ponun wanyil
namawi thunggarar tumbiwalun ngayambun
Our land, our waters are dying but our language is coming to life

again

- Tumake Yande Aboriginal Elders Group *(Ngarrindjeri, Australia)*

(8) 'Au'a 'ia, e Kama e, kona moku, 'O kona moku, e Kama, e 'au'a 'ia
Hold fast, O Child, the isle/ The island, O Child, hold fast
- Keaulumoku *(Hawaian, U.S.)*

(9) Fonua, kelekele/ kakai/ anga fetu'utaki, fehokotaki'anga
Land. People. Connection
- Vaimoana Niumeitolu *(Tongan, Tonga)*

Welcome

(10) Iyeh tubabolu nata luntamba. Luntamba jalimussow ning jalikewolu, tubabolu nata. Luntamba jarra, Luntamba!
Ladies and gentlemen, our guests have arrived, welcome to our house, and feel at home!
- Women from Papa Susso Family *(Manding, Gambia)*

(11) Mapia y pattolay tawe ta ili mi, cunnasi maggarammammu kami
Life is beautiful in my village, everybody knows everyone here
- Grace G. Baldisseri *(Ibanag, Philippines)*

(12) Plega ar bed 'barz va godell
I'll fold up the world into my pocket
- Mikael Madeg (*Breton, France)*

(13) Yng nghegin gefn ei dŷ mae'n cadw cenedl
In the back kitchen of his house he keeps a nation
- Bobi Jones *(Welsh, Wales)*

(14) פֿון יענער זײַט ליד קען מײַן מאַמע אַרויס,
און שטײן אויף דער שוועל אַ ווײַלע פֿאַרטראַכט

On the poem’s other side my mother stands rapt
In the doorway a moment in the fading light
- Rokhl Korn *(Yiddish, Canada)*

(15) حوم لكتب خط * ولأوني رسول
كليد بجهيم * وشهم دخول

I want to write a line and hire a messenger
who has an entry visa
- Hajj bir Ali bir Dakon (*Mahri, Yemen*)

(16) Apoqonmui kwilm nsituowey ewikasik ntinink
Help me search the meaning written in my life
- Rita Joe *(Mi'kmaq, Canada)*

(17) Na kumeh for madi koe fineh: Ar For! Ar Neh for
When something is hard to say, “say it” they tell the poet, and the poet says it
- Momory Finah *(Kuranko, Sierra Leone)*

Peril

(18) នៅល្ងាចថ្ងៃសូត្រមន្តចូលឆ្នាំ ខាល
ភ្នំពេញបានអនុម្មោទនាសុទ្ធគ្រាប់បែកផ្ទោង
ជំនួសបុណ្យតែម្តង ។

On the eve of our happy new year, feasting
was replaced with mortar fire in our city of
Phnom Penh
- U Sam Oeur *(Khmer, Cambodia)*

(19) 

The sons of bitterness are here, they wear their hats

- Traditional *(Nakhi, China)*

(20) Desten nou/ Se pa pou nou fini mal
Our destiny is not to have an unfortunate end.
- Denize Lauture (*Haitian Creole, Haiti)*

(21) Arniri wangk' Arabana yanhirnda, wangka warunganha
We all speak Arabana, a language from long ago
- Mathapurda Syd Strangways *(Arabana, Australia)*

(22) ئەمڕۆ نێوی کوردستانم
لە پێڕستدا خوێندەوە،
کەچی لە کتێبەکە خۆیدا نەمدۆزییەوە.
Today I read the name, Kurdistan, in the table of contents but I could not find it in the book
- Farhad Shakely *(Kurdish, "Kurdistan")*

(23) მრავალ დროების მოწამე ხარ, მაგრამ ხარ უტყვი!..
Though wordless you have been witness to eras past!
- Nikoloz Baratashvili *(Georgian, Georgia)*

(24) Ka mi koara dohm re a ciniha ku tsa'a mi?
If I lose my voice, will you still understand me?
- Unknown *(Ju/'hoan, Namibia)*

(25) Af-dhabaandhow aayar ninkaa, aammusaan ahaye
I am that silent man who sits, slowly patting his mouth again and again
- Raage Ugaas (*Somali, Somalia)*

Recovery

(26) Mise an teanga i mála an fhuadaitheora
I am the tongue in the kidnapper's sack
- Gearóid Mac Lochlainn *(Irish, Ireland)*

(27) Pèr eisista iéu prèni lengo. Óublìdi un pau mai mi ramènti
I speak my tongue to exist. I forget a little but I remember
- Philippe Blanchet *(Provençal, France)*

(28) Tèé ńdé wá wó íjéḿ wá áwɔ̀ kùrɔ̀ wá ídó ɓèè fìèkánɛ̀/ wá sísíéḿ kùá sɛ́ɣɛ̀mà fíé
What do we do if our children cannot speak our language? We will arise and start speaking
- Ebitare Obikudo (Nkọrọọ, Nigeria)

(29) Ha tamora'e oikove ñe'e umi che ypykue ñe'e rapykue.
Oh, if it were to happen that the spoken word could live in the fingerprint of the speech of my ancestors
- Susy Delgado *(Guarani, Paraguay)*

(30) Lefün wenuntumeael / ñi füchake cheyem / ñi ñamkülechi dungu
I have traveled over the plains, the shore, the mountain, to collect the lost sayings of my old ones
- Leonel Lienlaf *(Mapuche, Chile)*

(31) Ngaingga, adilili ngarlpurlaru yura ngawarla inhanga murlda yartanga idla ngawarlangawarlaiku!
It's deeply moving, our language is at last being heard in a different land!
- Inhaadi Adnyamathanha Ngawarla School Group *(Adnyamathanha, Australia)*

(32) Ha ro nijä ro Ndome. Dro zäi da pa da kohi Nu Hnini ko yo dö zäi to'mi.
I come from the oratory of the Old Mother. I am the Eternal Return of the people with hope-filled eyes
- Serafín Thaayrohyadi Bermúdez *(Ñähñu, Mexico)*

(33) Kin kilhpin mapakhlhay/ akgatum xanat tachuwin
a tlokgonit xuntilhnin/ lhpitkgonit nak chiwix
From my lips, there blossoms a spiral language sign created by my ancestors and carved into stone
- Jun Tiburcio *(Totonac, Mexico)*

(34) Uvumai apamai e'i aipa ivo'i kelogo/ Uvumai apamai e'i kapulai kekapulaisa
Our ancestors were the source of daring! Our ancestors were the source of victory!
- Traditional *(Mekeo, Papua New Guinea)*

(35) Tilli pa yue te gbong
The ladder gave the roof its name
- Traditional *(Buli, Ghana)*

(36) Qui ten la lenga ten la clau
Who holds the language holds the key
- Frédéric Mistral *(Occitan, France)*

Myth

(37) Khaniphendule nani zintaba zezwe lethu!
Nani milambo yakowethu kha nithethe!
Raise your voices, mountains of our country!
And you, rivers of home, speak out!
- SEK Mqhayi *(Xhosa, South Africa)*

(38) Kunanmanta paqarinmanmi hatunyayta kay takiypi yachachiyki
As of today and tomorrow, through this song I'll teach you to become a giant
- William Hurtado de Mendoza *(Quechua, Peru)*

(39) Tüfawla ñi pu ñawe zeumalkefiñ lien ruka / ka kürüf negvmüñ ma meke enew ñi logko
For my daughters I build the house of silver as I ride my horse above the rainbow
- Elicura Chihuailaf *(Mapuche, Chile)*

(40) ᏧᏅᏁᏅᏗ ᏗᎥᏚᏩ ᏃᏧ ᏧᏁᏚ ᏩᏚᏁᏚᏅᏍᏗᏍ.
With bright red and white wings
- Nannie Taylor *(Cherokee, United States)*

(41) ù bjâŋə jīn m̄bá úgőho mù sèhe bâha tô mɛ̄ úfőŋ jī ʤʊ́ mɛ̄ ígőhʊ
As it was talking, fire continued to pour from its mouth, with a feather tied in its mouth like a slipknot
- Traditional *(Mungbam, Cameroon)*

(42) Ca nyur tung thiangɛ, ca lec nyang tuoth kɛ lied.
I sat on the deer's horn and cleaned the crocodile's teeth with sand
- Traditional *(Nuer, South Sudan)*

(43) Gosa mii johtit go biegganjunni ii šat deaivva davás?
Where do we go when even the leader reindeer loses its nose for the wind and can't find its way back west?
- Sofia Jannok *(Northern Saami, Sweden)*

Love

(44)   

A little bit of musk… She sends out a little bit of musk.

- Peter Cook *(American Sign Language, U.S.)*

(45) Ngabi karlu nganurr(i)y(i)nurriying

Ngabi karlu nganurri(i)yinu'

Ngabi duwa [ya] [y]abanajuku[yu]n ngadburr(i)yinurr(i)yin

I'm not going to have a shower

I'm not going to have a shower

I'm going to wait for her and we'll have a shower together

- Ronnie Waraludj *(Iwaidja, Australia)*

(46) Armahaizeni, kačo. Lopen sinun ke

You my love, I want to come with you and watch your eyes

- Traditional *(Karelian, Russia)*

(47) ئاي يۈزنىڭ شەۋقىگە ئاللا پەرۋانە بولدۇم

I have become a moth drawn to the beauty of your face, indeed Allah

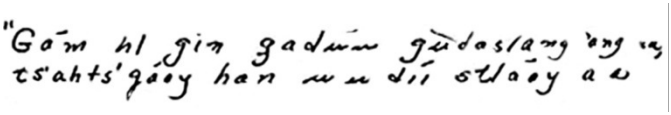
- Shah Mäshräp *(Uyghur, China)*

(48) Ndaani' ladxidua'ya'. Ti diidxa' si ñabe lii lu / Ti diidxa' si, ti diidxa' ma' biaanda' naa

In my heart, just one word to say to you in bed/ Just one word, a word I have already forgotten.

- Víctor de la Cruz *(Isthmus Zapotec, Mexico)*

Death

(49) 

This is what I was thinking of as I sat outside today

- Dr. Erma Lawrence *(Haida, Canada)*

(50) Dame le gien nowen wanwa, lauba gien banda habunana

When I pass away, an official marching band will be leading me to my final resting place

- Paul Nabor *(Garifuna, Belize)*

(51) кандыг болган ындыг арткан сен

сен мим эджим эки эджим

кандыг ырааган сен мим эджим

The way you were, that's how you remained,

You, my friend, my good friend, what have you done?

Oh why have you gone far away?

- Lydia Stepanovna Bolxoeva *(Tofa, Russia)*

(52) To’one’ táan kbin, dzoka’anto’on beyo’, le tankelem paalo’ob ku lik’lo’obo’, leti’ob úuch u yilko'ob ku beeto'ob, le ba'axo'ob ma' pajchaj k-betik to'one'.

We are going away, it is all over. Now the young ones are growing up. They must try to finish, those things we did not.

- Gerardo Can Pat *(Mayan, Mexico)*

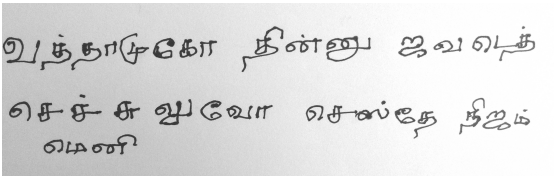
(53) Ka mate! Ka mate! Ka ora! Ka ora!

I die! I die! I live! I live!

- Te Rauparaha *(Māori, New Zealand)*

Words

(54)



If days, with words, you spend… in the end doth soul exist

- Sriman Nayaki Swamigal *(Sourashtra, India)*

(55) Hizkuntza batek ez du hormarik eraikitzen, kolorez pintatzen ditu.

A language builds no walls, it paints them in colors.

- Kirmen Uribe *(Basque, Spain)*

(56) What obscures, falls away. Hayutke hvtke.

What obscures, falls away. White Dawning.

- Joy Harjo *(Mvskoke, U.S.)*

(57) Chamu Chamu ye tu

Talk some and leave some

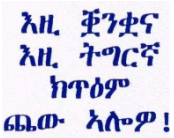
- Isaac Bernard *(Kromanti, Jamaica)*

(58) नान् बल्ल बाक्यको बचान थाहान् ।

Now we've finally had a good conversation, they said

- Traditional *(Thangmi, Nepal)*

(59)



Welcome to our language

Taste the sauce

- Reesom Haile *(Tigrinian, Eritrea)*

The poem line by line

1

Ch'a tlákwdáx si. áat, tlél ch'as yá táakw.

It didn't just start yesterday

- Nora Marks Dauenhauer *(Tlingit, U.S.)*

This line, written originally in Chinese by Han Shan (c. 800 AD) and here in Tlingit, comes from Nora Marks Dauenhauer's experimental translations into Tlingit from a variety of origins and poetic styles. Dauenhauer was born in Juneau, Alaska in 1927. She was monolingual in Tlingit as a child, adding English when starting school. As an anthropologist and an award-winning poet and writer, she has contributed to safeguarding the Tlingit language through fieldwork, transcription, translation and explanation of oral literature. Tlingit is spoken by about 600 people today in Southeast Alaska and Western Canada.

2

Li' to bu nakal le jme'tike

Come to the source of the word

- Alberto Gómez Pérez *(Tsotsil, Mexico)*

Gómez Pérez was born in 1966 in Ejido Santa Catarina Las Palmas in Chiapas, Mexico. He writes poetry, narrative, and essays, and his poetry publications include "Words for the Gods and the World", "May the Sun Not Fade Away," and "The Weeping of Times." This line is from his poem "*Yibelun k'op*/ Source of the Word," translated by Donald Frischmann. Tsotsil (also Tzotzil) speakers call their language *Batz'I K'op*/ true language. At the end of the 20th century there were more than 514,000 speakers of this Mayan language, living primarily in the State of Chiapas.

3

An xi chjinie sié'an. 'An xi chjinie tsaki'an.

I am the wise chanter. I am the wise healer.

- Juan Gregorio Regino *(Mazatec, Mexico)*

Juan Gregorio Regino (b.1962) is one of the leading indigenous language poets of the twentieth century. Mazatec is a group of different indigenous languages spoken in southern Mexico by about 200,000 people today. Regino's original dialect is Soyaltepec Mazatec and he uses the Practical Mazatec Alphabet to write poetry, which was developed jointly for four dialects between 1989 and 1990. In this poem "*Nijmi en nima/* Chants," he celebrates the sacred prayers that help the Mazatecs to be heard in other realms. His poems turn into prayers. Translation by Donald Frischmann.

4

We:s ha'icu 'at hahawa 'i-hoi

Everything is now moving and alive

- Ofelia Zepeda *(Tohono O'odham, Mexico)*

This line is from the poem "Rain" by Ofelia Zepeda (b.1952), a poet, linguistics scholar, and cultural preservationist, whose poetry touches on linguistics, O'odham traditions, the natural world, and the experience of contemporary O'odham life. Zepeda directs the American Indian Studies Program at the University of Arizona as well as the American Indian Language Development Institute, which she co-founded. Tohono O'odham is spoken by about 14,000 Tohono O'odham Native Americans in the U.S. and Mexico.

5

Ni eiya

yaah ni

You breathe earth sky

- Rex Lee Jim *(Navajo, U.S.)*

This poem was written and translated by Rex Lee Jim, an author, playwright, and medicine man, who is currently Vice President of the

Navajo Nation. Jim played a key role in the drafting and passage of the International Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007. He proposes an alternative translation based on the sounds of the words: “you you are/ awe/ is yours.” Navajo is spoken in the southwestern United States and has more speakers than any other Native American language north of the U.S.-Mexico border, numbering around 170,000.

6
O tca tsi kxa/ho o cua
e kokxuisi ta’ma
This is what our land looks like and this is how our speech sounds
- !Unn/obe Morethlwa *(Ju/’hoan, Botswana)*

Ju/’hoan is spoken by about 34,000 people in Namibia and Botswana. !Unn/obe Morethlwa, the poet, has lived most of her life as part of a traditional hunting and gathering band, where she gathered wild foods and sold ostrich-eggshell beadwork to occasional tourists. Having worked for some time as a serf for Afrikaner farmers and having lived on a mission station where she kept following her own healing religion, she observed the transformations her society was undergoing due to incoming black and white groups. In a 1971 interview, she noted how the tobacco, sugar, alcohol, and coffee production *businesses* were turning her people into slaves.

7
Namawi ruwi, namawi tapatawi ponun wanyil
namawi thunggarar tumbiwalun ngayambun
Our land, our waters are dying but our language is coming to life again
- Tumake Yande Aboriginal Elders Group *(Ngarrindjeri, Australia)*

This line is written and translated by Tumake Yande Aboriginal Elders Group, a governmental aboriginal healthcare program serving aboriginal elders and their care givers living on Ngarrindjeri Lands. Ngarrindjeri

(also Narrinyeri) is listed by the *Ethnologue* as spoken by 160 people in 2006 in South Australia and nearly extinct. The language is being revived by enthusiasts, supporters, and a responsive community, restoring speaking in full sentences in speeches at community events and through songs and stories. Language speakers have generated teaching materials for children and adults, including a dictionary.

8

'Au'a 'ia, e Kama e, kona moku, 'O kona moku, e Kama, e 'au'a 'ia

Hold fast, O Child, the isle/ The island, O Child, hold fast

- Keaulumoku *(Hawaian, U.S.)*

This line is from a chant by Keaulumoku predicting the overthrow of the Hawaiian religious belief systems. It is a very famous *mele hula* today. “Mele” means “song” in Hawaiian, and “hula” is a dance form developed by the Polynesians who originally settled in the Hawaiian Islands, and accompanied by chant or song. It dramatized or portrays the sung words in visual dance form. This *hula* is danced with a *pahu* or shark skin drum. It is translated by Puakea Nogelmeier in consultation with Aunty Pat Bacon. Keaulumoku is the first, and perhaps the oldest known Hawaiian chanter.

9

Fonua, kelekele/ kakai/ anga fetu'utaki, fehokotaki'anga

Land. People. Connection

- Vaimoana Niumeitolu *(Tongan, Tonga)*

Tongan is the national language of Tonga, which occupies an archipelago of 176 islands in the southern Pacific Ocean, 52 of which are inhabited by about 100,000 people. Vaimoana (Moana) Niumeitolu is a Tongan-American poet, actor, and painter. She is an advocate of peace, joy, love, cultural awareness, and artistic expression, and the founder of Mahina Movement, a trio of poets and musicians who perform and tell stories about individuals, like themselves, who deal with dual identities. Translation by Va'eomatoka Valu and Elisiva Maka.

10

Iyeh tubabolu nata luntamba. Luntamba jalimussow ning jalikewolu, tubabolu nata. Luntamba jarra, Luntamba!

Ladies and gentlemen, our guests have arrived, welcome to our house, and feel at home!

- Women from Papa Susso Family *(Manding, Gambia)*

Manding (or Mandinka) is one of the Manding Languages, and is spoken in Mali, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, the Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, and Chad by about 1.4 million people and recognized officially only in Senegal. It uses Latin and Arabic-script based alphabets. The Arabic-based alphabet is widely used, older, and associated with Islamic areas, while the Latin one, introduced and spread after colonization, is the official one. This welcome line was sung by women in the Papa Sasso Family in Banjul, Gambia, and translated by Papa Susso.

11

Mapia y pattolay tawe ta ili mi, cunnasi maggarammammu kami

Life is beautiful in my village, everybody knows everyone here

- Grace G. Baldisseri *(Ibanag, Philippines)*

Ibanag is spoken by about 500,000 thousand people in the Philippines, as well as by Filipino immigrants in the Middle East, the UK, and the U.S. The line is from a poem titled “Tawe Ta Ili Mi/ In My Village,” written and translated by Grace G. Baldisseri, who lives in the U.S. and writes poetry in English and Ibanag. Since 2012, the revival of Ibanag culture has become part of the Mother-Tongue Based program of the Filipino government, which seeks to preserve indigenous cultures, including languages.

12

Plega ar bed 'barz va godell

I'll fold up the world into my pocket

- Mikael Madeg *(Breton, France)*

Breton is an endangered Celtic language spoken in Brittany, France. This line is from a poem titled "*Goulennig*/ Small Question," written and translated by Mikael Madeg (b.1950). Madeg says "I suppose love is the main theme in my poems, that and life lived; and womankind in what they are and what they can symbolize." A holder of two Ph.D's of Celtic studies, he lives in the Breton countryside where he teaches English and Breton, and has declared his most recent poetry book *Barzaz* as his last one. He describes it "as a statement about the "unacceptable" language conditions in Brittany."

13

Yng nghegin gefn ei dŷ mae'n cadw cenedl

In the back kitchen of his house he keeps a nation

- Bobi Jones *(Welsh, Wales)*

Bobi Jones, poet, author, critic and scholar, is one of the most well-known and prolific Welsh writers of the latter half of the twentieth century. He is a champion of Welsh-language learning, and a constant voice in the struggle for a Welsh cultural identity and for Welsh autonomy and self-rule. Welsh is the only language in the world that went off of UNESCO's and the *Ethnologue*'s endangered languages lists. It is a Celtic language spoken by about 700,000 people around the world, mainly in Wales, the UK. This line is from the poem "*Cymro Di-Gymraeg*/ A Welshless Welshman," translated by Joseph P. Clancy.

14

פֿון יענער זײַט ליד קען מײַן מאַמע אַרויס,
און שטײן אויף דער שוועל אַ ווײַלע פֿאַרטראַכט

On the poem's other side my mother stands rapt

In the doorway a moment in the fading light

- Rokhl Korn *(Yiddish, Canada)*

Using Hebrew script and spoken by about 1.5 million people around the world, Yiddish was the primary spoken language of the Ashkenazi Jews

for a significant portion of its history. These lines are from a poem titled “On the Poem’s Other Side” by Rokhl Korn (1898-1982), translated by Irena Klepfisz. Korn was born in Poland and moved due to war and persecution against her people to Austria, Poland, Uzbekistan, and Russia before immigrating to Canada, where she settled permanently and continued to write poetry. Korn published her first work in Polish at age 20 and started publishing in Yiddish a year later.

15

حوم لكتب خط * ولأوني رسول
كليد سجهيم * وشهم دخول

I want to write a line and hire a messenger
who has an entry visa
- Hajj bir Ali bir Dakon *(Mahri, Yemen)*

Mahri (also Mehri) is spoken by about 115,000 people in Yemen and Oman and is a remnant of the indigenous languages spoken in the southern Arabian Peninsula before the arrival of Islam to the region and the Arabic language that came with it. Mahri is primarily oral. The line was written by Hajj bir Ali bir Dakon using a slightly modified Arabic script, and translated by Sam Liebhaber. His published poetry marks a milestone in writing Mahri, which has several dialect, and has not been written before.

16

Apoqonmui kwilm nsituowey ewikasik ntinink
Help me search the meaning written in my life
- Rita Joe *(Mi'kmaq, Canada)*

Mi'kmaq speakers numbered 8,040 in Canada in 2011. The number is decreasing, and includes no monolinguals. This line is from the poem “Expect nothing else from me.” Rita Joe has worked actively for the education of Native children and preservation of Native culture. She is often referred to as “the gentle warrior,” and has received the Order of

Canada in 1989 and an Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree. She writes, “Inspiration came to me by learning that others do not always write what I want to hear – the good in my culture. Write what comes from the heart. Do not wait until tomorrow, do it now!”

17

Na kumeh for madi koe fineh: Ar For! Ar Neh for

When something is hard to say, “say it” they tell the poet, and the poet says it

- Momory Finah *(Kuranko, Sierra Leone)*

Kuranko is spoken by about 300,000 people in West Africa, mainly in Sierra Leone, but also in Guinea and Guinea-Bissau. Momory Finah is a Finah poet from the village of Dankawali in Northeast Sierra Leone (a “Finah” is a poet/storyteller/master of ceremonies in West African culture). The translator, Kewulay Finah Kamara, is a Sierra Leone immigrant to the U.S. and a Finah poet. City Lore and Kewulay Kamara are currently producing a documentary film about Kamara’s journey back to Africa to recreate an ancient epic handed down in his family, the only written copy of which was destroyed in the recent Civil War in Sierra Leone.

18

នៅល្ងាចថ្ងៃសូត្រមន្តចូលឆ្នាំ ខាល
ភ្នំពេញបានអនុម្មោទនាសុទ្ធគ្រាប់បែកផ្ទោង
ជំនួសបុណ្យតែម្តង ។

On the eve of our happy new year, feasting was replaced with mortar fire in our city of Phnom Penh

- U Sam Oeur *(Khmer, Cambodia)*

Khmer is the official language of Cambodia and is also spoken in Vietnam and Thailand. These lines are from a poem written in 1975 titled “Prelude” and translated by Ken McCullough. U Sam Oeur is a

survivor of the Khmer Regime and the following period under Vietnamese control, which was marked by civil war. He now lives in the U.S., continuing to write poetry, and publishing several poetry collections about his experiences. This line is from the poem "Prelude" in the volume *Sacred Vows.*

19

The sons of bitterness are here, they wear their hats

- Traditional *(Nakhi, China)*

The Nakhi live in the foothills of the Himalayas, numbering around 300,000 and speaking Nakhi (or Naxi). The language is mainly oral, and few can read and write it in either Geba or Latin script. This section/ line is from a traditional funeral song titled "Song of the Dead, Relating to the Origin of Bitterness" and translated by Joseph F. Rock, appearing in his volume *The Zhi mä Funeral Ceremony of the Na-Khi of Southwest China* (1955). This important funeral ceremony of the Nakhi tribe was preserved until recently only in mnemonic picture-writing.

20

Desten nou/ Se pa pou nou fini mal

Our destiny is not to have an unfortunate end.

- Denize Lauture *(Haitian Creole, Haiti)*

A creole arises when a pidgin, a simplified language, developed by adults for use as a second language, becomes the native and primary language of their children. Haitian Creole, or simply "Creole," is the official language of Haiti along with French, and is a mixture of French and African languages and dialects. This line is from the poem "*Desten Nou*/ Our Destiny," written and translated by Denize Lauture. A poet and short story author, Lauture (b.1946) writes in Creole, English, and

French. He has two published poetry collections, one in English and one in Creole, and two published children books.

21

Arniri wangk' Arabana yanhirnda, wangka warunganha

We all speak Arabana, a language from long ago

- Mathapurda Syd Strangways *(Arabana, Australia)*

The *Ethnologue* notes that Arabana, an aboriginal language spoken in South Australia, is nearly extinct, with 12 speakers left in 2006. The Australian government and the Aboriginal Languages Network, a team of teachers and Aboriginal language and culture experts in Port Augusta, South Australia created an educational website to help preserve Arabana, which includes background information on the languages of Adnyamathanha, Arabana, and Pitjantjatjara, plus teacher resources, and interactive games and puzzles. The poem line is translated by Gregory Wilson.

22

ئەمڕۆ نێوی کوردستانم
لە پێڕستدا خوێندەوە،
کەچی لە کتێبەکە خۆیدا نەمدۆزییەوە.

Today I read the name, Kurdistan, in the table of contents but I could not find it in the book

- Farhad Shakely *(Kurdish, "Kurdistan")*

These lines are written and translated by Farhad Shakely. They refer to the struggle of Kurds, who live mostly in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, to establish their own country "Kurdistan," which does not exist today. Kurdish is spoken by about 30 million people worldwide and is a centerpiece of the Kurdish struggle towards statehood. The written literary output in Kurdish languages was confined mostly to oral poetry until the early 20th century, when a written literature began to develop.

23

მრავალ დროების მოწამე ხარ, მაგრამ ხარ უტყვი!.

Though wordless you have been witness to eras past!

- Nikoloz Baratashvili *(Georgian, Georgia)*

Georgian is the official language of the country of Georgia. It has its own alphabet, which is used to write some other Caucasian languages as well. The development of the Georgian alphabet and literary traditions is linked to the conversion of the country to Christianity in the 4th Century A.D., where literature and writing had a religious purpose. Despite his death at an early age, Baratashvili (1817-1845) is considered to be the high point of Romanticism in Georgia, which sprang up in reaction to the industrial revolution, the aristocratic social and political norms of the time, and the scientific rationalization of nature.

24

Ka mi koara dohm re a ciniha ku tsa'a mi?

If I lose my voice, will you still understand me?

- Unknown *(Ju/'hoan, Namibia)*

Ju/’hoan is spoken in Namibia and Botswana by about 34,000 people, the majority of whom live in Namibia. It is a click language with 48 click consonants, and one of the world’s most phonetically complex languages. This line was spoken by an unknown Ju/’hoan person in Tsumkwe, Namibia in 2010, collected by Megan Biesele, and translated by Dam Debe. Debe explains, “Dohm” means voice/ throat, “Koara dohm” means no voice/ voiceless/ to have no say, and the idiom “Koara dohm” means you are near death or sometimes make mistakes that can cause you problems, “Koara tzi” means to quit, and “Koara dhari” means to have no tongue/ language.

25

Af-dhabaandhow aayar ninkaa, aammusaan ahaye

I am that silent man who sits, slowly patting his mouth again and again

- Raage Ugaas *(Somali, Somalia)*

This line is from a poem titled "Night Has Fallen" by Raage Ugaas and translated by Martin Orwin. Ugaas (ca. 1810-ca. 1880) is one of a few Somali poets whose poems have survived from the 19th century to the present day, which testifies to the esteem he is held up to by his people. Somali is the official language of Somalia and also spoken in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Yemen and Kenya, and the Somali Diaspora, which has increased since the start of the civil war in the 1990s.

26

Mise an teanga i mála an fhuadaitheora

I am the tongue in the kidnapper's sack

- Gearóid Mac Lochlainn *(Irish, Ireland)*

The *Ethnologue* lists Irish as threatened. However, the Irish government published its "20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language" in 2010. Irish was the main language in Ireland until the 18th century, when it lost ground to English for political and economic reasons. This line is from a poem titled "*Teanga Eile*/ Second Tongue" by award-winning poet Gearóid Mac Lochlainn, and translated by him and Séamas Mac Annaidh. Mac Lochlainn has chosen the path of being a poet who writes in an endangered language in the 21st century, despite the entailed audience-drawing and economic difficulties.

27

Pèr eisista iéu prèni lengo. Óublìdi un pau mai mi ramènti

I speak my tongue to exist. I forget a little but I remember

- Philippe Blanchet *(Provençal, France)*

This line is from a poem titled "*Pàsti lou liame*/ I Bake the Link," written and translated by Philippe Blanchet, an award-winning poet and author, and a professor in sociolinguistics and linguistic dialects who specializes in Provençal, the diversity of French languages, and multilingualism in Francophone regions. Provençal is a dialect of the Occitan language,

whose different dialects are sometimes not mutually intelligible. It is spoken by about 400,000 people, living mostly in Southern France, but also in Italy and the Principality of Monaco.

28

Tèé ńdé wá wó íjéḿ wá áwɔ̀ kùrɔ̀ wá ídó ɓèè ɗièkánɛ̀/ wá sísíéḿ kùá séɣɛ̀mà fíé

What do we do if our children cannot speak our language? We will arise and start speaking

- Ebitare Obikudo *(Nkǫ̣rǫ̣ǫ̣, Nigeria)*

Nkǫ̣rǫ̣ǫ̣ is spoken in Nigeria by about 4500 ethnic Nkǫ̣rǫ̣ǫ̣ (1989) who live in Rivers State on the Atlantic Ocean. The Nkoroo people refer to themselves and their language as “Kirika,” though “Nkoroo” (or Nkǫ̣rǫ̣ǫ̣) is the standard name used by outsiders and in the scholarly literature. The line is from a poem titled “Novel Sayings,” written and translated by Ebitare Obikudo, a scholar of the Nkoroo language. Obikudo’s work covers language use, the sociolinguistic usages of the language, grammar, and the language’s pronominal and vowel harmony systems. His work is supported by the National Science Foundation.

29

Ha tamora'e oikove ñe'e umi che ypykue ñe'e rapykue

Oh, if it were to happen that the spoken word could live in the fingerprint of the speech of my ancestors

- Susy Delgado *(Guarani, Paraguay)*

Guarani is an official language in Paraguay, Argentina and Bolivia, and its speakers, the Guarani people, number around 5 million. This indigenous language of South America is the only indigenous language of the Americas whose speakers include a large proportion of non-indigenous people. The line is from poem No. XXX in the book “*Ayvu Membyre*/ Offspring of the Distant Word,” published originally in 1999 in Paraguay with translation by Susan Smith Nash.

30

Lefün wenuntumeael / ñi füchake cheyem / ñi ñamkülechi dungu

I have traveled over the plains, the shore, the mountain, to collect the lost sayings of my old ones.

- Leonel Lienlaf *(Mapuche, Chile)*

Leonel Lienlaf, the author of these lines from a poem titled "*Rüpu/Road*" writes his poetry in both Spanish and Mapuche, which is spoken by the Mapuche indigenous inhabitants of south-central Chile and southwestern Argentina. Born in 1969, Lienlaf upholds orality as a parallel form of expression that is never subordinate: "In Mapuche, when we say the word "sigh," we use a respiratory movement… When you print [Mapuche]… on a piece of paper it becomes frozen, as though it had been startled, keeping the words from finding their bearing. Orality lets you adjust the meaning; writing does not."

31

Ngaingga, adilili ngarlpurlaru yura ngawarla inhanga murlda yartanga idla ngawarlangawarlaiku!

It's deeply moving, our language is at last being heard in a different land!

- Inhaadi Adnyamathanha Ngawarla School Group *(Adnyamathanha, Australia)*

Named after the people who speak it, Adnyamathanha is an aboriginal Australian language registered in the *Ethnologue* as spoken by 111 people today and nearly extinct. This line was created by the Inhaadi Adnyamathanha Ngawarla school group in South Australia in 2009 especially for City Lore's "Khonsay" initiative and translated by Guy Tunstill. Poetry in traditional Aboriginal Australia exists only as song, and song-texts are rarely set down or recited. They are almost always sung.

32

Ha ro nijä ro Ndome. Dro zäi da pa da kohi Nu Hnini ko yo dö zäi to'mi.

I come from the oratory of the Old Mother. I am the Eternal Return of the people with hope-filled eyes

- Serafín Thaayrohyadi Bermúdez *(Ñähñu, Mexico)*

Ñähñu (also Otomí) is one of Mexico's indigenous languages, which only began to take on a written form, using the Latin script, after the Spanish conquest. This line is part of a longer poem titled "*Dro ñätho ñähñu 'ñuhu 'ñuhmu*/ I am Ñähñu." Written by Serafín Thaayrohyadi Bermúdez (b.1968), the title of the poem includes different forms of self-reference used by Otomi people. It literally reads, "I am [*Dro*] Ñätho, I am Ñähñu, I am 'Ñuhu, I am 'Ñuhmu". In this way, the poem offers a description of all the people identified with this language. The translation is by Donald Frischmann.

33

Kin kilhpin mapakhlhay/ akgatum xanat tachuwin
a tlokgonit xuntilhnin/ lhpitkgonit nak chiwix.

From my lips, there blossoms a spiral language sign created by my ancestors and carved into stone.

- Jun Tiburcio *(Totonac, Mexico)*

Native to Mexico and spoken by the Totanac indigenous people, the Totonac languages are a family of closely related tongues spoken by approximately 300,000 people today. They are recognized along with 62 other indigenous languages among the official languages of Mexico. The line is from a poem titled "*Tachuwin xa tutunaku*/ Sweet Tutunaku Language." Tiburcio (b.1959) is a poet, artisan, and ceramics artist. He says about indigenous languages, "Our culture has some wise words that remain valid in these times. Nothing is past: antiquity can fit into modernity." Poem translated by Donald Frischmann.

34

Uvumai apamai e'i aipa ivo'i kelogo/ Uvumai apamai e'i kapulai kekapulaisa

Our ancestors were the source of daring! Our ancestors were the source

of victory!

- Traditional *(Mekeo, Papua New Guinea)*

Mekeo is mainly spoken in two villages in Papua New Guinea by about 20,000 people. Papua New Guinea has more languages than any other country, with over 820 indigenous tongues, representing 12% of the world's total; yet most have fewer than 1,000 speakers. This line is from a traditional Mekeo war song titled “Ivani Ivina,” collected by Allan Natachee in the 1940s from a Mekeo elder called Efi Ongopai, and translated by Lucy Isoaimo-Irish. Many Mekeo songs are war chants and dances. The singers bang spears and bows as rhythm sticks.

35

Tilli pa yue te gbong

The ladder gave the roof its name

- Traditional *(Buli, Ghana)*

This proverb in the Buli language of northern Ghana comes from the oral tradition of the Builsa people, and was collected and translated by Awon Atuire. Buli is spoken by about 150,000 people and classified by the *Ethnologue* as developing, which means that it is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some, although not yet widespread or sustainable. Ethnic identities started to exist in Ghana’s northern territories only since colonization. Preventive factors before then were high local mobility due to war and slave riding, high immigration of settlers, and the absence of larger political entities.

36

Qui ten la lenga ten la clau

Who holds the language holds the key

- Frédéric Mistral *(Occitan, France)*

Occitan is a Latin language spoken in Southern France, in addition to Italy’s Occitan Valleys, Monaco, and in Catalonia, an autonomous community of Spain. It has 2 million speakers today, yet, all Occitan

speakers speak French too, and UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger lists 4 out of its 6 dialects as severely endangered, and 2 as definitely endangered. Mistral (1830-1914) led the 19th century revival of Occitan language and literature. He shared the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1904 (with Jose Echegaray y Eizaguirre of Spain) for his contributions in literature and philology. Translation is by Pierre Joris and Nicole Peyrafitte.

37

Khaniphendule nani zintaba zezwe lethu!
Nani milambo yakowethu kha nithethe!
Raise your voices, mountains of our country!
And you, rivers of home, speak out!
- SEK Mqhayi *(Xhosa, South Africa)*

These lines are from a poem titled "*Aa! zweliyazuza, itshawe lasebhilitani!*/ Aa! Hail the Hero of Britain" by SEK Mqhayi, and translated by Antjie Krog, Ncebakazi Saliwa, and Koos Oosthuyzen. SEK (Samuel Edward Krune) Mqhayi (1875-1945) is a Xhosa poet, historian, and translator known as the "father of Xhosa poetry." He contributed to codifying Xhosa grammar and standardizing Xhosa orthography. Mqhayi's works include novels, biographies, poetry collections, and an autobiography. Xhosa is a click language, whose name itself starts with a click, and one of the official languages of South Africa.

38

Kunanmanta paqarinmanmi hatunyayta kay takiypi yachachiyki
As of today and tomorrow, through this song I'll teach you to become a giant
- William Hurtado de Mendoza *(Quechua, Peru)*

Quechua is a native language in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador and is also spoken in Colombia, Chile, and Argentina. It is the most widely spoken language of the indigenous people of the Americas, with 14 dialects and around 9 million speakers according to the UNESCO *Atlas of the World's*

Languages in Danger. This line is from a poem titled "*Cancion Para Que Aprendas*/ A Learning Song" by William Hurtado de Mendoza (b.1946), translated by Maureen Ahern. De Mendoza was born in Cuzco, Peru, the capital of the Inca Empire. He writes poetry in Quechua and Spanish.

39

Tüfawla ñi pu ñawe zeumalkefiñ lien ruka / ka kürüf negvmüñ ma meke enew ñi

For my daughters I build the house of silver as I ride my horse above the rainbow

- Elicura Chihuailaf *(Mapuche, Chile)*

Mapuche or Mapudungun comes from *mapu "*earth, land" and *dungun* "speak, speech." It is spoken by the Mapuche people in Chile and Argentina. It is both an endangered language and a language isolate, related to no others. This line is part of a poem titled "For I am the Power of the Nameless," by Elicura Chihuailaf and translated by John Bierhorst. Chihuailaf is the best known of the Mapuche poets and an advocate of preserving Mapuche as one of the "principal means of achieving dignity, of preserving and restoring for – and by – our own selves the soul of our people."

40

ᏧᏍᏩᏍᏗ ᏗᎥᏚᏂ ᏃᏧ ᏧᏁᏚ ᏩᏚᏗᏯᏍᏘᏕ.

With bright red and white wings

- Nannie Taylor *(Cherokee, United States)*

This line is from a poem titled "ᏍᏍᏍ/ Butterfly" by Nannie Taylor, a consultant on Cherokee Language who currently lives and was raised in the Wolfetown Community on the Qualla Boundary, a reservation of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in North Carolina. Cherokee is classified by the *Ethnologue* as threatened, and is spoken by about 10,000 people (2010) in the U.S. Cherokee has its own 85-character syllabary, a set of written symbols representing syllables that make up

words, which was developed in the early 19th century, but is often written with Latin characters or a Latin alphabet with diacritical marks.

41

ù bjâŋə jīn m̄bá úgőho mù sèhe bâha tô mɛ̄ úfőŋ jī ʤʊ́ mɛ̄ ígʊ̋hʊ ǹdɛ̀m

As it was talking, fire continued to pour from its mouth, with a feather tied in its mouth like a slipknot

- Traditional *(Mungbam, Cameroon)*

Mungbam is spoken by about 400 people (2011) and classified by the *Ethnologue* as threatened. It is an unwritten language whose name is made up of the initial syllables of the 5 villages where it is spoken. This line is part of a folktale from the Cameroon Grassfields, which was narrated by Mrs. Domo Mary Ade, and translated by Jesse Lovegren. This line describes the head of a monster whose body parts were separate to start with. The monster pretends to be kind and lures a child into his abode, planning to eat him later. At the end of the tale and just in time, the monster's wife warns the child and he escapes.

42

Ca nyur tung thiangɛ, ca lec nyang tuoth kɛ lied.

I sat on the deer's horn and cleaned the crocodile's teeth with sand

- Traditional *(Nuer, South Sudan)*

This line is from a traditional clapping song titled "Cleaned the Crocodile's Teeth," translated by Terese Svoboda. Nuer is is one of eastern and central Africa's most widely spoken languages, and is spoken by the Nuer people of South Sudan and in western Ethiopia. The Nuer people are the largest ethnic group in South Sudan. They receive facial markings - called *gaar* - as part of their initiation into adulthood. The typical foods they eat include beef, goat, cow's milk, mangos, and sorghum, a grain. Tens of thousands of Neur have immigrated throughout the world as a result of the civil war in Southern Sudan.

43

Gosa mii johtit go biegganjunni ii šat deaivva davás?

Where do we go when even the leader reindeer loses its nose for the wind and can't find its way back west?

- Sofia Jannok *(Northern Saami, Sweden)*

This line is from asong titled "*Davádat*/ Westbound Wind" by acclaimed Swedish performer Sofia Jannok. of the song appeared on her 2010 music album "*Áššogáttis*/ By the Embers". In the past decade, Saami youth have embraced their own Saami-singing pop idols. That is an indication that the Saami (or Sámi) language, spoken by about 30,000 people today in Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Russia, may well survive. Twenty-year old Mikkal Morottaja a.k.a. MC Amoc performs rap and hip-hop in Inari Sámi, and 22-year old Tiina Sanila has released the first ever rock album in Koltta Sámi. Translation by Siri Gaski.

44

A little bit of musk… She sends out a little bit of musk.

- Peter Cook *(American Sign Language, U.S.)*

Deaf Poet Peter Cook is an internationally acclaimed performing artist, whose works incorporate American Sign Language (ASL), pantomime, storytelling, acting, and movement. He is co-founder of the ASL poetry troupe Flying Words, which is credited with having influenced the history of ASL poetry, with hearing coauthor Kenny Lerner, who collaborated on the line above. ASL is one of 137 deaf sign languages listed by the Ethnologue. It is used by 100,000 to 500,000 out of 2 million profoundly deaf people in the U.S. (1986-88). More recent statistics are lacking. This line comes from the "shot" series by Peter Cook & Kenneth Lerner (Flying Words), featured in Deaf Jam movie.

45

Ngabi karlu nganurr(i)y(i)nurriying

Ngabi karlu nganurri(i)yinu'

Ngabi duwa [ya] [y]abanajuku[yu]n ngadburr(i)yinurr(i)yin

I'm not going to have a shower

I'm not going to have a shower

I'm going to wait for her and we'll have a shower together

- Ronnie Waraludj *(Iwaidja, Australia)*

Iwaidja is an indigenous language spoken in northern Australia by about 150 people (2006) and listed by the *Ethnologue* as threatened. This line is from a song titled "Ngadburriyinurriying,"written and performed by Ronnie Waraludj and translated by Nicholas Evans for the music album "Jurtbirrk: Love Songs from Northwestern Arnhem Land," which won the Northern Territory (Australia) Traditional Music Award in 2005. Jurtbirrk (love songs) are performed informally for entertainment and may include dancing. One or two men sing the songs and play *arrilil* (clapsticks), while another man plays *ardawirr* (didjeridu).

46

Armahaizeni, kačo. Lopen sinun ke

You my love, I want to come with you and watch your eyes

- Traditional *(Karelian, Russia)*

This line comes from a traditional Karelian folk song, as performed by Santtu Karhu, one of Karelia's most famous musicians. Karelian is spoken mainly in Karelia, northwest Russia, in addition to Finland, by 35,600 people. It is a Finnic language that has three main varieties, each with several dialects, some of which are not mutually intelligible. Of these varieties, Olonets Karelian and Lude have been written since 2007 using a Latin-script based alphabet called "the modern unified Karelian alphabet," which replaced the previous different writing systems, while Tver Karelian is written in a Latin-script based alphabet dating to 1930. Translation is by Santtu Karhu.

47

ئاي يۈزنىڭ شەۋقىگە ئاللا پەرۋانە بولدۇم

I have become a moth drawn to the beauty of your face, indeed Allah

- Shah Mäshräp *(Uyghur, China)*

Uyghur is a Turkic language with about 9 million speakers, who mainly live in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of Western China. This line, inspired by Sufi thought, was written by the 17th century poet Shah Mäshräp and is performed within the Čahargah Maqäm, one of Twelve Maqäms, or musical suites, of Uyghur music. The Mäshräp songs comprise one section of the Twelve Maqams and are also part of the Sufi repertoire, which are performed ritualistically in addition to being sung in bazaars and at shrine festivals.

48

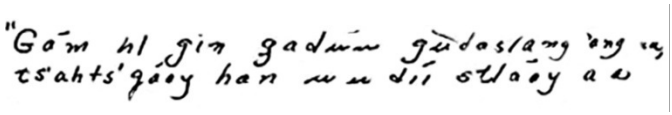
Ndaani' ladxidua'ya'. Ti diidxa' si ñabe lii lu / Ti diidxa' si, ti diidxa' ma' biaanda' naa.

In my heart, just one word to say to you in bed/ Just one word, a word I have already forgotten.

- Víctor de la Cruz *(Isthmus Zapotec, Mexico)*

Isthmus Zapotec is one of the Zapotec languages, a group of closely related indigenous Mesoamerican languages spoken in Mexico by about half a million Zapotec people. This line is from a poem titled “The Word I Have Forgotten” by Víctor de la Cruz (b.1948) and translated by Donald Frischmann. The translator notes that in his conversations with the poet and his peers, “the theme of nostalgia… emerges. During their periods of residence in Mexico City, writing in Zapotec served to dispel the dark feelings engendered by the distance from the mother tongue and their Isthmus homeland.”

49



This is what I was thinking of as I sat outside today

- Dr. Erma Lawrence *(Haida, Canada)*

Haida is spoken in Canada and Alaska, the U.S. It is a language isolate, related to no others, and has about 55 native speakers left. Dr. Erma Lawrence (1912-2011) has written, edited, and participated in publishing many Haida language books, including a Haida-to-English and English-to-Haida dictionary, published in 1977 by the Society for the Preservation of Haida Language and Literature, of which she was a founding member. Dr. Lawrence's Haida name is Áljuhl, meaning "Beautiful One." She devoted her life to gathering, recording, documenting, and teaching Haida.

50

Dame le gien nowen wanwa, lauba gien banda habunana

When I pass away, an official marching band will be leading me to my final resting place

- Paul Nabor *(Garifuna, Belize)*

This line comes from a song titled "*Naguya Nei*/ I Am Moving On" by Paul Nabor, a *parandero*, or old master of the Paranda music style, and an *abuyei*, a spirit medium and healer who attends to his congregation at a Garifuna temple he built in Punta Gorda. He wrote it for his sister when she was on her deathbed. The Language, Dance, and Music of the Garifuna people were included in UNESCO's *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* in 2008, and the language is spoken by about 200,000 people, living in Honduras, Belize, Guatemala, and Nicaragua.

51

кандыг болган ындыг арткан сен

сен мии м эджим эки эджим
кандыг ырааган сен мии м эджим
The way you were, that's how you remained,
You, my friend, my good friend, what have you done?
Oh why have you gone far away?
- Lydia Stepanovna Bolxoeva *(Tofa, Russia)*

Tofa (also Karagas) is mostly oral, and employs a Cyrillic alphabet when written. It is one of the Turkic languages, spoken by about 100 people in Russia today, and is listed by the Ethnologue as nearly extinct. These lines were sung in 2001 by Lydia Bolxoeva and recorded by K. David Harrison. They are published on National Geographic's Enduring Voices' YouTube Channel. Along with other published endangered languages recordings, they serve to foster collaboration between academics and communities to promote language revitalization. Lines translated by Greg Anderson and K. David Harrison.

52
To'one' táan kbin, dzoka'anto'on beyo', le tankelem paalo'ob ku lik'lo'obo', leti'ob úuch u yilko'ob ku beeto'ob, le ba'axo'ob ma' pajchaj k-betik to'one'.
We are going away, it is all over. Now the young ones are growing up. They must try to finish, those things we did not.
- Gerardo Can Pat *(Mayan, Mexico)*

Mayan languages are spoken by at least 6 million indigenous Maya, who live mainly in Guatemala, Mexico, Belize, and Honduras. This line is from a poem titled "K'a'ajsaj/ Memories" by Gerardo Can Pat (1957-1994), who comes from Yucatán, Mexico and is one of the most brilliant Mayan poets in terms of depth of expression and musicality. This language has tremendous auditory complexity because of variations in its syllabic duration, its tonal ascents and descents, and that its rhythm does not always coincide with the syllables containing long vowels or with the tonal ascents or descents. Translation by Donald Frischmann.

53

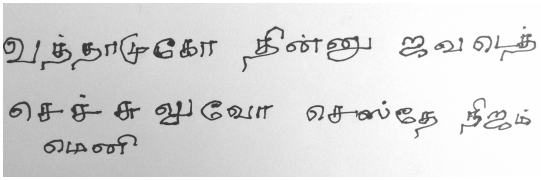
Ka mate! Ka mate! Ka ora! Ka ora!

I die! I die! I live! I live!

- Te Rauparaha *(Maori, New Zealand)*

Te Rauparaha (c.1768?-1849) was a chief of Ngāti Toa, a New Zealand Māori tribe and an influential character in New Zealand history. He is remembered as the author of the *haka* “Ka mate,” which he composed when he escaped from his enemies after a defeat in battle. The poem is a celebration of life over death. It has also traditionally been performed by two of New Zealand’s international rugby teams on the field, immediately prior to international matches. A “Haka” is a traditional ancestral war cry, dance, or challenge of the Māori people of New Zealand.

54



If days, with words, you spend… in the end doth soul exist

- Sriman Nayaki Swamigal *(Sourashtra, India)*

Saurashtra is spoken by about 200,000 people in southern India. Although it has its own written script, few people know how to read and write in it and speakers alternatively use Latin, Devanagari, or Tamil scripts for writing. India has several hundreds of individual mother tongues. The 2001 Census of India notes 30 languages spoken by more than a million native speakers and 122 by more than 10,000 people. Translation by Savithri N. Rajaram, with Steve Zeitlin.

55

Hizkuntza batek ez du hormarik eraikitzen, kolorez pintatzen ditu.

A language builds no walls, it paints them in colors.

- Kirmen Uribe *(Basque, Spain)*

Basque, spoken by about 700,000 people today, is the language of the Basque ethnic group, which primarily inhabits parts of northern Spain and southern France. The language has been a tumultuous political issue as the Basques advocate for independence, and as the Spanish and French governments have attempted to restrict the use of the language historically and still today. Kirmen Uribe (b.1970) is a renowned Basque-language poet and author born in Ondarroa, Basque Autonomous Community, Spain. Translation is by Elizabeth Macklin.

56

What obscures, falls away. Hayutke hvtke.

What obscures, falls away. White Dawning.

- Joy Harjo *(Mvskoke, U.S.)*

Muscogee (Mvskoke in Muscogee) is spoken by about 6,000 of the 52,000 Muscogee Native American people (statistics of 2007 and 1997 respectively) who live in the U.S. States of Oklahoma, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida. According to the *Ethnologue*, almost all the population also speaks English and there are only 45 monolinguals, which would make this a threatened tongue. This line is from a song titled "Winding through the Milky Way," written and translated by Joy Harjo, an award-winning poet, author, and musician, and comes from her music album *Red Dreams, A Trail Beyond Tears*.

57

Chamu Chamu ye tu

Talk some and leave some

- Isaac Bernard *(Kromanti, Jamaica)*

Kromanti is a ritual language used by the elderly in Moore Town, Portland, Jamaica. This West African language survived among runaway slaves in the 17th century, remaining in use for everyday communication till the 20th century. It is threatened today because of traditions of

secrecy and low interest on the part of younger Maroons to learn it. However, in 2003, Moore Town heritage was named a UNESCO Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in an attempt to safeguard it. The line was translated by Hubert Devonish.

58

नान् बल्ल बाक्यको बचान थाहान् ।

Now we've finally had a good conversation, they said

- Traditional *(Thangmi, Nepal)*

Thangmi is a Tibeto-Burman language of Nepal, spoken by about 25,000 people and classified by the *Ethnologue* as threatened. This line was recited by the Thangmi guru Lalit Bahadur at a wedding in 2005 and translated by Sara Shneiderman and Bir Bahadur Thami. A Thangmi wedding is preceded by asking for the bride's hand by the groom's family. It takes a minimum of one year of preparations before the wedding takes place. During that time, several rites are completed and specific offerings are made from the groom's family to that of the bride.

59

እዚ ቋንቋና
እዚ ትግርኛ
ክጥዕም
ጨው ኣሎዎ!

Welcome to our language
Taste the sauce

- Reesom Haile *(Tigrinian, Eritrea)*

It fits that the last line of "Khonsay" was written by Reesom Haile (1946-2003). Haile returned to Eritrea after twenty years abroad, during which he taught Communications at The New School for Social Research in New York and worked as a Communications Consultant with UN Agencies, governments, and NGOs around the world. His work sets an example for working with poetry to retain and safeguard local languages

and cultures while integrating them into the global culture. Tigrinian (also Tigrinya) is a Semetic language spoken in Eritria and Ethiopia. These lines are from a poem titled “Our Language,” and translated by Charles Cantalupo.

Appendix: Language status

The 13 levels of language statuses are formally known as the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption (EGIDS) Scale, developed by Lewis and Simons in 2010, and used by the *Ethnologue*.

Label	**Description**
International	The language is widely used between nations in trade, knowledge exchange, and international policy.
National	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government at the national level.
Provincial	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government within major administrative subdivisions of a nation.
Wider Communication	The language is used in work and mass media without official status to transcend language differences across a region.
Educational	The language is in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education.
Developing	The language is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some though this is not yet widespread or sustainable.
Vigorous	The language is used for face-to-face communication by all generations and the situation is sustainable.
Threatened	The language is used for face-to-face communication within all generations, but it is losing users.
Shifting	The child-bearing generation can use the language among themselves, but it is not being transmitted to children.
Moribund	The only remaining active users of the language are members of the grandparent generation and older.
Nearly Extinct	The only remaining users of the language are members of the grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language.
Dormant	The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community, but no one has more than symbolic proficiency.
Extinct	The language is no longer used and no one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language.

Starting at the level “threatened” through “dormant,” the labels above apply to endangered languages and stress the crisis those are passing through. When language revival efforts are undertaken, parallel, more optimistic terms are used: “threatened” becomes “re-established,” “shifting” becomes “revitalized,” “moribund” becomes “reawakened,” “nearly extinct” becomes “reintroduced,” and “dormant” becomes “rediscovered.”

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More than half of the world's languages will disappear this century. *Khonsay: Poem of Many Tongues* is a tribute and call to action to support the world's endangered languages and celebrate its linguistic diversity.

Khonsay is part of a larger project focusing on endangered languages by the nonprofit organizations Bowery Arts + Science and City Lore. Khonsay was conceived by Bob Holman and Steve Zeitlin, directed by Bob Holman, and co-produced with Molly Garfinkel. It was realized with contributions from endangered language poets, singers, translators, and linguists from around the world, with the help of Catherine Fletcher, Emilie Arrighi, Maya Alkateb, Puja Sahney, and Zsuzsanna Cselenyi. This booklet is published in conjunction with the Khonsay exhibit at the 2013 Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington D.C. It was edited by Maya Alkateb and Bob Holman.

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