Lazuri

An Endangered Language from the Black Sea

Edited by

Züleyha Ünlü
Tokat Gaziosmanpasa University, Turkey

Brian George Hewitt
Emeritus Professor of Caucasian Languages (SOAS, London);
Fellow of the British Academy;
International Circassian Academy of Sciences, Jordan;
Abkhazian Academy of Sciences

Series in Language and Linguistics


VERNON PRESS

www.vernonpress.com

In the Americas:
Vernon Press
1000 N West Street, Suite 1200
Wilmington, Delaware, 19801
United States

In the rest of the world:
Vernon Press
C/Sancti Espiritu 17,
Malaga, 29006
Spain

Series in Language and Linguistics

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022947698

ISBN: 978-1-64889-221-9

Cover design by Vernon Press. Cover image by 愚木混株 Cdd20 from Pixabay.

To all endangered languages
And to those who contribute to vitalise them, the treasures of the world.

Contents

List of Tables vii

List of Figures ix

Acknowledgements xi

Contributors xiii

Introduction xix

[B.] George Hewitt
Emeritus Professor of Caucasian Languages (SOAS, London); Fellow of the British Academy; International Circassian Academy of Sciences, Jordan; Abkhazian Academy of Sciences

PREFACE Laz words, Laz worlds xxxv

K. David Harrison
Vin University, Hanoi, Vietnam

Chapter 1 **The Current Status of Laz in Turkey** 1

Belma Haznedar
Boğaziçi University, Turkey

İsmail Avcı-Bucaklişi
Istanbul Laz Institute, Turkey

Chapter 2 **On the Significance of Laz for Theoretical Research in Linguistics** 33

Ömer Demirok
Boğaziçi University, Turkey

Balkız Öztürk
Boğaziçi University, Turkey

Chapter 3 **A Spotlight on the 'Lazian' Lexis: Evidence from a 19th-Century Lexicographic Resource** 63

Zaal Kikvidze
Tbilisi State University, Georgia

Levan Pachulia
Sokhumi State University, Georgia

Chapter 4 **Linguistic Variation and Complexity in Laz** 85

Ömer Eren
University of Chicago

Chapter 5 **Stories of Perseverance: Using the Lazuri Alboni for the Emergence of Literary Genres in a South Caucasian Endangered Language** 113

Peri Yuksel
New Jersey City University, New Jersey, USA

Irfan Cağatay Aleksiva
Laz Cultural Association, Istanbul, Turkey

Chapter 6 **Principles of Designing a New Dictionary Model for Endangered Languages: The Case of Laz** 143

Fahrettin Şirin
Bielefeld University, Germany

Hanife Yaman
Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University, Turkey

Chapter 7 **Speaking Lazuri Beautifully: Discourses on Lazuri as an Endangered Language** 177

Gülşah Türk-Yiğitalp
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain

Chapter 8 **An Applied Linguistics Perspective on the Preservation of the Laz Language** 201

Züleyha Ünlü
Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University, Turkey

Index 217

List of Tables

Table 1.1 - Gender 7
Table 1.2 - Age 7
Table 1.3 - Occupation 7
Table 1.4 - Educational background 8
Table 1.5 - Place of residence 8
Table 1.6 - Language-skills in Laz and Turkish 10
Table 2.1 - Spatial Prefixes in PL 52
Table 2.2 - The Simplex and Complex Prefixes of PL 53
Table 3.1 - English head-words and their "Lazian" translations 69
Table 3.2 - "Lazian" lexis in D. R. Peacock's collection 75
Table 3.3 - D. R. Peacock's transliteration conventions 78
Table 4.1 - Reflexivization in Laz 97
Table 4.2 - Distribution of case-markers based on semantic roles in Laz (Öztürk 2008, p. 4) 101
Table 4.3 - Partial paradigm of Comparative Case Forms (Common Kartvelian kac 'man') (Harris, 1985, p. 388) 101
Table 5.1 - Different Laz Alphabets with Equivalent IPA 123
Table 5.2 - Morphological and Lexical Differences between two Lazuri Dialects (Viçe, Ardeşen) and their Equivalent IPA transcription 126
Table 5.3 - *Regional Lazuri Dialect-affiliation of the Literary Book Authors/Translators (N=29)* 127
Table 5.4 - Lazuri Writing Rubric with Scoring Outcomes (N=56) 129
Table 5.5 - Lazuri Books by Genre Printed in Turkey from 1997 to 2021 (N=58) 130
Table 5.6 - Lazuri Poetry 130
Table 5.7 - Translations, References, Political Fiction, and Wisdom-literature in Lazuri 133
Table 5.8 - Novels, Essays, Short Stories, and Theatre in Lazuri 134
Table 5.9 - Memoirs, Autobiographies, and Interviews in Lazuri 136
Table 5.10 - Lazuri Fairy Tales and Folk Tales 137
Table 6.1 - Lexican Object Elements 166
Table 6.2 - Lexicon-entry Elements 169
Table 8.1 - Inclusion- and Exclusion-criteria 205
Table 8.2 - List of existing studies on Laz 206

List of Figures

Figure 0.1 - Laz words as documented by Hervás y Panduro (1787), with Italian and Turkish equivalents. xxxviii
Figure 0.2 - Laz words–as compared with Georgian and Mingrelian– from Peacock (1887). xxxviii
Figure 2.1 - Underlying structure of unergative verbs derived from nouns 39
Figure 2.2 - The AxPart affixes of PL 53
Figure 8.1 - Kuryakov, Y. (2002). Kartvelian: Overview [Map]. In Y. Kuryakov, *Atlas of the Caucasian Languages with Language Guide*. Moscow: Institute of Linguistics. 214
Figure 8.2 - Kuryakov, Y. (2002). Kartvelian: South-West [Map]. In Y. Kuryakov, *Atlas of the Caucasian Languages with Language Guide*. Moscow: Institute of Linguistics. 215
Figure 8.3 - Kuryakov, Y. (2002). Caucasian Languages in Turkey [Map]. In Y. Kuryakov, *Atlas of the Caucasian Languages with Language Guide*. Moscow: Institute of Linguistics. 216

Acknowledgements

The contributors of this book are the first I want to thank for working on this project despite all the difficulties life has presented to them while developing this book. I also want to thank the following people who have been of an immense help to me: Dr. Erkan Külekçi, Dr. Didem Erdel and Research Assistant Okaycan Dürükoğlu. I thank them for their continuous appreciation and for their support and encouragement in completing this project.

Contributors

Balkız Öztürk is a Professor of Linguistics at Boğaziçi University, Istanbul. She received her PhD from Harvard University in 2004. Her research interests include the interface between syntax, morphology, and the lexicon. She focuses on Altaic and South Caucasian languages. She is the author of the monograph "Case, Referentiality and Phrase Structure" and has co-edited the volumes "Exploring the Turkish Linguistic Landscape," "Morphological Complexity Within and Across Boundaries," and "Pazar Laz." Her research on Laz covers a wide range of phenomena, such as thematic suffixes and the verb classification system, valency markers, spatial markers, indexical shift and the complementizer system.

Belma Haznedar holds a PhD in Linguistics from Durham University, UK. She is currently a full Professor of Applied Linguistics at Boğaziçi University, Istanbul-Turkey. Prof. Haznedar's expertise area focuses on early childhood bilingualism, with special reference to the acquisition of morphosyntactic properties of successive and simultaneous language acquisition in children. In her recent work, she also investigates (i) literacy development in monolingual and bilingual children; (iii) adult and child immigrants with low literacy skills; (iii) heritage language maintenance, language loss and language vitality in endangered languages.

[**Brian**] **George Hewitt** was born in Doncaster (Yorkshire) in 1949 and educated at Doncaster Grammar School for Boys, from where he won a scholarship in Classics at St. John's College (Cambridge). After the Cambridge Diploma in Linguistics, he registered for a Ph.D. comparing the syntax of subordination in Ancient Greek and Old Armenian. However, after visiting a Circassian and a Ubykh village in Turkey in 1974 and then after spending the academic year 1975-76 learning Georgian in Tbilisi, where he also had theoretical instruction in Abkhaz, Avar, and Chechen, he returned to Cambridge with an Abkhazian wife and changed his thesis-topic to a comparison of subordination in Abkhaz and Georgian. He was a lecturer in Linguistics at Hull University (1981-88), securing his Cambridge doctorate in 1982, and was then transferred to SOAS (London University), where he remained until his retirement in 2015, having become Professor of Caucasian Languages in 1996. He was elected to the British Academy in 1997. First President of the (now defunct) Societas Caucasologica Europaea (1986-88 & 1988-90), he is an Honorary Member of the

International Circassian Academy of Sciences (1997-) and of the Abkhazian Academy of Sciences (1997-). His publications include: Lingua Descriptive Studies 2: Abkhaz (1979); Typology of Subordination in Georgian and Abkhaz (1987); Indigenous Languages of the Caucasus 2: North West Caucasus (1989 as editor & contributor); Georgian: a Learner's Grammar (1995); Georgian: a Structural Reference Grammar (1995); A Georgian Reader (1996); (with his wife Zaira Khiba) Abkhaz Newspaper Reader, with Supplements (1998); The Abkhazians: A Handbook (1998 as editor & contributor); Introduction to the Study of the Languages of the Caucasus (2004); Abkhaz: a Comprehensive Self-tutor (2010); Discordant Neighbours. A Reassessment of the Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-South Ossetian Conflicts (2013).

Fahrettin Şirin took his BA in English Language Teaching in the Department of Foreign Language Education, Faculty of Education, Middle East Technical University (METU), Ankara, Turkey. He then took his MA in Linguistics in the Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Letters, Ankara University, Ankara, Turkey. Currently, he is a PhD candidate in Germany. He worked as an English teacher in different high schools and as an instructor of English, lecturer in computer classes and as a research assistant at several universities. He also worked as a web admin editor, translator, and technical coordinator for many different projects in different institutions. Currently, he is working as a dictionary database developer and making and compiling a Turkish monolingual and a Turkish-English-Turkish bilingual dictionary.

Hanife Yaman was born in 1989 in Ardeşen. In 2011, she completed her undergraduate education at Ordu University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of Turkish Language and Literature. In the same year, she started her graduate studies at Ordu University, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of Turkish Language and Literature. She defended her master's thesis entitled *Verb valence in Azerbaijani Turkish* in 2013. Currently, she is studying for a doctorate in education at Ondokuz Mayıs University, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of Turkish Language and Literature. She has also been working as a lecturer in the Department of Turkish Language and Literature at Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University since 2014.

İrfan Çağatay Aleksiva was born in Ardeşen/Rize in 1981. He studied Turkish Language and Literature at Marmara University, Faculty of Letters, between 2002 and 2006. He has taken active roles in the movement of protecting Laz culture since 2002. Also, he has been active in fieldwork for lexicographic collections since he was twelve years old. In 2007, he co-authored the expanded

version of the Laz-Turkish dictionary (Uzunhasanoğlu, Bucaklişi & Cağatay Aleksiva, 2007). Cağatay published his toponymic collection under the title Svacoxo, Laz Toponymic Dictionary (Bucaklisi & Cagatay, 2009) to spread awareness about one of the most salient elements of the vanishing Laz heritage- the loss of original Laz place names. He worked as a writer and editor for various Laz magazines and periodicals (e.g., Skani Nena, Tanura, Ağani Murutsxi, Ogni, Uncire).

İsmail Bucaklişi was born in 1970 in Noxlapsu in the Pazar town of the province of Rize in Turkey. He established the first-ever Laz youth group at the university in 1989 and started conducting research on the Laz people. In 1993, he became one of the founders of OGNİ, the first Laz culture periodical in Turkey, in which he wrote articles. In 1993 he started working on collecting words and writing the first Laz dictionary in Turkey. The dictionary was published in 1999 with the inclusion of a co-author. He is the co-author of the Laz Grammar Book, which was published in 2003 (Kojima & Bucaklişi, 2003). He is the first author of the Great Laz Dictionary, published in 2007 (Bucaklişi, Uzunhasanoğlu & Aleksiva, 2007), which is the most extensive dictionary of the Laz language to date. In 2003, he started his collection work for Svacoxo – Laz Toponymic Dictionary, which listed the original Laz names of villages and places and was published in 2009 (Aleksiva & Bucaklişi, 2009). He wrote and published a Laz study book in 2014 in order to facilitate the learning of Laz. He shot online Laz learning videos composed of 14 units, which are available on YouTube. In addition, Bucaklişi is the author of a book on the life and poems of the Laz poet Hasan Helimişi (Mu Pat E Skiri, 2006) and the Laz Alphabet-Lazuri Alboni (2013). He established and became the editor-in-chief of the Laz periodicals named Mjora (2000), Skani Nena (2008), and Tanura (2011). Ismail Avcı Bucaklişi is the author of four Laz study books prepared for the Turkish Ministry of Education, which are currently used for the elective Laz lessons in the years 6-8 of secondary schools (Lazuri 5; 2014, Lazuri 6, 2015; Lazuri 7, 2017; Lazuri 8, 2018). In 2018, he initiated the “Training of Instructors of the Laz language” and organised a number of pieces of training, by which he has created the foundations for the Laz language education in Turkey. He led the establishment of the Lazika Yayın Kollektifi (Lazika Publishing Collective) in 2011, which to date published more than 80 books, the majority of which are in the Laz language. Additionally, he is the editor of more than 100 books. Bucaklişi led the establishment of Laz Kültür Derneği (Laz Cultural Association) in 2008 and the Laz Enstitüsü (Laz Institute) in 2013 and became a board member in both. He is currently the chairman of the Laz Institute. He initiated the EU-funded projects titled "Mother-tongue based Multilingual

Education" (2016) and "Network of Laz and Circassian Civil Societies" (2020) within the Laz Institute. He led the establishment of TADNET- Tehlike Altındaki Diller Ağı (Endangered Languages Network) in 2020, in which the NGOs and activists of 12 different endangered languages in Turkey came together for the first time ever. He is working towards finalising a study on the Intangible Laz Cultural Heritage, which he started in 1990. To date, he has collected and recorded a large pool of materials on the Laz music, dance, tales, epics, craft, customs, and other materials related to the Laz folklore. He has acted as an informant and consultant to academics working on the Laz language. Bucaklişi, who has devoted his life to the survival of the Laz language, has opened courses to teach Laz on different platforms. He has been teaching the Laz language as an elective lesson at Boğaziçi University since 2011 and at İstanbul Bilgi University since 2015.

Gülşah Türk-Yiğitalp is a second-year PhD candidate in English Studies at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Her PhD project deals with issues of mobility, temporality, and belonging through a critical sociolinguistic ethnography of language-in-education policies for Syrian refugee students in Turkish public schools. Her main research interests include minoritized languages in Turkey, language ideologies, and language policy. She holds a BA in English Language and Literature from Hacettepe University and MA in Humanities and Social Sciences from Yıldız Technical University, where she wrote her thesis on the language ideologies of Lazuri speakers. She has another MA in Nationalism Studies from the Central European University, where she worked on the discourse of education policies for Syrian refugee students in Turkey.

K. David Harrison is an anthropologist, linguist, and National Geographic Explorer documenting endangered languages and cultures around the world. He has done collaborative fieldwork with indigenous communities in Siberia, Mongolia, India, and Vanuatu. He was featured in the acclaimed documentary film *The Linguists*, and his work has been covered by The New York Times, The Economist, USA Today, and Science. David is Professor and Vice Provost of Academic Affairs at VinUniversity in Hanoi, Vietnam, and is a fellow of the Explorers Club.

Levan Pachulia is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Humanities, Sokhumi State University, where his scholarship and courses concentrate on the Kartvelian languages. He has published books on methods in linguistics research and comparative linguistics and papers on various aspects of the

structures of the Kartvelian languages, with particular reference to Megrelian and Laz. For years, he has been a visiting professor at Akaki Tesereteli State University, Georgia.

Ömer Demirok is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Linguistics at Boğaziçi University, Istanbul. He received his PhD in Linguistics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2019. His primary research interests include syntax, formal semantics, morphology, and their interfaces. He has done fieldwork on the Pazar (At'ina) dialect of Laz and on Georgian heritage varieties spoken in Turkey. His research on Laz covers various topics such as case marking, agreement, valency marking, root allomorphy, indexical shift, complementizers, logophoricity, and modality.

Ömer Eren is a PhD candidate in the Linguistics Department at The University of Chicago. He holds an MA from Boğaziçi University in Turkey (2017). The primary focus of his work is on morphology, syntax, and their interface in Turkic and Caucasian languages. He is mainly interested in the structure of nominals and spatial constructions. He is also currently working on language contact, endangerment and linguistic variation, specifically focusing on Laz. His dissertation project aims to investigate the current state of the Laz grammar as spoken by different generations in terms of their morphosyntactic properties, which involve valency-changing operations and the distribution of case & agreement as well as imperfective aspect markers.

Peri Yüksel earned her Ph.D. in Human Development from The Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York. She received the Isenberg Award in recognition of her language documentation, which helped in the publication and distribution of two children's books in the endangered Laz language. As a tenured Associate Professor in the Psychology Department at New Jersey City University (NJCU), she teaches undergraduate courses (cross-cultural psychology, psychopathology, lifespan), graduate courses (research methods, developmental psychology), and designs and assesses faculty-led trips abroad. Dr. Yüksel's research concerns bilingual language development and effective teaching and learning environments that facilitate student success and engagement in psychological literacy and global citizenship. Dr. Yüksel published in the field of psycholinguistics, scholarship of teaching and learning, and international education, and always encourages her students to conduct research for peer review. Dr. Yüksel chairs the Annual NJCU Pedagogy Day, serves in the NJCU's Honors Program, and the

Institutional Review Board, and is part of the advisory board for the Frank Guarini Institute for International Studies.

Zaal Kikvidze, *Professor Dr.hab.,* is a senior research fellow at the Arnold Chikobava Institute of Linguistics, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. His research interests include Kartvelian languages, sociolinguistics, language and gender, cognitive linguistics, lexicography and so forth. His latest publication is *A Glossary of Sociolinguistics Terms* (2021). He has taught linguistics at various universities both in Georgia and abroad (Germany, Italy, Sweden and so forth).

Züleyha Ünlü currently works as an Assistant Professor at the English Language and Literature Department of Tokat Gaziosmanpasa University in Turkey. Following her MS. Ed in TESOL at the University of Pennsylvania, USA, with full funding from the Ministry of Turkish National Education, Dr. Ünlü has specialised in classroom feedback practices on academic writing as well as qualitative research, with a particular focus on Grounded Theory, during her PhD at the University of Warwick in the UK. Her main research interests are Reflective Practice, Classroom Discourse in EAP and ELT settings, Professional and Academic Discourse, and Grounded Theory Methodology. However, her learning background at the University of Pennsylvania, particularly through the Sociolinguistics and Classroom Discourse courses, focused on diversity, heritage languages, and minority languages in mainstream education, which led her to work on endangered languages as well. She has taught linguistics, applied linguistics, language skills, and language teaching methods courses since she began her teaching career at Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University.

Introduction

[B.] George Hewitt[1]

Emeritus Professor of Caucasian Languages (SOAS, London); Fellow of the British Academy; International Circassian Academy of Sciences, Jordan; Abkhazian Academy of Sciences

In an Introduction to a monograph or, as here, a collection of individually authored chapters around a broad theme, readers might expect to be presented with some form of a summary of the contents and/or the context behind, or the reasons for, the composition of the work. However, as the eight chapters are summarised in exemplary fashion by K. David Harrison in his *Preface* under the sub-headings: Laz-endangerment and recovery; Laz linguistics and lexicography; Laz linguistic ecology; Laz environmental linguistics; and Valuing Laz, I shall not address the single contributions but shall rather take this opportunity to talk somewhat more generally about Laz studies in the context of research on the language-family to which it belongs, touching upon a relevant issue in this or that article where it is appropriate to do so – I hope that any anticipatory reduplication of material later presented in the body of the work will be forgiven. I would just stress at the outset how valuable it is to have the results of the surveys which (a) lay out the current situation in which Laz finds itself (Haznedar & Bucaklişi) and (b) indicate both how speakers assess their own and others' competence in the language and when they feel it appropriate to speak it (Türk-Yiğitalp). Editor Ünlü's discussion of the need to co-opt the expertise of applied linguists when it comes to framing methods of teaching Laz is instructive and was much appreciated by this non-applied linguist.

So, the South Caucasian[2] language-family, which has not been demonstrated to be genetically related to any other, is comprised of Georgian, Mingrelian, Laz and Svan. At least this is the accepted opinion outside Georgia, where a widespread view holds that Mingrelian and Laz should rather be regarded as

---

[1] I thank Eylem Bostancı of the Laz Institute for reading this Introduction and supplying supplementary material, now incorporated.

[2] Otherwise widely known among caucasologists as 'Kartvelian' (from Georgian *kartvel-i* 'Georgian (person),' an association which results in the Laz preferring the term 'South Caucasian.'

co-dialects of the so-called Zan[3] language. Generally speaking, the family's areal distribution has always been confined to western Transcaucasia (or the South Caucasus, as the politically correct would have it), mostly concentrated in today's Georgia, and north-eastern Turkey. A Laz-Mingrelian dialect-continuum along the Black Sea littoral is assumed to have been fractured as christian Georgian speakers moved westwards during the five centuries of the Arab presence in, and indeed domination of, central Georgia from the mid-7th to the early 12th century.[4] This left the Mingrelian language (*margal-ur-i nina* in Mingrelian)[5] spoken in the lowlands of western Georgia, bounded by Abkhazia (located in N.W. Transcaucasia) to the north-west, Svaneti(a) to the north, Georgian-speaking Lechkhum-Imereti(a) to the (north-)east, and, more pertinently for the topic of the present volume, divided from the Laz homeland (along the coast and in hinterland-regions from Sarpi to Rize) by the Georgian-speaking provinces of Guria and Ach'ara (*aka* Adzharia) to the south. A further divide was introduced on 13 October 1921 when by the Treaty of Kars, which established the frontier between Turkey and the Transcaucasian republics of what became the Soviet Union (most relevantly, Soviet Georgia), the majority of Laz speakers found themselves on the Turkish side of the border, cut off from the small number of fellow speakers mostly located in/around the split village of Sarpi on the Soviet side[6] – a few Laz also resided in Abkhazia.

Since Laz and Mingrelian are the only two South Caucasian tongues between which there exists a degree of mutual intelligibility, the question always arises as to the extent to which any statement about the one might also be applicable to the other. And this is surely a thought that is likely to be in the mind of at least some readers as they wend their way through this work, just as it certainly was in mine, though one cannot but wonder how much awareness/knowledge of, or (dare one say?) interest in, each other actually exists in the two speech-communities based in Lazistan/Turkey, on the one hand, and Mingrelia/Georgia, on the other. Therefore, I have judged it to be a reasonable (and

[3] Cf. Svan *zän* 'Mingrelia' and *zan-är* 'Mingrelians.'

[4] An Emirate existed in Tbilisi from 736 to 853.

[5] Some commentators prefer the form 'Megrelian' (from the Georgian [sic] *megrel-i* 'Mingrelian (person)'), though, oddly, none has thus far chosen to create an English calque 'Margalian' from the Mingrelians' self-designation, viz. *margal-i* 'Mingrelian (person).'

[6] Also assigned to Turkey were the ancient Georgian-speaking provinces of T'ao, K'lardzheti and Shavsheti, though the number of Georgians (in particular speakers of Georgian) in Turkey today is unknown but not thought to be large.

hopefully acceptable) approach to adopt to refer in these introductory remarks to relevant parallels in the light of issues raised in the contributions below.

The obvious starting-point is to observe that, whilst Georgian has a writing-tradition that stretches back over a millennium and a half, the three remaining South Caucasian languages have essentially been unwritten, and all three have the dubious status of being labelled by UNESCO as endangered. Though there are estimates of how many speakers each can boast, there are no official figures, because within Georgia Mingrelians and the few Laz (plus the Svans) are classified as 'Georgians,' whereas in Turkey the Laz are categorised as 'Turks.' Furthermore, in Georgia there has been no official teaching of Mingrelian, Laz or Svan,[7] whilst in Turkey minority-languages have, until relatively recently, been ignored/actively discouraged, especially since the founding of the Republic, with the result that the majoritarian languages (Georgian and Turkish) have naturally gained ground at the expense of those spoken by the various minorities. This state of affairs, of course, lies at the very heart of this book and indeed motivated its composition. One of those whose work is referenced here is the indefatigable champion of the rights of the Laz and Mingrelian peoples and their languages, the German Wolfgang Feurstein. And his 1992 article *Mingrelisch, Lazisch, Swanisch. Alte Sprachen und Kulturen der Kolchis vor dem baldigen Untergang* can serve as a useful introduction to the parallel destinies that have been played out on each side of the Turko-(Soviet) Georgian border. Moreover, it may be pertinent to add at this point that neither Georgia nor Turkey has signed (much less ratified) the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, adopted in 1992 under the auspices of the Council of Europe.

Colchis was the name assigned by the Greeks and Romans to a geographically amorphous area of the western Transcaucasus and is popularly best known from fable as the destination of Jason and the Argonauts' voyage in search of the legendary Golden Fleece. From the beginning of the 1st millennium of the christian era the toponym Lazica came to be associated with (parts of) the Black

[7] An anonymous reviewer has stated that there is apparently teaching of Mingrelian at high-school level in both Tbilisi and Kutaisi. As for Laz tuition in Turkey, İsmail Bucaklişi (Director of the Laz Institute) has reported that Laz has the status of an elective course and can be taught for two hours per week in schools. Course-materials exist, and Laz teacher-training sessions have been conducted twice thus far in accordance with the protocol signed with the Ministry of National Education. Also, there are 15 teachers who can teach Laz. Compared to previous years, the number of Laz learners at schools has recently fallen.

Sea's eastern littoral and features in the writings of the 6th-century historians Procopius of Cæsarea and Agathias Scholasticus.[8] This, then, provides two thousand years of testimony for linking the root *laz-* to this general area, the people being then known in Greek as *Lazoí*.

But what of the language itself? In Laz we have the name *laz-ur-i nena* 'Laz language.'[9] However, in Georgia at least there is an alternative designation, seen in the phrase *ch'an-ur-i ena* 'Laz language', the term being avoided in Turkey because of another unfortunate meaning of the root *ch'an-*, namely 'impotent' (Kadzhaia 2001-2). As for the dominant root *laz-*, its origins, despite much speculation, are unknown – for a discussion see Hewitt (2014).

Despite some earlier collections of words and phrases, it was really only in the 19th century that philologists started to pay serious attention to the linguistic treasure-store that is the Caucasus, and Laz was actually one of the first to become on object of scholarly study[10] when the German Georg Rosen published a 38-page description in 1844 entitled *Über die Sprache der Lazen.*[11] The vocabulary-gathering tradition of such early visitors to the Caucasus as the Germans Johann Güldenstädt (1787) and Julius von Klaproth (1814; 1823) was carried on by the Russian-born British diplomat Demetrius Peacock, whose lexical study of five West Caucasian languages (Georgian, Mingrelian, Laz, Svan, and Abkhaz) in 1887 provides the only contribution to this book to come from scholars based in Georgia, Zaal Kikvidze and Levan Pachulia, who discuss the author together with his treatment of his Laz material in chapter III.

But it was 1910 which could be said to be the year that saw the grammatical study of Laz really take off when the St. Petersburg-based, Scottish-Georgian scholar Nikolaj (Nik'o) Marr published his *Grammatika Chanskago (Lazskago)*

---

[8] For a short description of the Lazic War see Bury (1958, vol. II, 113-123).

[9] For the sake of comparison and completeness, note that Georgian for 'Georgian language' is *kart-ul-i ena*, whilst Svan has *lu-shn-u nin* for 'Svan language.'

[10] French orientalist Marie Félicité Brosset Jeune (1802-1880), member of the St. Petersburg Academy from 1836 and resident in Russia from 1837, had produced a grammar of Georgian (*L'art libéral ou Grammaire géorgien*) in 1834, in which he expressed the (mistaken) view that Georgian belonged to the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European family – because of the large number of Persian loans, precisely the same misinterpretation was applied to Armenian until Heinrich Hübschmann finally demonstrated that Armenian, though Indo-European, formed a separate branch within the family.

[11] Rosen followed this in 1846 with 84 pages on (Iranian) Ossetic (43 pages), Mingrelian (9 pages), Svan (13 pages) and Abkhaz (12 pages), all studied *in situ* in his *Ossetische Sprachlehre nebst einer Abhandlung über das Mingrelische, Suanische und Abchasische.*

Jazyka s Xrestomatieju i Slovarem 'Grammar of the Ch'an (Laz) Language with Chrestomathy and Dictionary' – this same year also saw the appearance of Marr's article *Iz poezdki v Turetskij Lazistan* 'From a Journey to Turkish Lazistan,' the Turkish translation of which, namely *Lazistan'a Yolculuk*, came out in 2016.[12] Georgian graduate of Marr's Oriental Faculty, Ioseb Q'ipshidze, published in the year of his graduation (1911) a supplement to his professor's grammar in his *Dopolnitel'nyja Svedenija O Chanskom" Jazyke (Iz" Lingvisticheskoj Èkskursii v" Russkij Lazistan"* 'Supplementary Reports on the Ch'an Language (From a Linguistic Excursion to Russian Lazistan).' He went on to produce his impressive *Grammatika Mingrel'skago (Iverskago) Jazyka s" Xrestomatieju i Slovarem"* 'Grammar of the Mingrelian (Iberian) Language with Chrestomathy and Dictionary' in 1914 – both of these important works were reprinted in one volume in 1994. Given what was to follow, it is ironic to note that, with the publication of these works by Marr and his pupil, Laz and Mingrelian were the best described (sc. according to contemporary philological/linguistic standards) of the four South Caucasian languages. Q'ipshidze also put together a selection of Laz texts, but the resulting book (*ch'anuri t'eksṭ'ebi*) only saw the light of day in Tbilisi in 1939, twenty years after the compiler's death in 1919 from Spotted Typhus at the tragically early age of circa 35.[13] One early beneficiary of this output from Marr and Q'ipshidze was the distinguished German kartvelologist, Gerhard Deeters, who mined their works for the Laz and Mingrelian materials he included in his seminal comparison of the verbal systems across all four South Caucasian languages *Das kharthwelische Verbum* (1930).

What then needs to be highlighted about developments following the fixing of the Turkish-(Soviet) Georgian border in 1921? I believe it is fair to say (though I stand to be corrected) that, until the stirrings of the revivalist-movement in Turkey in the 1980s, there were only two substantial works to appear as a result of study carried out in Turkey, and both emanated from the pen of the indomitable investigator of Caucasian languages spoken in Turkey, namely the French scholar Georges Dumézil, being published in Paris. First came his *Contes Lazes* in 1937, representing the Arhavi dialect spoken by informant Niazi

[12] 1910 also saw the publication of Ivane Nizharadze's substantial *Russko-Svanskij Slovar'* 'Russian-Svan Dictionary,' which had been preceded in 1902 by Nizharadze's collection of Svan texts. Marr's original Russian text was re-published in Tbilisi by Artanuji Press in 2021 in a volume which first presents the work's translation into Georgian. The book is entitled *Nik'o Mari: Lazeti; Nikolaj Marr: Lazistan.*

[13] There was some doubt about the precise year of his birth.

Ban and recorded in Istanbul in 1930-31. Dumézil's *Récits Lazes (en dialecte d'Arhavi (parler de Şenköy))* appeared in 1967. In addition to the tales, registered in Istanbul between 1960 and 1964, this volume also contains a short grammar, as was Dumézil's wont.

Across the border in Georgia the collection and publication of texts continued. Arnold Chikobava (1898-1985), a Mingrelian, who founded and headed until his death the Caucasian Languages' Department at the Georgian Academy of Sciences, first produced his *Ch'anuri T'ekst'ebi. Nak'veti P'irveli. Xopuri K'ilok'avi* 'Ch'an Texts. First Part. Khopa Dialect' in 1929. This was followed in 1936 by his *Ch'anuris Gramat'ik'uli Analizi (T'ekst'ebiturt)* 'Grammatical Analysis of Ch'an (with Texts)' in 1936, whilst his third major contribution was the *Ch'anur-Megrul-Kartuli Shedarebiti Leksik'oni* 'Ch'an-Mingrelian-Georgian Comparative Dictionary' in 1938. This same year Sergi Zhghent'i published his *Ch'anuri T'ekst'ebi. Arkabuli K'ilok'avi* 'Ch'an Texts. Arkabe Dialect.'[14] He then delved into the phonetics with his study *Ch'anur-Megrulis Ponet'ik'a* 'Phonetics of Ch'an-Mingrelian' in 1953.

The business of collecting and publishing Laz materials was then taken up by younger researchers. To the pen of Irine Asatiani, who recently died just short of her 100th birthday, belongs *Ch'anuri (Lazuri) T'ekst'ebi. I. Xopuri K'ilok'avi* 'Ch'an (Laz) Texts. I. Khopa Dialect' (1974). Her Laz dictionary, which I have yet to see, appeared in 2012. Guram K'art'ozia (b. 1934) has compiled two collections: *Lazuri T'ekst'ebi* 'Laz Texts' (1972) and *Lazuri T'ekst'ebi II* 'Laz Texts II' (1993). One might also add Zurab Tandilava's *Lazuri Xalxuri P'oezia* 'Laz Folk-poetry' of 1972. Worth noting too, in my opinion, is Irine Asatiani's Candidate's Dissertation (1953) as outlined in the accompanying *avtoreferat* (or dissertation-summary), for the topic was *Preverby v Zanskom (Megrel'sko-Chanskom) Jazyke* 'Preverbs in the Zan (Mingrelo-Ch'an) Language'.

These works happen to be relevant to themes aired in this book for the following reasons. Eren in chapter IV examines a case of dialect-variation, advancing the interesting argument that simplification in one area of grammar can lead to greater complexity elsewhere, whilst Yüksel & Aleksiva in chapter V *inter alia* very helpfully list and describe the 58 publications in Laz that have been composed since the start of publishing in Turkey in 1997 as part of the

[14] This tragic decade also witnessed the publication of a volume of Svan poetry (*Svanuri P'oezia*) in 1939 and the first volume (of four) of Svan prose-texts in the Upper Bal dialect (*Svanuri P'rozauli T'ekst'ebi, I. Balszemouri K'ilo*), also in 1939. Two years earlier Mak'ar Khubua's *Megruli T'ekst'ebi* 'Mingrelian Texts' had also come out.

revitalisation-movement[15]. But as is clear from what has been said, there exists in print a wealth of texts garnered over the course of more than a century such that burrowing into them might well provide researchers with a wide range of source-material for potentially turning up many more examples of both language-change and dialectal variation.

As part of their argument that the structure of Laz is of importance for the general linguist, Demirok & Öztürk in chapter II highlight the spatial markers seen in the preverbal system. It would be interesting at some point in the future to learn the authors' opinions about the Laz preverbal system in comparison with that of Mingrelian once they take into consideration not only the observations of Asatiani (assuming her oeuvre could be made available to them) and others who have worked on Mingrelian[16] but also the opinion that both these languages were most probably once influenced by the well-known extensive system of spatio-directional preverbs in the neighbouring North-West Caucasian languages (with special reference to Abkhaz). Demirok & Öztürk also raise the issue of ergativity/activity during their discussion of the case-system of Laz. Here again there might be fruitful possibilities of widening the significance of the Laz patterns by looking at Mingrelian (and Georgian, with reference to which ergativity vs activity has been a topic of debate).[17]

Şirin & Yaman present a template for the production of an idealised dictionary (not exclusively for Laz) suitable for the digital age, noting near the start of chapter VI: 'The Laz dictionaries produced so far are unsatisfactory for many reasons: for their usability and reliability, their lexicographic standards,

---

[15] Indeed, the Laz Institute confirms that, with the establishment of the Lazika Publication Collective in 2011, at least 100 Laz books have been published in Turkey to date, half of which are in the Laz language, and there are at least 10 more books in Laz awaiting publication by the Lazika Publication Collective and the Laz Institute.

[16] Might I mention in this regard the appendix on 'Kartvelian Preverbs' that I appended to my *Introduction to the Study of the Languages of the Caucasus* (Lincom 2004, pp. 284-315)?

[17] See relevant sections in my articles: *Georgian - Ergative or Active?*, in *Lingua Studies in Ergativity* (special edition edited by R M W Dixon), 1987, pp. 319-340; *Review-article of Syntax and Semantics 18: A. C. Harris 'Diachronic Syntax: The Kartvelian Case,'* in *Revue des Etudes Géorgiennes et Caucasiennes, 3*, 1989, pp. 173-213; *Georgian: Ergative, Active, or What?,* in *Subject, Voice and Ergativity* (ed. D. C. Bennett, T. Bynon, B.G. Hewitt), 1995, SOAS, pp. 202-217; *Similarities and Differences: some verbal contrasts between Georgian and Mingrelian,* in *Chomolangma, Demawend und Kasbek. Festschrift for R. Bielmeier*, 2008, pp. 657-676).

structural organization, content, design and corpus-usage, while also failing to provide many lexicographic requirements and industry-standards.' One imagines that much time and many resources will be necessary if one is to satisfy the standards set by the authors. Were an aspiring lexicographer to aim at improving existing models but at a more modest level, one wonders if any of the approaches adopted for the sister-languages would meet the needs of everyday-users. I have in mind the following templates: (a) for Georgian, Kita Tschenkéli's root-dictionary (*Georgisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, Zürich, 1965-74), where all relevant verb-parts are given beneath the root, or the Georgian Academy's 8-volume 'Explanatory Dictionary of the Georgian Language' (*Kartuli Enis Ganmart'ebiti Leksik'oni*, Tbilisi, 1950-64), where a verb is entered in either the 3rd person Present or 3rd person Future singular accompanied by its, as it were, 'principal parts,' viz. (Future), Aorist and Perfect – the 'masdar' (= verbal noun) and participles are assigned their own entries, a pattern largely followed by Donald Rayfield's 2-volume *A Comprehensive Georgian-English Dictionary* (London, 2006), though alongside the verbal noun he repeats the principal finite tense-forms, and (b) for Mingrelian, whose verbs were entered by Q'ipshidze (1914) as a root, accompanied by a selection of finite and derived forms, whilst Otar Kadzhaia in his *Megruli Enis Leksik'oni* 'Dictionary of the Mingrelian Language' (in 3 volumes, 2001-2002) basically did the same as Q'ipshidze but used the verbal noun as the basic entry-form. Despite the unavoidable reduplication inherent in the approach, my own preference lies with the practice adopted by the Georgian Academy and Rayfield.

There is a host of material on, or related to, Laz(-Mingrelian) written in Georgian in the form of books or articles too numerous to be listed here, though perhaps I could single out two volumes by Iuri Sikharulidze, namely *Ch'aneti (Lazeti). Saist'orio Geograpiis Masalebi* 'Lazistan. Historical Geography Materials' (Batumi, vol. 1 1977; vol. 2 1979), as well as the monumental *Lazur-Megruli Gramat'ik'a. I. Morpologia* 'Grammar of Laz-Mingrelian. I. Morpholoy' (2015) by Ch'abuk'i Kiria, Lali Ezugbaia, Omar Memishishi, and Merab Chukhua. Other useful information on Laz(-Mingrelian) can be located scattered in such series dedicated to language-research as *Iberiul-k'avk'asiuri Enatmetsniereba* 'Ibero-Caucasian Linguistics' (from 1946-), the sadly defunct *Ts'elits'deuli Iberiul-K'avk'asiuri Enatmetsnierebisa* 'Annual of Ibero-Caucasian Linguistics' (1974-1994), and the language-series of the once-quarterly *Matsne* 'Reporter', the resurrection of which is apparently planned from the spring of 2022. Some specific references are given in the bibliographies of the following works, which are of course indispensible contributions to Laz/South Caucasian studies in their own right: Holisky (1991), Feurstein (1992), and Boeder (2005). The various studies of Laz produced by the Westerners Ralph D. Anderson,

Ulrich Lüders and René Lacroix will, no doubt, be too well known to all interested in the language to need specific mention at this point in the book.

Of course, it is only natural that Laz together with the other two minority South Caucasian languages (Mingrelian and Svan) should have been studied by linguists, folklorists and lexicographers based at the Georgian Academy of Sciences' Department of Caucasian Languages or at Tbilisi State University over the decades since these institutions were founded, leading to grammatical studies of various kinds, collections of folk-tales, and lexicological investigations. Nor is it surprising that Laz, as one of the 'exotic' languages of the Caucasus, should have attracted the attention of Western linguists from the very start of philological interest in languages outside the well-known members of the Indo-European family. But more extraordinary is the creation of scripts for previously unwritten tongues, and so we have to examine what happened in the early years of the Soviet Union, with particular focus on Laz, part of the topic of Yüksel & Aleksiva's contribution in chapter VI, to which I now turn.

One major task (among many) for the young Soviet state was to eradicate the high level of illiteracy inherited from tsarist times. In order to help with this, several languages were selected for the award of literary status and became collectively known as the 'Young Written Languages', these literary forms to be used for teaching in schools in their associated autonomous regions. Where there was a history (at some level at least) of a tradition of writing, the relevant orthography tended initially to be adopted, being used for both teaching and the production of printed materials.[18] Where no such tradition existed, scripts were devised. And Laz was one of the languages to be so treated despite the paucity of speakers living within the USSR. As to why poorly represented languages should have been supported at all, there are conflicting views –it may have been simple altruism endowing these languages with a crucial role in the drive to eradicate illiterary. Wixman (1980: 126ff.), on the other hand, with reference to the Caucasus as a whole, sees here a desire on Moscow's part to win approval for Communism's generosity to these peoples from the often large numbers of representatives of these same ethnic groups living abroad (for instance, in Turkey). Here is what Wixman writes: 'One of the groups obviously supported for this reason was the Laz, the bulk of whose population was in eastern Turkey. Although in 1926 the Laz population of the entire Soviet Union was only 645 individuals, a Laz literary language was established in 1927 (using

[18] This, for example, was the case with the Arabic-based script for Circassian in the North Caucasus, and A. Ch'och'ua's Cyrillic-based script for Abkhaz in Georgia.

the Latin[19] alphabet) and they were declared a narodnost. By 1938 this folly was dropped, and the Laz were reclassified as an ethnographic group of Georgians.' Feurstein (1992: 299ff.), who numbered the Soviet Laz population at that time as 'no more than 2,000,' then takes the story on, first to the appearance of Iskender Citaši's daily-paper *Mčita Murucxi*[20] 'Red Star', which was born on 1 November 1929 but which ceased publication after only two issues, as well as to the publication in 1935 of Citaši's Laz school-primer for the 1st class *Alboni* 'Alphabet', whose significance is highlighted in chapter VI. The year 1938 saw not only the end of the Soviets' Laz experiment but also the demise of its champion Citaši, who perished in Stalin's 'purges.'

Wixman drew a comparison with the Mingrelians, writing as follows: 'A prime example of a people that did not receive support as a distinct ethnic group are the Mingrelians. The case of the Mingrelians should be compared with that of the other Caucasian peoples (Circassians, Abaza, Abkhaz, and Kurds) that receive 'ethnic support.' Although (1) the population of the Mingrelians in 1926 was almost one quarter million; (2) they had a distinct language, history, and culture; and (3) lived in a compact territory (satisfying all criteria under Salin's definition of a nation), they received no ethnic territory nor ethnic institutions in their own language. This can be explained by: (1) they posed no threat to the regime, given their small population and location away from any sensitive zones; (2) there was no need to create a separate Mingrelian literary language as virtually all Mingrelians were fluent in Georgian; and (3) there are no Mingrelian communities living outside the USSR. There simply was no reason to support the Mingrelians' (*ibid.*). In fact, it was not true to say of Mingrelians of that period that they were all fluent in Georgian. Also a leading Mingrelian at the time, Ishak' Zhvania, was in favour of their being gifted cultural autonomy, and there were publications, employing the Georgian script (plus two extra characters needed representing non-Georgian sounds). Take the example of the daily newspaper – from 1 March 1930 to 20 December 1935 the *Q'azaxiši Gazeti* 'Peasant's Paper,' was published in Zugdidi. This was continued from 1 January 1936 to 22 July 1938 by *K'omunari* 'Man of the Commune,' which was half in Mingrelian, half in Georgian. This development from wholly Mingrelian, through joint Mingrelian and Georgian, to the wholly Georgian *Mebrdzoli* 'Warrior,' which remained as the only local paper for Zugdidi, would seem to suggest that knowledge of Georgian amongst the population of Mingrelia's capital was not as secure or as widespread as was perhaps popularly believed

[19] *Recte* roman – BGH.
[20] [mtʃ'ita murutsxi].

(and argued?), and that at least a temporary aid was required in the daily dissemination of Party propaganda amongst (presumably) the working class around the capital until Georgian became thoroughly established there. Whatever the truth of the matter, as of 1938 the Soviet Laz and Mingrelian populations found themselves with no teaching of, or publications in, their languages (other, that is, than works produced by folklorists and linguists for the benefit of their professional colleagues rather than the native speakers themselves).[21]

I first met Wolfgang Feurstein when he introduced himself at the 2nd colloquium of the European Caucasological Society that was held in Vienna in 1984, when he spoke to us about his work on Laz. Nine years later he met in his home-town of Schopfloch the famous journalist and writer Neal Ascherson, who penned an article about him and his work in the newspaper for which he then worked, the sadly now defunct *Independent on Sunday*. Here is part of what he wrote (1 November 1993): 'In the village of Schopfloch lives Wolfgang Feurstein, a German intellectual who has devoted his existence to the rescue of the Lazi from "assimilation." From this remote village, almost single-handed and quite unrewarded, Feurstein has set about nothing less than the foundation of a national culture. He has given the Lazi an alphabet, and prepared schoolbooks which are now beginning to circulate – clandestinely – in their villages. He and the small group of expatriates who form the "Katchkar Working Group" (named after a mountain range) are working on the first dictionary and the first volumes of what is to be a source-book and bibliography of Lazi history.'[22] Feurstein illustrates in his 1992 article the three scripts that have been employed for Laz, viz. that of the 1936 *Alboni*, then the *Lazuri Alfabe* devised by him and colleagues for use in the materials infiltrated into Turkey from 1984, plus the Georgian-based equivalent.

Ascherson went on to write the following in his 1993 article: 'For myself, I support Feurstein. A scientist is not just a camera. A scientist's duty to a vanishing culture is not just to record but to offer wisdom and say: "This end is

---

[21] For more on Mingrelian see Hewitt (1995; 1995a).

[22] After reading this article and noticing that Ascherson was a fellow-guest one evening at St. Antony's College (Oxford), I introduced myself to him and gave him something I had written on Mingrelian. Yüksel & Aleksiva write about Ascherson's comments on Feurstein's activities on behalf of the Laz in his books *Black Sea* (1995) and *Black Sea: The birthplace of civilization and barbarism* (2007). These books were written after the author's first visit to Georgia, including Abkhazia, in 1994, and, unsurprisingly, allusion is also made to the parallel between Mingrelian and Laz.

not inevitable. There is a way to survive, and I can point you towards it!" And, anyway, it is too late to stop the journey. The Turkish ban on spoken Lazuri was lifted two years ago. The little books from the Black Forest are passing from family to family. More letters and poems in Lazuri are reaching Schopfloch. Young men working in Germany appear and ask: "Who are we really? Where did we come from?" All that is certain is that the Lazi have eaten the forbidden fruit of an alphabet, and are beginning to see themselves with new eyes.'

The path to full recognition of the right to publish in Laz has not, however, been entirely smooth. To quote again from Ascherson (1995.209): 'In 1992 Feurstein's alphabet was seen for the first time on student placards, in an Istanbul demonstration. Early in 1994, a journal named *Ogni*,[23] written in Turkish and Lazuri, was published in Istanbul by a group of young Lazi. The editor was arrested after the first number, and now faces charges of "separatism." A second issue of the journal appeared a few weeks later. It called, more clearly than before, for an end to the assimilation of Lazi culture. One of the publishers said: "A new age has dawned!".' In fact, a more detailed (and accurate) account of the interesting fate of *Ogni* has been provided by the Laz Institute, which I reproduce here: '*Ogni* was published in Istanbul in November 1993. A Laz from Ardeşen, the lawyer Ahmet Kirim was the person who started the process. His office was being used and he was legally the leading figure in the matter. Mehmedali Baris Besli was chosen as the editor-in-chief. Mehmedali was tried in the DGM (State Security Court) for three separate articles in the magazine and was acquitted in the first trial, but there was no case of an arrest being made. One of the articles in the first issue of the magazine that led to the lawsuit belonged to Ismail Avci Bucaklişi, whilst the other two articles belonged to Ahmet Kirim and Mehmedali Baris Besli. Ali İhsan Aksamaz also wrote articles for the magazine. Ismail and Mehmedali were the only ones who could speak Laz, and the content in Laz belonged to them.'

With specific reference to the history of publishing Laz material(s) in Turkey and Ascherson's representation of Feurstein's role, the Laz Institute respectfully points out that, whilst his primer reached many readers, it would be something of a romantic hyperbole to claim that the availability of this alphabet at the time caused, accelerated, and influenced the Laz cultural movement in Turkey. They stress that: 'It should not be forgotten that the 1990s was a period of significant changes in the world and in Turkey when the consciousness and awareness towards ethnic identities had begun to increase and movements

[23] The Laz sentence *Ogni skani nena* means 'Know your language' – BGH.

were established, including the Laz cultural movement. Also, with reference to the statement about the circulation of Laz school-books, although Feurstein may have prepared Laz school-books, it is unclear that he has ever published or circulated them to the Laz people since we have not come across any such in Turkey. As to Laz study-books prepared so far, we can say the following. The first Laz language-courses in Turkey started in 1998 at the offices of an NGO in Istanbul. However, there were no Laz study-books or information on how to teach Laz available at the time. On the other hand, although Iskender Citaši's books were known, these books could not be used as course-material since they were prepared to teach literacy to those who already knew Laz. The first Laz language-learning materials were prepared at Boğaziçi University in 2011, following the introduction of elective Laz lessons at secondary schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education. The first Laz language study-book is the one entitled "Laz Textbook," published in 2014 by *Lazika Yayın Kollektifi* (Lazika Publication Collective), which was established in Istanbul in 2011 to publish in the Laz language. Afterwards, a donation-protocol was signed between the Laz Institute and the Turkish Ministry of National Education, and four Laz textbooks (for levels A1, A2, B1, B2) for the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades in secondary schools were delivered to the Ministry by the Laz Institute. The author of these books was İsmail Avcı Bucaklişi, together with two academics, namely Ömer Demirok, now Vice-president of Linguistics at Boğaziçi, and Ömer Eren, now a Ph.D. student in linguistics at Chicago University, who both participated in the preparation of the books as authors. In addition, another 250-page Laz textbook for adults, entitled 'Lazuri Doviguram' ('I am Learning Laz'), was published in 2018 as a Laz Institute publication (supported by the EU). Apart from these, we have no information on the availability of a textbook written for the purpose of teaching Laz. The collective volume of all these books is around 1,400 pages.'

As for Feurstein himself, as a result of his 'clandestine' operations in Turkey, he personally fell foul of the authorities[24] – for encouraging minorities and their languages, which was prohibited at the time – but such pressure never diminished his enthusiasm and determination. His and his collaborators' efforts are, of course, rightly lauded in what follows, but it cannot be denied

[24] When I first visited Turkey in the summer of 1974 to collect materials on Circassian (and, as it turned out, Ubykh) in Anatolia, those who arranged my trip warned me that, if asked upon entry into the country to explain the purpose of my visit, under no circumstances should I mention I was travelling to work with a minority. In the event, I was not asked, and my sojourn passed off in entirely pleasurable tranquillity.

that there is no time to rest on one's laurels, given that much remains to be done. Indeed, the essential *raison d'être* of this collection of essays is to address the question of how to build on the successes already achieved by reaching a stage when the tag 'endangered' is removed from Laz and its future is guaranteed. Hopefully all readers will agree that such is a noble goal and wish everyone engaged in the enterprise to attain its complete success.

Postscript

I have then not confined myself exclusively to the case of Laz but have discussed topics in parallel with the closely-related sister-language Mingrelian. Additionally, I have tried to draw attention to works published in Georgia (largely in Georgian) that either contain Laz materials or deal with aspects of Laz grammar. The reasons are: (i) I would like to encourage interested parties on the Laz side to make every effort to acquaint themselves with valuable materials that are probably not readily accessible to them in Turkey (or elsewhere wherever their studies happen to have taken them), and (ii) I dare to hope that the time might come when dedicated individuals from both the (mainly Turkish) Laz and (Georgian) Mingrelian communities will be willing and in a position to collaborate for the mutual benefit of both their mother-tongues. Naturally, any such moves for cross-border co-operation will need to be handled sensitively. For one thing, the Laz have taken exception to moves from Georgia to persuade political and/or educational authorities in Turkey to describe them as 'Georgians' and their language as a 'Georgian dialect.'[25] On

[25] In 2014 there were suggestions that Düzce University might build on its instituting of courses on Circassian and Georgian language and literature, with collaboration from both Circassia (North Caucasus) and Tbilisi, by introducing parallel teaching for Laz. In a statement *My Visit to Düzce University*, circulated in 2015, İrfan Çağatay writes about a meeting he had on 19 December 2014 with the chancellor of the University. I quote from the translation by Kadir Erdi Öge: 'The lady Chancellor explained that they have been considering creating such a programme for the past few years but had been unable to realise their intention. [...] The organisation with which they were connected in Tbilisi was საქართველოს საპატრიარქოს წმიდა ანდრია პირველწოდებულის სახელობის ქართული უნივერსიტეტი in other words the "The Georgian University Named After St. Andrew the First-Called of the Patriarchate of Georgia". As can be understood from the name, the University is affiliated with the Patriarchate of Georgia. During our meeting, a Turkish woman of Georgian descent, Nigar Demircan-Çakır, also joined us. According to what was explained by the Chancellor, a delegation, including Nigar Demircan-Çakır and the Dean of the Science-Literature Faculty, Prof. İlhan Genç, had a few days earlier on the 17th December attended a meeting in Tbilisi with the intention of forming a

the other hand, the mere raising of the question of status for Mingrelian tends immediately to give rise to suspicions among Georgians of an ulterior motive of political separatism, and, it must be acknowledged, Mingrelians do seem to be content with their ethnic categorisation as 'Georgians.'[26] Though once (at best) discouraged or (at worst) prohibited, works on Mingrelian are now appearing – for example, publisher Artanuji has published (2021) Natia Poniava's *Vists'avlot Megruli* 'Let's Learn Mingrelian'; Nargiza Basaria brought out *Chkyni Nina* 'Our Language' in Abkhazia in 2013; Givi Karchava's translation of 'The Little Prince' into Mingrelian *Ch'ich'e Mapaskiri* also came out in 2013, but, interestingly, it was published in Istanbul by the Laz [sic] Cultural Association (*Laz Kültür Derneği*) two years after the Laz translation *Ch'ita Mapaskiri* under the imprint of the Lazika Publication Collective (*Lazika Yayın Kollektifi*);[27] and a journal in Mingrelian/Laz *Skani* 'Your(s)' has also

partnership with two Georgian Universities, and at this meeting their intention of creating a Laz Language and Literature programme was also on the agenda of the topics discussed. At the meeting in Tbilisi the attendees from the Georgian side were as follows: Chancellor of the University, Sergo Vardosanidze, Tariel Putkaradze, Teimuraz Gvantseladze, Mikheil Labadze, Sopo Kekua and Nana Kaçarava. I am sure our interested readers will have heard of the names Tariel Putkaradze and Mikheil Labadze before. During their meeting madame Chancellor also mentioned to me a dialogue which she found quite peculiar. The above-mentioned individuals had apparently said the following: "Whether it be in allocating teaching staff for the Georgian classes or in creating the Turkology programmes in Georgia, we have provided every form of assistance. However, we have a polite request. We have heard that you intend to create a Laz Language and Literature programme. Do not go ahead in creating this programme. Or if you do intend to do so please do not bypass us; create the Laz language classes as a subject taught under the aegis of the Georgian Language and Literature programme. We do not accept Laz as a free-standing language but deem it to be a dialect of the Georgian language. If a university in Tbilisi were to have created a programme accepting a dialect of the Turkish language as a language of its own, would you find this to be pleasing? So, therefore, for us the creation of a Laz programme is equally displeasing".'

[26] At the height of Georgian chauvinism in the late 1980s, Mingrelians who spoke out in defence of their Mingrelianness came in for harsh criticism, pressure and in some cases actual physical abuse – for an example see the English translation of an unpublished 'Open Letter' by Nugzar Dzhodzhua, a Mingrelian resident in Abkhazia, which I incorporated as Appendix III in my 1993 article.

[27] The *Lazika Publication Collective* published the first-ever Laz novel "Daçxuri" (Fire, by M. Murğulişi), followed by other novels, poem books, tale books, study books, dictionaries, and translations of world classics, such as Dostoyevsky's *Crime and*

reportedly begun life in Georgia. There is also activity on the internet – one can mention at least two sites: *Megrul-Lazur-Svanuri Enis Sagandzuri* 'Treasury of the Mingrelian-Laz-Svan Language(s)' and *Megrel'skaja Natsija* 'Mingrelian Nation.' From such shoots maybe something substantial will grow to bridge the two language-communities on either side of the geo-political divide to secure the survival of two important Caucasian languages that for too long have suffered neglect. This would be my fervent wish, to the realisation of which this volume might make a meaningful contribution.

REFERENCES

Ascherson, N. (1995). *Black Sea*, London.

Boeder, W. (2005). The South Caucasian Languages. In *Lingua 115*, 5-89.

Bury, J. B. (1958). *History of the Later Roman Empire*. 2 vols. USA.

Feurstein, W. (1992). Mingrelisch, Lazisch, Swanisch. Alte Sprachen und Kulturen der Kolchis vor dem baldigen Untergang. In George Hewitt (ed.) *Caucasian Perspectives*, 285-328.

Güldenstädt, J. A. (1787). *Reisen durch Russland und im Caucasischen Gebürge: auf Befehl der Russisch-Kayserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaftlichen herausgegeben von P. S. Pallas.* 2 vols. St. Petersburg.

Hewitt, [B.] G. (1993). Abkhazia: a problem of identity and ownership. *Central Asian Survey, 12*(3), 267-323.

Hewitt, [B.] G. (1995a). Demographic Manipulation in the Caucasus. *The Journal of Refugee Studies, 8*(1), 48-74.

Hewitt, [B.] G. (1995b). Yet a third consideration of Völker, Sprachen und Kulturen des südlichen Kaukasus. *Central Asian Survey, 14*(2), 285-310.

Hewitt, [B.] G. (2014). History in the context of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, *Iran and the Caucasus 18*, pp. 153-179.

Holisky, D. A. (1991). Laz. In Alice C. Harris (ed.) *The Indigenous Languages of the Caucasus. Volume I. Kartvelian Languages*, 395-472. Delmar/New York, Caravan Books.

Peacock D.R. (1887). Original Vocabularies of Five West Caucasian Languages (Georgian, Mingrelian, Lazian, Swanetian, and Abkhazian). *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 19*(1), 145-156

von Klaproth, J. (1814). *Kaukasischen Sprachen. Anhang zur Reise in den Kaukasus und nach Georgien.* Halle und Berlin. Reprinted 2018 (Intank Publishing).

von Klaproth, J. (1823). *Asia polyglotta.* Paris: J. M. Eberhart.

Wixman, R. (1980). *Language Aspects of Ethnic Patterns & Processes in the North Caucasus.* Chicago.

Punishment, all representing important developments that have greatly contributed to the development of literature in Laz.

PREFACE
Laz words, Laz worlds

K. David Harrison
Vin University, Hanoi, Vietnam

"Nananena var goindinen."
The mother-tongue must not be lost.

"Nananena gondinina, ti skaniti gondineri giğun."
If you lose your mother-tongue, you lose yourself also.[1]

What can the Laz language–spoken by a shrinking number of people in Turkey and Georgia, and in diaspora–teach us about linguistic diversity, spatial cognition, healing plants, and cultural resilience? The remarkable papers in *Lazuri: An Endangered Language from the Black Sea* (Ünlü & Hewitt, 2023), along with other recent work authored by scholars deeply devoted to the language, show that Laz has much to teach us. With its grammatical complexities, its resilience under socio-political pressure, its poetic aesthetics, and the value speakers invest in it, Laz speaks from its Black Sea homeland to all of humanity.

1. Laz endangerment and recovery

The dynamics of Turkish-Laz co-existence are resulting in speakers shifting from Laz to Turkish. To personalize this process, Haznedar and Avcı-Bucaklişi (2022) invite four Laz speakers–named Zeki, Aslı, Halil and Volkan–to narrate their language experiences in their own words, sharing this perspective with the reader. They note that "official records of the current number of Laz speakers in Turkey are largely unknown." This problem is common to many endangered and diasporic languages, which may be intentionally undercounted or neglected in censuses. The authors then apply quantitative survey methods to a sample population of nearly 500. They establish that Laz is primarily oral, with limited domains of use, and "a definitely endangered language." In their sample population they find that "use of Laz is primarily

[1] Chenel (n.d.)

associated with informal personal contexts such as home, neighbourhood, funerals and weddings."

The generational shift away from Laz results from pressure exerted by state policies, the educational system, social prejudice, language contact, and discrimination. But there is reason for hope. As a news article "Turkey's Laz awakening" notes: "The Lazika Publishing Collective has printed 35 bilingual Turkish-Laz books since its founding in 2010" (Tastekin, 2013). The journalist quotes Professor Mehmet Bekaroğlu, who was at that time head of the Laz Institute (Laz Enstitüsü) as saying: "We are recovering the lost Laz words."[2] Of the many different terms that can be applied to any language endangerment situation, the choice of "lost" and "recovering" aptly describes Laz. On November 7, 2021, the first "Laz Language Day" was declared and celebrated in an online event attended by Laz artists, writers, poets and activists. Both the Laz Institute in Istanbul and Lazuri TV have a robust YouTube presence, with popular videos on those channels garnering over 10,000 views each. Choral music, oral histories, foodways, and children's programming are among the video highlights, all domains for the recovering of Laz. The language is increasingly used in publishing, as Yuksel and Aleksiva (2023) report: "since 1997 fifty-eight literary books were published in Turkey by fourteen different publishers and written by a broad range of writers in their native dialects within the contact-induced linguistic community in Lazona and beyond. The work proves a collective effort to document and preserve Lazuri thoughts and expressions in the digital era."

It is important that the endangered status of Laz be established, even though speaker numbers are unclear, because it provides a strong motivation for scholars and activists of all kinds. Language survival benefits the Laz community itself, and also contributes to global linguistic diversity. Laz survival also benefits the Turkish polity, and the authors rightly assert that "language preservation (or at least documentation) is necessary to create more democratic and peaceful societies." Haznedar and Avcı-Bucaklişi (2022) issue a call to action, affirming that "we need to embrace linguistic diversity as a resource and potential for both individuals and societies."

2. Laz linguistics and lexicography

Laz is a primarily oral language (though more recently also written) with significant dialect diversity that exists under intense language contact

[2] See also www.lazenstitu.com.

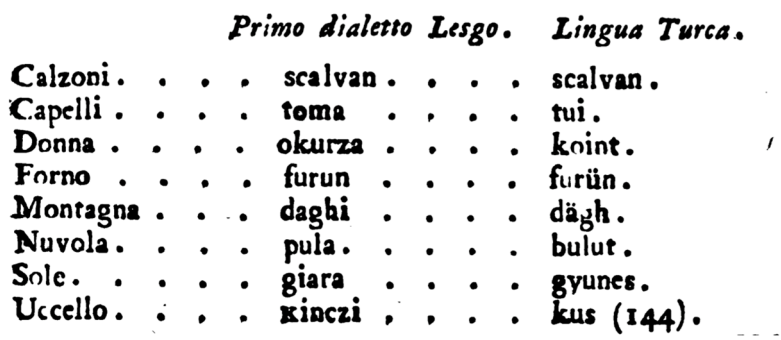
(Kutcher, 2008; Yuksel & Aleksiva, 2023). These qualities may be seen as detrimental, but also contribute to Laz's vitality. First, Laz orality is a cognitive asset, in that speakers must commit to memory large bodies of knowledge, thus exercising their brains as speakers of written languages do not. Second, Laz dialect diversity is used by speakers to identify place of origin of other speakers. The diversity also contributes to linguistic theory, as a kind of natural experiment in language evolution. Thirdly, Laz-Turkish language contact may lead, with effort from the community, to a state of stable bilingualism, which can help sustain Laz in particular domains such as the home. As for contact, which is often framed as degrading a language's complexity, Kutcher (2008, 95) has shown that while Laz indeed borrows from Turkish, it uses borrowings to innovate and increase its own grammatical complexity. For example, Laz adopted the Turkish locational marker *yeri*, but uses it in a novel way to increase expressive precision.

Laz both challenges and complements linguistic theory with its grammatical complexity, including typologically rare features such an active-ergative case system (Demirok & Öztürk, 2023). The morphological encoding of spatial relations in Laz–an elaborated system that deploys 27 verbal prefixes–fills a predicted gap in the spatial encoding typology (Acedo Matellán, 2016). This demonstrates the value of Laz to our understanding of how languages encode spatial relations via elaborate morphological affixation, as is well attested elsewhere in the Caucasus (Comrie & Polinsky, 1998). It is exciting to think how much more Laz will contribute to the linguistic and cognitive sciences theory as its dialect varieties are documented.

Legacy sources, even if flawed, help fill gaps in language documentation. Kikvidze and Pachulia (2023) describe the lexicographic explorations of 19th century British diplomat and amateur linguist Demetrius Peacock (1887). While Laz was historically under-documented in comparison to nearby Caucasus languages, it has a colorful history of amateurs and scholars dating as far back as Spanish philologist Lorenzo Hervás y Panduro (1735-1809), who diligently collected Laz words, creating a continuity of written sources.

Laz lexicography is thus elevated as an essential activity in language documentation, and a valued historical record. The vital tradition collecting Laz words continues to the present day with works such as Çağatay's (2020) *The Dictionary of Laz Plant Names*, summarized below, and other Laz dictionaries (e.g., Aleksiva & Avcı-BucaklişI, 2009). As Şirin and Yaman (2023) report, Laz lexicography has now entered the digital age, with a range of different lexicographic models being applied.

Figure 0.1 - Laz words as documented by Hervás y Panduro (1787), with Italian and Turkish equivalents.



	Primo dialetto Lesgo.	*Lingua Turca.*
Calzoni. . . .	scalvan. . . .	scalvan.
Capelli	toma	tui.
Donna	okurza	koint.
Forno	furun	furün.
Montagna . . .	daghi	dägh.
Nuvola. . . .	pula.	bulut.
Sole.	giara	gyunes.
Uccello. . . .	kinczi	kus (144).

Figure 0.2 - Laz words–as compared with Georgian and Mingrelian–from Peacock (1887).

English.	Georgian.	Mingrelian.	Laz.	Swanetian.	Abkhazian.
Woman	Rali	Ossuri	Okhordja	Zural	Abhüs
Wife	Tsoli	Tchili	Tchili	Yekhv	Abhüs
Child	Bofshi	Tchkhitchkha	Berre	Bebshv	Atchkue
Son	Vaji	Skwa	Bidji	Ghezal-Tchkint	Apá
Daughter	Rali	Dzgabi	Bozo	Dina	Aphá
Slave	Rma	Rotchi	Rële	Glekh	Akhashala=Apü
Cultivator	Tokhneli	Makhatchkali	Makhatchkali	Mukhni	Adghï-khopshi
Shepherd	Mtskessi	Tchkwishi	Tchkeshi	Muldegh	Akhtchi
God	Ghmerti	Ghoronti	Tanghrï	Ghermet	Antcha
Devil	Eskmaki	Mazakwali	Sheitan	Ashma	Aüsta
Sun	Mze	Bja	Mjora	Mlok	Amre
Moon	Mtvari	Tuta	Tuta	Doshdul	Amze
Star	Varsklavi	Muritskhi	Muritskhi	Amtgvaek	Eyetsua

3. Laz linguistic ecology

Laz endangerment and vitality arises from many contributing factors, across time, space, and populations. As the state having the largest Laz population, Turkey's political ideology has played a crucial role. Summarizing the plight of Laz since the 1923 founding of the Turkish Republic, Öner (2015) writes: "as…the history of Republican Turkey suggests, one of the key aims of the state was to control education and to endorse Turkish as a tool for asserting the national identity. In that sense, multilingualism has also been perceived as a threat to national unity."

Applying a language ecology framework to Laz, Eren (2023) shows that forces as diverse as topography, tea plantations, roads, and water sources also come into play. He concludes that "the shift and loss of Laz can be interpreted as simply a strategy that Laz speakers employ to adapt to the changing socio-economic structure" (p. 23). While this is true of almost any endangered language, Laz proves that generalizations should be avoided in looking at any

endangerment scenario. Local history, nuances of geography, state policy, land inheritance patterns, customary law, the forced Turkicization of Laz personal names, and other local factors all exerted specific pressures on Laz, constituting its unique linguistic ecology. These factors may also hold the key to Laz survival, which requires a unique strategy.

One approach is evident in the careful positioning of Laz as unthreatening to Turkish language hegemony, and not a separatist movement. Laz activists take care to affirm the unity of the Turkish nation, while still asking if there is a place for Laz within a plurilingual Turkey. In 2012, thanks to these efforts at Laz visibility, Laz was recognized by the Ministry of Education as being among Turkey's "Living Languages and Dialects (LLDs)" eligible to receive government support for pedagogy (Bilmez & Çağatay, 2021). This resulted in government supported Laz elective language courses, beginning in 2012. Despite their high political-symbolic value, the courses had low enrollments, and the authors assess the program to have been a failure. But many parallel efforts to sustain Laz continue, and some hopeful signs are apparent.

If Laz is to survive, it will be due to the efforts of its speakers, and so their attitudes, beliefs and practices are consequential. How do Laz speakers and heritage speakers think and talk about the current state of their language? In her participatory ethnographic study, Türk-Yiğitalp (2023) explores the question of "what it means for its speakers that Lazuri is an endangered language and how they make sense of the process of language 'loss' or 'endangerment'." She cautions that idealized and valuative notions of who is a native speaker obscure the messier, more complex practices that characterize the extended Laz speech community. Speakers' own explanations about the current state of Laz referenced the generational and urban/rural divide. They used metaphors of forgetting and loss, and described spatial dislocation from isolated highlands to more urban lowlands to explain the state of Laz. Ideas of naturalness and purity are also common in these speakers' narratives, describing rural Laz children said to speak "beautifully" and "like a nightingale." Heritage speakers expressed negative views towards borrowing and code-mixing, as indicating the decline of an idealized pure form of Laz to an impure, mixed form. Internalized attitudes about the dominance of Turkish, and the subordinate position of Laz–hardly ever spoken in a 'pure' form–may discourage younger speakers from using Laz in their multilingual repertoires. If Laz is to be revitalized, the author concludes, "acknowledging the more diverse uses of Lazuri along with other languages in one's repertoire would be a more productive path forward."

4. Laz environmental linguistics

Laz dialect diversity is set against a backdrop of the extreme linguistic and biological diversity of the Caucasus region and is a key component of it. Laz thus makes a significant contribution to both biodiversity studies and environmental linguistics. Laz belongs to the Caucasus language hotspot, home to 52 languages belonging to 13 genetic units (language families). Laz also lies within the Caucasus biodiversity hotspot, "one of the most biologically rich regions on Earth…among the planet's 25 most diverse and endangered hotspots" (Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, 2003, p. 4). The region has 6,500 species of vascular plants, a quarter of which are found nowhere else–"the highest level of endemism in the temperate world" (CEPF, 2003, p. 7). In terms of animals, the West Lesser Caucasus Corridor–the subregion where Laz is spoken–has been identified as a large herbivore hotspot and may still host rare carnivores such as the Caucasian leopard (*Panthera pardus tulliana*) (Gokturk et al., 2011). Thus situated, Laz contains a wealth of environmental knowledge about plants, landscapes, and traditional lifeways.

But Laz ethnobotanical knowledge is vanishing, perhaps even faster than the language itself. As Çağatay (2020) notes: "Factors such as the end of the traditional agricultural economy, urbanization, migration and the gradual withdrawal of Laz language from modern life has led to the endangering of plant names in particular. This knowledge, which is preserved only in people who have a relationship with agriculture and animal husbandry over a certain age, will be forgotten with this generation." Çağatay's Dictionary of Laz Plant Names lists 1,064 vernacular plant names belonging to 335 taxa, a truly impressive inventory of botanical knowledge. The author notes that it is mostly Laz women who are the bearers of this tradition, and that plant names differ from village to village, thus hinting at an even greater underlying diversity.

As ethnobotanists Kazancı et al. (2020, p. 1) explain: "The Mountains of the Western Lesser Caucasus with its rich plant diversity, multicultural and multilingual nature host diverse ethnobotanical knowledge related to medicinal plants. However, cross-cultural medicinal ethnobotany and patterns of plant knowledge have not yet been investigated in the region." In their ethnobotanical study, the researchers identified 152 native wild plant species and 817 species-use combinations, representing a rich but previously undocumented knowledge base. In comparing findings from Georgia and Turkey, they found that: "Participants in both countries use a significant number of shared species for different purposes. This lack of shared ethnomedicinal knowledge might be a sign of different epidemiology of certain ailments in communities studied as well as various medicinal knowledge

systems in ethnolinguistically diverse communities on both sites of the border." The authors found that of the 817 documented species-use combinations, only 9% were shared across the Georgia-Turkey border, even though the communities are in close proximity, inhabit the same mountain landscapes and practice similar semi-nomadic agro-pastoralist lifeways. This study also provides an example of Laz's contributions to scientific knowledge on two fronts. First, the lead author is of Laz origin and is working to document the traditional ethnobotanical wisdom of her community, the Laz people (Kazancı et al., 2021). Second, although the botanical interviews were conducted mostly in Turkish, some sites are on Laz territory. The researchers consulted two Laz families who contributed a total of 28 Laz plant names, with uses ranging from basketry to medicine, to musical instruments (C. Kazancı & S. Oruç, personal communication). Some of the botanical knowledge may thus be understood as belonging to Laz culture, even though narrated in Turkish. A similar ethnobotanical study (Bussmann et al., 2020) was carried out at multiple sites in Georgia, including the Adjara region where the Laz people live. For this study, Laz-speaking participants were interviewed in the Laz language in their homes and gardens. The resulting data set of 276 plant species–although showing a predominance of Georgian names–includes 30 Laz plant names, identified by consultants as useful for nutritional, medicinal, veterinary, and ritual purposes.

5. Valuing Laz

The Laz language should be treasured for many reasons. For the intrinsic value Laz holds for its speakers and heritage speakers, as part of their identity. For Laz grammatical complexity that advances scientific understanding. For Laz's resurgent presence that affirms the multilingual and multicultural nature of the Turkish polity. Laz activists and artists are expanding their Nananena (i.e., mother tongue) into new domains of inquiry and creativity. Laz musicians and performers are winning over a national and global audience with their talent (Taşkın, 2011; Solomon, 2017). Laz journalists, politicians, and scientists are reaffirming its presence and value, most visibly in Turkey but also in Georgia and internationally. Linguists and philologists creating new scholarship on Laz are to be commended for their care and advocacy, and for bringing Laz language matters to a wide audience. May these collective efforts to sustain Laz in the 21st century meet with great success.

REFERENCES

Acedo Matellán, V. (2016). *The morphosyntax of transitions: A case study in Latin and other languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Aleksiva, İ., & Avcı-Bucaklişi, İ. (2009). *Svacoxo: Laz yer adları sözlüğü*. Kadıköy, İstanbul: Kolkhis Laz Kültür Derneği.

Bilmez, Bülent & Çağatay, İ. (2021). *Elective Language Courses on Living Languages and Dialects in the Context of Language Rights. LAZ LANGUAGE EXAMPLE (2012-2021). SUMMARY.* https://www.academia.edu/48803964/A_RIGHT_UNCLAIMED_Elective_Language_Courses_on_Living_Languages_and_Dialects_in_the_Context_of_Language_Rights_LAZ_LANGUAGE_EXAMPLE_2012_2021_SUMMARY. Accessed January 2022.

Bussmann, R. W., Paniagua Zambrana, N. Y., Sikharulidze, S., Kikvidze, Z., Darchidze, M., Manvelidze, Z., Ekhvaia, J., Kikodze, D., Khutsishvili, M., Batsatsashvili, K., & Hart, R. E. (2020). From the Sea to the Mountains – Plant Use in Adjara, Samegrelo and Kvemo Svaneti, Sakartvelo (Republic of Georgia), Caucasus. *Ethnobotany Research and Applications*, vol. 20, June 2020, pp. 1-34.

Çağatay, I. (2020). *Dictionary of Laz Plant Names*. LINCOM Scientific Dictionaries 03. München : Lincom-Europa.

Chenel, L. (n. d.). *500 Laz Proverbs*. https://lynnchenel.com/500-laz-proverbs/. Accessed January 2021.

Comrie, B., & Polinsky, M. (1998). The Great Dagestanian Case Hoax. In A. Siewierska and J. J. Song (eds.) *Case, Typology, and Grammar*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. pp. 95-114.

Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund. (2003). CEPF Ecosystem Profile for the Caucasus Biodiversity Hotspot.

Demirok, Ö., & Öztürk, B. (2023). On the Significance of Laz for Theoretical Research in Linguistics. In Züleyha Ünlü and B. George Hewitt (eds.) *Lazuri: An Endangered Language from Black Sea*. Vernon Press.

Eren, Ö. (2023). Linguistic Variation and Complexity in Laz. In Züleyha Ünlü and B. George Hewitt (eds.) *Lazuri: An Endangered Language from the Black Sea*. Vernon Press.

Gokturk, T., Bucak, F., & Artvinli, T. (2011). Mammalian fauna of Artvin. *African Journal of Agricultural Research* 6, no. 6: 1418–1425.

Haznedar, B., & Avcı-Bucaklişi, İ. (2023). Current Status of Laz. In Züleyha Ünlü and B. George Hewitt (eds.) *Lazuri: An Endangered Language from the Black Sea*. Vernon Press..

Hervás y Panduro, L. (1787). *Vocabolario poligloto con prolegomeni sopra piu' di 150 lingue dove sono delle scoperte nuove, ed utili all'antica storia dell'uman genere, ed alla cognizione del meccanismo delle parole. Opera dell'abate don Lorenzo Hervas socio della Reale Accademia delle Scienze, ed Antichita di Dublino, e dell'Etrusca di Cortona*. Cesena: Per Gregorio Biasini all'insegna di Pallade.

Kazancı, C., Oruç, S. & Mosulishvili, M. (2020). Medicinal ethnobotany of wild plants: a cross-cultural comparison around Georgia-Turkey border, the

Western Lesser Caucasus. *J Ethnobiology Ethnomedicine* 16, 71 (2020). https://doi.org/10.1186/s13002-020-00415-y.

Kikvidze, Z. & Pachulia, L. (2023). A spotlight on the 'Lazian' Lexis: Evidence from a 19th-century lexicographic resource. In Züleyha Ünlü and B. George Hewitt (eds.) *Lazuri: An Endangered Language from the Black Sea*. Vernon Press.

Kazancı, C., Oruç, S., Mosulishvili, M., & Wall, J. (2021). Cultural Keystone Species without Boundaries: A Case Study on Wild Woody Plants of Transhumant People around the Georgia-Turkey Border (Western Lesser Caucasus). *Journal of Ethnobiology*, *41*(4), 447-464, (21 December 2021).

Kutscher, S. (2008). The language of the Laz in Turkey: Contact-induced change or gradual language loss? *Turkic Languages* 12, pp. 82-102.

Şirin, F. & Yaman, H. (2023). Principles of Designing a New Dictionary Model for Endangered Languages: The Case of Laz. In Züleyha Ünlü and B. George Hewitt (eds.) *Lazuri: An Endangered Language from the Black Sea*. Vernon Press.

Solomon, T. (2017). Who Are the Laz? Cultural Identity and the Musical Public Sphere on the Turkish Black Sea Coast. *The World of Music*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 83–113. Florian Noetzel GmbH Verlag, VWB - Verlag für Wissenschaft und Bildung, Schott Music GmbH & Co. KG, Bärenreiter. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44841947.

Taşkın, N. (2011). *Representing and Performing Laz Identity: 'This is Not a Rebel Song!'* MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University.

Tastekin, F. (2013). Turkey's Laz awakening. *Al-Monitor*. December 1, 2013. https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2013/12/laz-people-of-turkey-awaken.html#ixzz7GnkUzr3M. Accessed January 2022.

Türk-Yiğitalp, G. (2023). Speaking Lazuri Beautifully: Discourses on Lazuri as an Endangered Language. In Züleyha Ünlü and B. George Hewitt (eds.) *Lazuri: An Endangered Language from the Black Sea*. Vernon Press.

Yuksel, P. & Aleksiva, İ. Ç., (2023). Stories of Perseverance: Using the Lazuri Alboni for the Emergence of Literary Genres in a South Caucasian Endangered Language. In Züleyha Ünlü and B. George Hewitt (eds.) *Lazuri: An Endangered Language from the Black Sea*. Vernon Press.

PAGES MISSING

FROM THIS FREE SAMPLE

Index

A

Abkhazia, 119, 120
Abkhazian, 63, 64, 69, 84, 141
accusative, 35, 36, 101, 102
Acedo Matellán, xlii, 54, 56
active-ergative, xxxvii, 35, 36, 37
Adjarian, 80, 81, 84, 120, 139
adpositions, 50, 59
affixal, 56, 58, 99
affixation, 87, 96, 97, 99
affricates, 78, 82
agreement calculus, 34, 44, 45
allative case, 53, 55, 57
alphabet, 114, 115, 119, 120, 121, 122, 128, 129, 131, 132, 133, 137, 203
ambiguity, 105, 106, 107, 191
ancestral language, 114, 116, 138, 141, 142
applied linguistics, 201, 204, 209, 210, 211
Ardeşen, xiv, 7, 116, 123, 126, 127, 128, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 141, 144, 150, 181
Arhavi, 1, 2, 7, 83, 116, 123, 127, 133, 135, 144, 150, 181
Armenian, 82, 88, 119
Artvin, 7, 82, 115, 116, 119, 127, 144, 177, 181
Asia Polyglotta, 65
Asian Journal of London, 80
Asiliskender, 89, 109
Atina, 7, 65, 116, 123, 127, 128, 144, 150
Atlas of the World Languages in Danger, 87
attitudes, 4, 16, 115, 177, 196

B

Batumi, 3, 63, 66, 67, 123, 144
Bengal Asiatic Society, 68, 81
bilingual, xiii, xiv, xvii
bilingual speech community, 4
bilingualism literature, 17
biodiversity, 114
biological diversity, 6
biotic communities, 115
Black Sea, 11, 13, 23, 25, 28, 29, 30, 31, 115, 118, 136, 139, 199
blue-collar participants, 9
Boğaziçi University, xiii, xvii, 1, 59, 111, 115, 175
Borçka, 7, 116, 123, 127, 144, 150
bound form, 98

C

Çamlıhemşin, 7, 144
case system, 34, 35, 36, 37, 86, 87, 101, 102, 103, 111
Caspian Sea, 118
Caucasian, xvii, 3, 63, 67, 68, 79, 81, 83, 84, 97, 113, 114, 115, 118, 119, 138, 141, 202
Caucasus, 20, 60, 67, 68, 79, 83, 84, 111, 115, 140, 141, 174
child-directed speech, 12, 14, 16
classical world literature, 130
cognitive, xviii, 61, 103, 107, 138

competence in Laz, 2, 6, 8, 14, 17
constructive discourse, 178
contact outcomes, 90
contact situations, 90, 95
contact-induced speech community, 139
continental European languages, 92
corpus usage, xxvi, 145
COVID-19, 96
creoles, 90, 96, 109
critically endangered, 5
cultural heritage, 114, 146
current status of Laz, 3, 90, 93, 201, 202
Çxala dialect, 127, 134

D

Dagestanian, 119
DAT, 38, 39
data selection and collection, 145
database planning, 145
dative, 38, 45
DCT, 36, 37, 38, 39
decline in Laz, 12
de-dentalized allophone, 79
deixis, 50
Dependent Case Theory, 36
derived intransitives, 45
derived transitives, 45
Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 116, 140
dialect alteration, 128
dialectal diversity, 65
dialectal morpho-syntactic, 86
dialectal variation, 85, 86, 87, 108, 202
dialects of Laz, 85
dictionary writing, 115, 162
differentially marked, 35
directional and locative meanings, 51
document type definition, 145
domain analysis, 87
dual residence, 8
Düzce, 7

E

Eastern Anatolia, 6
Eastern Black Sea, 3
ecological approach, 86, 88, 89, 97, 107
ecosystem, 114, 178
ejective, 78, 82
English headwords, 63, 64, 69, 77
English-Megrelian, 81
ergative case, xxxvii, 34, 35, 36, 37, 58, 59
Ergative-Absolutive system, 86
ethnolects, 92
ethnolinguistic vitality, 5
Étude Sur La Langue Laze, 120
Evliya Çelebi, 64, 82, 83
expletive, 99

F

fairy tales, 113, 129, 130, 137
familial interactions, 86, 87
fiction, 130, 135
Figure, 53, 56
Fındıklı, 7, 116, 123, 127, 144, 181
first-generation migrants, 2
form complexity, 107
formal education, 2
free form, 98

G

gene pool, 97
geographical area, 88, 90, 168
Georgia, xvii, xviii, 3, 66, 84, 86, 113, 118, 119, 120, 123, 136, 137, 140
Georgian, xvii, 3, 60, 63, 64, 67, 69, 79, 81, 83, 84, 101, 119, 120, 121, 140, 141, 144, 174
Germanic and Slavic, 56
GIDS, 5, 115, 117
glossonym, 65, 69
glottalised, 78, 82
Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale, 5, 115, 117
Ground referent, 52, 57

H

headwords, 69, 147
Hemshin, 88
heritage speakers, 2
heritage vernacular', 88
history, 63, 64, 84, 114, 138
Hopa, 2, 7, 116, 123, 127, 136, 137, 144, 181

I

Iberian, 84, 113, 115
identity, 20, 65, 111, 113, 121, 122, 133, 138, 168, 187, 194, 198, 203, 206
ideologies, xvi, 138, 177, 179, 180, 183, 184, 185, 194, 197, 198, 199, 206
idiolectal variation, 107
idiosyncratic, 45, 49, 165, 172
imperfective, xvii, 45, 46, 47
indigenous, 20, 113, 114, 115, 118, 119, 131, 134, 135, 138, 141
Indo-European, 118
industrial revolution, 114
industrialization, 6, 89, 90, 92, 96
inflection classes, 45, 49, 163
inflectional morphology, 85, 102, 103, 106
informal personal contexts, xxxvi, 16
Instructions of Compiling Vocabularies and Sentences, 68
intellectual wealth, 114, 115, 139
intergenerational transmission, 1, 3, 4, 16, 18, 116, 117, 144
interlocutors, 11, 12, 184
intransitive verbs, 37, 46
inventory complexity, 106, 107
Ireland, 92
Irish, 92, 94, 199
Istanbul, xiii, xvii, 1, 6, 115, 175, 177, 181, 199

J

Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 63, 66, 84, 141

K

Kartvelian, xvi, xviii, 20, 60, 65, 101, 110, 119, 120, 121, 141, 202

L

language contact, xvii, 4, 17, 100, 109, 111, 183, 193, 194, 195
language endangerment, 3, 58, 86, 89, 94, 177, 179, 199, 212

language extinction, 114, 178
language fluency, 113, 203
language loss, xiii, 16, 20, 110, 114, 117, 141, 177, 179, 182, 183, 184, 199
language maintenance, xiii, 19, 114, 115, 138
language policy, xvi, 139, 141
language preservation, xxxvi, 5
language proficiency, 10, 17, 122, 128, 129, 182, 183, 184, 191
language shift, 3, 4, 5, 15, 16, 19, 21, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 92, 93, 110, 140, 177, 179
language transmission, 5
language valorisation, 138
Language Vitality and Endangerment, 5
Latin, xlii, 56, 58, 115, 119, 120, 122, 128
Latinized Lazuri alphabet, 113
Laz, xiii, xvii, xxxv, xxxviii, xlii, 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 63, 64, 65, 69, 75, 77,79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 105, 108, 110, 111, 113, 115, 116, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 127, 129, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 141, 142, 144, 145, 146, 149, 150, 154, 156, 157, 158, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 173, 174, 175, 181, 194, 199, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 208, 211
Laz Cultural institute, 13
Laz language, 201
Lazian, xliii, 63, 64, 66, 67, 69, 75, 79, 81, 82, 84, 141, 202
Lazistan, 80, 84, 120
Lazona, xxxvi, 115, 127, 138
Laz-Turkish, 8, 9
Lazuri, xvi, xxxv, xxxix, xlii, xliii, 96, 113, 114, 115, 116, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 141, 154, 157, 158, 160, 174, 175, 177, 179, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191,192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 203, 206
Lazuri Alboni, xliii, 113, 115, 121, 138, 139, 203
lazuri nena, 119
Leibnizian sampling preferences, 69
lemma, 147, 164, 170, 173
Lesga Langauge, 119
Lesser Caucasus, 115
lexical, 54, 55, 56, 57, 61, 63, 64, 65, 77, 83, 120, 123, 146, 147, 151, 152, 153, 159, 161, 162, 164, 165, 166, 167, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173
lexicographer, 63, 65, 151, 166
lexicography, xviii, 81, 82, 83, 145, 146, 150, 160
lexicon, xiii, 60, 147, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 173, 190
lexico-semantic groups, 63, 69
lexis, 64, 75, 82
Lezgian language, 65
Li, 16, 17, 20, 74
lingua franca, 114, 193
Lingua Lasga, 65
Lingua Lesga, 65, 119, 140

linguicide, 114
linguistic complexity, 85, 86, 87, 88, 95, 99, 109, 111
linguistic diversity, xxxvi, 5, 18, 114
linguistic variation, 201
List of English Words and Sentences, 68
literacy, xiii, xvii, 5, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 18, 19, 114, 122, 138
literary books, xxxvi, 113, 115, 122, 128, 138
Living Laz project, 3
loanwords, 128, 189, 190, 191, 194
local ethnic language, 116
Luka Lazuri, 129
lušnu nin, 119

M

macrostructure, 147, 148, 150, 153, 165
margaluri nina, 119
markers, xiii, xvii, 34, 58, 97, 99, 100, 101, 104, 106, 107
Marmara, 3, 6, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 23, 25, 28, 29, 30, 31, 144
MAXQDA, 181
megastructure, 147, 153, 154
Megrelian, xvii, 3, 63, 64, 69, 81, 83, 119, 174
memoir, 130, 136
mesostructure, 147, 152, 153
metadata, 145, 147, 151, 154, 164, 165, 166, 167
microstructure, 147, 151, 153, 160, 165, 169
millet, 88, 109
Mingrelian, 63, 67, 69, 80, 83, 84, 119, 120, 137, 141, 144
Ministry of Education, 13, 18, 89
minoritised language, 179, 180, 181, 196
monolingual, xiii, xiv, 87, 148, 172, 180, 188, 191, 192, 194
mother tongue, 2, 5, 8, 15, 18, 116, 133, 136, 138, 179
Motion Event, 55
motion verbs, 50, 56, 57, 58
mountain of tongues, 118
multilingual, 1, 17, 20, 65, 82, 89, 109, 118, 138, 145, 162, 163, 164, 167, 168

N

narratives, 178, 179, 182, 183
nation, 88, 92, 194, 198
national language, 88, 93, 94, 158, 185
nationalism, 89, 114
nationalistic policy, 89
native dialects, xxxvi, 138
native Lazuri speakers, 116, 136
natural languages, 34, 45
neologies, 128, 129, 137
New World, 92, 94
North Caucasian, 118, 119
North Central Caucasian, 119
Northeast Caucasian, 118, 119
Northeastern Black Sea, 113
Northeastern Turkey, 90, 91
Northwest Caucasian, 118, 119

O

Occupation, 12, 22, 24, 27, 29, 30, 31
OE, 88, 89, 94, 95
official status, 5, 13

Only Laz, 8, 11
oral contexts, 11, 16
orthography, 115, 120, 138, 139, 147, 155, 170
Ottoman, 88, 90, 93, 96, 109, 110, 113, 116, 120, 144

P

Partial paradigm of Comparative Case Forms, 101
particles, 50, 59, 61
path-based typology, 50, 55, 56
Pazar, xiii, xvii, 1, 2, 6, 34, 59, 60, 65, 85, 111, 116, 123, 127, 144, 150, 181, 206
pedagogy of endangered languages, 208
Persian, 113, 115, 189, 194
phonemic system of Laz, 78, 82
poesy, 130, 132, 133
poetry, 113, 129, 130, 131, 132, 134
Political Fiction, 130, 133
Pomak, 88, 93
pragmatics, 105, 106
prefix, 37, 38, 39, 40, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 97
pre-root vowel, 43, 45, 47

R

receptive bilingualism, 17, 196
reflexive constructions, 85, 87, 96, 202
reflexive marker, 96, 99
reflexive pronoun, 96, 97
reflexivity, 85, 99
reflexivization, 37, 85, 97, 98, 99
residential segregation, 92
revitalization, 20, 115, 117, 140, 144, 146, 160, 162, 198, 211, 212
Rize, 6, 115, 116, 119, 123, 127, 144, 177, 181
Romance, 56
Royal Asiatic Society, 63, 66, 80, 81, 84, 141
rural areas, 6, 10, 11, 86, 87, 91, 94, 116
Russia, 66, 67
Russian, 20, 83, 84, 113, 116, 120, 144

S

Sarpi, 3, 119, 136
satellite-framed languages, 56, 57, 58
semantic relation, 35, 37
semantics, xvii, 46, 47, 54, 59, 61, 99, 147, 158
semasiological, 147, 148, 150
sense of cultural identity and consciousness, 113, 203
Seyahâtnâme, 64
short stories, 113, 130, 134, 135
socialization, 15, 116, 141
South Caucasian, xiii, xliii, 3, 59, 87, 97, 113, 118, 119, 144, 203
southeastern Abkhazia, 119
Southwest Caucasian language, 113, 114
spatial prefixes, 49, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58
specimina, 64, 65, 79, 81
speech community, 115, 139
stops, 78, 82
strong satellite-framed languages, 56, 58
structural complexity, 94, 96

Suanetian, 79
suffixes, xiii, 107, 151
Svan, 3, 63, 64, 69, 79, 81, 119, 144, 174
Svanetian, 67, 81, 84, 141
Svenonius, 50, 51, 54, 61
Swanetian, 63, 69, 84
symbolic, 13, 198
syntactic hierarchy, 34, 41, 42, 43, 44, 58
syntax, xiii, xvii, 59, 60, 95, 99, 102, 103, 104, 110
system complexity, 85, 94, 99

T

the Ottoman Empire, 88, 109, 120
theoretical research, xlii, 33, 34, 38, 44, 45, 49, 58, 202
thesauri, 148, 150, 164
thesaurus, 145, 147, 148, 158
transitive, 36, 38, 39, 47, 48, 59
translation, 63, 82, 83, 120, 123, 129, 133, 134, 157, 168, 182, 186
transliteration, 63, 68, 77, 78, 79, 82
Turkey, xiii, xiv, xvi, xvii, xxxvi, xlii, 1, 3, 6, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 82, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 95, 110, 111, 113, 115, 116, 118, 119, 121, 122, 123, 127, 129, 130, 131, 136, 138, 139, 140, 141, 144, 194, 195, 198, 199, 203, 206
Turkic, xvii, 20, 110, 118, 141, 199
Turkish, xiii, xiv, xvi, 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29, 36, 39, 41, 79, 82, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 93, 94, 96, 97, 98, 101, 116, 117, 121, 128, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 148, 150, 156, 166, 177, 181, 182, 186, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 199, 203

U

unergatives, 37, 38, 39, 40, 47, 49, 57, 98
UNESCO, 1, 3, 5, 15, 17, 20, 21, 87, 114, 140, 141, 179, 199
UNESCO's classification, 1, 15, 17
urban areas, 3, 6, 10, 11, 92, 93, 94

V

verb classification system, xiii, 34, 45, 49, 202
verbal agreement system, 34, 40
verbal reflexive, 96, 97
verbal spatial-marking system, 34, 202
verb-framed languages, 56, 58
Viçe dialect, 127, 128, 130, 134

W

weak satellite-framed languages, 56, 58
weddings, xxxvi, 8, 13, 16
white-collar jobs, 9, 11, 13
Wisdom Literature, 130, 133
WordNet, 148, 150, 153
World War I, 89, 135
written script, 114, 115
written transmission, 139

X

Xopa dialect, 127, 131, 132, 133

Y

younger generations, 1, 8, 15, 16, 86, 87, 88, 96, 98, 183, 184, 185, 197