ENDANGERED LANGUAGES OF TURKEY

2023

Edited by

Metin Bağrıaçık
Ömer Demirok
Balkız Öztürk

written by

Yasemin Oral, Murat Topçu, Neşe Kaya, Ömer Eren, Melike Üzüm, Ioanna Sitaridou, Metin Bağrıaçık, İlyas Arslan

This book has been prepared with the financial support of the European Union within the scope of the Laz-Circassian Civil Society Network Project. The views and opinions expressed in this book are those of the author(s), the Laz Institute and the Istanbul Caucasus Cultural Association. These views and opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union, which cannot be held responsible for them in any way.

This book has been prepared within the scope of the project number IPA/2020/414-772 titled “Network of Laz and Circassian Civil Societies/ Laz-Çerkes Sivil Toplum Ağı”, which was signed between the European Union Delegation to Turkey and the Laz Institute, with the Istanbul Caucasus Cultural Association as a project partner, dated 06 May 2020.

Endangered Languages in Turkey

2023

Edited by

Metin Bağrıaçık

Ömer Demirok

Balkız Öztürk

written by

Yasemin Oral, Murat Topçu, Neşe Kaya, Ömer Eren,
Melike Üzüm, Ioanna Sitaridou, Metin Bağrıaçık, İlyas Arslan

LAZ ENSTİTÜSÜ
2013

"**European Union Laz-Circassian Civil Society Network Project - 2020-2023, Reference: IPA/2020/414-772**" (Avrupa Birliği, Laz-Çerkes Sivil Toplum Ağı Projesi - 2020-2023, Referans: IPA/2020/414-772)

Original Title: Endangered Languages In Turkey-2023

Project Implementing Agency: The Laz Institute & the Istanbul Caucasus Cultural Association
Project Coordinator: Eylem Bostancı Avcı
Editor-in-Chief: İsmail Avcı Bucaklişi
Cover Design: Çiğdem Subaş (Merhaba Grafik)
Written by: Yasemin Oral, Murat Topçu, Neşe Kaya, Ömer Eren, Melike Üzüm, Ioanna Sitaridou, Metin Bağrıaçık, İlyas Arslan
Edited by (Editörler): Metin Bağrıaçık, Ömer Demirok, Balkız Öztürk

ISBN: 978-605-70129-6-8
Publisher Certificate Number: 41340

Halitağa Cad. No:32/27 Kadıköy - İstanbul
Tel: 05324827765
laz.enstitu@lazenstitu.com

Printed at: Fotokitap Fotoğraf Ürünleri Paz. ve Tic. Ltd. Şti.
Oruçreis Mah. Tekstilkent, B-5 Blok, No: 10-AH111 Esenler – İstanbul
Tel: +90 (212) 629 0385 - +90 (541) 231 1887
Printing House Certificate Number: 47448

Endangered Languages in Turkey

2023

Contents

Abbreviations used in this book

AMG	Asia Minor Greek
DHİBRA	Network on Language Rights Monitoring, Documentation and Reporting
FL	first language
HADIG	Organization of Research and Preservation of Hemshin Culture
KAFFED	Federation of Caucasus Associations
NENA	North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic
NWC	Northwest Caucasian
RTÜK	Radio and Television Supreme Council of Turkey
SL	second language
TADNET	The Network of Endangered Languages in Turkey
TRT	Turkish Radio and Television Corporation

ABL	ablative
ACC	accusative
ASP	aspect
CAUS	causative
DEF	definite
DEIC	deictic
ERG	ergative
F	feminine
GEN	genitive
IMP	imperative
IND	indicative
INF	infinitive
LOC	locative
M	masculine
N	neuter
NOM	nominative
OBL	oblique
PL	plural
PRS	present
PST	past
PTCP	participle
REL	relativizer
SG	singular
TH	theme suffix

FOREWORD

The Laz Institute proudly presents the valuable book, “The Endangered Languages in Turkey”, which is a product of the Laz-Circassian Civil Society Network project, financially supported by the European Union. This project, run jointly by the Laz Institute and the Istanbul Caucasian Cultural Association, has taken significant steps in preservation and development of Turkey's linguistic diversity since its commencement on July 1, 2020.

“The Endangered Languages in Turkey”, which brings together eight important chapters written by influential scholars on different endangered languages of Turkey represents more than just the outcome of a project. It symbolizes a step towards the future, a hope, and an effort to preserve our cultural heritage. We hope this work will raise awareness and interest in the preservation and development of our languages in society.

Beside this book, the Laz-Circassian Civil Society Network produced the following valuable outputs. First, a report on the Course of Living Languages and Dialects were prepared. Second, a platform titled TADNET (Endangered Languages Network) was established to raise awareness within the general community about language extinction and to help the endangered languages of Turkey survive into the future generations. TADNET is not only one of the first initiatives in Turkey in this field but it also sets a good example for future attempts across the globe. Third, community networks were established among school teachers who are native speakers of Laz or Circassian, and training programs were organized for language educators in cooperation with the Ministry of National Education. Fourth, campaigns were run to

promote addition of elective courses of Living Languages and Dialects in middle schools. Fifth, collaboration with national and international academic communities facilitated the exchange of knowledge on the status of languages worldwide and the expertise in keeping them alive. Sixth, Digital Activism Training programs for Endangered Languages were organized. Seventh, to support Turkey's linguistic diversity in the academic field, the International Symposium on Endangered Languages, and the International Conference on Caucasian Languages were held at Istanbul Bilgi University, and the Endangered Languages Fairy Tale Festival was held in Kadıköy Yeldeğirmeni ART. Finally, a number of language maps, audible dictionaries, and learning websites were created, and educational content in Laz and Circassian was prepared.

We would like to thank the civil society organizations within TADNET wholeheartedly for their support in carrying out this project, namely, Zaza-Der, Istanbul Pomak Cultural Association (İSPOD), Midyat Syriac Cultural Association, Georgian Cultural House, Suryaniler.com, Circassian Associations Federation (KAFFED), HADİG-Hemşin Culture Research and Preservation Association, Romani Godi, and our project partner, the Istanbul Caucasian Cultural Association.

Finally, as the Laz-Circassian Civil Society Network Project team, we extend our gratitude to the European Union, the Ministry of National Education, academics from inside and outside the country, volunteers, and everyone who contributed to this effort for their financial support of our project.

Ntsaşa extit…
Ismail Avcı Bucaklişi
Chairman, the Laz Institute

PREFACE

We are (still) living on a planet of linguistic minorities—half of the world population speaks one or more of 7000-odd languages while the other half has one of the 20-odd top languages as their mother tongue (Lo Bianco 2017). One thing we know about these roughly 7000 languages—oral or signed—is that they have been disappearing at an alarming rate; one fifth of them are not transmitted across generations (Eberhard et al. 2023) and one third are seriously endangered (Lo Bianco 2017). Estimates suggest that between 50 and 95% of the living languages will either disappear or become seriously endangered by the end of 2100. This rate of extinction is shown to exceed the rate of loss of biodiversity (Sutherland 2003). The loss of diversity in languages means loss of diversity in cultures, knowledge, and ecosystems. The speakers of these vanishing languages however have enough political, economic, and sociocultural reasons, forced or not, for putting a halt on the transmission of linguistic knowledge to the next generation, and for promoting instead the acquisition of some prestigious ones. The loss is significantly at high stakes in economically developed regions. Thus, countries or regions facing rapid economic growth run the highest risk of becoming major points of language death (Amano et al. 2014).

No single country seems to have made a significant progress in altering this pessimistic picture yet and Turkey is naturally not an exception. Born out of the ashes of a multicultural empire, Turkey's restrictive attitude in the post-WWI era towards its minorities to manage linguistic and cultural uniformity at the national level, along with industrialization, was a major turning point for the fate of its minority languages. The rising awareness for linguistic rights of minorities in the Western world after the WWII did not leak into Turkey's borders for various state-de-

fended reasons and Turkey's stance in confining the term 'minority' only to three non-Muslim communities (Oran 2001:155). Significant steps towards improving, or at best not exacerbating, the situation of the minority languages were taken only after the turn of the 21st century, with the state's initiative for EU harmonization process. Turkey signed the UNESCO-2005 Convention on Diversity of Cultural Expressions in 2006 and the UNESCO-2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2012, both of which involve items concerning the protection of non-official languages. Allowing the establishment of private language institutes to teach minority languages that are not state recognized was the initial step, followed by including courses on some minority languages as electives in the state curriculum, and establishing university departments to study minority languages. Although they are important steps, whether they have brought significant improvement on the status of the minority languages is a moot point.

So far, following the convention used in the UN documents, we have taken linguistic minorities to describe nationals of a state who are numerically inferior groups of people and who speak or sign a language different from that of the majority, who are in a non-dominant position, and, who seek to preserve their distinct linguistic identity, culture, traditions and religion (de Varennes and Kuzborska 2019:32-33). de Varennes and Kuzborska (2019) state the problems this definition brings along, one of which is that the definition excludes non-nationals. Shifting the attention from communities to languages, Eberhard et al. 2023 simply make a distinction between established (both indigenous and non-indigenous) and unestablished languages in each country. Leaving aside the unestablished ones, obviously not because they do not deserve attention but because covering the status of these languages merits further studies, most of the established languages are listed eit-

her as Threatened (6b) or Shifting (7) according to EGIDs classification (cf. Eberhard et al. 2023), with only few that apparently fares better.

This book is neither a global assessment of how state intervention succeeded, failed, or remained neutral to the vitality of the minority languages of Turkey, nor is a rehash the by-now obvious: that all established minority languages of Turkey face a serious threat, like their kin elsewhere. We would rather like to offer up-to-date information from the actual field on the status of these languages, especially on how speakers who wish to reclaim their own language despite prevailing pressures manage or fail in maintaining resilience of their language. Each chapter is devoted to a specific minority language. The chapters provide a historical overview of the language, offering information on the status of the language before and after the establishment of the republic, the current sociolinguistic situation of the languages and on the in-group efforts for maintaining vitality. We only cover a fragment of the 38 established oral languages (according to Eberhard et al. 2023), namely Abkhaz-Abaza, Circassian, Homshetsnak, Laz, Posha, Romeyka, Turoyo and Zaza. There are multiple reasons for why the book has a limited scope, the most important one being our intention to offer field data on the lesser studied ones, on which the information available is fragmentary. We hope that the current book will constitute a framework for forthcoming ones whose scope hopefully extends to cover all minority languages of Turkey, established and unestablished.

References

Amano, T., B. Sandel, H. Eager, E. Bulteau, J-C. Svenning, B. Dalsgaard, C. Rahbek, R. G. Davies & W. J. Sutherland. (2014). "Global distribution and drivers of language extinction risk." In *Proceedings of the Royal So-*

ciety B 281, 20141574. DOI: 10.1098/rspb.2014.1574.

Eberhard, D. M., G. F. Simons, and C. D. Fennig (eds.). (2023). *Ethnologue: Languages of the world*. Twenty-sixth edition (online version). Dallas, Texas: SIL International.

Lo Bianco, J. (2017). "Resolving ethnolinguistic conflict in multi-ethnic societies." *Nature Human Behaviour* 1, 0075. DOI: 10.1038/s41562-017-0085.

Oran, B. (2001). *Küreselleşme ve azınlıklar* (4. basım). Ankara: İmaj Yayınevi.

Sutherland, W. J. (2003). "Parallel extinction risk and global distribution of languages and species." *Nature* 423, 276–279.

de Varennes, F. & E. Kuzborska. (2019). "Minority language rights and standards: definitions and applications at the supranational level." In G. Hogan-Brun & B. O'Rourke (eds.) *The Palgrave handbook of minority languages and communities,* 21–72. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

1 Abkhaz-Abaza

Yasemin Oral

Introduction

Turkey is a multilingual country, with millions of people whose 'mother tongue' is different from Turkish. It is characterized by diversity in ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups such as Arabs, Armenians, Circassians, Kurds, Laz, Jews, Zaza, and others. Furthermore, as Schroeder (2021:44-45) argues, when looking at the large cities especially in the western Turkey, the situation can best be characterized by linguistic 'super diversity'. This is not conducive to describe the existing diversity in terms of cultures of origin or ancestral societies only but is understood as new diversities which are shaped by (also) migration across or above these historical layers. Despite the widely acknowledged consensus on the linguistic diversity of Turkey, there is no officially updated data on the languages currently spoken in Turkey. The most recent data was collected in the 1965 population census according to which there were thirty-six languages spoken in Turkey at the time. According to the projection of 1935 and 1965 censuses made by the Institution of Population at Hacettepe University in 1992, 13.1% of the population spoke other languages as their mother tongue rather than Turkish (cited in Türkdogan 1999:187-88).

A note of caution is due here, however. The mother tongue concept is highly contested and controversial, with diverse definitions in the literature. As Skutnabb-Kangas (2008) puts forward, it is possible to speak

of four major criteria that are generally utilized for defining the concept: origin (i.e. the language one learns first), identification (i.e. the language one identifies with internally & the language one is identified with by others), competence (i.e. the language one knows best) and function (i.e. the language one uses most). Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) argues that for linguistic majorities and/or in the settings marked by monolingualism all the definitions usually converge and thus it might be difficult to see the significance and consequences of the various definitions. She yet questions those above-mentioned criteria regarding the cases of indigenous peoples who have not had the opportunity of learning their parents' or ancestors' languages or in cases where there are no 'native speakers' left and argues for the rights of those people to identify with a language they do not know well or at all. Within such a climate of concern, it is not clear, for example, to what extent the results of the above-mentioned censuses are reflective of the internal identification criterion.

As of 2021, Ethnologue reports that 73% indigenous languages spoken in Turkey are endangered. According to the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger, there are fifteen endangered languages in Turkey. Among these endangered languages spoken in Turkey is Abkhaz-Abaza. The present chapter will first present a general overview of Abkhaz-Abaza including its genetic relations, typology, and geographical distribution together with a historical sketch, which is going to be followed by their current sociolinguistic situation and the revitalization studies regarding them.

General overview and the historical background

Abkhaz and Abaza are closely related languages of the Northwest Caucasian (NWC) language family, together with the Circassian and Ubykh

languages. Traditional homeland of the speakers of NWC languages are the areas to the north and partly to the south of the western part of the Caucasian Ridge including the northeastern coast of the Black Sea (Arkadier and Lander 2020:370). The first wave of Abazas migrated out of Abkhazia over the Klukhor Pass to the North Caucasus in the 14th century to settle around today's Karachay- Cherkessia (Scumacher et al. 2017:62). Over the course of centuries, those who settled on the north slope of the Caucasus became the Abazas, and those on the south slope became the Abkhaz; that is to say, the homeland of the Abkhaz is Abkhazia, on the west end of the south slopes of the Caucasus, while the homeland of the Abazas is on the north slopes, in Karachay-Cherkessia, with a significant mutual intelligibility though (O'Herin 2020:448). Dialects of Abkhaz include Sadz (it is today spoken only in Turkey, Chirikba 1996), Bzyb, and Abzhui, while those of Abaza comprise Tapanta and Askharawa, as can be seen in Figure 1 together with their relations to the other NWC languages.

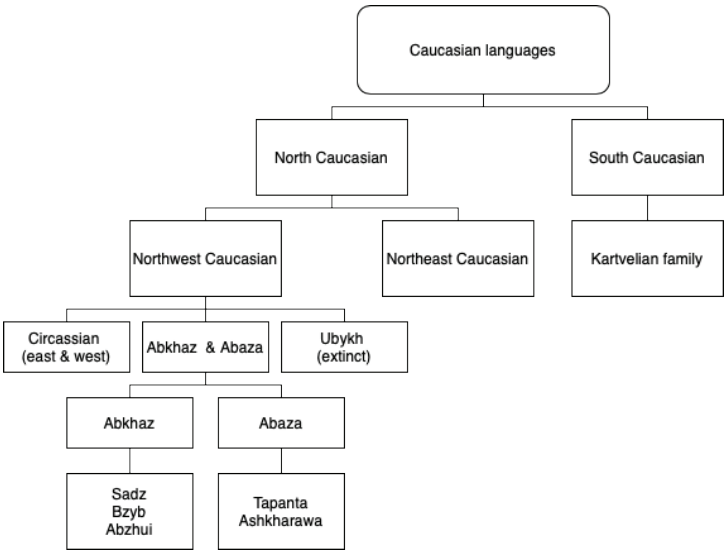


Figure 1. Linguistic family tree of Abkhaz-Abaza.

Abkhaz and Abaza have rather young literary traditions, reaching back only to the end of the 19th century, when the first scripts for the languages were devised. This was followed by a vivid literary production in the 20th century (Meurer 2018:2456). Both languages are currently written in the Cyrillic alphabets, the historical evolution of which is also presented in the following table. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the orthographic conventions of the two languages are quite distinct: the Abaza orthography follows the typical pattern of Cyrillic-based orthographies of languages in the North Caucasus, while the Abkhaz orthography is idiosyncratic (O'Herin 2020:448).

Language	Alphabet	Period
Abkhaz	Cyrillic	1862 - 1926
	Roman	1926 - 1938
	Georgian	1938 - 1954
	Cyrillic	1954 -
Abaza	Roman	1926 - 1938
	Cyrillic	1938 -

Table 1. History of the scripts.

The number of Abkhaz-Abaza speakers in the Caucasus, including Abkhazia and Russia, is estimated to be around 150000 currently. The situation of those languages in their homeland is thus perceived to be relatively stable. In 2007, the Abkhaz government adopted the Law on State Language of Abkhazia to promote the Abkhaz language. Article 2 of the law states that Abkhaz is the only state language in Abkhazia, and Russian is also used in governmental institutions and official matters. The law further states that all citizens of the Republic of Abkhazia must have command in the state language. However, in practice, the increasing dominance of the Russian language is ubiquitous. Recent surveys put forward that the percentage of Abkhazian speakers at the level of pre-school is as low as 30% in all the cities of Abkhazia although Abkhaz is available in schools as a medium of instruction alongside Russian. Furthermore, Chirikba (2015) states that 78.8% of the Abkhaz in Abkhaz speak Russian as well.

The special case of Abkhazia, as a partially recognized country since 2008 despite its de facto independence since 1993, requires a brief consideration to better understand its sociolinguistic situation. According to the last Soviet census of 1989, 102938 Abkhazians lived in the USSR, of whom 93267 resided within the then Abkhazian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Hewitt 2017a:65-66). Back then they used to live in mixed communities and had close contact with the Georgians. Yet, the Georgian invasion on 14 August 1992 and the Abkhazian victory on 30 September 1993 altered the demography and the socio-political relations permanently. A large majority of the Georgian population fled or was displaced, while a significant Abkhaz population was killed or injured. The aftermath of the war was also characterized by a complete international isola-

tion until when the Russian Federation officially recognized Abkhazia as an independent state alongside South Ossetia on August 26 2008. Since then, the ongoing patron-client relationship between Russia and Abkhazia alongside the lack of the wider international recognition has reinforced the influence of Russia over Abkhazia in many ways, including its sociolinguistic profile.

In the North Caucasian Republics of Russia, Abaza is taught in schools only as a language elective from grades one through nine. Most of the Abazas there also tend to speak Circassian. The language and educational policies of the Russian Federation, including the one in Karachay-Cherkessia where the majority of the Abaza-speaking community live, has reinforced and elevated the role of the Russian language as the state language and downgraded the status of minority languages. Concomitantly, the role of the minority languages in education has decreased. As Friedman (2010:135) discusses, not only does Russian function as the lingua franca of the Caucasus but it is also the language of higher education, the key to upward mobility and prosperity, and the majority urban language and the unmarked language in public contexts. The UNESCO Red Book on Endangered Languages reports that in Russia only three minority languages are not endangered. Overall, both the Abaza and Abkhaz communities in the Caucasus are mostly bilingual; namely, they speak Russian in addition to Abkhaz-Abaza—albeit to the advantage of the former.

Following the deportations from their homelands during and after the Russo-Circassian War, which ended in 1864, most Abkhaz-Abaza, along with the entire Ubykh nation and the Circassians had to migrate to Ottoman lands, where they form a large diaspora-community

of around 4 million (Hewitt 2017a:62) today. They are thus geographically dispersed outside their motherland, mainly in Turkey, the Middle East, Europe, and the USA. Today, the largest Abkhaz-Abaza community resides in Turkey. Their number in Turkey exceeds the number of the population in their motherland, although the exact numbers are unknown. The forced settlement of the Abkhaz to Turkey took place in three major waves- 1864, 1867 and 1878, and the number of the exiled population was around 100000 (Tvijba 2000); while that of Abazas took place between 1859 and 1864 with a population of around 50000. Today, according to TADNET (The Network of Endangered Languages in Turkey), there are around 110 Abkhaz and 60 Abaza villages in Turkey, in addition to the relatively large populations in the cities. Against this backdrop, with a modest population projection, it would be reasonable to suggest the existence of about 500000 Abkhaz-Abaza population in Turkey at minimum. According to the Russian Empire Census, in 1897, after the exile, the Abkhaz-speaking population was 72103. Currently, Abkhaz is spoken by around 130000 persons in Abkhazia.

Current sociolinguistic situation

It must be noted at the outset that the term 'Abhaz' is generally used in Turkey to refer both to Abkhaz and Abaza individuals, without differentiating between them. Furthermore, the Abkhaz and Abaza communities are generally considered to be part of the larger Northern Caucasian diaspora, together with the Circassians. However, from a linguistic perspective, the present paper prefers to distinguish Abkhaz-Abaza from Circassians. Having clarified that, it is appropriate to examine the current sociolinguistic situation of Abkhaz-Abaza in Turkey. Both languages are classified as

endangered languages together with the other NWC languages in Turkey today according to UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger and Ethnologue, despite the large population. Contributory factors are complex, multi-layered, historically situated and shaped by social, political, and economic factors.

First, it is widely accepted that any forced migration is a traumatic experience with adverse effects on the forcibly displaced migrants such as grief, loss, anxiety, uncertainty, and loneliness as well as the problems of integration and adaptation processes. The first-generation migrants from the north-west Caucasus to today's Turkey, including the Abkhaz and Abazas, can thus be said to have faced and suffered from all these traumatic experiences and challenges. Furthermore, it was the Ottoman government's policy to settle the North Caucasians in regions where the government had limited authority, where Muslims formed a minority, or where unrest had broken out; therefore, they were dispersed over the empire (Wessenlink 1996). With the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, this was followed by decades-long state assimilation policies, including the obligations to adopt Turkish names and to use only the Turkish language.

Meanwhile, the North Caucasian diaspora tried to maintain their cultural identity alongside their sense of belonging to their homeland. They were more like a close community, mostly residing in villages, with their own languages, traditions and customs, and system of relations and norms. However, the liberalization of Turkey's economy resulted in rapid urbanization among the North Caucasians as well, usually in search of higher education opportunities, better jobs and better life conditions, and interrupted the intergenerational language transmission significantly and accelerated language shift to Tur-

kish. The 1992-1993 war between Abkhazia and Georgia necessitates a brief note here since it functioned as a powerful cultural catalyst. The demonstrations were held by thousands of North Caucasians in Istanbul and Ankara against the Georgian invasion of Abkhazia and the passive stance of the Turkish government and civil organizations supporting the Abkhazian cause became very active.

In addition to and perhaps on top of these factors, however, is the national law and legislation. The Treaty of Lausanne granted official minority status only to non-Muslim communities, thus the right to language and education in Turkey is limited with Armenian, Greek, and Jewish communities. Monolingual language policies which officially favor Turkish over other languages have prevailed since the early Republican days. The policymakers of the early times in the newly established Turkish state focused on the ethnic and linguistic dominance of Turks over other ethnic identities (Yavuz 2001) and the hegemony of monolingualism is still ongoing. Turkish is the official language of Turkey and the 42nd article of the Turkish Constitution states that no language other than Turkish can be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens in educational institutions. These endangered languages spoken in Turkey are officially unrecognized languages by the Republic of Turkey. Thus, as Gezer and Dixon (2021:260) states, de jure and de facto language discrimination is prevalent in Turkey, according to classification offered by Baker (2006, as cited in Gezer and Dixon 2021) which states that the official language, de jure, is protected by law and de facto language refers to the languages which may not be acknowledged legally by the government, yet they exist in the country.

During the European Union adjustment process of Turkey, however, a number of regulations were made to protect the mother tongues

of different ethnic groups, including the lifting of the ban on naming children in minority languages, private language courses being offered, and publications in these tongues made possible (see the next section for more detailed information). All these developments are surely not only tangible contributions to the protection of indigenous and/or endangered languages in Turkey but also undeniably significant achievements in a context dominated by linguistic uniformity. Nevertheless, they are insufficient to safeguard these languages. The public take of the matter is still mainly characterized by the negative attitudes, ideological stereotypes, and socio-political indifference. The policy and legislation as they stand today by no means measure up to a level that would alter the current linguistic ecology which has so far failed to prevent language shift required for the promotion of Abkhaz-Abaza and the other endangered languages.

The Abkhaz-Abaza diaspora in Turkey today is far from homogeneity and monolith. It is characterized by multiplicity, diversity, and dynamism in terms of their identities, which also extends to political and ideological thoughts. In the aftermath of the Cold War, there emerged a shift from an understanding of an 'imagined homeland' to that of a 'real territory', while at the same time the enhancement of technology and the relative ease of travel have created the possibility of co-construction of multiple identities which make it possible to live both in diaspora and at home, and to develop a sense of belonging to both here and there. Despite their individual and communal efforts to maintain their cultural traditions, rituals, and customs, the first- and second- generations' struggles to maintain Abkhaz-Abaza have already given way to language shift to Turkish as the first language within the third and fourth

generations who were born in Turkey.

Due to the official monolingualism in the formal public spaces, the use of Abkhaz-Abaza was always limited with informal spaces but today their functional use has scaled down to such a degree that the use of Abaza and Abkhaz is seriously endangered. If we were to account for it in Bourdieusian terms, it can be argued that the Abkhaz-Abaza languages have lost their value to a large extent as a form of economic, cultural, and symbolic capital among the younger generation, with perhaps the exception of social capital with reference to social ties and networks as well as the group membership and identity marker.

This does not necessarily mean that the communities do not identify these languages as their mother tongues though; they may- albeit only with reference to Skutnabb-Cagnas' internal identification criterion as semi-speakers or even non-speakers. It is also possible to view this situation through the theoretical lens provided by House (2003), who makes a distinction between language for communication and language for identification. The latter is different from the former in the sense that it is local languages which are likely to be the main determinants of identity with a high level of affective-emotive quality involved and thus hold a stake in the collective linguistic-cultural capital that defines the mother tongue group and its members.

On the whole, these languages have survived decades-long Russian-Caucasian war, social and cultural dislocations as a result of the exile, geographical dispersion within the Ottoman Empire, degradation and minoritization under the ubiquitous dominance of Russian politics and policies in their homelands, and overt assimilation and folkloriza-

tion policies in their diasporic homes. Despite the large population of the Abkhaz-Abaza diaspora in Turkey, there is no solid statistical data on the number of the speakers of these languages. Ubykh, which belongs to the same language family group as Abkhaz-Abaza, already went extinct in Turkey when the last native speaker of the Ubykh language, Tevfik Esenç, passed away in 1992. The issue of endangered languages in Turkey has not attracted the attention of the academic community, either at the national or the international level. Although endangered language communities of Turkey have been researched in terms of their history, politics, and sociology to some extent; the language issues are particularly understudied. There is a huge gap in research regarding their sociolinguistic resources and profiles. Therefore, the Abkhaz-Abaza languages face the threat of sharing the same fate as Ubykh.

The situation in the homeland is also not much different on the grounds that the use of Abkhaz has not expanded into new domains in Abkhazia due to the strong influence of Russian (Dobrushina et al. 2020:66). Similarly, regarding the language law introduced in 2007 in Abkhazia with the aim of encouraging the study and use of the language, Hewitt (2017b) argues that, despite its significance, making a law without making provision in terms of teaching, publication of relevant language-materials renders that law pointless. With Abkhazia's economy still in a parlous state, any assistance in terms of help with producing suitable manuals and the training of teachers. Furthermore, the numbers of speakers of the NWC languages often mislead researchers to the sense of comfort concerning linguistic vitality; however, the growing dominance of Russian underscores the urgency of studying these languages (Polinsky 2020:9).

Preservation and revitalization studies

Against the backdrop of the language policies, political trajectory, ecolinguistic niche and sociocultural milieu, the threats and risks that face the linguistic and cultural diversity in Turkey in general and Abkhaz-Abaza specifically are compelling and thus require coordinated and multilateral responses. However, the matter has not attracted the attention of the general public or the academic community in Turkey, with few exceptions. There are almost no academic studies on ecolinguistic language planning to support the revitalization of these languages. In a similar vein, the issue has been given short shrift by the international community and organizations in their efforts to create a global language preservation ecosystem, as is evidenced by the lack of UNESCO language preservation program in Turkey nor internationally funded large-scale projects.

To start with, the previously stated legislative reforms in the early 2000s brought about several significant developments although they did not mean the de jure recognition of those languages under question. Today, Abkhaz Language and Culture is available as a major degree in the Caucasian Languages and Cultures Department of Duzce University, although it has not started to accept students yet. Boğaziçi University in Istanbul also offers the Abkhaz language as an elective course. Since the 2012-2013 academic year, furthermore, Abkhazian has been offered as part of the 2-hour elective language courses on Living Languages and Dialects in Turkish secondary schools if the 'minimum of 10 students' criterion is met. Yet, all of these developments have been riddled with their own problems and challenges, ranging from bureaucratic obstacles, complex application procedures, inadequate course materials, lack of proper teacher training, lack of

promotion and awareness-raising activities in the public sphere, widespread perception of these elective courses as ideological choices rather than a legal and legitimate right and fear of stigmatization and being labeled on the part of the language community to the lack of sufficient academic staff and a foreseeable lack of job opportunities for the graduates of the departments.

Moreover, it is quite clear that teaching/learning any language only through these elective courses is not possible because of the limited weekly course hours, inadequate course materials, and insufficient number of teachers. In addition, the enrollment number in the Living Languages and Dialects courses is quite low, compared to the other elective courses. This primarily stems from the fact that the public in general are not sufficiently informed about these courses, parents, teachers and school administrators are nervous about such issues as course offers and pedagogical leadership and other similar reasons mentioned above. According to the statistics of the Federation of Caucasus Associations (KAFFED), for example, only three classes in Abkhaz were opened with a total number of 44 students in Sakarya, which is one of the cities where the Abkhaz population is most concentrated in Turkey, between 2014 and 2017. The activity reports of the Federation covering the years of 2017-2021 does not mention any information about the Abkhaz classes. In the fall semester of 2022, no Abkhaz classes were opened either.

Within such a climate of affairs, the primary preservation and revitalization studies are the grassroots language initiatives that are mainly supported by the civil society organizations. These grassroots movements are perhaps the only promising avenue toward the protection and revitalization of Abkhaz-Abaza; however, they are at the infancy

stage with limited resources, expertise and support. In this respect, one of the major long-standing actors has been the civil organizations. They have been offering language courses and trying to contribute to the solution of the language-related problems at different levels. It was, for instance, mainly the KAFFED, following the legislative amendments in 2003, that organized and conducted the necessary activities including material development and organizing seminars and workshops on language teaching, in cooperation with the experts, academics and teachers. The coursebooks, Abkhaz Teaching Material Modules 1-2-3 (Elmas and Okuyucu 2019), which are used in elective Abkhaz courses at secondary schools, have been prepared within a commission in the leadership and coordination of the KAFFED as well. In addition to the teaching materials, two dictionaries, including the bidirectional Abkhaz-Turkish dictionary by Okuyucu (2020) and Abkhaz-Abaza-Turkish mini dictionary by Habat (2006), have also been made available.

Another significant recent initiative is the TADNET, which was established in 2020 within the scope of the Laz-Circassian Civil Societies Network project with the financial support of the European Union Delegation to Turkey. They focus on the minoritized and endangered languages in Turkey and work towards increasing public awareness, distributing the literature in the field and providing sources and information on the endangered languages in Turkey. Since one of the major partners of the project is Istanbul Caucasian Culture Association, the project contributes to the preservation and revitalization of Abkhaz-Abaza as well as Circassian by preparing language maps and reports, developing language activism, and offering teacher training programs and language courses. The Network on Language Rights Monitoring, Documentation and Re-

porting (DHİBRA) is another initiative with a major focus on linguistic diversity and rights. The network brings together the representatives of various languages in Turkey including Abkhaz-Abaza with the experts, academics, and civil organizations to contribute to the solution of the relevant problems and lobby for more awareness across the society.

This grassroots language activism and emerging bottom-up resistance to top-down language policies may be sowing the seeds of prospects for an inclusive and sustainable environment for endangered languages in Turkey; yet they are far from becoming the mainstream and carry weight only to a limited extent without political investment, educational resources, research interest, social prestige, and economic power. In the case of Abkhaz-Abaza, they are all quite scarce—if not almost non-existent.

References

Arkadiev, P. & Y. Lander (2020). "The Northwest Caucasian languages." In M. Polinsky (ed.) *The Oxford handbook of languages of the Caucasus*, 369–446. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chirikba, V. (1996). "Sadz, An Abkhaz dialect in Turkey." In I. H. Aronson, ed.), *Linguistic studies in the non-Slavic languages of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic republics,* 67–81. Chicago, IL: Chicago Linguistic Society.

Dobrushina, N., Daniel, M. & Y. Koryakov (2020). "Languages and sociolinguistics of the Caucasus." In M. Polinsky (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of languages of the Caucasus*, 27-66. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Elmas, Ç. & İ. Okuyucu (2019). *Abazaca öğretim materyali, Modül 1-2-3* (KAFFED yürütücülüğünde).

Friedman, V. A. (2010). "Sociolinguistics in the Caucasus." In J. M. Ball (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of sociolinguistics around the world,* 127-138. London: Routledge.

Gezer, M. Ü. & L. Q. Dixon (2021). "An overview of Turkey's policy development in TESOL and multilingualism." In K. Raza, Coombe, C. & D. Reynolds (eds.), *Policy development in TESOL and multilingualism: past, present and the way forward*, 257-270. Dordrecht: Springer.

Habat, B. (2006). *Türkçe-Abazaca-Abhazca mini sözlük ve seçme abaza atasözleri.* Ankara: Kafkas Dernekleri Federasyonu.

Hewitt, G. (2017a). "Caucasian Languages." In G. Price (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the languages of Europe,* 60-82. London: Blackwell.

Hewitt, G. (2017b). "Instilling pride by raising a language's prestige." In R. Korkmaz, & G. Doğan (eds.), *Endangered languages of the Caucasus,* 91-97. Leiden: Brill

House, J. (2003). "English as a Lingua Franca: A threat to multilingualism?" *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 7(4), 556-578.

Meurer, P. (2018). "The Abkhaz national corpus." In *Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation* (LREC 2018), Miyazaki, Japan. European Language Resources Association (ELRA).

O'Herin, B. (2020). "Abaza and Abkhaz." In M. Polinsky (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of languages of the Caucasus*, 447- 488. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Okuyucu (Ahocba), İ. (2020). *Türkçe-Abazaca, Abazaca-Türkçe sözlük.*

Kafdav Yayıncılık.

Polinsky, M. (2020). “Introduction.” In M. Polinsky (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of languages of the Caucasus,* 1-23. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Schroeder, C. (2021). “How to understand societal multilingualism in Turkey – a proposal, based on the notion of ‘register’.” In B. Bilmez (ed.), *Language rights and linguistic pluralism in Turkey,* 43-54. Istanbul: Türkiye Kültürleri Araştırma Grubu.

Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2008). “Bilingual education and sign language as the mother tongue of deaf children.” In Bidoli, K., Cynthia, J. & E. Ochse, (eds). *English in international deaf Communication,* 75- 94. Bern: Peter Lang.

Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2000). *Linguistic genocide in education—or worldwide diversity and human rights?* London: Lawrance-Erlbaum.

Türkdoğan, O. (1998). *Etnik sosyoloji.* Istanbul: Timas Yayinlari.

Tvijba, L. (2000). *Etno-demograficheskie protsessı v Abhazii v XIX.* Suhum, Alaşara.

Wessenlink, E. (1996). The North Caucasian Diaspora in Turkey, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a6bc8.html [last accessed on 6 December 2022]

Yavuz, H. (2001). “Five stages of the construction of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey.” *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics* 7(3), 1-24.

2 Circassian

Murat Topçu

Introduction

The Circassian language is part of the Northwest Caucasian group of Caucasian languages, along with Abkhaz, Abaza and Ubyk, the latter of which, notorious for its consonant inventory with 38 phonemes, became extinct when the last fluent speaker, Tevfik Esenç, died in Turkey in 1992. Circassians refer to their language as Adigabze (адыгэбзэ) or Adigabz (адыгабз), names derived from the endonym, Adige.

Circassian language is native to the the northwestern Caucasus region, historically known as Circassia. Circassia extends from Terek River in the east to the Black Sea coast in the west, and from Kuban River in the north to Georgia in the south, covering Abkhazia, Karachay and Balkar lands and Ossetia. By the end of the 16th century, the Kabardian region, located in the eastern part of historical Circassia, transformed into a separate political structure distinct from other Circassian principalities. Today, the entirety of the historical Circassian land is part of the Russian Federation.

The majority of Circassian speakers were exiled to the Ottoman Empire during and after the Russo-Circassian War, which lasted for more than a century before coming to an end on May 21, 1864. The Circassian exiles, who were relocated in various parts of Anatolia, the

Balkans, and the Middle East, ended up in different states after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Those who remained in the Caucasus were re-settled in specific regions. Autonomous administrative structures were established in areas where the Circassian population was relatively dense during the early years of the Soviet Union. Today, the majority of these Circassians live in the federal republics of Adygea, Karachay-Cherkess, and Kabardino-Balkar, whose names, boundaries, and statuses have changed many times since the 1920s. Furthermore, there are smaller Circassian settlements in the Krasnodar and Stavropol Krais, and in the Mozdoksky region in North Ossetia-Alania. Given the major relocations in the history of its speakers, the Circassian language is currently spoken in the Caucasus as well as the diaspora in Turkey, Syria, Jordan, and Israel.

Dialects

Two main dialects of Circassian can be reconstructed at the time before the exile, namely the western dialect spoken on the west of Kuban River all to way to the Black Sea coast and the eastern dialect, known also as Kabardian, spoken in the Terek River basin, on the lower slopes of the Caucasus Mountains, in what is today the Republic of Kabardino-Balkar. Kabardian is mainly divided into two sub-dialects, as Greater and Lesser Kabardian, also known as Jilahsteney. The two sub-dialects are geographically separated by Terek River. Other sub-dialects of Kabardian are Kuban (or Kiban-Zelenchuk), and Besleney spoken by émigrés from the Kabardian region, and that of Mozdok in North Ossetia-Alania, spoken by a small Orthodox group (Taov 1997). Kabardian is the official language in the Republic of Kabardino-Balkar and the Republic of Karachay-Cherkess.

Western Circassian probably exhibited more pronounced intra-dialectal variation than the relatively homogenous Kabardian. While it is highly

likely that the sub-groups of Western Circassians, namely the Abzakh, Adamey, Bzhedugh, Mokhosh, Shapsugh, Hatuquey, Natkhuaj, Temirgoy, Zhaney, all had their own sub-dialects in the remote past past, following various population movements during and after the war, and thus through koineization, most dialects have disappeared. Today, one can today find individuals that speak Abzakh, Temirgoy, Bzhedugh, and Shapsugh sub-dialects in the Republic of Adygea (Price 2000:62-63). A literary standard version West Circassian based on the Temirgoy dialect and known as Adyghe constitutes the official language of the Republic of Adygea.

The fact that Circassians are identified with different names in Russia and that these naming practices are adopted in the linguistic literature causes certain confusion in the classification of the dialects. The nomenclature that emerged during the Soviet era and is still in use today is based on the names of the then administrative units. Those living in Adygea were called 'Adyghes' (Adygeyets), those living in Karachay-Cherkess 'Circassians', and those in Kabardino-Balkaria were called 'Kabardians'(kabardinets). Accordingly, Soviet/Russian linguists came to refer to the Northwest Caucasian Language Group as 'Abkhaz-Adyghe' languages. In this classification, Western Circassian was identified as 'Adyge' and Eastern Circassian as 'Kabardian-Circassian', both of which belong to the 'Adyghe branch'. The sub-dialects (vernaculars) were also considered dialects of these languages.

The mistranslation of this terminology from Russian to other western languages, notably English, leads to further confusion. The term 'Adyghe' is frequently used in English for Western Circassian (West Circassian) and appears in texts as a combination in the form of 'Adyghe and Kabardian', although Kabardians also call themselves Adyghe and their language Adyghebze (Adyghe language). Adyghe is sometimes used synonymously with 'Circassian'. While based on the Russian terminology,

the latter usage disregards the distinction between Adygean and Adyghe, which exists in Russian. The language is also recorded this way in the international code system determined by ISO, cf. ISO 639 - ady and kbd).

Orthography in the Caucasus

The initial attempts to write in Circassian emerged in the early 19th century. In 1829, Ivan Gratsilevski from the University of Petersburg, who was assigned to teach Russian to the Circassian officers of the Tsarist guard unit, adapted the Russian alphabet for the officers to communicate amongst themselves in their own language. This initiative inspired two young officers in the guard unit, Shora Bekmirza Noguma and Sultan Han-Girey, to prepare the first Circassian alphabet (Zehok 1993:26-27).

Shora Noguma's application to the government for the recognition of his version of the Circasian alphabet based on Cyrilic graphemes was not accepted. Under the pressure of the clergy in 1843, Noguma prepared another alphabet based on Arabic letters; however, this alphabet proved inadequate and was not put in use (Hatali 2000:205-106, Han-Girey 1992:95-96, Isayev 1979:83-184). Sultan Han-Girey also prepared an alphabet of 63 letters based on Russian characters. There is no detailed information about this alphabet as Han-Girey's notes did not survive to the present day (Han Girey 1992:95-96). Efforts to create an alphabet continued in the second half of the 19th century. In Tbilisi, Umar Bersey published his works *Bukvar cherkesskogo yazika* ("Circassian Language Reader") in 1853 and *Grammatika adygeyskogo yazika* ("Circassian Language Grammar") in 1858. The former introduced the alphabet he prepared using Arabic letters and contained a glossary of 80 words written with this alphabet. Bersey's alphabet

consisted of 28 Arabic, 4 Persian letters, and 14 special signs he created to render the sounds of Circassian. Vowels were represented by signs placed below and above the consonants, as in Arabic (Zekoh 1993:28). The publication date of Bersey's book, March 14, has been celebrated as the Circassian Language Day since 2000.

In 1854, Louis Löwe published the book *A Dictionary of the Circassian Language* by using the Arabic alphabet for both dialects of Circassian, as well as providing the transcriptions of the entries in Latin alphabet. In 1878, Hacıbek Ançok prepared a simpler alphabet by modifying Berse's alphabet. The alphabet consisted of 68 letters, all of which were single signs. Ançok recorded numerous oral literary works with his own alphabet (Zekoh 1993:28). A Cyrillic-based alphabet of 44 letters was prepared by Kazi Hatoxshoko, a teacher at the Nalchik Kabardian School, in 1865. In 1881, the poet Bekmirza Pasha began writing in Circassian with the alphabet he adapted from the Arabic alphabet. In the 1890s, famous Caucasologist Lev Lopatinski prepared a Circassian alphabet based on the reformed Cyrillic-Russian alphabet. Influenced by him, Pago Tambiy prepared his own alphabet and reader in 1906. In the early 20th century, Mejid Fanziy, Hasan Yelberd, Nuriy Tsağo, and Talustan Şeretloko, each made attempts to create a standardized version of the alphabet based on on Arabic letters (Hatali 2000:242-249).

Even though some Russian linguists and Circassian intellectuals made efforts to prepare a Circassian alphabet in the last period of the Tsarist era, state support and the historical conditions in which the Circassian people found themselves did not allow writing to become a tool of education and enlightenment. According to the 1920 census, the literacy rate among Circassians in the Caucasus was less than 10%.

Orthography in the Ottoman lands

The first attempt to create an alphabet outside of the Caucasus was undertaken in 1897 by Ahmet Cavit Pasha, who compile folk literature using the Circassian alphabet he prepared with Arabic letters. Later, the Circassian Union and Cooperation Society (Çerkes İttihad ve Teavün Cemiyeti, 1908-1923), of which Ahmet Cavit Pasha was the president, published the newspaper Ğuaze (Guide) using this alphabet, as well as literary and religious books. During the Constitutional Era, two more versions of the alphabet were developed (Berzeg 1969:6).

Between 1908 and 1920, Ottoman-Circassian intellectuals showed intense efforts to create a standardized alphabet. Following Ahmet Cavit Pasha, the first known study was carried out by Dr. Mehmet Ali Pçehatluk in Istanbul. *Adığe Alfib,* prepared by Pçehatluk with Latin letters and is accompanied by a user guide in Ottoman Turkish, was published in 1912 (1329) in accordance with the decision announced in the 12th issue of the Ğuaze newspaper on June 9, 1327 (1910) by the Alphabet Commission of the Circassian Union and Cooperation Society. Other known authors who attempted at developing a Circassian alphabet in Istanbul are as follows: Yusuf Suat Neğuç and Ahmet Nuri Tsağo (1909), Adighe Zauil (Circassian Warrior) (1915), Blenav Batuk Harun (1918), İbrahim Hıdzetl (1921).

Different orthographic conventions for writing in Circassian were prepared in other parts of the empire or in other countries as well, such as Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. Muhamed Kemal Huaj, who was a pasha in the Egyptian army and served in Europe for more than 30 years, settled in a Circassian village in Syria after retirement. In 1910, he prepared an alphabet based on Arabic letters and opened a school with

his own funding to provide education in Circassian (Isayev 1979:187). Another alphabet used at times in Syria was prepared by Harun Bateko, one of the intellectuals who was also part of the Circassian Union and Cooperation Society and the Northern Caucasus Society (*Elifba vel Şerkesiyye,* Damascus, 1929). This alphabet, based on Latin graphemes, was actively used in the education at Kuneytra Circassian School and in publications, the most notorious of which is a newspaper titled *Marg* (prayer, 1928-1931). During this period, poet and author Ömer Hilmi Tsey published a new alphabet based on Latin letters, but this too could not find an area of implementation. (*Adighe Txibze* (Adighe Alphabet Book), Aleppo, 1926).

The chaotic period following the First World War did not allow for the use of these alphabets and the development of cultural activities. However, alphabets, textbooks, and literary works prepared in Istanbul were sent to the Caucasus.

During the Second World War, Şaban Kube, who had to leave the Caucasus and settle in Jordan, prepared a new alphabet here (*Adighe Alfibe*, Damascus-Amman, 1952). This alphabet, mainly created by adapting certain Cyrillic graphemes and by integrating them to a Latin-based system, was used to print some of Kube's works, calendars, and memoranda in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, France, and the USA. In Turkey as well, a poetry book called *Vatan Düşüncesi* (Ankara, 1967) was printed by Sefer Berzeg with this alphabet.

Orthography during the Soviet period

After the collapse of the Tsarist regime and the establishment of the Soviet Union in 1922, efforts began to create alphabets for peoples

within the borders of the Union (see Table 1). To this end, the two dialects of Circassian were handled separately. To write in Western Circassian, the Circassian alphabet with Arabic letters was used from 1918 to 1927. In 1927, a Latin alphabet prepared by the Russian linguist Nikolay Yakovlev and his Circassian colleague Davud Aşhamaf was adopted for education in the Adygea Autonomous Region. In 1938, a switch was made to the Cyrillic alphabet, again prepared by Yakovlev and Aşhamaf.

To write in Kabardian, a few Arabic-based alphabets were used in the period between 1917 and 1923, and Latin-based alphabets from 1924 to 1935. The Cyrillic-based alphabet developed by Tuta Borıkuey and adopted in 1936 is still in use today (Table 1).

	Basis	**Period**
East Circassian (Kabaridan)	Arabic	1917-1923
	Latin	1924-1935
	Cyrillic	1936 - present
West Circassian	Arabic	1918-1926
	Latin	1927-1937
	Cyrillic	1938 - present

Table 1. Alphabets adopted in Russia to write in Circassian dialects.

Because the western and eastern dialects differ in the number of distinctive sounds, the number of letters in their respective alphabets is also different: The Western Circassian alphabet contains 66 letters while the Kabardian alphabet contains 59 letters.

Education

The first educational institution in the history of the Circassian diaspora that offered Circassian language courses was the Circassian Teavün Mektebi (The Circassian School of Cooperation), established in Istanbul in 1910. At this private school, Circassian was written based on an Arabic-based alphabet. Due to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the school was forced to close its doors.

The Circassian Women's Union Society in Istanbul, established in Istanbul in 1918, opened the Circassian Girls' School (Çerkes Kız Numune Mektebi) one year after its establishment. The school had 180 students enrolled in 6 classes, and they received education in English, visual arts, music, gymnastics, and theater. This institution used the Latin alphabet for Circassian education. The Circassian Girls' School was closed on September 5, 1923.

During the early years of the Republic of Turkey, "Citizen, Speak Turkish" campaign confined the usage of Circassian language to villages. This period marked a complete disconnection with the Caucasus, leading to a significant decline in the number of Circassian speakers within 50 years.

In the 1970s, Turkish Circassians began to establish relations and visit the Caucasus, where they encountered Circassian books printed in the Cyrillic alphabet. The alphabet proposals published in the Yamçı magazine by the Ankara Caucasus Association in 1978 marked the first step taken in the promotion of the language after a long hiatus. At the same time, the perception by the Turkish go-

vernment of the books published in the Cyrillic script as propaganda for separatism and communism severely hindered Circassian literacy.

With the military coup in 1980, a new dark period began for the Circassian language, like other minority languages spoken in Turkey. Publications in Circassian were condemned with separatism and printed material imported from the Caucasus were destroyed. The 1982 constitution included articles stating that "the official language of the state is Turkish" and "no language other than Turkish shall be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens in educational institutions." The lifting of language restrictions began when Turkey was accepted as a candidate for the European Union in 1999.

In 2002, radio and TV channels were allowed to broadcast programs in different languages and dialects. TRT (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation) started broadcasting a weekly 30-minute-long radio program in Circassian in 2004. The program was immediately followed by a Turkish translation. Similarly, TV programs in a language other than Turkish were required to be subtitled. Programs aimed at teaching the language to children remained prohibited. In 2009, when TRT Kurd was established and started broadcasting 24/7, the Circassian radio and TV programs were discontinued.

Starting from 2006, the Caucasus Associations Federation began organizing Circassian language courses, preparing educational materials, and arranging training sessions for teachers. In the 2012-2013 academic year, elective Circassian language courses were introduced to the curriculum for middle schools (5th to 8th grades) for two hours per week. Whether Circassian course is offered or not at a given school depends first on the school principal's motivation to do so and second

on the existence of at least 10 students wishing to participate in the course. The Ministry of National Education offers the language course in two separate categories based on the alphabet used (Cyrillic and Latin), rendering some sense of discontinuity. These handicaps, along with lack of interest in procuring and training teachers, resulted in the Circassian language course remaining so far largely symbolic.

In 2011, the Department of Circassian Language and Culture was established at Kayseri Erciyes University and started accepting students in the 2018-2019 academic year. In 2013, the Department of Circassian Language and Literature was established at Düzce University. Later, its name was changed to the Department of Circassian Language and Culture, resulting in students losing the opportunity to take pedagogy courses and become teachers. The department also offers postgraduate and doctoral programs. In 2011, Boğaziçi University and in 2023, Bahçeşehir University included elective Circassian language courses in their curricula.

The widespread adoption of distance education during the pandemic opened a new horizon for Circassian language teaching. Numerous online courses were organized by Circassian non-governmental organizations and private initiatives.

Since the first years of the establishment of the Soviet Union in the Caucasus, Circassian education has been given at certain levels of the school system (primary-middle-high school). However, Circassian was never used as the language of instruction in schools, or Russian-Circassian bilingual education was not implemented. Circassian, which is included in school programs as language and literature lessons at certain times a week, has been removed from being a mandatory mother tongue lesson with the law passed in June 2018.

Number of speakers

Determining the exact number of Circassian language speakers dispersed across different countries is not possible. There is relatively more reliable data as to the number of Circassian speakers in the Caucasus. According to the 2010 general population census in the Russian Federation, there are 716966 people who speak Circassian (587547 speakers of Eastern Circassian (Kabardian) and 129419 speakers of Western Circassian). The data from the latest 2021 census has not been released yet.

The number of Circassian speakers in the diaspora can only be estimated. There are no precise records about the Circassian population in the Caucasus before the exile. Many researchers suggest that the number of Circassian refugees that were settled in Ottoman territories in the mid-19th century was over a million. During the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War, Circassians who were settled in the Balkans then migrated intoto Anatolia and the Middle East. A small Circassian community (approximately 200 people) that remained in Kosovo returned to their homeland and settled in the Republic of Adygea in 1998 (Bersirov 1981; Özbek 1986).

Most of the Circassian villages in Syria were in the Golan Heights, which were occupied by Israel in 1967. After the occupation, the Circassians resettled in Damascus and other regions. In the mid-1970s, through the Tolstoy Foundation, they were accepted as refugees in the United States, giving rise to a small community in New Jersey (Catford 1986:240). In the 1980s, there were 40000 Circassians in Syria, 30,000 in Jordan and 3000 in Israel (Smeets 1984:53, Catford 1986240). However, due to the conflict that began in Syria in 2012,

most of the Circassians living in Damascus, Aleppo, and Homs dispersed to various countries around the world. Over the past fifty years, Circassian emigrants have formed small communities in the United States and Western European countries.

Despite the absence of formal language rights in Syria, Circassians preserved their language relatively intact because of their significant population and their predominantly rural lifestyle. In Jordan, on the other hand, Circassians suffered from language loss due to urbanization and concentration in Amman even though they have their own schools. Among the Circassian diaspora, Israeli Circassians have managed to preserve their language the best. Their community of 3-4 thousand people living almost exclusively in one village (Kfar-Kama) and the support from the government have contributed to their language preservation up to the present day.

The only official data available about the number of Circassian speakers in Turkey is from the population census conducted in 1927, which included questions about mother tongue. The results of the seven censuses conducted until 1965 were announced to the public, while the results of the four censuses conducted between 1965 and 1985 were only given to relevant state institutions and were not made public. Questions about mother tongue were included in the censuses until 1985, but after officials from the State Institute of Statistics were accused of 'separatism' and prosecuted in 1985, the questions were removed from the 1990, 1995, and 2000 censuses (Bildirici 1997, cited in Dündar 2000:65).

Although the data obtained from these censuses are far from reality, it is still beneficial to look at them to gain some insights. The census

results, given in Table 2, distinguish between those who speak Circassian as their mother tongue and those who speak it as a second language. According to these results, Circassian appears as the fourth language after Turkish, Kurdish, and Arabic (Dündar 2000).

	Mother Tongue	Second Language	Total	Population	%
1927	95901	-	95901	13.629.488	7.04
1935	91972	14703	106675	16.157.450	6.60
1945	66691	9779	76470	18.790.174	4.07
1950	75837	-	75837	20.947.188	3.62
1955	77611	22861	100407	24.064.763	4.17
1960	63137	65061	128198	27.754.820	4.62
1965	58339	48621	106960	31.391.421	3.40

Table 2. The number of Circassian speakers in Turkey according to census results

There are around 600 Circassian settlements in Turkey. Based on this information and data about the population that arrived in the 19th century, it can be estimated that the Circassian population in Turkey is between 2 and 3 million. The scattered settlements of Circassians in Turkey, migration from villages to cities that started in the 1960s, language suppression and prohibitions, the lack of socio-economic benefits for Circassian, etc., have resulted in a low percentage of Circassians below middle age who speak the language. Among children, knowing the language is an exceptional case.

References

Bildirici, F. (1997). "Azınlıklarını saymayan ülke", Gazete Pazar, 30 Kasım 1997.

Bleichsteiner, R. (1923). "Zum Protohattischen." *Berichte des Forschungs-Institutes für Osten und Orient,* Bd. 3, p. 102-6.

Bleichsteiner, R. (1930). "Die werschikisch-burischkische Sprache im Pamir-

gebiet und ihre Stellung zu den Japhetitensprachen des Kaukasus." *Wiener Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte und Linguistik 1*.

Bleichsteiner, R. (1937). "Die kaukasische Sprachgruppe." *Anthropos,* no. 32.

Colarusso, J. (1994). "Proto-Northwest Caucasian (or How to crack a very hard nut)." *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 22 (1/2), 1-36.

Dündar, F. (2000). *Türkiye nüfus sayımlarında azınlıklar.* Çiviyazıları, İstanbul.

Forrer, E. (1919). "Die acht Sprachen der Boghazköy-Inschriften." *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Klasse* 53, 1029-1041.

Han-Girey, S. (1992). *Zapiski o Çerkesii* (Circassia notes), Elbrus Yayınevi, Nalçik.

Hatali, Ş. V. (2000). *Adığebzem yi thıde* (Histroy of Adyghe), Nalçik.

İsayev M. İ. (1979). *Yazıkovoye stroitelstvo v SSSR* (Language Policies in the USSR - The Process of Forming the Writings of the Peoples of the USSR), Moscow.

Kuipers, A. H. (1951). A Contribution to the analysis of the Qabardian language. PhD Dissertation, Columbia University.

Kuipers, A. H. (1960). *Phoneme and morpheme in Kabardian (Eastern Adyghe).* The Hague: Mouton & Co.

Kuipers, A. H. (1975). *A dictionary of Proto-Circassian roots.* Lisse, Netherlands: The Peter de Ridder Press Publications on North Caucasian Languages.

Nichols, J. (1997). "Nikolaev & Starostin's North Caucasian etymological dictionary and the methodology of long-range comparison: an assessment." Paper presented at The Tenth Biennial Non-Slavic Languages (NSL) Conference, University of Chicago, Thursday-Saturday, 8-10 May 1997.

Pliev, R. S. (1992). *Nakhskie yaziki: Klyuch k ètrusskim tainam* (The Nakh Languages: The Key to Etruscan Secrets), Grozny.

Price, G. 2000. "The North-West Caucasian Family" In *Encyclopedia of the languages of Europe.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Starostin, S. (1997). "Reconstruction of Proto-North-Caucasian: Response to J. Nichols." Paper presented at The Tenth Biennial Non-Slavic Languages (NSL) Conference, University of Chicago, Thursday-Saturday, 8-10 Mayıs 1997.

Starostin, S. A. & S. L. Nikolaev (1994). *North Caucasian etymological dictionary.* Moscow.

Taov Kh. T. (1997). *Problemı Kabardino-çerkesskoy dialektologii,* Kabardino-Balkarskiy Gos. University, Nalçik.

Tuite, K. (1997). "Pelops, the Hazel-Witch and the Pre-Eaten Ibex: on an ancient Circumpontic symbolic cluster", *Antiquitates Proponticæ, Circumponticæ et Caucasicæ II.*

Tuite, K. (1998). "Evidence for prehistoric links between the Caucasus and Central Asia: the case of the Burushos." In V. Mair (ed.), *The Bronze Age and Iron Age peoples of Eastern Central Asia, 448-475.* Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Study of Man.

Zekoh, U., S. (1993). *Kratkiy kurs adıgeyskoy grammatiki I* (A short course in Adyghe Grammar I), Maykop.

3 Hamshetsnak

Neşe Kaya

Notes on the current geography and territorial distribution of Hemshins

The North Anatolian Mountains rise along the northern shores of Turkey. Between the coastal Black Sea and the Pontic Mountains mountains lies a strip of 'thin' land hosting the cities of Trabzon, Rize, and Artvin. This land, which is called the "Eastern Black Sea Region" in Turkey today, has been populated by numerous communities, one of which is known as the Hemshin. There are several names used to refer to the Hemshin community. "Hemshin" or Hemshinli" are both Turkish terms and are also adopted by all the Hemshins living in Turkey. "Homshetsi", "Hamshetsi" and "Hamshen", are the autonyms used in their native language. In this article, we use the term Hemshin throughout.

Today, the Hemshins live in an area stretching from Çayeli in Rize to as far east as Kemalpaşa in Artvin, at the Georgian-Turkish border. The Hemshins are Muslims and geographically categorized as Eastern Hemshins[1] (also known as Hopa Hemshins) and Western Hemshins (also known as Bash Hemshins; Aksu 2014, Vaux 2007). Eastern Hemshins mostly live in Hopa, Kemalpaşa, and Borçka in Artvin. Western Hemshins are mostly settled in Rize (Çamlıhemşin, Hemşin, Pazar,

[1] The conversion of Hemshins from Christianity to Islam was completed by the late 1700s (Simonian 2007:61-66).

İkizdere, Çayeli, Ardeşen, and Fındıklı towns), Trabzon (Araklı town), and Erzurum (İspir, Uzundere, Tortum, Narman towns). Today, there are also Hemshins settled in Düzce and Adapazarı, who migrated there before and during the 1877/78 Russo-Turkish War chiefly from Fındıklı and Hopa. In addition to a significant number of Hemshins living in big cities such as İstanbul, İzmir, and Ankara in Turkey, today there are also Hemshins living in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. These are the descendants of Hopa Hemshins who remained in and around Batumi after Batumi was annexed by the Georgian SSR in the aftermath of the WWI. The Hemshins living in Batumi were then deported to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in 1940s during the Stalin era. They are too Muslim and still speak Hamshetsnak. Finally, there are also Hemshins living in Krasnodar and Sochi in Russia, and Sokhumi and Gagra in Abkhazia, who are also referred to as Northern Hemshins (Vaux 2007). They call themselves Hamshenahay (Hamshen Armenians), belong to Armenian Apostolic Church and still speak the Hemshin language. The latter group first had to migrate to Trabzon, Ordu, Giresun, and Samsun from the traditional Hemshin lands to resist forced conversion in the 1800s and then to Abkhazia and Sochi during the Armenian Genocide of 1915.

Although no official census records exist for the Hemshin population in Turkey, there are several population estimates based on the official population statistics of the villages and towns with majority Hemshin inhabitants. According to Simonian (2007:xxi) the Western Hemshins in Rize are estimated to number around 29000 individuals while the number of Eastern Hemshins in Hopa is estimated to be around 26000. Mine Üçüncü, a Hemshin individual from Adapazarı estimates the Hemshins living in Adapazarı and Düzce to be around 2000 (excluding many Hemshins who out-migrate seasonally for education

purposes) (Üçüncü 2014:42-45). In addition to these, the number of the Hemshin individuals living in big cities such as Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa, and Ankara is believed to outnumber those who stayed in their home villages. The Hemshin population settled in Russia, Abkhazia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan is estimated at around 3000. Consequently, Simonian gives an estimate of a total figure of approximately 150000 Hemshin individuals around the world (2007:xxi).

A short overview of Hamshetsnak

While in Turkish the language is referred to as "Armeni", "Ermença", "Hemşin dili" or "Hemşince, "Homshetsnak", "Hamshetsnak", "Homshetsma", "Hamshetsma" are the terms used to refer to the language in the native language. Hemshin individuals choose one of these names depending on the language code used at the time of speech, the region they live and sometimes on their political positioning. We refer to the language as Hamshetsnak throughout. Hamshetsnak is a variety of Western Armenian which is "definitely endangered" according to the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger.[2] Among the Hemshins living in Turkey today only the Eastern Hemshins speak the Hemshin language, in addition to Turkish. They refer to their language as Homshetsnak or Hamshetsnak in their native language or Hemşince in Turkish. In addition, some of the Hemshins whose ancestors migrated to Adapazarı and Düzce from Hopa still speak the Hemshin language. There are five Hemshin villages in Düzce and Adapazarı which are categorized as "the ones who speak the language and who don't" by the Hemshins living in these cities. While the Hemshins living in the villages of Hemşin and Karatavuk in Düzce, and Acmabaşı in Adapazarı still speak the language, those in Yenice in Düzce, and Paralı in Adapazarı do not. In addition to these

[2] https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000192416 (Accessed 17 December 2022).

villages, there are also speakers living in Karapelit, Çakmaklı, and Kestanepınarı villages in Adapazarı. The Western Hemshins have long lost their language (approximately 50 known individuals still speak the language) but they still retain and actively use many place names, family names, names for plants, insects, and animals and many names for traditional agricultural tools in Hemshin language. The preserved Hemshin vocabulary items found in the daily Turkish speech of the Western Hemshins are in most cases nearly identical to those in the Hemshin language spoken by Eastern Hemshins.

Although there is considerable interest and work in documenting Hamshetsnak in the last two decades there are not many studies on the language, and a comprehensive documentation and study of the language is yet to be conducted.[3] The most comprehensive report on the language has been published by Bert Vaux (e.g., Vaux 2007). In recent years, with the increasing interest in documenting Hamshetsnak among the Hemshins in Turkey, several other books have been published by Hamshetsnak native speakers such as Mahir Özkan's *Hamşetsnag Hamşenehayeran (Hemşince, in press)* and Huriye Şahin's *Hamşetsnak Lizu Kidanutun (Hemşince Dil Bilgisi, 2019)*. The data for this paper comes from a collaborative work on documenting the grammar of Hemshin language by Neşe Kaya Özkan, Songül Gündoğdu, Mahir Özkan and Hikmet Akçiçek.[4]

Hamshetsnak is a variety of Western Armenian, which has been in con-

[3] As cited in Simonian (2007), the earliest work on Hemshin language was written in 1910s by Nikolai rr, a Georgian historian and linguist. Another study on varieties of Hamshen language was conducted by Hrachya Acharyan in the beginning of 1900s. A more recent work with short notes on the language was conducted by Georges Dumézil, a French philologist in 1967. Finally, Uwe Bläsing, a German philologist documented the preserved Hemshin words in the Turkish of Western Hemshins in Turkey. Unfortunately, these resources are not accessible to many Hemshins as they do not have Turkish or English translations. Also see Bläsing (2007).

[4] The planned title: Hamshetsnagin Hame Gramer Me/Hemşince İçin Bir Gramer (A Grammar of Hamshetsnak)

tact with Turkish, Greek, Laz, and Georgian languages over hundreds of years. Preserving several features from Classical and Middle Armenian (Vaux 2007:265), having typological commonalities with both Turkic and Indo-European languages, Hamshetsnak exhibits highly distinctive characteristics that evolved in this unique contact situation.

Bert Vaux (2007:259) classifies Hamshetsnak as one of the varieties of Armenian that belongs to the northeastern subgroup of Western Armenian varieties because the language exhibits a few linguistic features that distinguish the varieties of western varieties of Armenian from those in the eastern group. Firstly, according to Vaux (2007), the unaspirated voiceless stops are voiced in western varieties, including Hamshetsnak. Having said this, we observe in our field work several words that keep the unaspirated voiceless stops such as *k'edal* 'spoon', *k'ezi* 'to you', *k'eloğ* 'head', etc. Secondly, similar to other western dialects, Hamshetsnak forms the second singular pronoun with a final *-n* (*tun* 'you.sg'). In the morphological domain, Hamshetsnak employs the affix *-g(u)* to form the present and imperfect indicative tenses as seen in (1) below:

(1) a. Yes torx-i-gu-m.
I dig-TH-1NDC-PRS.1SG
'I am digging/I dig.'

b. Yes torx-e-gu-Ø.
I dig-TH-1NDC-PST.1SG
'I was digging.'

The ablative singular ending is -a in Hamshetsnak, similar to the other Western Armenian varieties, as seen in (2). Finally, similar to the other Western Armenian varieties, Homshetsnak employs nominative/accusative or genitive/dative case ending -i- to form locative case, e.g., ard-i-n 'in the field' (3).

(2) mektab-**a**-n

school-ABL-DEF
'from the school'

(3) ard-**i**-n
field-LOC-DEF
in the field'

The verbal system in Hamshetsnak exhibits rich morphological patterns encoding tense, aspect, modality, voice, and agreement. Like Proto-Armenian, Hamshetsnak has four verbal conjugations, characterized by theme vowels *-e-, -i-, -a-,* and *-u-,* as illustrated in (4), (5), (6), (7) respectively:

(4) Tun keʃ-e-gu-s.
you.SG drive-TH-1NDC-PRS.2SG
'You drive.'

(5) Tun tertʃ-i-gu-s.
you.SG run-TH-1NDC-PRS.2SG
'You run.'

(6) Tun ert-a-gu-s.
you.SG go-TH-1NDC-PRS.2SG
'You go.'

(7) Tun desn-u-gu-s.
you.SG see-TH-1NDC-PRS.2SG
'You see.'

The Old-Armenian *-u-* conjugation has been partially lost in Hamshetsnak. There are only a few verbs documented in this conjugation such *as arnush* 'to take', *desnush* 'to see', and *kednush* 'to find'.

Hamshetsnak has undergone internal changes and suppletive forms emerged in the present and past (aorist) form of some verbs, such as *ertush* 'to go' as seen in (8) below.

(8) a. Yes g'-ert-a-m.
1 1NDC-go-TH-PRS.1SG
'I go/I am going.'

b. Yes kena-ts-i.
I go.PST-ASP-PST.1SG
'I went.'

Hamshetsnak also typically instantiates fusional morphology, especially in the formation of past tense as seen in (9) and (10) where -a and -i respectively bear both tense and person information.

9) Yes des-a.
I see-PST.1SG
'I saw.'

(10) Yes xep-ets-i.
I close-ASP-PST.1SG
'I closed'

The system of nominal morphology is rich with noun declension classes distinguished primarily by different theme vowels and marking nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, instrumental, ablative, and locative cases. The nominative and accusative on one hand, and the genitive, dative, and locative on the other employ syncretic forms. The syncretism observed between nominative and accusative depends on the animacy feature of the entity, however. The nominative is marked with *-Ø* while accusative is marked with *–(y)i/u/an/va/oç/a/o* depending on the noun declension class in Hamshetsnak when the object is animate. If the direct object is inanimate a sync-

retism is observed between the nominative and accusative cases as illustrated in (11).

(11) Sevgi-Ø-n garmuc-Ø-e xeç-e-ts-uts-Ø.
Sevgi-NOM-DEF bridge-ACC-DEF knock down-TH-ASP-CAUS-PST.3SG
'Sevgi knocked down the bridge.'

When the object is animate the accusative is marked with *–(y)i/u/an/va/oç/a/o* depending on the noun declension class in Hamshetsnak as seen in (12).

12) Yes Murat-i-n des-a.
I Murat-ACC-DEF see.PST.1SG
'I saw Murat.'

To conclude, there are four distinct case markers in Hamshetsnak; *-Ø, -(y)i/u/an/va/oç/a/o, - (ts)a* (ablative), and -(ts)ov (instrumental). Among these *–(y)i/u/an/va/oç/a/o* is employed to mark dative, genitive, and locative in inanimate entities while it marks accusative, dative, genitive and locative for the animate entities.

Hamshetsnak is also unique in preserving the original meaning and function of the deictic clitics *-s*, *-d*, and *-n* in Classical Armenian respectively referring to the entities near the speaker, near the addressee, and to the entities out of the purview of both speaker and the addressee (Vaux 2007) as seen in (13) below:

(13) a. Gov-u-s pern-a!
cow-ACC-DEIC catch-IMP.2SG
'Catch the cow!' (the cow is closer the speaker)

b. Gov-u-d pern-a!
cow-ACC-DEIC catch-IMP.2SG
'Catch the cow!' (the cow is closer to the addressee)

c. Gov-u-n pern-a!
cow- ACC-DEIC catch-IMP.2SG
'Catch the cow!' (the cow has gone and neither the speaker nor the addressee can see it)

Vaux (2007:265) defines Hamshetsnak as "one of the most archaic and innovative varieties of modern Armenian" based on the linguistic features that the language has preserved from Classical Armenian, some of which we described above, and characteristics that the language has developed over years in the unique contact situation.

Among the innovations Hemshin language displays, Vaux (ibid.) lists nasal rising where a sound changes into o when it precedes a nasal consonant, the use of present participle oɣ- to form future tense (*Xepoɣum* 'I will close'), the use of *-di* as a second-person singular imperfect ending (*Xepegud(i)* 'You were closing), the use of -ush as the infinitival suffix for all verbs although other varieties use the forms *el-*, *al-, il-* and *ul-* based on the theme vowels. For example, the infinitival forms of the verbs 'to find', 'to say', 'to read', and 'to arrive' are respectively *kednush, asush, gartush, and*

pobush. In Hamshetsnak, the theme vowels that these verbs bring in are observed when the verbs are marked with tense, aspect and modality while in other western dialects the infinitival form of the verbs bear theme vowels as well.

One feature that Hamshetsnak exhibits, which it also shares with the Xodochur variety of Western Armenian, is the use of the verb *unush* 'have' as an auxiliary in the formation of present and past perfect tense with the transitive verbs as seen in (14) and (15) below:

(14) Yes kitab-Ø-e kezi dev-adz-un-im.
I book-ACC-DEF you give-ASP-have-PRS.1SG
'I have given the book to you.'

(15) Yes kitab-Ø-e kezi dev-adz-un-e.
I book-ACC-DEF you give-ASP-have-PST.1SG
'I had given the book to you.'

The intransitive verbs make use of the verb 'be' as their auxiliary to form the perfect tenses as seen in (16).

(16) a. Eng-adz-im.
fall-ASP-PRS.1SG
'I have fallen.'

b. Eng-adz-e.
fall-ASP-PST.1SG
'I had fallen.'

Hamshetsnak is a (neuter) SOV language that shows null subjects, similar to Turkish. While this similarity is purely accidental, Vaux (2006) draws our attention to other linguistic features that makes Western Armenian closer to Turkic languages typologically, one of which is the formation and the place of relative clauses. Similar to Western Armenian, Hamshetsnak forms the relative clause with participial suffix and places them before the modified noun (cf. 17) with (18), which illustrates its Turkish counterpart.

(17) Comp-u-n vaan nest-adz mart-un des-a.
Road-GEN-DEF on sit-PTCP man-ACC-DEF see-PST.1SG
'I saw the man who sits on the road.'

(18) Yol-da otur-an adam-ı gör-dü-m.
road.LOC sit.PTCP man-ACC see-PST-1SG
'I saw the man who sits on the road.'

Another possible influence from Turkish is the formation of 'yes/no questions' using the *ta* (if, whether) marker in Hamshetsnak as seen in (19). See Vaux (2007) for a more detailed discussion.

(19) Yes erond im ta?
I beautiful COP.1SG Q
'Am I beautiful?'

Considering that Armenian is well known for its divergences from Proto-Indo-European, it is not surprising that Hamshetsnak also exhibit many linguistic features that differentiates it from Indo-European languages carrying unique characteristics from Classical Armenian and Turkish.

Notes on the history of Hemshin people and Hamshetsnak

Unfortunately, there are only a few written documents on the history of the Hemshins. Some medieval Armenian chroniclers, such as Ghewond, Stepanos Taronetsi, and Mamikonian offer short mentions of a migration of Armenians from the region west of Lake Sevan to the Pontus in the second half of the eighth century. Based on these sources, the current location, and the origins of the name Hemshin can be associated with the migration of Armenians to Pontus under the leadership of Shapuh Amatuni and his son Hamam in around 790, fleeing the Arab invasions. From Mamikonian, we learn that, upon the destruction of Hamam's city, Tambur, by the Persian troops brought by the Prince of Georgia, Hamam built a new city 'by his own name' Hamam-a-shen (built or inhabited by Hamam) from which the name Hemshin seems to have been derived (Simonian 2007:20-21). The principality of Hamshen continued to exist until it was conquered by the Ottomans in 1486. The significant topics to cover about the period after the Ottoman conquest relates to the Islamization process and how conversion possibly influenced the loss of language among the Western Hemshins. Analyzing several Armenian manuscripts, diaries, and notes from travelers to the traditional Hemshin lands such as German botanist Karl Koch and Castillian ambassador Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo, and Ottoman registers, Simonian (2007:73) concludes that Hemshin remained an exclusively Christian district up until the early seventeenth century.

As mentioned formerly, today the Western Hemshins speak only Turkish, and the existence of Armenian toponyms, artefact and ethno-ecological words in their Turkish frequently trigger vehement negotiations over the ethnic identity of Hemshins as well as whether Western

Hemshins used to speak Hemshin language at some point and lost it or they only borrowed some words from the Armenians as a result of contact between Hemshins and Armenians before the foundation of the Republic of Turkey. Today, most of the Hemshins in Çamlıhemşin in Rize would tell that they do not have any other language than Turkish, and they are not sure if their ancestors used to speak Hemshin language at all.

Although it cannot be precisely determined until when Hamshetsnak was spoken among the Western Hemshins, it is highly probable that it was spoken at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Bläsing, 2007:279-280). As cited in Simonian (2007:77), in his 1910 article on Turkish Lazistan, the Georgian linguist Nikolai Marr, reported that the Hemshins 'have not only changed their faith, but to a great extent have completely forgotten their native language'. In addition to many Hamshetsnak toponyms, artefact names and ethno-ecological words in the spoken Turkish of Western Hemshins, which may indicate that the ancestors of Western Hemshins once spoke Hamshetsnak, we have learned recently that there are still some Hemshin individuals who speak Hamshetsnak among the Western Hemshins. During our interview meeting in July 2022, an 84-year-old Hemshin woman in Fındıklı (Rize) told me that her grandmother used to speak "Ermença" (namely, Hamshetsnak). She said "they used to speak among themselves very cheerfully. They really enjoyed speaking Ermença." Similarly, only recently we have learned that there are around 50 Hemshin individuals who still speak Hamshetsnak in the Raşot Valley in Çayeli, Rize. Unlike Eastern Hemshins who call their language Homshetsnak or Hamshetsnak they call the language they speak Ermenice (Armenian). These accounts enable us to argue that the ancestors of Western Hemshins living in and around Rize used to speak Hamshetsnak and they lost it during the

nineteenth century. Unlike many cases where the process of language loss is instigated upon migration from the homeland, in the Hemshin case the language has been preserved more among the Hemshins who left the main traditional Hemshin lands (namely, in and around today's Hemşin and Çamlıhemşin in Rize).

Simonian (2007) draws attention to the conversion of Hemshin Armenians to Islam and the degree of integration to the Ottoman system as some of the most significant factors that might have induced language loss among the Western Hemshins. Simonian refers to the "millet" (community) concept in the Ottoman Empire wherein people identified themselves in terms of belonging to a particular religious community. The association of speaking Armenian with being Christian (and Turkish with being Muslim) was a quite common practice observed in the frame of the "millet" system during the Ottoman Empire. Hence, being an Armenian at that time meant being a member of Armenian Apostolic Church. We see that in these times rather than language and ethnicity association as in the nation states, language was a marker of one's religion. Linguistic anthropologists Irvine and Gal observe a similar case in nineteenth century Macedonia where Muslims were "counted as "Turks," while Orthodox Christians, including people who spoke various forms of Slavic, Romance, Albanian, and Greek, were counted as "Greeks"" (Irvine & Gal 2000:65-66.) As a reflection of this understanding, it was common to hold the idea that speaking languages other than Turkish was akin to committing a sin. Declaring speaking Armenian as a sin with the statement 'seven Armenian words were an insult for a Muslim' through campaigns by mullahs in 1890s and calling Armenian as the "language of gaurs" clearly depict the language ideologies at work and the atmosphere under which Hemshins decided to quit speaking their language (Simonian 2007:77).

In addition, one can count the increase in the number of schools in the region, the availability of Islamic religious instruction, social and economic mobility among the Hemshins (some Hemshin men such as Mehmed Ali Pasha even became grand-admiral or vizier in the imperial system), outmigration from Hemshin lands among other processes that contributed to the loss of Hemshin language among the Western Hemshins.

Although the date of the migration of the Hemshins to Hopa and Kemalpaşa (the region associated with Eastern Hemshins) is not certain, one can deduce by some reports and oral history accounts by Hopa Hemshins that it happened by the early nineteenth century.[5] The migration to this district and settlement in the highland villages led to the circumstances that enabled the maintenance of Hamshetsnak among the Eastern Hemshins. Unlike the Western Hemshins, the Eastern Hemshins did not enjoy the social and economic mobility until recently. Until the last four decades, Eastern Hemshins were mainly engaged in subsistence-oriented economies practicing transhumance and small-scale agriculture including beekeeping and cultivating corn, collard greens, and beans. They would spend summers with their flocks in *lernukes* (*yaylas* in Turkish 'highland pastures') located in Ardahan. During the rest of the year, they used to stay in their highland mountain villages in and around Hopa and Kemalpasa, having very little relation with the state institutions and non-Hemshin people located in coastal Hopa or Kemalpasa. This fact enabled the maintenance of Hamshetsnak till today among Eastern Hemshins. As an 82-year-old Hemshin woman told me in 2013, Hemshin people used to speak Hemshin language in and around their villages and summer pastures

[5] Simonian (2007:80) cites several sources presenting different dates for the migration of Hopa Hemshins from the traditional Hemshin lands to Hopa region: According to Torlakyan and Gaspian the migration took place during the second half of the seventeenth century. Some Russian sources report a later date for the migration around 1780s or 1800s. The oral history accounts of Hopa Hemshins point to 1800s as well as I discuss in Kaya (2014).

and spoke Turkish "only when [they]we went downtown. [They]We used to speak it with the Laz people in the town."

While the socio-economic situation favored the preservation of Hamshetsnak among the Eastern Hemshins for a long time, the subsidized introduction of tea as a cash crop from 1950s on (Beller-Han 2007:340), along with developments emerged through modernization such as increasing transportation, urbanization, expansion of schooling (in Turkish), and migration to more populated coastal towns intensified Hemshin people's interaction with the state institutions and non-Hemshin people and they therefore increased the use of Turkish while shrinking the spheres where Hamshetsnak was spoken.

Similar to the campaigns launched by Mullahs against the use of Armenian during the nineteenth century, condemning speaking languages other than Turkish continued after the foundation of the Republic of Turkey. Since its foundation, the Republic of Turkey pursued a monolithic nation state model recognizing only Turkish language and restricting and even banning the public use of non-Turkish languages of the different ethnicities living within the country. All the other ethnicities having a non-Turkish language were expected to speak Turkish being deprived of speaking their languages publicly through campaigns such as "Citizen, Speak Turkish" (Çağatay 2005:95). To provide a basis to the policy of the Turkish state aiming at the assimilation of non-Turkish Muslims, some Turkish nationalist researchers claimed that different ethnicities such as Kurds, Armenians, and Hemshins were proto-Turks, who however lost their original native language (e.g., Kırzıoglu 1966, 1994).

Assimilation practices of the Turkish nation state did not only target linguistic assimilation. Banning non-Turkish languages in public places (Yıldız 2001), the Surname Law prohibiting last names referring to non-Turkic

ethnic origins or languages (Bayar 2011), making changes in the toponyms of non-Turkish origin (Nişanyan 2011) are only some of the practices within the scope of assimilation projects of the Turkish nation state along with the schooling in Turkish. Today many Hemshin individuals tell how their teachers would reprimand them when they were caught speaking Hamshetsnak. Hemshin children at school were exposed to both verbal and physical violence when they were heard speaking Hamshetsnak. It is through such socio-economic and political processes that a language shift from Hamshetsnak to Turkish started to take place among the Hopa Hemshins in Turkey.

Current sociolinguistic aspects of Hamshetsnak

Today Hamshetsnak is spoken mostly by the elderly Hemshins among the Eastern Hemshins (Kaya 2014). While the elderly speak Hamshetsnak with the middle-aged generation, they speak Turkish with the younger generation, notably with the children. Children are mostly addressed in Turkish both by their grandparents and parents. Thanks to some passive exposure to the language, some children understand Hamshetsnak but always respond back in Turkish. In short, we can claim that intergeneration transmission of Hamshetsnak has been mostly disrupted and the spaces where Hamshetsnak is used has been limited to summer pastures (the use of summer pastures for transhumance has also shifted dramatically) and family interactions within Hemshin villages (mostly among the Hemshins over 50 years old).

My research among the Eastern Hemshins for almost a decade now shows that in addition to socio-economic and political transformations, increasing schooling and contact with non-Hemshin people, language ideologies about Hamshetsnak have played a significant role in the processes of lin-

guistic and social marginalization of Hemshins, and in the language shift from Hamshetsnak to Turkish. Among the commonly held language ideologies we can list (a) the discourses of shame surrounding Hamshetsnak or "ideologies of contempt" (Dorian 1998), which has created perception of inferiority for Hamshetsnak with attributes such as "backward, rude, grammarless code", (b) discourses of "utilitarian language ideologies" (Kroskrity & Field 2009), promoting a sense of irrelevance of Hamshetsnak to Hemshin people's contemporary economic needs in a Turkish dominated world, and (c) the ideology of language as identity, constructing a direct indexical relationship between speaking Hamshetsnak and being Hemshin or even Armenian in the context of modern Turkey, where being Armenian is still approached with expressions of negative affect.

Despite the authority of Turkish as the dominant language, Hamshetsnak is still valued within the community and has material and emotional functions that not only construct social relationships and belonging among the Hemshins but also link them to their history and ancestors. Many Hemshin individuals told me that speaking Hamshetsnak is one of the significant markers of being Hemshin and as a language that was left from their ancestors, it should be maintained and transmitted to the future generations. Hamshetsnak is also commonly referred to as the language of "intimacy", "secrecy" and "humor" among the Hemshins. When Eastern Hemshins recount past events they choose Hamshetsnak over Turkish stating that in Turkish such stories are never "intimate" or "funny." The language is also used frequently when parents want to talk about issues that kids should not know about. Similarly, Hamshetsnak is also used in public spaces such as buses when the speakers do not want others to understand what they are talking about. Finally, in the last two decades, the language has come to stand for Hemshin identity and has played an active role

in the identity politics among the Hemshins, which has been increasing the symbolic value of the language in turn. The Hemshin activists who are engaged in politics of identity, employ Hamshetsnak in many of the events and activities they organize to make their distinct identity visible. We can claim that the slogan *Kimanak ta? Hozaik!* (Do you hear? We are here!) in Hamshetsnak, which first appeared in the first Hemshin music album cover, *Vova* (Who?), and has been circulating in different venues, has underscored the significance of Hamshetsnak for the Hemshin identity and identity politics (Akçiçek et al. 2018).

Language reclamation among the Hemshins

Although the language revitalization efforts among the Hemshins are not institutionalized and Hemshin people continue their language preservation activities through individual efforts and with limited social and economic resources it is possible to argue that Hemshin people have been mobilized around a multiple and heterogenous linguistic and cultural reclamation movement since the beginning of 2000s. In a context with increasing interest in Hemshin history, culture, and language, through organizations, platforms, and individual efforts, many Hemshins organize events to raise awareness about language loss, document the grammar of language, write dictionaries, document, and produce songs and stories, organize online and in-class language classes, produce films and documentaries using Hamshetsnak, translate international literary work into Hamshetsnak, and so on.

It is only for the last couple of decades that Hemshin people has become visible publicly in Turkey. Many people in Turkey heard Hamshetsnak first with the song *Ka tun mita xendas oç* (Girl, I hope you

can't be happy) when Kazım Koyuncu, a Laz singer included a song in Hamshetsnak in their album in 1998. In 2000, Özcan Alper, a Hemshin film director released his short documentary film, *Momi* (grandmother) depicting Hemshin life in highland pastures, as one of the most significant spaces of Hamshetsnak. In 2005, the first music album, *Vova* (Who?) with songs all in Hamshetsnak was released by Hikmet Akçiçek, Ersin Çelik and Mustafa Biber. In 2010, Harun Aksu, Mahir Özkan, and Hikmet Akçiçek, who are well-known for their efforts to document and revitalize Hamshetsnak, suggested an alphabet for the language in their essay "Latin Harfleriyle Hemşince Yazım Önerisi/Hamsetsu Anuben (A Suggestion for Writing Hemshince with Latin Letters) (Aksu et al. 2010).

In 2011, *HADIG, Hemşin Kültürünü Araştırma ve Yaşatma Derneği* (the Organization of Research and Preservation of Hemshin Culture) was founded by Hemshin people living in Istanbul. Documenting Hemshin language and revitalizing it was one of the missions of the organization. In line with this mission, they started a project aiming at documenting the language and writing a grammar book of the language, which is still in progress. They organized events that brought elderly and young Hemshins together in addition to activities such as online and in-person courses to teach the language to young adults, conducting projects on translating international literature to Hamshetsnak, writing a dictionary of the language, and consciousness raising events on the 21st of February, International Mother Language Day, so on. In 2013, *GOR* Collective (*Gor* means collaborative work in Hamshetsnak) was founded and started to publish biannual *Gor Journal* with Turkish and Hamshetsnak fictional and non-fictional stories, songs, essays on Hemshin history, culture, nature, and language.

One can claim that without any state support and with very few economic resources, *HADIG* and *Gor* Collective have managed to make Hemshin people and their language visible and increased awareness among the Hemshins in relation to Hemshin identity, history, and language across borders. Raising awareness about the endangered Hemshin language and producing written documents in Hamshetsnak, the organization has also increased the symbolic value of the language. Today, many young Hemshins, who could not believe their ears when they first heard the Hamshetsnak song from Kazım Koyuncu, went beyond documenting Hemshin songs, stories, and traditional spaces of the language and started to produce new songs, literary works, grammar books, YouTube videos, and films creating new contexts for the use of the language. The Hamshetsnak songs by the music bands *Entu* (opposite) and *Meluses* (our light), the books *Hemşin Öyküleri* (Hemshin Stories) and *Bidzik Pirens* (Little Prince) by Mahir Özkan, Youtube kids' songs including Bidzik Astag (Twinkle Little Star) By Ayşenur Kolivar and Onur Şentürk can be given as the recent works that have taken attention not only among the Hemshins in Turkey but also among the diaspora Hemshins. By increasing the public visibility and symbolic value of Hamshetsnak, such efforts and products also change the language ideologies that negatively impact the use of the language. Today, Hemshin people are increasingly speaking out their different ethnic identity and show interest in preserving, reclaiming, and speaking their language.

References

Akçiçek, H., Altunkaya, N., Şahin, Ş. (2018). "Hemşinliler: kamusal görünürlük." İstanbul'da kültürel çeşitliliğin sivil toplum aktörlerini güçlendirme ve kapasite geliştirme projesi. İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversi-

tesi. https://www.turkiyekulturleri.org/tr/Dijital-Yayinlar-Detay/41/Hemsinliler-Kamusal-Gorunurluk. Accessed December 17, 2022.

Aksu, C. (2014). "Hemşinliler, tarih ve kimlik parçaları" *Gor* 1, 5-9.

Aksu, H., Akçiçek, H., and Ö, Mahir. (2010). "Latin harfleriyle Hemşince yazım önerisi/Hamsetsu anuben" (A Suggestion for Writing Hemshince with Latin Letters). *Biryaşam Dergisi 8*.

Bayar, Y. (2012). "The Trajectory of nation-building through language policies: the case of Turkey during the Early Republic (1920-1938)." *Nations and Nationalism* 17, 108-128.

Bläsing, U. (2007). "Armenian in the vocabulary and culture of the Turkish Hemshinli", In H. H. Simonian (ed.) *The Hemshin: history, society and identity in the Highlands of Northeast Turkey*, 279-302. New York: Routledge.

Çağatay, S. (2006). *Islam, secularism, and nationalism in Modern Turkey:* Who is a Turk? New York: Routledge.

Dorian, N. C. (1998). "Western language ideologies and small-language prospects." In L. A. Grenoble &L. J. Whaley (eds.) *Endangered languages: Language loss and community response,* 3–21. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Irvine, J. T. & S. Gal. (2000). "Language ideology and linguistic differentiation." In P. V. Kroskrity (ed.) R*egimes of language: Ideologies, polities, and identities,* 35-84. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

Kaya, N. (2014). Hopa Hemshinlis: History, Language and Ientity. Unpublished M.A. Thesis. Sabancı University.

Kırzıoğlu, M. F. (1966). "Eski Oğuz (Arsaklı-Part) kalıntısı Hemşinliler", *Türk Folklor Araştırmaları.*

Kırzıoglu, F. (1994). *Karadeniz Bölgesindeki Lazlar ve Hemşinlilerin tarihçe-*

si. Ankara: Rizeliler Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği Yayını.

Kroskrity, P. V. & M. C. Field (2009). N*ative American language ideologies: Beliefs, practices, and struggles in Indian country.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Moseley, C. n.d. Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger. UNESCO Publishing. P. 26-27. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000192416 Accessed 17 December 2022

Nişanyan, S. (2011). *Hayali coğrafyalar: Cumhuriyet döneminde Türkiye'de değiştirilen yeradları. Istanbul*: TESEV.

Özkan, M. (in press). Hamşetsnag Hamşenehayeran *Hemşince: Hemşince gramer kitabı-Batı Ermenice ile Karşılaştırmalı.* Istanbul: Aras Yayıncılık.

Simonian, H. (2007). *The Hemshin: History, society and identity in the Highlands of Northeast Turkey.* New York: Routledge.

Şahin, H. (2019). *Hamşetsnak lizu kidanutun* (Hemşince Dil Bilgisi). Istanbul: Kurgu Kültür Merkezi.

Üçüncü, M. (2014). "Doğu Karadeniz'den batıya göç eden Hemşinliler." Gor 1, 42-45.

Vaux, B. (2006). "Armenian." In K. Brown (ed.) *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics,* 474-478. Oxford: Elsevier.

Vaux, B. (2007). "Homshetsma: The language of the Armenians of Hamshen." In H. H. Simonian (ed.) The *Hemshin: History, society and identity in the Highlands of Northeast Turkey,* 257-278. New York: Routledge.

Yıldız, A. (2001). *"Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyebilene":* Türk-Ulusal kimliğinin etno-seküler sınırları (1919-1939). Istanbul: Iletişim.

4 Laz

Ömer Eren

Current status of Laz

Laz (*Lazuri* in Laz, ISO 639-3: lzz), is an endangered and understudied language spoken in the southeastern shore of the Black Sea. Typologically, Laz exhibits an ergative-absolutive case system and a flexible word order with the canonical word order being SOV. The verb in Laz has a highly complex composition, exhibiting agreement markers that cross-reference the properties of both subjects and objects in sentences. (Holisky 1991, Boeder 2005, LaCroix 2009, Öztürk & Pöchtrager 2011, Demirok 2013). Genetically, Laz belongs to the South Caucasian language family along with Svan, Mingrelian and Georgian. Among these languages, Laz is the only one that is primarily spoken in the Republic of Turkey as the other members of the family are primarily spoken in the Republic of Georgia (Kutscher 2008). In Turkey, Laz is primarily spoken in two coastal cities in the Black Sea region, namely Rize (Pazar, Ardeşen and Fındıklı districts) and Artvin (Arhavi and Hopa districts), in addition to different parts of the Marmara region.[1]

[1] Many Laz migrated to the present-day Marmara region during the Russo-Turkish war (1877-78) and after 1950s for better job opportunities (Bucaklişi 2002). The Laz-speaking population are in Kocaeli, Sapanca, Bolu, Bursa and İstanbul.

Year	Laz Speakers	%	Notes
1935	FL: 63253, SL: 5061	.42	Census
1945	FL: 39232, SL: 4956	.24	Census
1950	70423 (total)	.34	Census
1955	FL: 30566, SL: 19144	.21	Census
1960	FL: 21703, SL: 38275	.22	Census
1965	FL: 26007, SL: 55158	.26	Census
1980	FL: 30000	.07	Estimate
2007	20000 (total)	.03	Estimate

Table 1. Speaker population (Wikipedia).

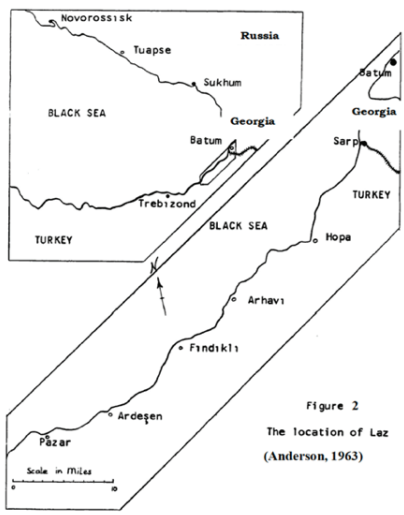


Figure 1. The location of Laz (Anderson 1963).[1]

[1] This figure is a modified version of Anderson's (1963), taken from Emgin (2009).

The absence of census data based on ethnicity prevents us from knowing the current exact number of Laz speakers in Turkey. The Ethnologue (2007) estimates that there were 20000 native speakers located along the coastal line of Turkey from Melyat to the border of Georgia, with an additional total of 2000 speakers residing in Georgia (Adjara) and Germany. The most recent official census data, on the other hand, indicate that the number of people who speak Laz as their mother language was 26007 in 1965 (Table 1). Crucially, contrary to the Ethnologue, the census also makes a distinction between first and second language users and refers to a group of 55158 'second language speakers', yielding a total of 81165 Laz speakers in 1965. This is important in showing that i) the number of Laz speakers has considerably decreased since the census took place, and ii) the Laz population is undergoing language shift because more than two third of the Laz speakers consider and use Laz as their second language in 1965. Language shift takes place when the speakers of a language adopt and gradually switch to a new vernacular that is economically and politically more powerful (Fishman 1991, Pauwels 2016, Mufwene 2020 et seq.). In the context of Laz, the census data prior to 1965 lend further support to the fact that the Laz-speaking population have gradually switched to Turkish. Notice that the number of second language users of Laz increased over the years while the number of those who speak Laz as their first language decreased. From 1960 on, second language speakers outnumber first language users.

The language shift which the Laz population have undergone, eventually giving rise to the endangerment of the language, came because of the socio-economic and political changes that have taken place in its ecology over the years. The Laz language did not have any official status until 2013, when the National Ministry of Education in

Turkey started offering elective Laz courses at governmental schools. The lack of official recognition has restricted Laz to the private sphere while the public sphere operates only in the official/national language of the country, namely Turkish (Kutscher 2008). Turkish, being the language of compulsory education, socio-economic structure as well as mainstream media, has gained more and more domains of uses in daily lives of the Laz-speaking communities. Laz, on the other hand, has been restricted to home settings and familial interactions, mostly with grandparents. A large proportion of the Laz-speaking population intentionally refrain from transmitting Laz to their children with the fear that it will negatively influence their proficiency in Turkish, which they consider to be necessary for good career prospects (Kutscher 2008). Additionally, the active use of Laz has been reported to be restricted to rural areas while Turkish dominates urban settings (Kutscher 2008, Haznedar et al. 2018). The industrialization process starting in 1950s in Turkey resulted in the construction of modern roads and widespread use of motorized vehicles, which have eventually made the hitherto isolated Laz-speaking communities residing in higher altitude villages migrate to more urban areas for better educational and economic prospects. Being in closer contact with the other members of the society in urban settings, the Laz population started using Turkish more and more in daily life.

All the factors listed above eventually resulted in Laz being used in fewer and fewer domains in daily life as well as in a significant decrease in its intergenerational transmission rate, rendering Laz an endangered language. According to the UNESCO Atlas of World Languages, Laz is classified as a definitely endangered language. Haznedar et al. (2018) further report that the intergenerational transmission rate of Laz is quite low as Turkish is the language that is mostly used

among the members of nuclear family in Laz-speaking communities. This being the case, it is estimated that the Laz language is predicted to become extinct within the next two generations (Kutscher 2008) if preventive measures are not taken on time.

Historical overview of the speakers and the language

The Laz people are historically argued to have descended from the Colchians, who migrated from the northeast, i.e., the southern part of Abkhazia, and settled in the South-eastern coast of the Black Sea in antiquity (Bellér-Hann, 2018). The first reference to the word 'Laz' in written resources was made in Pilinius' *Naturalis Historia* in relation to the Lazica Kingdom (Bucaklişi 2002). Historically, the Laz people were either under the authority of or in close relation with (if not dominated by) the Roman/Byzantine Empire, The Persian (Achaemenid) Empire, the Pontus Empire and lastly the Ottoman Empire before the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923.

The crucial fact about the history of the Laz is that they remained autonomous for centuries thanks to the physical geographic characteristics of their homeland. Geographically, consisting of a series of narrow, rugged valleys with rivers that cascade through the gorges of the coastal ranges, the historical and present-day homeland of the Laz people is extremely mountainous, steep, and rocky. Constituting an uninterrupted chain of highlands parallel to the coast of the Black Sea, the North Anatolian Mountains rise to heights even greater than 3000 meters in the east of country, especially in Rize and Artvin, i.e., the present-day homeland of the Laz people. Access to inland from the coast is quite limited due to the natural barriers formed by the mountains. The highly steep nature of the terrain also led to a scatte-

red type of settlement in the area. All these factors historically made it difficult for the area to be fully conquered or taken under full authority (Bellér -Hann 1995), allowing the Laz community to maintain their political and economic autonomy.

History of the Laz prior to 1923

The scarcity of written historical records makes it hard for us to know the history of the Laz, especially in the pre-Ottoman era. Although their homeland was integrated into the borders of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century (Özgün 2000), the Laz people maintained their administrative autonomy, mainly led by local notables or dynasts called *ayans*, until the establishment of the *Laz Sanjak* in 1851. The fact that the integration of the Laz people into the Ottoman Empire officially and administratively took three centuries does not come as a surprise given that they were protected by the natural barriers formed by the mountains in the area. It should also be noted that the establishment of the Laz Sanjak per se may not mean that all the Laz people were administratively and officially integrated into the Empire at the same time given that the Laz are scattered all around and on top of high mountains, access to which is hard due to the absence of roads. Yet, the establishment of an administrative unit allows us to have access to the first census data that refers to the Laz. The French orientalist and geographer Vital Cuinet reports that the Laz Muslim population constituted the majority of the entire population (138620 in 160000; approximately 87% in the Laz sanjak in 1892 (*Yurt Ansiklopedisi* cited from Bucaklişi 2002). Cuinet also notes that the sanjak consisted of 4 districts (*kazas* in Ottoman) as Atina (present-day Pazar), Hopa, Rize and Of, the first two of which were populated by the Laz-speaking communities.

The Laz sanjak was one of the many other sanjaks in the Ottoman Empire and each of its 4 districts had their own local governors. The administration of the Ottoman Empire was decentralized, that is, the Empire was divided into regions called sanjaks, which were autonomous and self-governed by local governors called *pasha* or *mutasarrıf*. These rulers used to act as mediators between the Ottoman government and their communities and they were responsible for the legal, financial, and administrative activities of their communities. Importantly, as long as the minority groups fulfilled their duties to the Empire, like paying taxes and abiding by the regulations of the government, they were not only guaranteed to receive protection from enemies, but they were also free to speak their own ethnic languages and practice their respective cultures. This allowed them to keep their ethnic identities, traditions, and languages alive. Furthermore, the average members of the relevant communities did not need to directly interact with the Ottoman government thanks to their intermediary leaders (Ceylan 2002 and the references therein).

Laz people were engaged in occupations like fishing and cattle breeding during the Ottoman Empire. This mainly came as a result of the fact that the geographical area they lived in was mountainous, hence not suitable for agriculture of many products other than maize, collards, and beans. Moreover, the highly steep terrain, combined with the absence of roads other than small pathways, prevented the Laz people from engaging in economic interaction and trade with other communities. As a result of this economic and social isolation, the Laz people pursued subsistence economic practices during the Ottoman times and probably even before that (Bucaklişi 2002:§4).

Situation of the Laz and Laz language after 1923 to present

After the collapse of the 600-year-old Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, the Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923. The newly founded Republic adopted Westernization as a policy and tried to incorporate this in all domains of life by launching reforms that followed the following principles: nationalism, secularism, and modernism (Akyol 2006). The Turkish Republic inherited a multilingual and multicultural structure from the Ottoman Empire. However, the national policy of the newly founded Republic was constructed based on a monolithic ethnicity and on a single (national) language: Turkishness and the Turkish language. The Act of Unification of Education, for instance, was approved one year after the foundation of the Republic and aimed at combining all educational institutions under a single institution, viz., the Ministry of Education. This legislation also forbade the formal teaching of any language other than Turkish. Moreover, speaking in other ethnic languages was forbidden not only in official institutions like schools but also in public. Likewise, the socio-economic structure was only allowed to function in a single language, namely Turkish. This necessitated that the Laz people learn Turkish in order to function in the socio-economic structure, unlike during the Ottoman Empire.

As for its economic policies, the Republic also adopted a liberal approach and started a process of industrialization to establish an economic structure that is nationally self-sufficient. For this purpose, a series of new factories were founded for mass production of textile, sugar, and cement, and so forth in the early years of the Republic (Habib 1951 among others). These developments were accompanied and supplemented by some infrastructure improvements like the building

of modern roads that connected the interior parts of the country to one another. All these developments also contributed to the formation of cities and fostered the urbanization process that the country has undergone since the foundation of the Republic (Keles 1980).

At this point, it is crucial to discuss the effect of the introduction of the tea cultivation and industry in the areas populated by the Laz-speaking communities. The Turkish government has invested in tea factories in Northeastern Turkey, where the climate and geography are most suitable for cultivation and production of tea. Tea cultivation and industry are still the main source of income today for most of the Laz people. Nevertheless, the introduction of the tea industry has been a catalyst in producing significant changes in the lives of the Laz people socially, economically, and culturally. Taşkın (2011) notes that it made them economically more dependent on and subsidiary to the state, enhancing the official interaction between the Laz and the government whose official language is Turkish. Moreover, it also played a pivotal role in bringing the Laz people in close contact with the rest of the population in the same area. The latter was certainly facilitated by certain significant infrastructure improvements like the building of modern roads both along the Black Sea coast and in the internal parts of Northeastern Turkey, widening the pathways that were not wide enough for vehicles needed for tea production. The construction of these roads combined with the availability of motorized vehicles made it easier for the Laz people to go to the urban centers more often than before as well as migrate to big cities for better-paying job opportunities. This brought the Laz people into closer contact with the members of the society, and thus resulted in a more integrated population structure.

In sum, the changes in the political and socio-economic structure after the foundation of the Republic have played a significant role in Laz ending up as an endangered language. These changes brought an end to the hitherto economically self-sufficient and socially isolated lifestyle of the Laz-speaking communities. Eventually, these changes led the Laz-speaking communities to abandon their ethnic language and gradually switch to the national and hence more prestigious and powerful language of the country, namely Turkish, and thus the language shift and the endangerment of Laz.

Current sociolinguistic situation of the Laz language

Almost all speakers of Laz are bilingual in that they are also proficient in Turkish. This also seems to hold even for very elderly speakers (even for the female population) who live in high altitude villages because these older-generation speakers i) have access to mainstream media through TV, ii) have learned Turkish from either their children and spouses, siblings even if they themselves did not receive formal education and lastly iii) have engaged in economic and/or government-related activities themselves. Younger generation speakers, on the other hand, have lower proficiency in Laz and are more active users of Turkish. Based on her observations during her fieldtrips to the districts of Pazar and Ardeşen in Rize, the German sociolinguist Silvia Kutscher (2008) notes that the number of proficient speakers is quite low among the young generation of Laz speakers. She predicts that only 5-10% of the children or adolescents of Laz origin have high proficiency in Laz while 50-70% of them would only qualify as passive- speakers, i.e., they can only understand the language but cannot speak it. Kutscher further reports that even fully competent speakers of Laz often switch to Turkish as it is the language which they use more frequently

in their daily lives. Since lower degrees of proficient speakers among younger generations and lower frequency of use across all generations are indicators of language shift and endangerment, Kutscher aims to investigate if Laz is endangered and if so whether its current situation could be described as a gradual death scenario à la Campbell & Muntzel (1989).

To this end, Kutscher examines Laz under the classification of levels in which language death is argued to proceed. The relevant three particular levels (based on Sasse 1992) are as follows: i) external factors (external to language) such as the socio-historical context in which language loss takes place, ii) the speech behavior of the speakers, i.e., domains in which the endangered language is used, and lastly iii) structural consequences, i.e., the changes that take place in the grammar of the endangered language due to language contact. Details aside, Kutscher argues that external factors such as economic factors, pro-Turkish quasi-scientific propaganda, and the ban on the use of Laz especially in public settings have led to a contraction in domains in which Laz is used in daily life. She further argues that this contraction has resulted in a diglossic situation where the public sphere functions solely in Turkish, which also penetrates into the semi-public sphere (i.e., streets and shops etc.). Laz, on the other hand, is only restricted to the private sphere, rendering Laz "a domestic language only spoken within the close family circle" (p. 99). Due to the decrease in its domains of use as well as the number of proficient speakers especially in the younger generations, Kutscher concludes that Laz is a highly endangered language, but it could still be saved because it is still being actively used in daily interactions and acquired as a native language.

Kutscher's arguments, which relied on her own observations during her

fieldwork, are confirmed by Haznedar et al.'s report (2018), which remains as the most comprehensive study on the current sociolinguistic situation of the Laz language in Turkey. A total of 450 participants from a wide range of ages and geographical areas took part in this study, which aims to investigate the language use patterns and preferences and the linguistic proficiency of the Laz-speaking communities in Turkey as well as their attitudes towards the Laz language. Since all these factors bear a great significance on the status of Laz as an endangered language, this study has also informed us on the inter-generational transmission of the Laz language. The relevant facts are examined in relation to their correlation with the following sociolinguistic (independent) variables: i) Geographical region (Black Sea vs. Marmara region), ii) Age, iii) Educational background (Primary School or below, Middle or High School, and University graduate or above), iv) Occupational type (Blue-collar vs. White collar), and v) Place of residence (Village, City, Village & City, i.e, dual settlement).

The examination of the language preferences of the participants indicates that the number of those who feel more comfortable in using Laz is significantly higher in the Black Sea region in comparison to the Marmara region. As for age and level of education, the rate of Laz being the preferred language exhibits a positive correlation with age (older speakers tend to prefer Laz) and negative correlation with level of education (the less formal schooling, the more preference for Laz). Relatedly, Laz has turned out to be the preferred language of those who hold blue collar jobs rather than white collar ones, which mostly require more years of formal education. Lastly, Turkish has also been reported to be the preferred language of those who live in urban areas while Laz is preferred more in rural settings like villages. This fact is in parallel with the findings regarding the regional differences in language preferences as many Laz speakers in the Marmara

region reside in big city centers like İstanbul, Kocaeli and Sakarya.

Haznedar et al.'s study is also significant in investigating the linguistic proficiency of the Laz-speaking communities in Turkey. Their findings rely on self-proficiency reports of the speakers about the four main linguistic skills, namely speaking, listening/comprehension, reading and writing. The former two of these skills are referred to as oral skills while the latter two are literacy skills as they require competence in a writing system. The results regarding these skills are in line with the fact that Laz is used and transmitted based on oral tradition and it has only recently developed a writing system: The speaking and listening skills of the participants are found to be better than their writing and reading skills, for which the speakers make use of Turkish, i.e., the medium of formal education in Turkey. The average of the self-reported proficiency scores in all these four skills, on the other hand, has given rise to the following three proficiency levels as low, intermediate, and advanced both in Laz and Turkish. These results indicate that the general level of proficiency of the participants in Laz is only intermediate while it is advanced in Turkish.

As for the correlation between the sociolinguistic factors and linguistic proficiency in Laz, the following picture emerges: i) The number of participants who indicated no competence in Laz is much higher in the Marmara region in comparison to Black Sea, ii) Age is negatively correlated with the level of proficiency in oral skills, that is, with the decrease in age, participants exhibit higher levels of proficiency in speaking and comprehension in Turkish in comparison to Laz, iii) In terms of occupation type, blue collar job-holders have better oral skills in Laz than those with white-collar

jobs, which is again in line with the findings regarding educational level because the latter type of jobs usually require higher education, and lastly iv) There is a strong divide between urban vs. rural area inhabitants in that those who live in rural areas have indicated to have higher levels of proficiency in speaking and listening in comparison to urban areas. This finding is in line with Kutscher's observation (2008) that the town inhabitants use Laz less frequently than the rural population (p. 89).

Another significant issue that has been examined in Haznedar et al.'s report is concerned with the rate of transmission of the Laz language across generations. In his seminal work on language shift and its reversal, Fishman (1991) emphasizes that family plays the central role in the maintenance of minority and endangered languages and the lack of functionality of the ethnic language in family might even render social or governmental measures ineffective. This raises the question of to what extent Laz is used at home settings, especially while addressing children, who are the main actors of the maintenance of the Laz language.

Informed by this literature, Haznedar et al. also investigate the question to what extent Laz is used for communication between parents themselves, between parents and their children as well as who is/was the main input provider for the Laz language for their participants. The answers to the questions "In which language did your parents speak to each other?" and "In which language did your parents speak to you until you started school?" yield the following picture: The rate of the use of Laz for parental communication and child directed speech is significantly higher in those i) who live in the Black Sea region, ii) who hold blue collar jobs, and/or iii) who have received less years of

formal education. Age, on the other hand, has been found to exhibit a negative correlation, that is, with the decrease in age Turkish is/was used more often between the parents of the participants and in their interaction with them. As for the question of who the main language input provider for the Laz language is/was, the results indicate a region-based difference: While the rate of those who have learned Laz from their grandparents is higher in the Marmara region, the main providers of linguistic input for Laz in the Black Sea region turns out to be parents. Taking all these findings taken into consideration, it can be argued that one of the reasons behind the discrepancy between the linguistic proficiency level of the Black Sea and Marmara region could be due to difference in the amount of Laz that was directed to and used with these participants during their childhood.

A related and significant question that was directed to the participants in Haznedar et al.'s study was whether, and if so to what extent, their children know/speak Laz. This question aims at understanding the rate of intergenerational transmission of the Laz language. The results indicate that the rate of the children who have been reported to know Laz well is only 23%. The remaining 28% do not know Laz at all and the rest have acquired it only to a certain extent, possibly qualifying as passive speakers or receptive bilinguals. These findings indicate that only one of the four participants transmitted Laz to their children, which is a robust finding about the intergenerational transmission rate of the Laz language. As for the correlation of the children's level of competence in Laz with the relevant sociolinguistic variables, it turns out that Laz is transmitted to younger generations, in a statistically significant way, more frequently in the Black Sea region in comparison to the Marmara region. Likewise, as the age of the participants increases, there occurs an increase in their children's level of competence

in Laz, which clearly shows us the gradually decreasing transmission rate of the Laz language, which has eventually given rise to its endangerment. These findings are also in line with the findings regarding how frequently the participants address their own children in Laz: The frequency rate is higher in the Black Sea region, especially in rural areas and by participants with lower levels of education. In sum, it turns out that the level of proficiency in younger generations is quite dependent on the frequency of the use of Laz for parental communication and child-directed speech.

Haznedar et al.'s findings regarding child-directed speech and parental communication also inform us about the domains in which Laz is used in daily life. It is commonly observed that people who speak more than one language use each language for different purposes and the choice is dependent on certain factors like the context in which conversation takes place as well as who they talk to. In the context of endangered languages, language shift takes place when the more prestigious language penetrates more and more domains in which the minority language has been used (Fishman 1991, Pauwels 1996, Mufwene 2020). Informed by this literature, Haznedar et al.'s study also investigates the use of Laz according to i) the interlocutor, ii) the social contexts in which Laz is used, and iii) (social-)media. The findings regarding child-directed speech and parental communication presented above are in line with the basic and most significant findings of Haznedar et al.'s study about the use of Laz according to the interlocutor. More specifically, the authors emphasize the decreasing use of Laz among core family members in all age ranges, which include spouses, parents, siblings, and children. Moreover, the participants report that they mostly speak Turkish with the members of their nuclear family and even in their interactions with their grandparents. This is a striking fact beca-

use the main interlocutors for communication in Laz have also been found to be grandparents, who also act as the main input providers for some of the participants, especially younger-generation speakers.

As for the use of Laz according to the social context, it turns out that Laz is mostly spoken at home and in the local area, especially at social gatherings like weddings or funerals. Turkish, on the other hand, is the only language that is spoken at more formal contexts like workplaces as well as official institutions like schools or local service establishments. These findings lend support to Kutscher's argument (2008) that Laz is mainly restricted to the private sphere, in particular interactions with the elderly family members.

Lastly, one of the domains in which Laz is used is mainstream media. Despite the absence of a TV channel or radio station that broadcasts in the Laz language, it is possible to listen to Laz songs or find content in Laz especially in local TV channels. More importantly, in recent years social media made it easier for the Laz speakers not only to share multimedia content in the Laz language but also to communicate with the other members of the Laz community. Texting or sharing social media content turns out to be a nice opportunity for Laz speakers to make use of and improve their literacy skills, namely, reading and writing. The findings of Haznedar et al.'s study about the use of Laz in media reveals a positive correlation between the level of education of participants and the amount of Laz content they share and follow in social media. Likewise, those holding white collar jobs follow and share more content on social media in Laz. As for reading print material in Laz like books and/or magazines, it turns out that those who reside in the Marmara region are engaged in reading in Laz more than those in the Black Sea region, where Laz is more used orally rather than in the written medium.

Revitalization efforts for Laz

Revitalization movements for Laz started in 1990s in Turkey, initially with the efforts of a limited group of activists, who came together firstly with the aim of creating an awareness about the existence of the Laz language, culture, and identity and then about the significance of their preservation and maintenance. The fact that efforts were first directed towards proving the existence of the Laz language as a distinct language was necessitated because there is a misconception about the Laz identity in Turkey in that Lazness is attributed to the entire Black Sea region and the Laz language is believed to be the Black Sea dialect of Turkish (Bucaklişi 2002). The pro-Turkish quasi-scientific propaganda carried out in the 90s played a significant role in creating and spreading the denial of the existence of a distinct Laz identity and language (Bellér-Hann & Hann 2000, Bucaklişi 2002, Kutscher 2008 a.o.). The scarcity of written historical records of Laz and the absence of a writing system reinforced this misconception, even among the Laz community. In other words, the absence of written tradition and documentation in Laz rendered this language 'archaic', rural, and less prestigious, i.e., a language that cannot meet the needs of its speakers in modern times. As a result of this, there is a tendency in the Laz-speaking communities to associate Laz with ruralness and the (unpleasant) past (Taşkın 2011, Haznedar et al. 2018). For some of its speakers, Laz is some sort of a simple local communication system that allows them to communicate among themselves but crucially not a language with a grammatical system that is as complex as that of other languages like Turkish or English.

The publication of the most comprehensive dictionary of the Laz language, i.e., *Didi Lazuri Nenapuna* 'Big Laz Dictionary' (Bucaklişi et al.

1999), featuring more than 10000 words, played an influential role in proving that Laz is a separate language with a sophisticated and developed vocabulary system. This was followed by the publication of the first descriptive grammar of Laz (Kojima and Bucaklişi 2003), aiming at proving that Laz has a grammatical system that is as complex as any other (spoken) language. These two resources, on the other hand, are not the first publications done on the Laz language as they were preceded and followed by certain magazines featuring content in and on the Laz language and culture (see Yaman 2019 for a full list of the bibliography of print material in Laz). The first issue of the first magazine called *Ogni* (Duy-Hear) was published in 1993 and a total of 6 issues were published. This was followed by the publication of Mjora (Güneş-Sun) in 2000 and Skani Nena (Senin sesin/dilin-Your voice/language) in 2008. These magazines were important in creating an awareness about the Laz language, identity and culture as well as encouraging the members of the Laz community to create written content in the Laz language, which has hitherto relied mostly on oral tradition.

The publications in Laz in Turkey were made using a writing system based on the Latin alphabet. The use of written Laz first began with the efforts of İskender Tzitaşi (1904-1938), who used the Latin alphabet to create written content in Laz. Tzitaşi's publications involve the first newspaper in Laz called *Mçhita Murutsxi* (Red Star-Kızıl Yıldız) as well as a few different course books such as *Çkuni Çhara-Albonişi Supara* (Yazınımız/Alfabe kitabı - Our Writing/ Alphabet Book) and *Okitxuşeni Supara* (Okuma kitabı-Reading Book), which were developed for use in the teaching of Laz at schools in the Soviet Union. The fact that the written use of Laz started with Tzitaşi's efforts, on the other hand, does not mean that the publications done in 1990s were made by using his alphabet. These publications were mostly done by using the alphabet developed

by the German scholar Wolfgang Feurstein and the Laz writer and teacher Fahri Kahraman in 1984, referred to as the Lazoğlu alphabet. This Latin-based alphabet was developed in Germany and then introduced in the *Ogni* magazine later in the 90s in Turkey. This alphabet features 35 different letters where a certain diacritic is added to Latin letters to represent the ejective sounds in Laz. It should be noted at this point that the Laz language still lacks a standard variety as well as a standard writing system adopted by the entire Laz-speaking community. Despite the existence of Laz fonts featuring the symbols in the Lazoğlu alphabet, it is still commonly observed that people still make use of alternative strategies to represent certain sounds, especially those that do not exist in Turkish, rather than sticking to this alphabet (e.g., the use of kh rather than ǩ, or ts instead of ʒ). Therefore, it is not known to what extent the writing systems have been adopted by the Laz community in real life.

There has been a significant increase in the printed material in Laz starting in 2000s. The Laz Publication Collective (Lazika Yayın Kolektifi) was established in 2011 and published more than 80 books. Only 5 of these were published in Turkish while the rest was in Laz, including the translations of World Classics, such as the *Little Prince* by A. S. Exupéry (Laz: *Çita Mapaskiri*). Additionally, the first and only newspaper printed in Laz in Turkey called *Ağani Murutsxi* (Yeni Yıldız-New Star) was also first published in 2013. The increase in the availability of published content in Laz is significant not only in increasing the domains in which Laz is used in daily life but also in documentation of the Laz language. Relying mostly on oral tradition, the number of written resources on and in Laz is quite limited, among which the following are involved: Über die Sprache der Lazen by the German researcher George Rosen (1844), Contes Lazes by Georges Dumézil (1937) and ethnographic and linguistic studies of Nicholai Marr

(1910). The documentation of endangered languages, on the other hand, bears a great significance on the revitalization and scientific investigation of these languages (Grenoble & Whaley 2005, Amery 2018). The scarcity of documented resources of Laz, for instance, makes it hard for us to know its historical development over time. The increasing availability of printed material in Laz, on the other hand, will hopefully pave way for corpus, frequency, historical and all sort of other scientific studies on Laz as well as make a great contribution to its revitalization in the future.

In addition to printed material, recordings and audio-visual material are also quite significant in the documentation of endangered languages (Nathan 2006). The audio recordings of the Laz intellectual, poet and artist Hasan Helimişi (1907-1976) were brought to Turkey and transcribed in 1990s. Helimişi's own songs were introduced to the society by one of the most influential Laz musicians in the history of Laz, i.e., Kazım Koyuncu (1971-2005), who played a significant role in creating an awareness of the distinctness of the Laz language and identity in the society. Helimişi's recordings were also featured in a music album along with other traditional Laz songs and compositions referred to as destanis collected from the Laz community. These projects not only contribute to the documentation of the Laz language and culture but also play a significant role in creating an interest in especially the younger generation speakers of Laz to engage in Laz (see Taşkın 2002 for a detailed examination of the effects Laz music on the Laz identity).

One of the most influential efforts for the revitalization of Laz is concerned with its education at official institutions. Language teaching policy initiatives for Laz in Turkey started only in 2002 with the amendment of the "Foreign Language and Teaching Act" issued in 1983 and rena-

med as "Foreign Language Education and Teaching along with *Learning Different Languages and Dialects Act by Turkish Citizens*" (Yeni-Palabıyık 2017). After this, teaching of Laz as a second language became possible and Laz classes started to be first offered at certain non-governmental organizations (2000-present) and then at higher education institutions (2011-present). The real milestone for official education in Laz took place in 2013, when the Laz curriculum and coursebook prepared by the Laz Institute established in the same year were accepted by the National Ministry of Education in Turkey. Since then, Laz has been offered as elective language courses under the umbrella term "Living Languages and Dialects " at secondary schools. This also marked the date when Laz was first officially recognized as a distinct language in the history of The Turkish Republic. These courses are still taught at certain schools, mostly in the Black Sea region as well as in İstanbul.

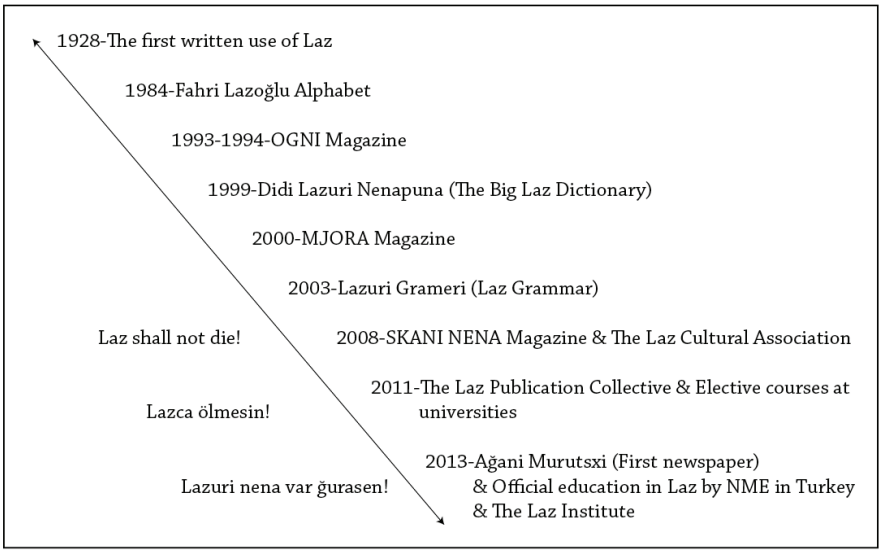


Figure 2. Revitalization efforts for Laz

The Laz Institute also prepared a certificate program in collaboration with the National Ministry of Education and organized professional development (in-service training) sessions for teachers who wish to teach Laz at governmental schools. Additionally, The Laz Institute also prepared a report on the status of the official Laz courses in 2020 (Bakay 2020), which aims to identify the problems that decrease the efficiency of these courses and increase the sustainability of these courses in this way. Figure 2 provides for a summary of the revitalization efforts presented so far.

The recent years have also witnessed the widespread use of internet in almost all domains of life. Especially, the rise of social media allowed people from all over the world to communicate with each other in an easy and fast way. This also bears a great significance for endangered languages because social media allows the speakers of these languages to connect and communicate with one another, creating a new domain of use for these languages. Additionally, social media allows language activists to reach a larger portion of the society, inform them about their revitalization projects and to create an awareness about the significance of the maintenance of endangered languages (see Meighan 2021 for an overview of the use of social media and technology for revitalization of endangered languages). To this end, the Laz Institute prepared a social media report, which aims to investigate the use of Laz on social media platforms like Facebook. Furthermore, the Institute also keeps offering free online Laz courses in order to reach as many language learners as possible by taking advantage of technology. Laz courses are also available on the Youtube account of the Institute along with many other multimedia content like songs and documentaries. A series of 10 puppet shows, which are designed as funny and entertaining multimedia content for children, are also broadcast on the same platform.

Revitalization efforts for endangered languages will be successful to the extent that there is enough demand and support from the members of the relevant communities and from the society for these efforts. In other words, the community members should have positive attitudes towards their ethnic language as well as have a desire to increase the domains in which it is used. As far as Laz is concerned in this respect, it seems that the Laz-speaking communities welcome and support the revitalization efforts. Haznedar et al. (2018) report the following in this respect: Only 14% of the 450 participants are literate in Laz but 72% of them express an interest in learning how to read and write in Laz, ii) the younger participants, who are the main actors for the revitalization of the Laz language, have more desire to be literate in Laz, iii) the majority of participants would support the visibility and more use of Laz in their daily life and they (94%) also expressed their sadness and concerns about the loss of the Laz language, iv) almost 70% expressed an interest in their children learning Laz at school and having access to a TV channel with content in Laz. The authors have also shown that almost half of the participants follow Laz-based accounts on social media, which also give them an opportunity to practice and improve their literacy skills in Laz.

This shows us that revitalization campaigns conducted over these platforms might also be quite influential. One of such efforts was concerned with the broadcasting of a series of videos and sharing of posts which highlight the significance of choosing elective Laz courses at the beginning of the relevant academic terms. Since the selection of these courses is done via the submission of individual print petitions within limited time, it is quite important not only to remind people of these deadlines but also to guide them through the petition system. The Laz Institute prepared a video and shared it online where the ele-

ctive course selection process is explained in a detailed way. Lastly, it should also be noted that the main figures for the revitalization of endangered languages are younger generation speakers in that they are the ones who will transmit the Laz language to next generations. The use of Laz content in social media platforms will not only allow these younger generation speakers to engage in Laz but also show that Laz is a distinct language with a complex grammatical system that also has a presence in the digital world, which will increase its prestige and hopefully contribute to the prevention of its extinction.

References

Akyol, M. (2006). The origin of Turkey's Kurdish Question: An Outcome of the Breakdown of the Ottoman Ancien Régime, Unpublished MA thesis, Boğaziçi University.

Amery, R. (2018). Revitalization of Kaurna. In L. Hinton, Huss, L. & G. Roche (eds.), *The Routledge handbook of language revitalization,* 330-342. London: Routledge.

Anderson R. D. (1963). A Grammar of Laz. PhD Dissertation. The University of Texas.

Bakay, Ö. (2020). Seçmeli Lazca Dersi Raporu 2013-2020. URL: https://www.lazenstitu.com/laz-enstitusu 2013-2020-secmeli-lazca-dersi-raporunu-yayimladi/ accessed on December 23 2022.

Bellér-Hann, I. (2018) "Laz." In Minorsky, V. & D. M. Lang (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam.* DOI: 10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_30686.

Bellér-Hann, I. & C. Hann (2000). Turkish region. State, market and social identities on the East Black Sea coast. Oxford: Currey.

Beller Hann, I. (1995). "Myth and history on the Eastern Black Sea coast." *Central Asian Survey* 14(4), 487-508.

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

Bucaklişi, İ. A. (2002). Lazlarda sosyokültürel Değişim. Unpublished MA thesis: Marmara University.

Bucaklişi, İ. A., Uzunhasanoğlu, H. & Aleksiva, I. (2007). *Didi Lazuri nenapuna-Büyük Lazca Sözlük*. Istanbul: Çiviyazıları.

Campbell, L. & M. C. Muntzel, M. C. (1989). "The structural consequences of language death." In N. C. Dorian (ed.) *Investigating obsolescence: studies in language contraction and death*. 181-196. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ceylan, E. (2002). "The millet system in the Ottoman Empire." *New Millennium Perspectives in the Humanities,* 245-266.

Demirok, Ö. (2013). Agree as a Unidirectional Operation: Evidence from Laz. Unpublished MA thesis, Boğaziçi University.

Dumézil, G. (1937). *Contes lazes* (No. 27). Paris: Travaux et me´moires de l'Institut d'Ethnologie, XXVII.

Dündar, F. (2000). *Türkiye nüfus sayımlarında azınlıklar.* İstanbul: Çiviyazıları.

Eberhard, D. M., Simons, G. F. & C. D. Fennig (eds.) (2022). *Ethnologue: languages of the world*, 25th edn., 3 Vols., SIL Intl.

Emgin, B. (2009). Finiteness and Complementation Patterns in Pazar Laz. Ubpublished MA thesis. Boğaziçi University.

Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing language shift.* Glevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Grenoble, L. A. & L. J. Whaley (2005). *Saving languages: An introduction to language revitalization.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Habib, H. (1951). "Industrialization in Turkey." *Pakistan Horizon* 4(1), 40-51.

Haznedar, B., Avcı-Bucaklişi, İ. & Ö. Bakay (2018). "Yaşayan Lazca projesi: Doğu Karadeniz ve Batı Karadeniz'de Lazcanın durumu." Ulusal Dilbilim Kurultayı. Dokuz Eylül University, İzmir, Turkey.

Holisky, D. A. (1991). "Laz." In A. C. Harris (ed.) *The Indigenous languages of the Caucasus:* The Kartvelian languages. Delmar, NY: Caravan Books.

Keles, R. (1980). "Urbanization and environment: Turkey", *Ekistics*, 349-352.

Kojima, G., & Bucaklişi, İ. A. (2003). *Lazuri grameri (Laz grammar)*. Istanbul: Çiviyazıları.

Kutscher, S. (2008). "The Language of the Laz in Turkey: Contact-induced change or gradual language loss?" *Turkic Languages* 12(1), 82-102.

Lacroix, R. (2009). Description du dialecte laze d'Arhavi (caucasique du sud, Turquie): Grammaire et textes. Doctoral dissertation: Université Lumière Lyon 2.

Marr, N. (1910). *Grammatika čanskago (lazskago) jazyka [Grammar of Čan (Laz)]. Materialy po jafetičeskomu jazykoznaniju*, 2. St. Petersburg: Akademija.

Meighan, P. J. (2021). "Decolonizing the digital landscape: the role of technology in Indigenous language revitalization." *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*.

Mufwene, S. S. (2020). "Language shift." *The International encyclopedia of linguistic anthropology*. Wiley Online Library.

Nathan, D. (2006). "Thick interfaces: mobilizing language documentation with multimedia." In W. Bisang, H. H. Hock & W. Winter (eds.) *Essentials of language documentation,* 178-363. NY: Mouton de Gruyter.

Özgün, M. R. (2000). *Lazlar.* İstanbul: Çiviyazıları.

Öztürk, B. & M. Pöchtrager (eds). (2011). *Pazar Laz.* Münich: LINCOM.

Pauwels, A. (2016). *Language maintenance and shift.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rosen, G. (1844). *Über die Sprache der Lazen.* Meyersche Hofbuchhandlung.

Sasse, H.-J. (1992). "Theory of language death." In B. Matthias (ed.) *Language death. Theoretical and factual explorations with special reference to East Africa,*

7-30. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Taşkın, N. (2011). Representing and Performing Laz Identity: This is not a Rebel Song. Unpublished MA thesis: Boğaziçi University.

Yaman, H. (2019). "Lazca ürünler ve Lazca üzerine yapılan çalışmalar bibliyografyası." *Tehlikedeki Diller Dergisi* 9(15), 231-239.

Yeni-Palabıyık, P. (2017). "Developing a language teaching policy for the endangered languages in Turkey." *ELT Research Journal* 6(1), 154-171.

Yurt Ansiklopedisi, IX (1982), "Rize." Anadolu Yayın A.Ş., İstanbul.

5 Posha

Melike Üzüm

Introduction

Poshas are a group of people who started to immigrate from Indian subcontinent toward Europe at least around the 6th century. They departed from Romans and settled in the East of Anatolia, especially during the reign of the Seljuks and Ottomans (Marsh 2008). Today, Posha communities live in different regions of Anatolia, mostly in the Eastern Black Sea Region.

The community is largely known to the out-group as Gypsies, but they reject affinity with Gypsies and call themselves Poshas. While some groups designated as Poshas are mostly monolingual in Turkish today, a considerable number of these continue to maintain their ancestral language, called the Posha language, which is a bilingual mixed language, combining Armenian grammar with Indo-Aryan and Turkish vocabulary.

Posha communities are not only found in Turkey today; considerable Posha communities live in Armenia, and Georgia as well (Voskanian 2002:169). It is thought that the original settlement of Poshas is the historical Armenian highlands in what is today Turkey (see Patkanoff 1908-9, Anumyan 2017, Marushiakova & Popov 2020). In Turkey, sizeable Posha communities are found in eastern and northeastern Anatolia, but numerous other Posha groups have been reported to exist

in other places across the Anatolian peninsula. There are also Posha groups in major metropolitan cities such as Istanbul and Bursa, but it is unclear whether these communities speak the language or not. Although certain Posha communities have occasionally been studied in the literature (cf. Andrews 1989, Önder 1999, Voskanian 2002, Akgül 2004, Bozkurt 2004, Arpacı 2019, Demir & Üzüm 2014, 2018), the linguistic and cultural affinity between different Posha groups across the Anatolian has not been properly studied; it is therefore rather difficult to provide a comprehensive overview of all Posha communities in Turkey today. We will therefore focus on Poshas living in Çankırı. Our data come from a sociolinguistic fieldwork we carried out in the city between 2011 and 2015. [1]

Given the current state of affairs, it is impossible to state the exact number of all Poshas in Turkey but we can mention some numbers specifically for the community in Çankırı. Çankırı was a district of the province of Kastamonu at the beginning of the 20th century, and it is noted in the literature that there were more than a thousand Armenian Gypsies in the province in this period (Balakian 2009:160). Andrews (1989:368-369), who composed an inventory of villages in the region between 1963 and 1971, lists 75 gypsy families in the city without having land registers (calculated as 381 people). According to the same source, there are additionally 280 gypsies in the neighboring villages, who are in the same situation. It is assumed that those who are labeled as gypsies by Andrews, are members of the Posha community (see Demir & Üzüm 2014, 2018). At the end of our fieldwork, we estimated the population of Poshas in Çankırı to be around 2000 people. We should further note that the number was probably higher until recently because there have been several waves

[1] Funded by TÜBİTAK SOBAK - Short Term Funding Program with project number 112R021.

of migration of Poshas from Çankırı to other cities such as Ankara and Kırıkkale in the last few years.

Çankırı Poshas live in a certain district of the city. They are generally bilingual in Turkish and Posha although their language skills in the latter vary according to age, gender, and lifestyle. Proficiency in Posha is especially low in the younger generations. Poshas are known to the out-group as çingene/cingan 'gypsies' or are referred to with metonyms for the term 'gypsy', such as elekçi 'sieve maker' or bohçacı 'peddler' (Çetin 2014, Demir & Üzüm 2014, 2018, Öncül 2019). They refer to monolingual Turkish speakers out of the community as *Tarti* and *Poo*. They differ from the local Turkish speakers in qualities such as accent and clothing.

Çankırı Poshas are relatively isolated from the other inhabitants of the city. This isolation could be explained by their preference to stay away from the cultural pressure and stigmatism from the dominant population group. They prefer their cultural characteristics and their ancestral language to remain hidden from the dominant community. Marriages inside the group are quite common, especially among older generations.

Historical background

Groups of immigrants who are called Rom, Dom, and Lom today are thought to have dispersed westward from India first in the 6th century and split into three groups throughout this and successive migrations (see Kenrick 2007, Marushiakova & Popov 2020). Between the 14th-15th centuries, gypsies migrated to Europe as blacksmiths, fortune tellers, and mercenaries (Kenrick 2007:38). In this process,

they paused in some places; interacted with other cultures and languages. While their neighbors in Central Asia called this nomadic community Dom, this name changed to Lom in Armenia. A few centuries later, when they came to Greece, the community, which started to be called Rom, became to be known by this name all over the world (Soravia 1984:21-22). Although Marsh claims that the origin of the Lom is unclear, he thinks it is possible that they were a group that departed from the Rom in the 11th century and remained in eastern Anatolia during the Seljuk and Ottoman periods, rather than advancing to the west (Marsh 2008:23).

An important migration movement in the history of Gypsies is the movement of a small group from Erzurum to Armenia following the Russian-Ottoman war. The group in Armenia, which belongs to the Armenian church now, call themselves as *Loms,* but they are also known as *Posha* (Kenrick 2007:157, Asatryan-Arakelova 2002:26). Seropyan further states that gypsy groups who were influenced by the Armenians and who accepted Christianity are called *Hay-Posha* (2000:22). They are also called Armenian Gypsies in the western literature (Meillet 1921, Voskanian 2002, Scala 2014). In this study we refer to them collectively as *Posha*. Clearly, Lom is an etymological cognate to *Rom* and *Dom*, words that designate other Indo-Aryan people of the Near East and Europe (Matras 2004). For Matras, the different but cognate names signal the existence of "repeated westward migratory ventures by individual groups seeking employment opportunities in specialized trades" (2004:16). It is claimed that the number of Poshas is very low today and the existing population lives in Turkey, Russia, Georgia, and Armenia (Kenrick 2007:7-8, Kolukırık 2009:104).

Posha language

Posha communities, whether they live in Armenia, Georgia, or Turkey, do not speak the Romani language. While some Posha communities, especially the ones in western Turkey are by now monolingual in Turkish, most Posha communities are bilingual in the local prestige language and in their ancestral language. Their ancestral language, which is called as *Lomin or Lomavren* in Armenia, and as *Posha* in Turkey, is an Armenian variant, with a considerable layer of Indo-Aryan origin words and possible traces of Indo-Aryan in its grammar (Patkanoff 1908:240, Voskanian 2002:169, Scala 2014:233, 236)

According to some authors, the affinity between *Dom, Rom*, and *Lom* people also means linguistic affinity between Romani, Domari, and Lomavren, i.e., the language of the Loms. That all three can be traced back to a single language was claimed as early as the 1920s by Sampson (1927). The affinity is also judged plausible by Matras (2004), who claims, following Turner (1926) that all three might have originated in the Central group of Indo-Aryan languages (Matras 2004:46, Voskanian 2011:811). *Lomavren*, which is also known as *Armenian Bosha or Boshayeren* (to Armenians, Voskanian) is thus rendered, at least originally, an Indo-Aryan language. When we look at the synchronic status, Lomavren has been defined as a mixed language, consisting of inherited Indo-Aryan vocabulary inserted into the Armenian grammar frame (for earlier characterizations, see Paspati 1870, Finck 1907, Patkanoff 1908, for modern analyses see Voskanian 2002, 2011, Scala 2014, Matras 2004). We also refer to the language as Posha language in this study.

Finck (1907) presents the oldest available data on Posha language in Die Sprache der *Armenischen Ziegeuner*. In particular, he claims that the gypsies of Armenia (as it is geographically defined) speak a language that is largely western Armenian but a massive lexical stock that is clearly of Indian origin is visible. He further points out that some vestigial structures of Indo-Aryan are also present (Finck 1907:49). Patkanoff (1908), refers to the language as Bosha and notes that it must be an Indo-Aryan language, based on its vocabulary (Patkanoff 1908:234-237, 245). Contrary to Patkanoff's view, Andrews (1989:140) claims that gypsies living in eastern Turkey speak a dialect of Armenian. The disagreement about the classification of Posha language is no more surprising than the difficulty in classifying other well-known bilingual mixed languages. In more recent literature, Posha is defined as a mixed language formed by Armenian grammatical structures and words of Indo-Aryan origin (Melikian 2002:188). In a similar vein, Seropyan (2000:23) explains the connection between Armenian and Posha as follows: "They usually use Armenian while speaking, but when they need to talk secretly among themselves, they use the Posha language. However, this language of Indo-European origin, which was getting poorer gradually, had to use Armenian in grammar and verb conjugation." Scala (2014) compares Posha to Para-Romani varieties and claims that the traditional Indo-Aryan is the lexifier code, however, unlike in Para-Romani varieties the traditional lexicon is retained massively and not through a process of selection.

Posha is currently spoken in Armenia, Georgia, and Turkey, mostly as a secret language (Voskanian 2002). Poshas in Turkey state that they had never heard of the names *Lom or Lomavren* from their ancestors and they do not claim affinity with the Poshas (Loms) in Armenia. They uniformly refer to themselves and their language as *Posha*. At

this point, we choose to stay entirely agnostic about the ethnic origin of Poshas in Turkey given their agnosticism about the term Lom. We are, however, certain that Poshas in Turkey and in Armenia have a strong historical affinity, therefore we claim that the Posha language spoken in Çankırı is a variant of Posha (Lomavren) spoken in Armenia today. Apart from the obvious similarity between the names Posha and Bosha, this conclusion is based on the plethora of lexical items common to both Lomavren (Bosha) and Posha language in Çankırı, the obvious dominance of Armenian in the grammar of both languages and the retention of Indo-Aryan and Iranian lexicon (see Uzum et al. 2023). The difference lies in the fact that Posha in Turkey has further undergone massive Turkish influence, which almost entirely replaced the Indo-Aryan lexicon and had also a considerable effect on grammar. These are obviously missing in Lomavren as it has been reported in the literature. We, therefore, conclude that the Posha language in Çankırı should synchronically be classified as a Turkish-Armenian mixed language with a thin layer of Indo-Aryan vocabulary and possible vestigial grammatical retentions of the Indo-Aryan past.

Examples of mixed language use from the data obtained through fieldwork in Çankırı are presented below.

(1) Gadu-n-**un** por-ı anutu-(y)e.
cat-DEF-GEN stomach-POSS.3SG hungry-COP.3SG
'The cat is hungry.'

(2) Coki-**ye** kafe per!
girl-DAT coffee bring.IMP.2SG
'Bring coffee to the (young) girl!'

(3) Emmen Cuma torun-**diyi**-s guka.
every Friday grandchild-PL-POSS.1SG come-PRS.3SG
'My grandchildren come every Friday.'

As seen in (1), the genitive suffix was copied from standard Turkish and combined with the Armenian word *gadu* 'cat'. The genitive suffix + *(I)n* is systematically used in Posha and Turkish-Posha sentences. (2) shows the use of the Indo-Aryan word *coki* 'girl' with the Turkish dative case. Finally, example (3) illustrates the use of a Turkish word and the Posha plural suffix, which is ultimately from Armenian. Considering the linguistic data gathered in Çankırı, we can say that Posha is a mixed language consisting of Armenian, Turkish, and Indo-Aryan. However, the native Indo-Aryan lexicon was largely replaced by Armenian and Turkish words in Posha of Çankırı.

Posha is only an oral language and Poshas in Turkey use Turkish for written communication. For example, our contacts were extremely surprised when they saw that we transcribed our interviews in Posha. It was the first time they had seen their language in writing. We also preferred phonetic transcription so that they can understand the transcribed texts. In this way, it was also easier to cooperate with them.

Social functions of the Posha language

Posha is mostly evaluated as a secret language in the literature (Patkanoff 1908, Voskanian 2002, Scala 2014:246). In our fieldwork, we also observed that the Posha language assumed the function of maintaining secrecy within the community. During our field interviews, our contacts claimed that the use of Posha saves them in difficult moments: *"Allah*

kötü gün vermesin hemen bir gizli lafımız olunca konuşuruz. Bu dil adamı kurtarır." (May God protect us from bad days, if we have a secret to say, we do it in Posha. This language saves us.) However, it was apparent that keeping the language secret was mostly due to their wish to be accepted into the general population. Furthermore, being the ancestral language, Posha is often seen as the medium that they switch to when they are in emotive mode. This notion is especially visible when they are tired, upset, afraid, or in other emotional moments. For example, during our observations, one of our contacts screamed at her grandchild in Posha when the child was about to hit her with a *zinar* (a long sharp rod used in sieve making). As a further example, when they recount an upsetting story in Turkish, they get emotional and use discourse-markers like *"marik"* (from Armenian, originally meaning 'mother' within an otherwise Turkish sentence, as in *ah marik can tatli iste* (oh, dear, the life is sweet).

Poshas consider Turkish more prestigious than Posha. One of our female consultants recounted a job interview story. During this interview, she initially spoke in Turkish and perceived that the interview was going well. Aat the end of the interview, however, her sister approached them and asked her a question in Posha. Our contact remembers that the interviewer's face changed when they witnessed this interaction, and the interview came to an end. She was not offered the job and believes that the interaction with her sister was a critical moment in the interview. For this reason, this consultant, as well as many others with whom we interacted, believe that speaking Posha lowers their social status, and that speaking in their mother tongue militate against their finding a respectable position in the society.

The speakers of the Posha language show diversity in terms of their language proficiency with respect to their age, gender, and lifestyle.

Proficiency in Posha is especially low in the younger generations. Posha parents think that the Posha language does not have any place in education, so they do not expect their children to speak Posha proficiently. They believe that knowing some basic vocabulary (*çür* 'water', *marik* 'mother', *keş* 'bad', *hast or ergate* – 'gun', etc.) is sufficient. Moreover, children are not usually interested in continuing their education after the elementary school at a local school in their own street, where they could interact with other kids who have been exposed to Posha. Furthermore, numerous children report that they do not want to continue with their education at all, the reason for which is their wish to conduct business like their parents. When we asked parents about children learning Posha, the parents responded with phrases like, "No need. What will they even do with Posha?" They emphasize the need for learning Turkish to have a good career and life. In our interviews with children between the ages of 6 and 10, we observed that they use Posha only at the word level. When we take into consideration that the language is not used by the younger generation, that the use domain of the language is narrow, and that there is growing prestige of Turkish over Posha, we can claim that Posha is an endangered language.

Revitalization of the Posha language

It is important to note that the Posha language is not used at schools and there are not any qualified people to teach the Posha language or produce language learning materials. Poshas are few and their literacy rate is typically low. In addition, there are no awareness, effort, or resources to teach Posha at schools.

It seems that living as a closed group is the only factor that fuels the maintenance of their language and culture; however, it is an individual's choice to live within the group or separately (Gibbons and Ramirez 2004:72).

Although Poshas do not have negative feelings about their language, they avoid speaking Posha in the presence of foreigners or other Turkish speakers. Since Poshas are bilingual, they prefer to speak Turkish—the Çankırı dialect, to be more accurate—in the presence of third parties. There is no evidence that they speak Posha with speakers outside the community. As a rule, only Poshas speak the language; exceptions are some local salesmen and some elderly people who moved into the neighborhood long ago and ended up learning a few words of Posha.

There have been a few linguistic studies showing that attitudes toward a minority language might change throughout the course of a field study (Avtans 2007). We also observed that Poshas, who at the onset of the study wanted to keep their language secret, seemed to be developing a positive attitude toward their mother tongue in later months. At the initial stages of the field study, parents often talked about the disadvantages and stigmas associated with speaking Posha, and told that they did not want their children to speak the Posha language. They reported that children should learn Turkish well and continue their education. However, after several months, during the field interviews, parents wanted to demonstrate a few interactions with their children in Posha. When children were not able to answer their questions, they showed frustration and even reprimanded their children for not having learned to speak Posha. Parents also recounted that they looked down on their neighbors who cannot speak Posha well, and argued that, "one needed to be stupid for not knowing Posha." They were also curious to see what we collected about their language and declared an interest in learning the grammar of the language if we could create a Posha grammar book for them. Such feedback and the fact that Poshas living outside of Çankırı contact us and inform us that they wanted to learn their language clearly show that research by itself may be an effective revitalization effort.

Posha language has not yet been well documented to prepare a sketch grammar, a dictionary, and teaching materials. It is only after our initial publications on the Poshas in Çankırı that Poshas from different regions reached us to ask for resources to learn their ancestral language. The research we carried out in Çankırı drew attention to the fact that the language is important by itself. We can therefore state that we took the first small step in reviving the language by creating awareness among the speakers about the maintenance of their language and death thereof if they do not speak it to their children.

References

Akgül, U. (2004). Poşalar: Buçuk Milletin Kayıp Kültürü, MA thesis, Hacettepe University.

Andrews, P. A. (1989). *Ethnic groups in the Republic of Turkey.* Wiesbaden: Reichert.

Anumyan, M. (2017). Türkiye'nin Karadeniz Bölgesinde yaşayan Poşaların bazı sorunları Üzerine. Batı Ermenistan ve Batı Ermenileri Sorunları Araştırmalar Merkezi. https://akunq.net/tr/?p=44548, Last Accessed: 17.12.2022

Arpacı, M. (2019). "Lomlar/Poşalar: etimoloji ve peripatetik toplumsal yapı [Loms/Poshas: Etymology and Peripatetic Lifestyle]." In H. Efe (ed.), *Erzincan'da sosyal damga, kimlik ve yoksulluk,* 19-32. Ankara: Siyasal Kitapevi.

Asatryan, G. S., Arakelova, V. (2002). *The ethnic minorities of Armenia. Yerevan: Caucasian Centre for Iranian* Studies.

Avtans, A. (2007). "Humane face of language documentation: a Great Andamanese experience." In P. K. Austin, O. Bond & D. Nathan (eds.), *Proceeding of the Conference on Language Documentation & Linguistic Theory,* 21-28. London: Department of Linguistics.

Balakian, G. (2009). Armenian Golgotha. (Translated by Peter Balakian and Aris G. Sevag). New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Bozkurt, T. (2004). Poşalar Örneğinde Etnisite ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet İlişkisi, MA thesis, Hacettepe University.

Çetin, E. (2014). "Çankırı Poşalarında sosyal ve dini hayat." *Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 18, 85-102.

Demir, N. & Üzüm, M. (2014). "Çankırı Poşaları." In N. Demir & F. Yıldırım (eds.), Prof. Dr. Mehmet Özmen Armağanı, 137-152. Adana: Çukurova Üniversitesi Yayınları.

Demir, N. & Üzüm, M. (2018). "Some Remarks on the Poshas of Çankırı." In C. Bulut (ed.), *Linguistic minorities in Turkey and Turkic-speaking minorities of the peripheries,* 73–88. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Finck, F. N. (1907). *Die Sprache der armenischen Ziguener, Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de St. Pétersbourg,* VIII série, vol. VIII, n. 5, St. Pétersbourg.

Gibbons, J. & E. Ramirez. (2004). *Maintaining a minority language: a case study of Hispanic teenagers*. Canada: Multilingual Matters.

Kenrick, D. (2007). *Historical dictionary of the Gypsies. Maryland*: The Scarecrow Press.

Kolukırık, S. (2009). *Dünden bugüne Çingeneler*. İstanbul: Ozan.

Marsh, A. (2008). "Etnisite ve kimlik: Çingenelerin kökeni." In E. Uzpeder, S. Danova, S. Özçelik & S. Gökçen (eds.), *Biz buradayız: Türkiye'de Romanlar, ayrımcı uygulamalar ve hak mücadelesi,* 19-27. İstanbul: Mart Matbaacılık.

Marushiakova, E. & V. Popov (2020). "The Gypsies (Dom-Lom-Rom) in Southern Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan)." In H. Kyuchukov, E. Marushiakova & V. Popov (eds.), *Preserving the Roma memories: Festschrift in honor of Dr. Adam Bartosz,* 11-53. Munich: Lincom Europa.

Matras, Y. (2004). *Romani: A linguistic introduction,* 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambri-

dge University Press.

Meillet, A. (1921). *Linguistique historique et linguistique générale.* Paris: Champion.

Melikian, G. (2002). "On the problem of secret languages and slangs in Iran." *Iran & Caucasus* 6, 181-188.

Öncül, K. (2019). "Türk kültür politikası ve Lomavrenler." *Avrasya Uluslararası Araştırmalar Dergisi* 7, 102-110.

Önder, E. (1999). "Bir alt kimlik örneği olarak Poşalar." *Türk Yurdu* 145, 38-49.

Patkanoff, K. P. (1908). "Some words on the dialects of Trans-caucasian Gypsies-Boša and Karači." *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society, new series* 1, 229–257, 2: 246-266 / 325-334.

Scala, A. (2014). "The mixed language of the Armenian Bosha (Lomavren) and its inflectional morphology: some considerations in light of Armenian dialectal variation." *ANNALI, del Dipartimento di Studi Letterari, Linguistici e Comparati Sezione linguistica* 3, 233-250.

Seropyan, S. (2000). "Vatansız tek ulus Çingeneler ve Çingenelerin Ermenileşmişleri Hay-Poşalar." *Tarih ve Toplum* 34, 21-25.

Soravia, G. (1984). "A wandering Voice: the language of The Gypsies." *The Gypsies,* The Unesco Courier, 21-23.

Uzum, M., Demir, N, Bagriacik, M. (2023). "Recycling a mixed language: Posha." *Languages* 8, 52. https://doi.org/10.3390/languages8010052

Voskanian, V. (2002). "The Iranian loan-words in Lomavren, the secret language of the Armenian Gypsies." *Iran and the Caucasus* 6(1-2), 169-180.

Voskanian, V. (2011). "Lomavren jazyk [Lomavren Language]." In T. Oranskaja, Y. Mazurova, A. Kibrik, L. Kulikov & A. Rusakov (eds.), *Jazyki mira. Novye Indoarijskie jazyki,* 811–818. Moscow: Akademia Nauk.

6 Romeyka

Ioanna Sitaridou

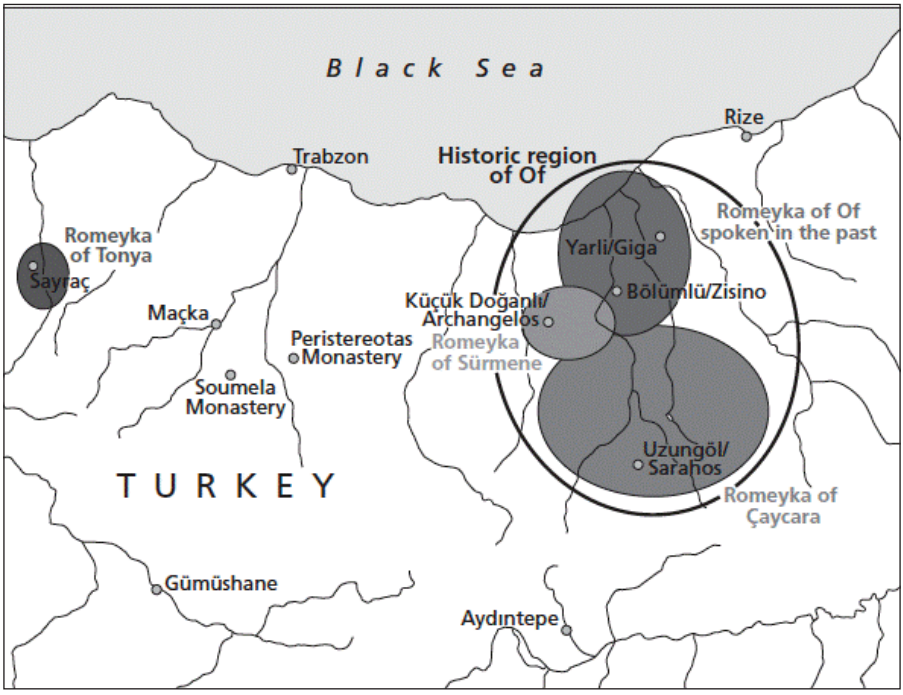
*Introduction**

The roots of the Greek presence in the Black Sea (known as Kara Deniz in Turkish; Pontus/Pontos in transliterated Greek) are steeped in myth: from the journey of Jason and the Argonauts to Colchis to the Amazons.[1] Mythology aside, the Greeks began to spread around the Black Sea from approximately the 6th c. BCE. Although it is difficult to substantiate uninterrupted continuity since those times, Greek-speaking communities, always in contact with the indigenous languages of the area, and then from the 12th c. CE onwards, with Turkish too, have survived to this day.

* The author gratefully acknowledges a grant ('Romeyka heritage in contemporary Turkey: socio-linguistic explorations into endangerment and preservation', with Dr Erol Sağlam) by the British Institute at Ankara (https://digitalrepository.biaa.ac.uk/romeyka-heritage-contemporary-turkey-socio-linguistic-explorations-endangerment-and-preservation). This paper is an updated companion paper to Sitaridou (2013).

[1] It is very common to find exaggerated statements pertaining to Greek presence in the Black Sea/Caucasus, see for instance: "The roots of the Greek presence on the Black Sea (known as the Pontus) disappear in the mist of myth; the journey of Jason and the Argonauts to Colchis, the Amazons, the exile of Prometheus to Caucasus, the confrontation of Heracles with the Stymphalian Birds in ancient Aretiada and the wandering of Orestes in Tonya."
(retrieved on 2/11/2022 from a university site, namely:
https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/events/events/ukfilmpremiereinthefootstepsoftheargonauts.aspx).
In fact, the quote seems awfully muddled. M. L. West in *The making of the Odyssey* (2014:21) writes: 'Direct contact between Greece and the Caucasus cannot be traced before the sixth century. But Ionian mariners had begun to prospect the western and northern coasts of the Black Sea in the first half of the seventh century, and some reflections of north Pontic topography can be found in Odysseus' wanderings in the Odyssey, mediated through an earlier Argonautic epic'. The name 'Aretiada' is nowhere to be found. Likewise, the reference to Tonya looks like a corruption of the name Tauri, the inhabitants of that part of the Crimea to which Orestes travelled, as dramatized in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* (which should be more accurately translated as 'Iphigenia among the Taurians'—beware of the translation 'Iphigenia in Tauris' since there is no such place as Tauris). I am extremely grateful to Prof. James Diggle (p.c.) for clarifying these issues for me.

Today, Romeyka[2] is spoken in several valley systems (Of, Tonya, Sürmene, and possibly in Santa too) across Trabzon (see Mackridge 1987, 1995, 1996, 1999; Bortone 2009; Özkan 2013; Sitaridou 2013; Schreiber and Sitaridou 2017)—see Map 1—and has also been taken to major cities in Turkey (e.g., Istanbul, Ankara and Bursa), and to diasporic settings across Europe (e.g., Berlin, Paris, Brussels) after decades of migration.



Map 1. The historical region of Pontus and current hellenophone enclaves (Sitaridou 2013:99, © Cambridge University Press 2013).

Currently, Romeyka is classified as a 'definitely endangered' language

[2] Infinitive wars, origin wars, the 'nationalisation of the past' (in the sense of Mackridge 2009) could not have left name wars out. While the autoglossonym is unquestionably /ro(u)mé(á)ika/, the glossonyms range from 'Muslim Pontic, Moslem Pontic, Romeyka, Romeic, Rumdza, Rumca, Romeica, ρουμάικα, ρωμαίικα, ρομέικα, etc. For the origin of the term and the most appropriate one, see Sitaridou (2013), and Schreiber and Sitaridou (2017). It is notable that there are no (self-)ethnonyms since all speakers identify as Turks.

by UNESCO (2010); as 'severely endangered' by the Encyclopedia of the World's Endangered Languages (2007); and as 'threatened' by the Endangered Languages Project[3] due to extensive contact with Turkish, absence of support mechanisms to facilitate intergenerational transmission, socio-cultural stigma, and migration to urban centers both in Turkey and Europe. Despite having no written form[4] and relying solely on oral transmission across generations, Romeyka continues to permeate local culture and intracommunal/intrafamilial relations—especially for the secluded rural communities across elevated valleys of Trabzon (see also Sağlam 2017).

Although Romeyka was reported to be spoken by 5000 speakers in the Valleys according to the census of 1965, this number was bound to be an underestimation given that there must be at least 5000 native speakers still today given some crude estimates.[5] However, the major problem for estimating the number of speakers has undoubtedly to do with whether we consider heritage speakers (in the sense of Silva-Corvalán

[3] Romeyka's ISO code is 639-3. Please note that in all the above-mentioned sites/resources Romeyka is very unhelpfully coalesced with Pontic Greek—one of the many shortcomings. Probably for this reason, Ethnologue (*https://www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/3265)* attributes 5* status to Romeyka in the original entry according to which 'Thus 5* or 6a* indicates a language that we think is most likely to be in vigorous use by all' (sic) (https://www.ethnologue.com/language/pnt retrieved on 9/11/2022); however, when it refers specifically to the situation in Turkey, a more appropriate rating, namely a 7* (shifting) is given; notwithstanding, a very problematic reference to the number of speakers.

[4] Having said this, the speakers have been devising their own writing system, which is an excellent exmple of bottom-up agency. The need to write it down has undoubtedly arisen out of texting and social media use; for instance, consider the following message (sic):

(i) *Do eftas kala ise*
Har a sto sochi arkadasha ershan şincenomen
Romeika amon emas kala halacevomen
'How are you? Are you well? Now friends from Sochi came to chat; They can converse in Romeika as well as we do.'

(Sitaridou, p.c., 25/10/2022 sent by a male Tonya speaker)

[5] 'Anasta' has approximately 800 permanent inhabitants the majority of whom seem to speak the language. This claim is based on an extrapolation: Sitaridou spoke to at least 30 women for sustained periods of time and while field working, she took part in one funeral and one wedding where she was able to observe large numbers of speakers interacting in Romeyka; in particular, at the funeral Romeyka lament

1994) to be functional enough in terms of communicative efficiency. As can be shown in the language shift scenario in Figure. 1,[6] currently, a Greek monolingual generation (G1) is not to be found; G2 for whom Romeyka is their mother tongue (L1) and Turkish is an L2, is still to be found in the villages for the population of 65+; G3 who is 48+ and who were born in the Trabzon area but went to primary school, they have become 'balanced' bilinguals; those who were raised in cities (G3) have a differentiated acquisitional profile, namely Turkish as L1 and Romeyka either as nondominant/late L1 or early L2; for G4, Turkish is an L1 and Romeyka is an L2 or has become a heritage language; for G5, Romeyka has become a heritage language and G6 is Turkish monolingual.

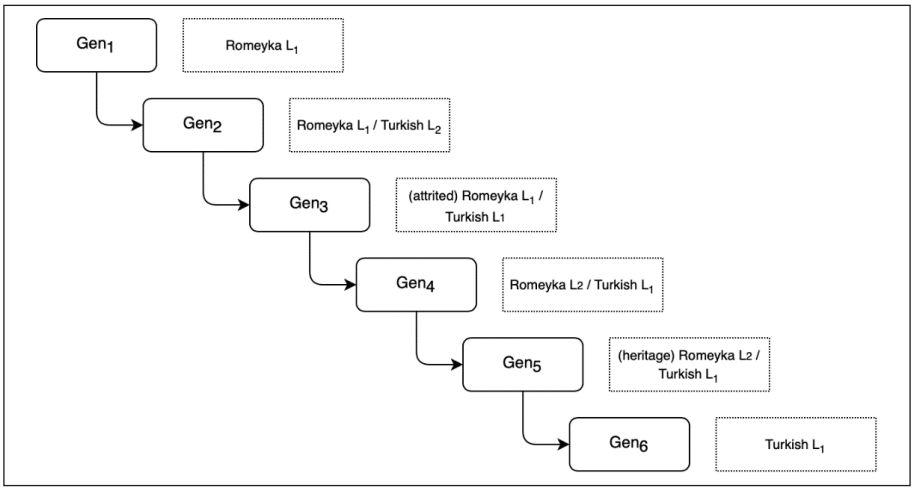


Figure 1. Language shift in Romeyka.

Considering the discussion above about differential acquisitional modes and as a result the different degrees of grammatical and communicative competence, the question as to who should be included

[6] Figure 1 can be compressed or decompressed in generational terms to capture slow/gradual or accelerated language shift depending on the sociolinguistics of different Romeyka-speaking communities. We should also bear in mind that generational span is shorter in these communities (ranging from 15-18 years).

when we consider the number of speakers is by no means a trivial issue. To add to the difficulty in assessing the number of speakers, we must also mention that there are important (heritage) Romeyka-speaking communities in the diaspora especially in Germany, UK, Belgium, Sweden, the Netherlands, and France; thus, global vitality studies may draw a different overall picture from the study of local vitalities.

Brief historical overview [7]

From Antiquity (6th c. BCE) to 16/17th c. CE

The presence of Greeks in the Southern Black Sea dates to the 7/6th c. BCE, when the first colonization efforts are recorded (see Tsetskhladze 2008). Ionians (members of the eastern division of the ancient Greek people) founded Miletus, which, in turn, founded Sinope, which, eventually, colonized Trebizond (see Bryer 1991:316). In the Pontus, the language of the first Greek colonizers of Trebizond was the Ionic Greek of Sinope. Despite economic and linguistic hegemony along the coast, it is doubtful whether the extinction of the area's native languages (for instance, Hittite and Luvian) was due to Hellenization. Still, prolonged contact between Greek speakers and other autochthonous/adstrate languages seems very plausible. Indeed, Kartvelian languages such as Laz spoken in Pontus, which along with Mingrelian once formed a dialect continuum and are both genetically related to Georgian (Boeder 2005), must have existed at the time of colonization. Laz survives today and, despite language contact with Greek, it has escaped Hellenization. Importantly, evidence of mutual contact between the Greeks and the Laz is evidenced in the medieval record only, but not earlier.

[7] This appeared originally in Sitaridou (2014b:27-28).

The next important phase for hellenophonia in the region sees the creation of another Greek-speaking pole in the area immediately adjacent to Pontus to the south, namely Cappadocia, largely due to the passage of the Macedonian army led by Alexander the Great who was on his way to Afghanistan and India. It is possible that from Cappadocia, Greek spread northwards towards Pontus.

Importantly, the decisive phase for the expansion of Greek language seems to be Christianization. Mentioned three times in the New Testament, the inhabitants of Pontus were among the first converts. Indicative of the spread, fervor and efficiency of the region's Christianization is the fact that one of the largest economic centers of the Church, the Soumela monastery, was founded in 386 CE, ca. 20 years after the region officially adopted Christianity. In the following years Pontus remained relatively stable in the margins of the Byzantine Empire between the 4th and 10th centuries CE. Greek in Pontus was undoubtedly given a boost by the dissolution of Byzantine rule in Constantinople, due to the fourth Crusade in 1204, and the move of some of the members of the Byzantine Imperial family to Trebizond, as shown by the marriage between Grand Komnenos Alexios III of Trebizond and Empress Theodora Kantakouzene (see Bryer 1975). Local tribes and clans were in contact with Greeks during this time, as demonstrated for instance by the case of Theodore Tzanichites, an autochthonous Tzan whose clan had undergone Hellenization and who became an official of the Grand Komnenos. The Acts of Vazelon provide 30 Tzan surnames (Bryer 1991:190), indicating bilingualism and possibly an emerging Greco-Lazic social pattern of clanism and localism, important to the Black Sea identity to this day (see Meeker 2002, Sitaridou 2014b).

From 16/17th C. CE to present day

The Fall of Trebizond in 1461 to the Ottomans led by Mehmed II,[8] saw the city becoming majority Muslim a century later (see Bryer and Winfield 1985); the capture of Trebizond must have led many Greeks inland, e.g., to Chaldia, the area roughly covering modern day Gümüşhane. Extensive Islamization of Greek speakers in Of, Sürmene, Rize and Matsuka is reported in the 16th/17th centuries (see Lowry 1977:209-247, Vryonis 1986). Intriguingly, though, while conversion to Islam across Asia Minor has conventionally been accompanied by a linguistic shift to Turkish, communities in the Valleys have retained Romeyka to this day. Crucially, because of the Islamization, they retained some archaic features while the Greek-speaking communities who remained Christian grew closer to Modern Greek especially because of extensive schooling in Greek in the 19th and early 20th c. CE.

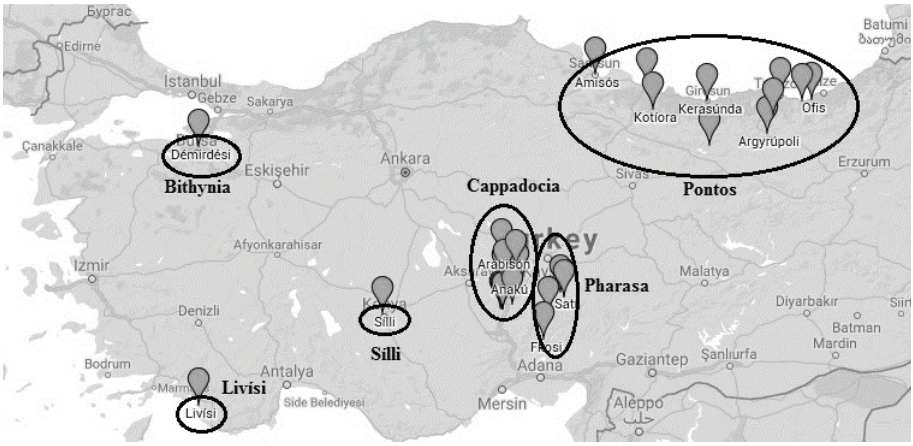
The degree of contact between Christian and Muslim speakers of Greek in Pontus from Islamization till the beginning of 19th c. CE remains controversial although most certainly limited. With religion as the only criterion of the Greco-Turkish population exchange in 1923 (see Lausanne Treaty), Greek-speaking Christians of Pontus were forced to leave Turkey and relocate to Greece (and from there also to USA, Australia, and Germany) while Romeyka-speaking Muslim communities in the Trabzon area remained in their homeland as they professed Islam, explaining why this Greek variety is still spoken in small enclaves in the region. Since the 1923 and till very recently the two speech communities were oblivious of each other's existence. Undoubtedly, the book published by Asan

[8] It is difficult to substantiate an earlier date for the arrival of the Ottomans in Pontus since the Battle of Manzikert which was fought between the Byzantine Empire and the Seljuk Empire in 1071 near Manzikert is trivially considered the earliest possible date for the Ottoman presence in Anatolia.

(1996) was a turning point. Previous to that, there was some random travelling of Pontic Greeks to Pontus in the late 1980s and early 1990s and some encounters of Pontic Greeks and Romeyka-speaking Turks in Germany where they met through the *Gastarbeiterprogramm* in the 1960s and 1970s (see Sağlam 2021:298).

Genetic classification of Romeyka

From a genetic point of view, Romeyka is part of the Pontic Greek group, which, along with Cappadocian, is at the core of the Asia Minor Greek (AMG). AMG consists of six varieties, spoken in the areas historically known as Bithynia, Livísi, Cappadocia, Phárasa, Sílli, and Pontus (Dawkins 1916), as shown in Map 2:



Map 2. Asia Minor Greek enclaves in central Asia Minor in 19th and early 20th centuries.

Leaving Bithynia and Livisi varieties aside, which are geographically AMG but not genetically so, there are different hypotheses regarding the evolution of AMG. On the one hand, Dawkins (1931),

on the basis of the affinities among AMG varieties, hypothesized that a medieval Asia Minor Greek koine must have existed, whose idiosyncratic development possibly preceded and was facilitated by the incipient Seljuq invasions of the 11th c. CE (see Dawkins 1916:205, 213, 1940:6, 14; also, see Browning 1983:130, Horrocks 2010:382, Triantafyllides 2002:277, Karatsareas 2011). On the other, some claim that at least some distinctive Asia Minor Greek developments descended from the regional koine Greek which must have been spoken in Asia Minor and adjacent islands (e.g., Cyprus) during Hellenistic and Roman times (Thumb 1914:199, Kapsomenos 2003:63, also Drettas 1999:15). This claim was, nevertheless, rebuked by Horrocks (2010:113-114), according to whom there is little relation between the grammatical innovations shared by the modern dialects and the region-specific characteristics of the Hellenistic Koine of Asia Minor recorded by Brixhe (1987) and Bubenik (1989:237–252; see also Karatsareas 2011:47).

To summarize so far, there are two main claims about contemporary AMG varieties: (a) they sprung out of some medieval AMG koine; and (b) they sprung out of a Hellenistic koine. To this day, it is conventionally assumed that Pontic Greek, as part of the AMG, has descended from Medieval Greek, as other Modern Greek varieties did (Horrocks 2010; Holton and Manolessou 2010), without however, accounting for how Romeyka varieties escaped some of the koineization features.

Finally, an equally complex issue is the relationship among the members of the AMG group, see Figure 2.

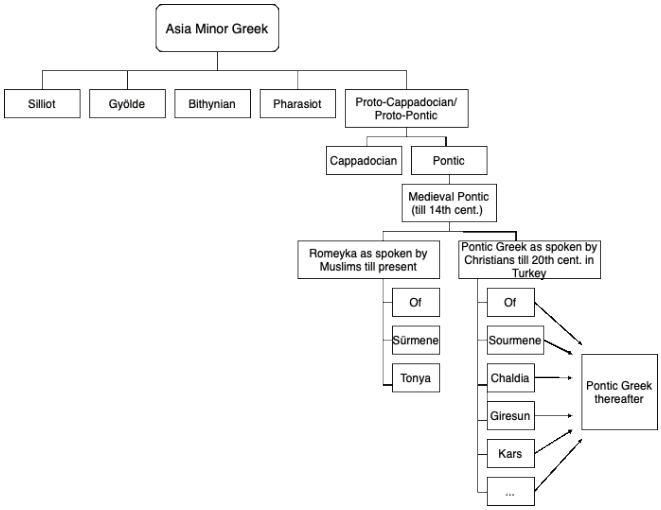


Figure 2. A phylogenetic tree of Asia Minor Greek (Sitaridou 2014b:31)

According to Karatsareas (2011:50) and Janse (2008), Proto-Cappadocian branched out into Pontic and Cappadocian and not the other way around, namely Proto-Pontic branching out into Pontic and Cappadocian. What is the evidence in light of Romeyka? What is the evidence for such a claim on the basis of syntactic reconstruction rather than morpho-phonology? Moreover, what is the relationship between Pontic and Pharasiot (also in light of recent work by Bağrıaçık 2018) and Silliot? Needless to say, more research is needed to answer these intriguing questions.

Why could Romeyka be driving a reconsideration of the phylogeny of Greek?

Sitaridou's (2014b, 2016, to appear) analysis of the Romeyka infinitive hints at a different genealogy. It was claimed that Romeyka infinitive can be dated to Hellenistic times since it enjoys a productive infinitival usage, especially the *prin* 'before'+infinitive construction, which became obsolete by 5th-6th c. CE in all other medieval Greek varieties. Therefore, /romé(á)

ika/ in Pontus was already a very conservative variety of Greek—as is often the case with varieties spoken in the peripheries with Constantinople as the centre of the Byzantine empire—when Islamization took place in 16/17th c. CE. From that point onwards, the /romé(á)ika/ of Muslim speakers was further isolated from both (i) other varieties of (post)medieval vernacular Greek and (ii) the /romé(á)ika/ of Christian speakers which, post-Lausanne, is referred to as 'Pontic Greek' and which has since aligned to Modern Greek to a large extent at least. Importantly, the survival of the infinitive was also accompanied—if not ensured—by reanalysis: rather than becoming replaced by the subjunctive which was the trend in all other medieval Greek varieties, the infinitive was reanalyzed as a negative polarity item, which, crucially, strengthened its survival by encroaching it further in the grammar.

Resulting from this work, Sitaridou (2014b, 2016) put forward the hypothesis that AMG participated partially in the processes that resulted in the formation of major Modern Greek dialects; in particular, for Proto-Pontic, it was claimed that the *terminus ante quem* is the Hellenistic times (strong thesis), not the middle of the Late Medieval period, as claimed by Horrocks (2010:382, also Holton and Manolessou 2010) for other Modern Greek dialects. The weak thesis suggests that the terminus post quem was the 11th c. CE, with Dawkins (1931).

More recently, Donabedian and Sitaridou (2020) proposed that Pontus was a Greek-speaking epicentre (rather than a mere 'periphery') within the (neo)Anatolian *Sprachbund* albeit—clearly—not since the Exchange of Populations in 1923. Furthermore, coupled with findings from the evolution of the negation system, Sitaridou (2016, 2017, to appear) proposed to revise the existing phylogeny of Asia Minor Greek through situating Romeyka as a descendant of Hellenistic Greek—500 years earlier than

previously assumed—and thus positing it as a sister, rather than a daughter, of Modern Greek. The implications of such a claim could radically alter what we think about the evolution of Greek, since, in essence, the claim is that there are more than one Greek languages on a par with the Romance languages (which all derived out of Vulgar Latin rather than out of each other, see also Kavčič and Sitaridou, to appear).

Overview of documentation efforts for Romeyka

In the past 146 years there have been four fieldworkers who were able to do monolingual data collection, as shown in Table 1. Crucially, the sites of data collection do not coincide and therefore we do not have diachronic data which are perfectly compatible since the diatopic variable is not a constant. Sitaridou's documentation effort (2008-present), which is the longest and largest monolingual data collection in the area comprises to this day over 17GB audio and 7GB video data focusing mainly on morphosyntax[9].

9 According to †Peter Mackridge (1946-2022) (p.c.), Ioannis Parcharidis was an 18-year-old Greek from Trabzon who had been working as a schoolteacher in the mixed Christian-Muslim village of Zisinó and who had been sent into the Muslim villages in 1876 by the German Hellenist Michael Deffner, who was normally resident in Athens but was making an extended visit to Trebizond. While Deffner remained in the safety and comfort of the provincial capital, he despatched the young Parcharidis on a hazardous mission to collect linguistic data in the Muslim villages. On the eve of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78, the local Ottoman authorities were particularly sensitive to the presence of spies in the area, and after only three days in Uzungöl, Parcharidis felt obliged to leave.

Variety	Tonya	Sürmene	Çaykara	Çaykara	Çaykara	Of	Of
Grammar	**Gr1**	**Gr2**	**Gr3**	**Gr4**	**Gr5**	**Gr6**	**Gr7**
Fieldworker	Sitaridou	Sitaridou	Sitaridou	Mackridge	Parcharidis	Parcharidis	Dawkins
Date of data collection	2022	2015	2008 (pilot), 2009, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2015	1983, 1985, 1987	1876	1876	1914
Locations / **Publications**	'Fengon' (Turkey)	Trabzon (Sitaridou 2021)	'Anasta' (Turkey) (Sitaridou 2007-2022, see references)	Sarahos (now refered to as Uzungöl, Turkey) (Mackridge 1987, 1995, 1996, 1999)	Sarahos (now refered to as Uzungöl, Turkey) (Deffner, 1878, 1877)	Zisino (now referred to as Of, Turkey) (Deffner 1878, 1877)	Krinita, Zourel, Kourits, Xalt, Kofkia, Giga (Dawkins 1914a)

Group A languages (spoken in Muslim communities)
Group B varieties (spoken in Christian communities)
Group C varieties (spoken in religiously communities)

Table 1. Overview of documentation efforts (based on monolingual data collection) (adapted and updated from Sitaridou 2014b:50)

Brief grammatical sketch of Romeyka

Thanks to the documentation efforts of the Romeyka project, the grammar of Romeyka—especially the Çaykara variety of 'Anasta' and as of lately of Tonya too—has been documented and analysed.[10] In particular: for double-object constructions and clitic clusters, see Michelioudakis and Sitaridou (2012); for complementation, see Sitaridou (2014a); for modality, see Sitaridou (2014a); for negation, see Sitaridou (2014a, 2016, to appear), Chatzopoulou and Sitaridou (2019); for infinitives, see Sitaridou (2014a/b, 2021); for the determiner phrase, see Guardiano et al. (2016), Michelioudakis and Sitaridou (2020); for interrogatives

[10] See: www.romeyka.org; for the past thirteen years, there have been 21 outputs (with several further ublications currently in preparation or forthcoming) and hundreds of academic talks.

and multiple wh-fronting, see Michelioudakis and Sitaridou (2020); for word order and information structure, see Sitaridou (2022), Neocleous (2020), Neocleous and Sitaridou (2022, submitted); for language contact, see Sitaridou (2022), Neocleous and Sitaridou (2022), Donabedian and Sitaridou (2020), Michelioudakis and Sitaridou (2020); for head-finality, see Neocleous and Sitaridou (2022), Michelioudakis and Sitaridou (2020); for syntactic reconstruction, see Sitaridou (2014, 2016); for null objects, see Sitaridou (2017); for if-clauses, see Sitaridou (2014a), Neocleous and Sitaridou (2022). It is important to point out that an obvious advantage of this cartography project is that it has been done by the same fieldworker (Sitaridou) using monolingual—that is, in Romeyka—data collection method and who has been consistently analyzing the grammar of female speakers in the village of 'Anasta' in Çaykara (thus avoiding mixing grammars). Moreover, whenever this is possible, micro-variation (in the sense of Michelioudakis and Sitaridou 2012 et seq.) is carefully monitored both within and across the Romeyka varieties, namely with Pontic Greek, Modern Greek and Turkish.

For this brief grammatical sketch, I will only refer to those aspects which are not covered at all or have received little coverage in the abovementioned publications or whose analyses are under way or about to appear—namely: (i) gender, case and semantic vs. syntactic agreement in the determiner phrase; (ii) null objects; (iii) relative clauses; and (iv) word order. [11]

Firstly, in relation to the determiner phrase, the following properties merit our attention: (i) obligatory Determiner Spreading (1); (ii) prenominal adjectives are the default; the unmarked order of adjectives and genitives is such that the genitive precedes the head

[11] All examples are from 'Anasta' in Çaykara unless otherwise stated.

noun, but follows all adjectives thus giving rise to what looks like adjectival splitting (1); (iii) spread of semantic agreement to [+human] masculine nouns in the plural whereby all become neuter as per predictions pertaining to animacy hierarchy for other types of nouns and genders (see Karatsareas 2014) (2); therefore, in Romeyka we find syntactic agreement with singular definite articles and nouns only, while semantic agreement (the neuter is the gender in which targets controlled by nouns of all semantic types appear) with everything else (3); (iv) no definite article with proper names (4); (v) important morphological variation in the case paradigms both intra- and inter-speaker and across varieties—for the latter, see Table 2.[12]

(1) to tranon to askemon t' Ali to muxteron
the big the ugly the Alis.GEN the cow
'Alis' big ugly cow'

(2) a. o tširis
the(M).NOM.SG father(M).NOM.SG
'the father'

b. ta tširiðes
the(N).NOM.PL father(N).NOM.PL
'the fathers'

c. i patsi
the(F).NOM.SG woman(F).NOM.SG
'the woman'

[12] Table 2 makes obvious that Sürmene has progressed more in the loss of cases while the Anasta (Çaykaa) variety is more conservative in line with previous claims by Sitaridou (2014 et seq.) about this variety being the most archaic one in the Valleys.

d. ta patsiðæ
the(N).NOM.PL woman(N).NOM.PL
'the women'

(3) a. to tranon o tširis
the(N).ACC.SG big(N).ACC/NOM.SG the(M).NOM.SG father(M).NOM.SG
'the big father'

b. ta tranan
the(N).ACC/NOM.PL big(N).ACC/NOM.PL

ta tširiðes
he(N).ACC/NOM.PL father(N).ACC/NOM.PL
'the big fathers'

(4) (*o) Alis tšimate
(*the(M).NOM.SG) Ali sleeps
'Alis is sleeping'

MASC		Çaykara (Anasta)	Sürmene Beşköy (Özkan 2013:145)	Pontic Greek (Drettas 1997)
SG	NOM	o peðas	o beðas	o peðas
	GEN	to/tu peða	du beða	ti peða
	ACC	ton peða(n)	don beða	ton peðan
PL	NOM	ta peðaðes/peðiæ	da beðia	i peðant / i peðaðes
	GEN	to/tu peðion	da beðia	ti peðaðion
	ACC	ta peðaðes	da beðiði	ti peðaðas

Table 2. Case inflection in masculine nouns ending in -as (o peðas/beðas 'the boy') preceded by the definite article cross-dialectally

Secondly, in Romeyka null objects are obligatory: (i) when the objects are discourse linked (definite) (5); and (ii) when the [-animate] referent can be construed as situational (6). Impossible contexts for null objects in Romeyka are: (i) when there is a [+animate] antecedent (7)—like Brazilian Portuguese, unlike European Portuguese and Hebrew; and (ii) in syntactic islands, e.g., relative clauses (8).

(5) Q: pios iðe ton Ademi?
who saw.3SG the Ademi.ACC
'Who saw Ademis?'

A: O Mehmetis iðe.
the Mehmetis.NOM saw.3SG
'Mehmetis saw him.'

(6) na pʌino ta xapsiæ prin mairepsini.
PRT.MOD wash.1SG the anchovies.ACC before cook.INF
'Before I cook, I will wash the anchovies.'

(7) aʌis eŋgaʌesten don džirin=at,
Alis hugged.3SG the father.ACC=his
ama i aiše efiʌisen=atona/*Ø.
but the Ayşe kissed.3SG=him
'Alis hugged his father but Ayşe kissed him.'

(8) ??aɣuron, ason bak^{h}aʌin teson
boy from.the grocery.ACC your
d[13]=anepsin endžen
the=grandson.ACC brought.3SG

[13] There is across word-boundaries voicing of initial stops by this speaker (but not by all speakers).

'The boy who brought something from the grocery was your grandson.'

Thirdly, there are relatives which follow the noun in Romeyka, as shown in (9) although this area awaits further investigation:

(9) a. Relativised subject

iða tin patšin p=efaizen ta χtinæ
saw.1SG the.ACC woman.ACC REL=feed.IPFV.3SG the.ACC animals.ACC
'I saw the woman who was feeding the animals'.

b. Relativised direct object

efaɣa to fain p=emairev i mana=m
ate.1SG the.ACC food.ACC REL=cook.IPFV.3SG the.NOM mother.NOM=my'
I ate the food which my mother was cooking.'

Finally, in relation to word order (see Neocleous and Sitaridou, 2022, in prep., Sitaridou 2022, Neocleous 2020, Sitaridou and Kaltsa 2014) Romeyka's information structure has several properties in common with Pontic Greek (both information and contrastive focus to the left of the verb), but it nonetheless differs from both Pontic Greek and Standard Modern Greek in having a single focus position to the left.

Current sociolinguistic situation

ula ta ɣloses maθœ
'one should learn all the languages'

Language attitudes towards Romeyka vary considerably depending on the (i) speech community and whether it is rural or not (for instance,

heritage speakers, especially in Istanbul, often consider their Romeyka grammar 'poor'; 'broken'; 'not a real language/corrupt'); without however, making the false assumption that all speech communities in the Black Sea (Tonya, Çaykara and Sürmene) hold identical attitudes; (ii) gender; with women in general being more fluent speakers and therefore entertaining more positive attitudes; (iii) age; given that older speakers generally hold more positive attitudes (but see Sağlam and Sitaridou (in prep.) as to how a younger generation in Istanbul today is reclaiming the Romeyka heritage). Overall, the degree of language competence seems to be the most powerful predictor of language stance: the more competent the speakers are, the more positive the attitudes.

Given the idiosyncrasies of the actual field and the difficulties of field-working in the Black Sea, mere statements about language use solicited in the form of a questionnaire can hardly yield insightful observations or capture the unfiltered linguistic stance of the speakers since the latter is intertwined with a wealth of contextual parameters. It is well-known that macro-sociological categories of identity, partitions of social space, aspects of the universe of cultural imagination are evoked/indexed micro-sociologically, that is, in specific discursive co(n)texts (cf. Schreiber and Sitaridou 2017); therefore, the latter can only be achieved by means of ethnographic methods which capture and analyse the use of (and statements about) language as 'indexical facts', in that they 'point to' contextual parameters, but also, crucially, in that they index ideologies as valuing schemata.

In this spirit and following Silverstein's (2003) indexical orders, Sitaridou and Tsiplakou (2012), discussed the emergent dialectic between two competing indexical orders in the micro-contextual interaction

between Teyze (a 65-year-old with no formal education who spent the winters in Istanbul and the summers in the *parharæ* 'summer pastures')[14] and the fieldworker (Sitaridou), as shown in the dialogue below (10)-(15):

(10) Romeyka generates confusion and communication failure:
— *When I go to Istanbul, I mix up Romeyka with Turkish.*
— *I don't know that stuff, don't speak it to me. I don't understand it.*
(quoting her daughters-in-law)

(11) Romeyka indexes a negatively valued group/category membership:
— *They laugh at us. 'Romeyka is all you ever speak. You people are Greeks,' they say*
— *Then again, they get angry. They say: 'you people are Greeks, don't talk anymore.'*

(12) Romeyka is different, but Teyze's own; communication failure is not due to her language, but to the disparaging attitudes of others:
— *I say, this is what I know. Take care of me if you want to. If not, then don't take care of me.*
— *Don't pay attention to me. When I talk, don't pay any attention to me.*

(13) Romeyka (qua cryptoglossia) is empowering:
— *When I am angry, I swear at you' (in Romeyka), I tell them.*
— *I look after you. You know nothing.*

[14] Data collected by the author in August 2010 in one of the summer pastures in Çaykara.

(14) Positive valuing of language competence/plurilingualism:

— *Learn all the languages. Wherever you go, it's good to know the language. Then it gets very easy for the person.*

— *You go here, you go there, you see that the language is different, you don't understand what they're saying, but when you know the language you can be understood.*

(15) Positive valuing of Romeyka?

— *Turkish is shorter. But when you speak Romeyka, your talk stretches out.*

Crucially, it is only thanks to this spontaneous dialogue and the emergent dialectic that we can appreciate how (11) is not contradicting (15), but how, instead, together they create a complex web of attitudes and emotions (that is the psycho-social, see Sağlam 2021) which—albeit seemingly antithetical—they can, in fact, coexist dynamically evidencing the constant-process of identity making in the Black Sea.

Revitalization efforts and the ideological conundrum

Shall we develop a writing system?
Shall we write a school grammar and a textbook?
Shall we push for a change in language policy?

The above-mentioned questions represent the standard, Euro-/Helleno-centric revitalisation strategies which are often intended for the revitalisation of European and non-European languages alike. They are all top-down attempts that require status and corpus planning, and which, essentially, boil down to politics more than linguistics; for instance, how can a linguist decide on whether the Greek or the Tur-

kish alphabet should be used for the development of a writing system for the needs of the Romeyka-speaking community? Do we suggest that the Greek alphabet be used to indicate the genetic affiliation with Greek or the Latin one to ensure a single writing system for both speakers' languages?[15]

Although the political context has been relatively more accommodating in recent decades (despite some 'yo-yo' effects), speakers are still reluctant to identify Romeyka as one of their languages since, for Turkish nationalists, speaking Greek goes against the very fundamentals of one's belonging (i.e., 'one nation, one language'). Interestingly, from a Greek nationalist perspective too, these varieties are deemed 'contaminated' and/or disruptive to the 'continuity' ideology (namely, 'one single Greek language spoken uninterruptedly since antiquity') as there is still a lot at stake regarding who's the legitimate continuator of antiquity (namely, the Greek Orthodox Byzantium); and thus, how can it be that unique fragments of linguistic continuity are to be found outside the "Athenian cradle" and—all the more—spoken by Muslims. To complicate things even further, from the perspective of Pontic Greek nationalism (as articulated in Greece post-Lausanne), the Romeyka speech communities are often seen as confused, 'cryptoX' and thus in need of 're-education'. Overall, the sociopolitical paradigm in both sides of the Aegean treats Romeyka-speakers as disruptors who should, therefore, be left to sink into the oblivion of total assimilation and erasure of the past.

[15] As I explain, these decisions lie outside linguistics science and for this reason I ask questions rather than provide answers. However, as I do not want to appear avoiding the question, I am of the opinion that a Turkish-based alphabet should be adopted to ease learnability issues as well as considering symbolic dimensions in the Turkish 'social imaginery' (in the sense of Castoriades 1975) that arise by using the Greek alphabet. To clarify, alongside Castoriades, who reflected on the notion of the 'imaginary' as a set of norms and values that a community share and which Europe should aim at co-creating and for whom co-creation would only occur through representing (language) and doing (praxis), I also believe that Romeyka speakers should co-create, but this has to come through their own praxis rather than mine.

Against this background, any research on Romeyka may inadvertently cause wider reverberations as it unsettles ethnocentric articulations of both Greek and Turkish identity through bringing these supposedly antagonistic categories together, but also by generating further insights into bilingualism and heritage preservation in unfamiliar ways and settings. This is precisely why when it comes to issues pertaining to revitalisation, we must be very aware that it is more about the politics and less about linguistics. For these reasons, I continue to stand firm by Sitaridou (2013:111) whereby 'Revitalization is always a form of intervention [...] Any aprioristic revitalization plan would represent no more than a Euro(Helleno)-centric imposition' since the science of linguistics does not have much to offer when such decisions may have important lifestyle and ideological repercussions.

However, this leaves open the question of whether there is anything at all that can be done about the revitalization of the language. As claimed in Sitaridou (2013:111), state-of-the-art documentation and some publicization ensuring that the research findings can reach back to the speech communities is probably the best course of action while grass-roots approaches are—hopefully—being formed. Minimally interventionist, this approach aims to prioritise research and how scientific knowledge can be fed back to the community. It is thus a *laissez-faire* approach in the sense that no one takes decisions on behalf of the community, but, instead, puts the emphasis on making the findings and analytic tools available, for the community to become agentive so that they decide whether this language is passed on or not; and how.

Within this spirit, professionalized and ethical documentation remains the most important act of preservation since comprehensive docu-

mentation of Romeyka and its socio-cultural implications in the face of its probable extinction can be used to revitalise the language at a later point by the speakers as they gain more agency, should they wish to do so. However, inspiring grassroots preservation which requires bottom-up synergies is a slow process because it can only be achieved through mutual knowledge exchange to reflect on heritage, language preservation, and cultural memory. Having said this, it is important to stress that the gains of preserving endangered languages are not only for the local communities, but rather for the entire 'glocal' society since raising the status of minority and heritage languages and cultures—a global issue and by no means Turkish only—can aid social cohesion. This claim is a direct counterpoint to the ideology which considers integration only possible through the abandonment of home/heritage languages; for this reason, currently in Europe and USA there is a re-appreciation of heritage languages since preserving distinctiveness does not create (self-)hate, but appreciation and respect for the broader society for allowing the individual to be who they want to be.

Overall, not only does Romeyka occupy a liminal geographical space (once at the fringes of the Byzantine empire, today as part of eastern Anatolia), but it is in fact liminal in its essence: used as a secret language and/or in the family sphere yet permeating the outer spaces; hated and loved by the 'Self' and the 'Other'; denied and affirmed many times at a time. Yet real and deserving recognition and visibility as all the languages of the world do.

References

Asan, Ö. (2000). *Pontos Kültürü* [Culture of Pontos]. Belge: İstanbul.

Bağrıaçık, M. (2018). Pharasiot Greek. Word order and Clause Structure. PhD dissertation, University of Ghent.

Bortone, P. (2009). "Greek with no history, no standard, no models: Muslim Pontic Greek." In A. Georgakopoulou, & M. Silk (eds.), *Standard languages and language standards: Greek, past and present*, 67-89. London: Ashgate.

Brixhe, C. (1987). *Essai sur le grec anatolien au début de notre ère*. Nancy, France: Presses Universitaires de Nancy.

Brendemoen, B. (2002). *The Turkish dialects of Trabzon. Their phonology and historical development*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.

Browning, R. (1983). *Medieval and Modern Greek*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bryer, A. (1975). Greeks and Türkmens: The Pontic exception. Dumbarton Oaks Papers 29.113-148

Bryer, A. (1991). The Pontic Greeks before the diaspora. Journal of Refugee Studies 4(4).

Bryer, A., & D. Winfield (1985). *The Byzantine monuments and topography of the Pontos*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.

Bubenik, V. (1989). *Hellenistic and Roman Greece as a sociolinguistic area.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Chatzopoulou, K. & I. Sitaridou (2014). 'Jespersen's cycle for NEG2 and conditional inversion in the history of Greek: evidence from Romeyka conditionals.' 16th Diachronic Generative Syntax Conference, Research Institute for Linguistics, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, 3-5/06/2014.

Dawkins, R. M. (1916). *Modern Greek in Asia Minor: a study of the dialects of Silli, Cappadocia and Pharasa with grammar, texts, translations, and glossary.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dawkins, R. M. (1931). "Notes on the study of the Modern Greek of Pontos." *Byzantion* 6, 389–400.

Dawkins, R. M. (1937). "The Pontic dialect of Modern Greek in Asia Minor and Russia." *Transactions of the Philological Society* 36, 15–52.

Dawkins, R. M. (1940). "The dialects of Modern Greek." *Transactions of the Philological Society* 39, 1–38.

Donabedian, A. & I. Sitaridou (2020). "Language contact in Anatolia." In E. Adamou & Y. Matras (eds.), *Handbook of language contact*, 404-434. London: Routledge.

Drettas, G. (1997). *Aspects pontiques.* Paris: Association de recherches pluridisciplinaires.

Drettas, G. (1999). "Το ελληνο-ποντιακό διαλεκτικό σύνολο." In A. Ph. Christidis, Arapopoulou, M. & G. Giannoulopoulou (eds.), *Διαλεκτικοί θύλακοι της ελληνικής γλώσσας/Dialect enclaves of the Greek language*, 15-24. Athens: Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs/Centre for the Greek Language.

Holton, D., & I. Manolessou (2010). "Medieval and Early Modern Greek." In E. J. Bakker (ed.), *A companion to the Ancient Greek language,* 539-563. Malden, MA & Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Holton, D., Horrocks, G., Janssen, M., Lendari, T., Manolessou, I. & N. Toufexis (2019). *The Cambridge grammar of Medieval and Early Modern Greek.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Horrocks, G. (2010). *Greek: a history of the language and its speakers*. Malden, MA & Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

Janse, M. (2008). *"Clitic doubling from Ancient to Asia Minor Greek."* In D. Kallulli & L. Tasmowski (eds.), *Clitic doubling in the Balkan languages [Linguistik Aktuell/Linguistics Today* 130], 165-202. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Guardiano, C., Michelioudakis, D., Ceolin, A., Irimia, M. A., Longobardi, G., Radkevich, N., Silvestri, G. & I. Sitaridou (2016). "South by Southeast. A syntactic approach to Greek and Romance microvariation." *L'Italia dialettale* 77, 95–166.

Karatsareas, P. (2014). "On the diachrony of gender in Asia Minor Greek:

the development of semantic agreement in Pontic." *Language Sciences* 43, 77–101.

Karatsareas, P. (2011). A study of Cappadocian Greek Nominal Morphology from a Diachronic and Dialectological Perspective. PhD Dissertation, University of Cambridge.

Kavčič, J. and I. Sitaridou (to appear), "Koine Greek." In W. Bisang, J. Kabatek & B. Kortmann (eds.), *Spread of world languages* Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

Lowry, H. (1977). The Ottoman Tahrir Defters as a Source for Urban Demographic History: The case of Trabzon (ca. 1463-1583). PhD Dissertation, UCLA.

Mackridge, P. (1987). "Greek-speaking Moslems of North-East Turkey: prolegomena to study of the Ophitic Sub-dialect of Pontic." *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 11, 115–137.

Mackridge, P. (1995). "Τα Ποντιακά στη σημερινή Τουρκία: Αρχαία στοιχεία στο ιδίωμα του Όφη." *Αρχείον Πόντου* 46, 153–161.

Mackridge, P. (1996). "The Medieval Greek infinitive in the light of Modern dialectal evidence." In C. N. Constantinides, Panagiotakis, N. M., Jeffreys, E. & A. D. Angelou (eds.), *ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝ*: *studies in honour of Robert Browning,* 191-204. Venice: Istituto ellenico di studi bizantini e postbizantini di Venezia.

Mackridge, P. (1999). "Η ελληνοφωνία στην περιοχή του Όφη (Πόντος)." In A.-Ph. Christidis (ed.), *Dialect enclaves of the Greek language*, 25-30. Thessaloniki: Centre for the Greek Language.

Michelioudakis, D. & I. Sitaridou (2020). "Towards a formal model of transfer under contact: contrasting Asia Minor Greek to mainland Greek and Turkish in search of syntactic borrowings." In M. Georgiafentis, G. Giannoulopoulou, M. Koliopoulou & A. Tsokoglou (eds.), *Contrastive studies in morphology and syntax*, 245-261. London: Bloomsbury.

Michelioudakis, D. & I. Sitaridou (2016). "Recasting the typology of multiple Wh-fronting: evidence from Pontic Greek." *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics* 1(1), 40. doi: https://doi.org/10.5334/gjgl.72

Michelioudakis, D. & I. Sitaridou (2012). "Syntactic microvariation: dative constructions in Greek." In R. Etxepare & B. Fernández (eds.), *Datives in variation: a micro-comparative perspective*, 212-255. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Neocleous, N. (2020). Word Order and Information Structure in Romeyka: A Syntax and Semantics Interface Account of Order in a Minimalist System. PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge.

Neocleous, N. & I. Sitaridou (2022). "Never just contact. The rise of final auxiliaries in Asia Minor Greek." *Diachronica* 16, 369–408.

Neocleous, N. & Sitaridou, I. (submitted). Word Order in Romeyka.

Oikonomidis, D. H. (1958). Γραμματική της ελληνικής διαλέκτου του Πόντου. Athens: Ακαδημία Αθηνών.

Özkan, H. (2013). "The Pontic Greek spoken by Muslims in the villages of Besköy in the povince of present-day Trabzon." *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 37, 130–150.

Papadopoulos, A. A. (1955). *Ιστορική γραμματική της ποντικής διαλέκτου*. Athens: Επιτροπή Ποντιακών Μελετών.

Rothman, J. (2007). "Pragmatic solution for syntactic problems: understanding some L2 syntactic errors in terms of pragmatic deficits." In S. Baauw, F. Dirjkoningen & M. Pinto (eds.), *Romance languages and linguistic theory* 2005, 299-320. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Sağlam, E. (2022). "Tracing 'Greek' heritage in contemporary Turkey: anthropological insights into intangible heritages, collective memory, and identity on the Black Sea littoral." *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 40, 373–394.

Sağlam, E. (2021). 'Because they would misunderstand!' Romeyka heritage and masculine reconfigurations of public culture in contemporary Turkey. In P. Hecker and I. Furman (eds.), *Politics of culture in contemporary Turkey,* 292-309. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Sağlam, E. (2021). "Intimate and yet alienated: landscapes, identity, and memories." *Études Arméniennes Contemporaines* 13, 161-185.

Sağlam, E. (2017). Constitutive Ambiguities: Collective Memory and Subjectivity in Romeika-Speaking Communities of Trabzon, Turkey. PhD dissertation, University of London.

Sağlam, E. & I. Sitaridou (in prep.). Speaking Greek as a Turkish nationalist: language ideologies, intergenerational transmission, and pathways for Romeyka's preservation in contemporary Turkey.

Silva-Corvalán, C. (1994). *Language contact and change*: *Spanish in Los Angeles*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon.

Schreiber L. & I. Sitaridou (2017). "Assessing the sociolinguistic vitality of Romeyka: an attitudinal study." *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 39, 1-16.

Silverstein, M. (2003). "Indexical order and the dialectics of sociolinguistic life." *Language and Communication* 23, 193–229.

Sitaridou, I. (in prep.). The evolution of negation in Romeyka. Ms, University of Cambridge.

Sitaridou, I. (2023). Obituary: Professor Peter Mackridge (1946–2022): A tribute to his contribution to the study of Pontic Greek. Journal of Greek Linguistics, 23(2), 133-138.

Sitaridou, I. (2022). "On the redundancy of a theory of language contact: cue-based reconstruction in a socio-linguistically informed manner." In N. Lavidas & K. Nikiforidou (eds.), *Language change: theory and methodologies in the 21st century,* 15-52. Leiden: Brill.

Sitaridou, I. (2021). "(In)vulnerable inflected infinitives as complements to volitionals and modals: evidence from Galician and Romeyka." In T. Eythórsson & J. G. Jónsson (eds.), *Syntactic features and the limits of syntactic change*, 161-177. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sitaridou, I. (2017a). "The rise of novel negators in Romeyka: negative existential cycle and monoclausality", Workshop on The Negative Existential Cycle from a historical-comparative perspective, Stockholm University, 04-5/05/2017.

Sitaridou, I. (2017b). "Null objects in Romeyka: contact with Turkish or internal conditioning?", Workshop on Historical language contact in English and beyond, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 31/03-02/04/2017.

Sitaridou, I. (2016). "Reframing the phylogeny of Asia Minor Greek: the view from Pontic Greek." *CHS Research Bulletin, Center for Hellenic Studies, Harvard University* 4(1), 1–17.

Sitaridou, I. (2014a). "Modality, antiveridicality, and complementation: the Romeyka infinitive as a Negative Polarity Item." *Lingua* 148, 118-46.

Sitaridou, I. (2014b). "The Romeyka infinitive: continuity, contact and change in the Hellenic varieties of Pontus." *Diachronica* 31(1), 23–73.

Sitaridou, I. (2013). "Greek-speaking enclaves in Pontus today: the documentation and revitalization of Romeyka." In M. Jones & S. Ogilvie (eds.), *Keeping languages alive. Language endangerment: documentation, pedagogy and revitalization,* 98-112. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sitaridou, I. (2007). "Infinitives with subjects in Greek and Southern Italian dialects: a Sprachbund effect." In D. Bentley & A. Ledgeway (eds.), *Sui dialetti italoromanzi. Saggi in onore di Nigel B. Vincent, The Italianist, Special Supplement*, 221-242. London: Maney.

Sitaridou, I. & Kaltsa, M. (2014). "Contrastivity in Pontic Greek." Lingua 146, 1-27.

Sitaridou, I. & S. Tsiplakou (2012). "On overt and covert language attitudes among Romeyka speakers", Workshop on 'Romeyka and Asia Minor Greek', Queens' College, 01/04/2012.

Tziovas, D. (2014). *Re-imagining the past. Antiquity and Modern Greek culture.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

West, M. (2005). "Odyssey and Argonautica." *The Classical Quarterly* 55(1), 39–64.

7 Turoyo

Metin Bağrıaçık

Introduction

While all minority languages of Turkey have been severed since the early 20th century, not all of them have seen the same amount of scholarly, political or community concern. Among the latter are several Neo-Aramaic languages of southeastern Turkey. The Neo-Aramaic dialects of Mlaḥsô (Yünlüce, Lice, Diyarbakır; Jastrow 1985a, 1994) and Hertevin (Ekindüzü, Pervari, Siirt; Jastrow 1971) became extinct in their native habitats without much notice towards the end of the 20th century (Jastrow 2011:697, Takashina 1990). The same is also true of numerous Aramaic varieties that once spoken further to the east, in a large area extending from Mount Cudi in the Şırnak Province in the west to the Hakkari Province in the east (Khan 2019a:195). The only Neo-Aramaic language that is still extant within in the borders of Turkey is Turoyo (alternatively referred to in the literature as Ṭuroyo), on which the current chapter focuses.

Basic facts about Turoyo

Turoyo (iso 639-3: tru) is a Neo-Aramaic language, native to a region that largely remains within Turkey today. It belongs to the Central Neo-Aramaic sub-branch of the Eastern Neo-Aramaic languages, which are in turn Semitic languages within the Afro-Asiatic family (Nöldeke 1881,

Tsereteli 1977 a.o.). Mlaḥsô, which is by now extinct, is the only other known Central Neo-Aramaic variety. The Tigris River in Anatolia seems to have been the natural border between the Central Neo-Aramaic languages, which are located on the west of the river, and the North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA) languages, which lie to the east. Over 150 different NENA languages are spoken in an area extending from the border areas of Syria to Iran (Khan 2011, Coghill 2016). A well-known characteristic of the NENA languages is the fundamental split according to whether the speaker groups are Christian or Jewish. Khan (2019b:268) states that this split is observed even in "cases where Jewish and Christian communities live […] in the same town." The Mandaic sub-branch of Eastern Neo-Aramaic languages, represented by a single language (Neo-Mandaic), is still spoken by a small community in Khuzestan in Iran (Häberl 2009). A Western Aramaic branch is currently represented by a few closely related dialects spoken around Damascus in Syria (Werner 2019), collectively known as *Sīryōn*. The classification of Neo-Aramaic languages and the position of Turoyo in this classification is given in Figure 1.

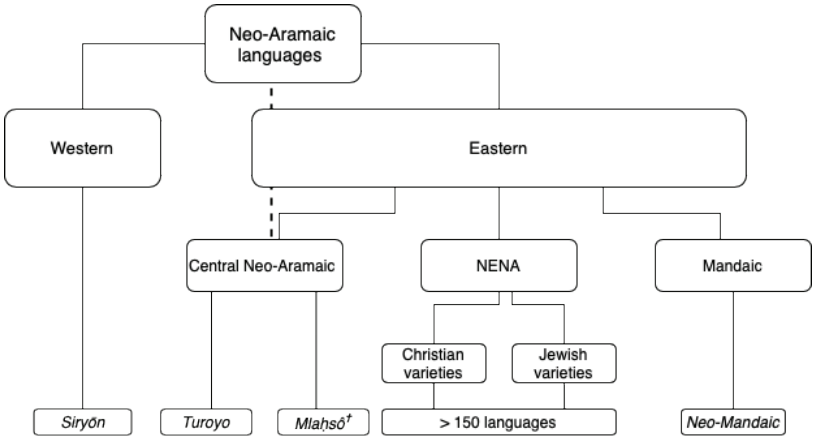


Figure 1. Neo-Aramaic languages.

Aramaic has recorded history of over 2700 years, starting with Ancient Aramaic, first attested in inscriptions dating to the time of Aramaean kingdoms in Mesopotamia (shortly after the 10th c. BCE). Imperial/Official Aramaic, the successor of Ancient Aramaic, was made a co-official language alongside Persian by Darius I (6th century BCE) in the Achaemenid Empire. Middle Aramaic periods cover the Hellenistic and Roman periods, in which dialectal differences, especially among the varieties spoken within and beyond the Roman borders already emerged (Kim 2008). The clear Eastern-Western divide was established in the Classical Aramaic period (3rd-8th c.CE); the diversification of Neo-Aramaic languages took place in and after this period. (Classical) Syriac, a dialect which shares properties with both Eastern and Western branches, and which was initially attested in the early decades of the Common Era in Edessa (modern-day Şanlıurfa), is still used in writing and in liturgy among many Neo-Aramaic linguistic communities (see Fitzmyer 1979 and Kaufman 1997 for extensive overviews of the history of Aramaic languages).

Turoyo is native to the hilly, limestone plateau in the eastern part of Mardin Province and the western part of Şırnak Province, in southeastern Turkey, with its major religious, cultural, and economic center being the town of Midyat (Figure 2). The area is known to Turoyo speakers as *Ṭūr ʿAḇdīn* (Tur Abdin), literally 'the mountain of the servants [of God]'— a naming practice reflecting its religious importance to its Christian inhabitants. The speakers are Christians, the vast majority of whom belong to the Syrian Orthodox (Jacobite) denomination. Çelik (2021) states that 357 monasteries and churches have been identified in Tur Abdin, most of which are in ruins today. This indicates the once glamorous situation of Christianity in the region, as well as its near demise in the recent past.

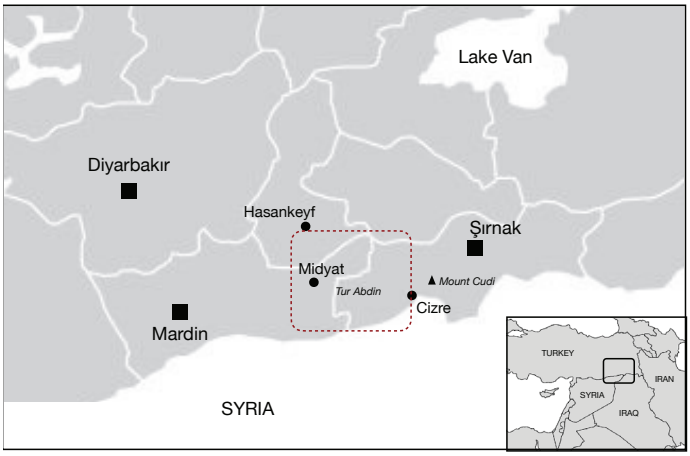


Figure 2. Tur Abdin.

The local population refer to the language as *Ṣurāyt,* whereas the European diaspora prefer to call the language *Suryoyo*. The autonomy is *Suroye* in Tur Abdin and *Suryoye* is more common within the diaspora. The speaker population is collectively referred to in Turkish as *Süryâniler.* Atto (2011) states that within the diaspora in Sweden the secular members of the community can designate themselves either as *Assyrians* or *Syriacs,* two ideological terms underlining Assyrian or Aramaean ancestry respectively. Following Atto's convention, we will refer to the speakers as Assyrians/Syriacs in English. See also Woźniak (2012).

As of 2023, there are around 3000 speakers of Turoyo in Tur Abdin, all of whom, excluding a few very elderly speakers, are bilingual at least in Turoyo and Turkish and quite a few of them also know Kurdish. It should be noted that the number is predicted to be even lower in different sources, e.g., "a few hundred speakers" in Jastrow (2011:697) and "about 2500" in Khan (2019:195). Roughly 500 further competent speakers are claimed to live in Istanbul (F. Altinsu, pers. comm.). In Central Europe and in Scandinavia, there are about 40000 speakers; however, the level of competence across the age groups in these countries awaits further research

(see Woźniak-Bobińska 2020 for pointers to the linguistic situation in Sweden). There also exist small- and medium-scale communities in the United States, especially in New Jersey (Weaver and Kiraz 2016), in Canada and in Australia (Jastrow 2011:697). Turoyo is listed as 'almost extinct' in Dimmendaal and Voeltz (2007:627), 'endangered' in Eberhard et. al (2023), and 'severely endangered' in Moseley (2010). The sources refer to Turoyo's situation in the homeland, namely in the Tur Abdin region.

Typological overview

A few reference grammars of Turoyo have been circulating since 1990s. The reader is referred to Ritter's seminal work (Ritter 1990), as well as Jastrow (1993) and Waltisberg (2016) among others. There are minor dialectal differences between Midyat and the neigboring villages, notably Midin (currently, Öğündük, Şırnak) (Jastrow 1985b, Ritter 1990).

Turoyo has escaped many of the innovations that the NENA languages underwent (see Kim 2008 and Jastrow 2011 for details). Among many are (a) the preservation of initial [a]-less 3rd person pronouns from Middle Aramaic, (Table 1), and the retention of Middle Aramaic passive stems (albeit with modifications).

			Turoyo		C.Urmi (NENA)[1]
			Midyat	Midin	
SG	1		ɘno	ono	ana
	2		hæt	hat	at
	3	M	huwːe	hijːe	aw
		F	hijːa	hijːa	aj
PL	1		æħna	æħna	axnan
	2		hatu	hatu	axtun
	3		hənːe	hənːək	ani

[1] *Adapted from Khan (2016:238).*

Table 1. Personal pronouns in Turoyo (in comparison with those in Christian Urmi).

In the nominal domain, Turoyo distinguishes two genders. Native masculine nouns typically end in *-o* in the singular and in *-e* in the plural, whereas feminine nouns typically end in *-to, -θo* or *-iθo* or *-o* in the singular and *-oθo* or *-joθo* in the plural (1a), see Jastrow 1993 for details). There are also some irregular roots (1b). Loan words, which are not integrated into the morphological system, receive *–(a)t* in the plural (1c).

(1)		Masculine	Feminine	a.
	Singular	arnv-o	ʕid-to	
	Plural	arnv-e	ʕid-oθo	
		'rabbit'	'church'	
b.	Singular	bejto	barθo	
		bote	bnoθo	
		'house'	'daughter'	
c.	Singular	tælævizjon	salatˤa	
		tælævizjon-at	salatˤa-t	
		'TV'	'salad'	

Turoyo, has developed definite articles out of demonstratives (Doron and Khan 2016), that are used in a wide range of environments, including personal names, kind-referring NPs, and ordinary NPs with anti-uniqueness effects (Yifrach & Coppock 2021). The articles agree with the singular noun in gender (*u* 'masc', *i* 'fem',) whereas a single form exists in the plural (aN). The archiphoneme (N) is realized as [nː] if the following word is vowel-initial (2a), otherwise the initial consonant undergoes gemination (2b-c)

(2 a. u abro ‘the boy’ an: abne ‘the boys’
b. u brozo ‘the pig’ ab broze ‘the pigs’
c. i ħmərtɔ ‘the jennet’ aħ ħmərjoθo ‘the jennets’

Adjectives are postnominal[1] and agree with the noun in the singular (3)-(4), whereas a unique form exists in the plural (not illustrated).

(3) u kelb-o rab-o
the.M.SG dog-M.SG big-M.SG
‘the big dog’

(4) i broz-to rab-to
the.F.SG pig-F.SG big-F.SG
‘the big sow’

Numerals precede the noun, lower numerals (1-10) also agree with the latter in gender. Demonstratives, which cooccur with the definite articles are suffixed to the noun overriding the gender marking. The singular forms agree with the head noun in gender:

(5) u ħmor=ano
the.M.SG donkey=this.M
‘this donkey’

(6) ab broz=anik
the.PL pig=those
‘those pigs’

[1] although adjectives of Turkish origin can also be prenominal.

Definiteness spread is observed between the noun and the adjective if there is other postnominal material, including another adjective, which intervenes between them:

(7) u ħmoro rabo u šafiro
the donkey big the nice
'the nice big donkey'

(8) u brozo d-i Marjam u šafiro
the pig GEN-the Maryam the nice
'the nice pig of Maryam'

See Doron and Khan (2016) for definiteness spread.

Pronominal possession is expressed on the possessed noun with two sets of suffixes. Both flag the gender fo the possessor in the second and third person singular. In the first one, the *-i* set, the definite article is not used; inalienable possession is mostly expressed by the i-set (Table 2), which overrides the gender marker. This is illustrated in (8). In the second one, an intervening morph, *-ajð* is clearly visible, on which the possessive pronouns attach. This set expresses the canonical pronominal possession and the suffixes in this set co-ocur with the definite article (9).

(8) iðo 'hand' → ið-i 'my hand'

(9) susjo 'horse' → u susj-ajði 'my horse'

			Set I	Set II
SG	1		*-i*	*-ajði*
	2	M	*-ox*	*-ajðox*
		F	*-ex*	*-ajðex*
	3	M	*-e*	*-ajðe*
		F	*-a*	*-ajða*
PL	1		*-ajna*	*-ajðan*
	2		*-ajxu*	*-jaθxu*
	3		*-ajje*	*-aθθe*

Table 2. Possessive suffixes

A stronger form of Set II involves the preposition di on which the suffixes attach after the loss of the first syllable:

(10) a. u susjo diði
the horse my
'my horse'

b. u susjo diθxu
the horse your.PL
'your (pl) horse'

Verbal inflection system cannot be presented extensively in this short paper; the interested reader is referred to Jastrow (1993) and Khan (2019) among others. As in other Aramaic languages, verbs are formed on consonantal roots and there are two broad types of inflection from a historical perspective. In the first one, referred to as the predicative inflection (Jastrow 2011), the inflectional bases receive person agreement markers that agree with the subject. These markers are thought to have derived from independent person pronouns, but the gender difference extends to the first singular as well:

			Surface form
SG	1	M	krʊhatno
		F	krʊhtono
	2	M	krohtət
		F	krohtət
	3	M	krohət
		F	krʊhto
PL	1		krʊhtina
	2		krʊhtitu
	3		krʊhti

*Table 3. Declension of the verb **rht** 'run' in the present in the predicative inflection.*

The second type of inflection is called the ergative inflection. The bases derive from a historical passive and encode the undergoer of an action. The agent is expressed with ergative inflectional suffixes, which fuse with the preposition *l-* that follows the base. The respective object is encoded in the base in three forms; masculine singular, feminine singular, and plural.

			Surface form
SG	1	M	ħze-l-i
		F	ħze-l-i
	2	M	ħze-l-ux
		F	ħze-l-ax
	3	M	ħze-l-e
		F	ħze-l-a
PL	1		ħze-l-an
	2		ħze-l-oxu
	3		ħze-l-en

*Table 4. Declension of the verb **ħzl** 'see' in the perfective in ergative inflection.*

See Jastrow (2011) for a succinct introduction of the tense and aspect system. See Waltisberg (2016) for clausal syntax.

Historical overview

Before 1923

While the Central Aramaic group is represented only by Turoyo, spoken in Tur Abdin today, given the historical distribution of Assyrian/Syriacs, it is likely that the languages of the group were spoken in a larger area, extending well beyond the current borders of Tur Abdin. Christianity was introduced rather early in the region, and the Syriac Church is established in the 6th century. By 1200, the Church was not in the Byzantine territory anymore. Under the Muslim rule, Assyrian/Syriacs, like other non-Muslim communities, were considered *dhimmi,* namely subjects that can enjoy limited freedom under the Muslim protection. Similarly, within the *Millet* system of the Ottoman Empire, Assyrian/Syriacs were considered a 'Dominated Millet', i.e., non-Muslim subjects of the Empire. For a large part of its history, the Syriac Orthodox Church was represented by the Armenian Patriarch in Istanbul, the head of one of the three recognized non-Muslim Millets, the others being Orthodox Greeks and Jews. Following the transformation of smaller non-Muslim minorities into millets in the later period of the empire, the Syriac Orthodox population was granted the millet status in 1882 (Gaunt 2006:13). The exact number of Turoyo speakers in the Ottoman times is impossible to know; the 1914-census counts just over 65000 individuals fitting into the category in the entire Ottoman land, albeit in three vague categories: *Süryaniler, Old Süryaniler and Jacobites* (Karpat 2003:226-227) but the numbers are definitely a lot higher in that period, e.g., 135000 according to Laloyan, a Russian geographer (cited in

Gaunt 2006:22). It is of course unclear what the number of Turoyo speakers was; however, the Assyro-Chaldean delegation in the peace conference in Lausanne claimed that there were 133000 Assyrian/Syriac people living only in the vilayet of Diyarbakir in 1914, 20550 of whom were living in (the villages of) Midyat. We therefore speculate that in the closure of the Ottoman era there were a lot more than 20000 speakers of Turoyo in Tur Abdin.

A fundamental turning point in the history of Turoyo speakers—in fact of all the Assyrian/Syriacs— in the Ottoman lands and beyond, is *Sayfo* 'sword', the orchestrated killings of Assyrian/Syriacs by the Muslims between 1914 and 1919. The estimated population loss of Assyrian/Syriacs varies between 150000 and 200000 in the Ottoman lands, and Gaunt (2006:300-302) concludes that the number of the population was reduced by two-thirds. The reader is referred to Gaunt (2006) for the motives and results of *Sayfo*.

After 1923

During the transition period from the end of the WWI until the official proclamation of the Republic of Turkey, Assyrian/Syriac leaders necessarily took part in the inevitable international struggle to secure official status for their community. In the years following the WWI, and the foundation of the Turkish republic, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon under the French or English mandates became shelters for many Assyrian/Syriac survivors from Turkey. Assyro-Chaldean delegation's requests from the Great Powers for an autonomous region and the recognition of the losses in Sayfo were not taken into consideration in the Paris Peace Conference. In the period of the Lausanne Peace Conference, that is when the future of the Republic of Turkey and the

issue of minorities were being shaped, none of the former requests were talked about; instead, the Assyro-Chaldean leaders adopted an explicitly pro-Turkish stand, due to fear of further stigmatization as tool for foreigners and to ensure existence (Atto 2016). To recite the then Patriarch, Elias III's words:

> So far, the issue of minority rights has entered neither the minds nor the dreams of the community I represent. [...]. Süryaniler are the minority of the people who live within the boundaries of the Misak-i Milli [National Oath]. They merely wish to live together with the majority [Turks] in good times and in bad and to enjoy the benefits of this [...]
>
> (cited in Atto 2016:92)

With the establishment of the Turkish republic in 1923, and with its move to limit the minority status only to Jews, Greek and Armenians in 1932, the status of Assyrian/Syriacs as a *de jure* minority, i.e., *millet* (at any legal level) ceased to exist. The Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate, which was located at Mor Hananyo Monastery in Mardin since the 12th century, was moved to Homs in Syria in 1933, and later to Damascus in 1955. The Assyrian/Syriac community has not been protected by any international treaty or by the Turkish Constitutions since then.

Assyrian/Syriacs were denied any access to rights, such as establishing schools or social organizations or periodical publications. There were there were 18 primary schools and one secondary school in the Sanjak of Mardin, which belong to the Jacobites in 1890s (Aydin et al. 2001).

As reported in Akyüz (1998), in the secondary school, courses were taught on Syriac grammar, Arabic grammar and (Ottoman) Turkish grammar alongside geography, mathematics, physical education, engineering. See Atalay (2005) for the number of schools that belong to the Assyrian/Syriacs in the Ottoman Empire in the late 19th century. With one exception, all schools were closed immediately after the Law of Unification of Education (Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu), passed in 1924. One school in Mardin, which went unnoticed by the officials in the period and survived, was eventually closed in 1928, upon the official petition sent by the school principal himself to the governor of Diyarbakir (to which Mardin then belonged) for its closure (Akyüz 1998:65). Turkish was also adopted in the churches that were left in the region to carry part of the masses. Atto (2016:94) righteously claims that the weakened position of Assyiran/Syriacs after 1930s is evidenced by the fact they are hardy mentioned in modern, twentieth-century Turkish literature.

Only the first eight census results of the Turkish Republic (1927-1965) provide numbers about the linguistic minorities within the country. In none of these, however, are there explicit information on the number of Turoyo native speakers or of the Assyrian/Syriacs in general. While Assyrian/Syriacs clearly lived in a much broader area before 1970s, given the fact that Midyat in Mardin has been the place with the highest number of Turoyo speakers, we will focus on the population figures of this city. The 1927-census results report that there were 6812 people in Mardin who spoke 'a different or unknown' language.[2] The 1965-census counts 17143 people with the same profile in the same

[2] The census results provide numerical data on the speakers of the following languages: Turkish, Greek, Armenian, French, Italian, English, Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Circassian, Kurdish, Tatar, Albanian, Bulgarian. All others are subsumed under the category 'different or unknown languages'.

city. [3]The figures are highly doubtful but irrespectively, they most likely refer to Turoyo speakers and they reflect only a fragment of the speakers that survived Sayfo and its aftereffects.[4]

The already decimated number of Turoyo speakers in and after WWI was reduced even further following the 1960s, with a migration wave to Istanbul to take up labor opportunities. While there were about 2000 Assyrian/Syriacs in 1963 in Istanbul, the number increased to 14000 in 1984 (Atto 2016:158). In order to escape from the negative climate that the Cyprus Crisis of 1974 created for the Christians in Turkey, and to escape from the armed conflict in the region of Tur Abdin between the Kurdish separationist group, PKK, and the Turkish government after the 1980s, many Assyrian/Syriacs left Tur Abdin and immigrated to Europe, with main destinations being Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden, as well as to North America and Australia. Today, there are over 300000 Assyrian/Syriacs in Europe alone, 25000 of whom reside in Södertälje in Sweden, which is also referred to as New Midyat. It should be noted that not all of these are from Tur Abdin, and hence, Turoyo speakers. Ethnologue's 2016 version predicts that there exist 84000 native speakers of Turoyo worldwide. The number of speakers in Turkey reduced from about 23000 in late 60s and 70s (Ritter 1967, Jastrow 1985b) to about 3000 in 1990s (Jastrow 2011, Bilge 2012 among others). Whether this number is stable or has been affected by the modern economic crisis of 2020s awaits further research. Given that the current population of Midyat is over about 120000 according to the 2023 census results, the above number shows that Turoyo speakers are a rather small minority, not only in the country but also in their original homeland, Tur Abdin.

[3] While more languages were added in the census in 1965, Turoyo is not one of them.

[4] The same census results provide numbers on the religious groups as well but given that the classification is unclear and the numbers are not reliable, we do not list them here.

Current sociolinguistic situation

Until the late 19th century, when Turoyo was first documented by Prym and Socin (1881), Suroyo remained as an oral language, which is still true to a large extend. The major documentation efforts of Turoyo were undertaken in late 1960s by Helmut Ritter, and later by Otto Jastrow. Although it has been studied in the Semitic/linguistic literature, within the community it has never gained a status of formal education. The education has focused on Classical Syriac, Kthobonoyo, which is still the case in village churches, where *malfone* (teachers) teach the latter. Kiraz (2011) reports that

> Kthobonoyo was enforced at village schools in the second half of the twentieth century [...] It was not unusual for a pupil to receive a punishment if heard speaking in a tongue other than Kthobonoyo. Even Turoyo was prohibited in schools.
>
> (Kiraz 2011:118)

The main motivation behind this attempt, nurtured by the clergy and adopted by many community members, is the consideration of Kthobonoyo's status to that of *fuṣḥā,* and taking it to represent the pure form of the language. There are even community members across the globe who attempt to revive Kthobonoyo as a living language. It should be noted that there has never been any official request by the community to teach Turoyo in Turkey, although some occasional requests to open Syriac Bible courses have been made, e.g., in 1949 (Akyüz 2005). While some of the other minority languages, such as Laz and Circassian, have been integrated into school curricula after early 2010s under the conjugated effect of the European prerequisite

conditions, there was no official request form the community leaders for doing the same for Turoyo. A department of Syriac language and literature was nevertheless opened at the Mardin Artuklu University in 2015, where Turoyo language was integrated into the curriculum. In the academic year 2019-2020, Turoyo was taught two hours per week at the second to fourth grades as opposed to twelve hours on Classical Syriac. Within the small community in Tur Abdin, Turoyo still exists as a spoken language; however, its transmission to younger generations is rather limited.

Turoyo within the diaspora has a different trajectory. Especially with the Swedish state's support to the immigrants' for retaining their own identity and for establishing their own associations if they continue to participate in Swedish society, Turoyo was integrated into the education system of the schools in which a considerable number of pupils of Assyrian/Syriac origin exist. In 1979, a modified version of the Latin alphabet was devised to write in Turoyo and the first Turoyo teaching material *(Toxu Qorena A-B)* was written in 1983 by Yusuf Ishaq (see Ishaq 1990 for details). As of 2020, there were two schools in Sweden, where Turoyo was taught (Woźniak-Bobińska 2020:169). Since late 1980s, new literature has been produced in this alphabet, notably in Sweden. The community in Sweden also runs two magazines (now online), which publish in Classical Syriac and Swedish (as well as Arabic and Turkish) and since early 2000, three TV channels broadcast programs in Turoyo. Professor Shabo Talay's 'Surayt Aramaic Online Project' (2014-2020), which aims at developing online Turoyo courses at intermediary and advanced levels, was prepared by adopting the Syriac alphabet for Turoyo. Many publications in Turoyo using this alphabet were also produced, notably in Germany. See Talay (2015) for the history of writing in Turoyo in Germany. Mikael Oez' *Modern Aramaic in*

Practice (2014) and *Aramäisch Lehrbuch* series (2020) are intended to teach Turoyo to foreigners, introducing both the Latin-based and Syriac scripts. Bulut's (2020), reference grammar of Turoyo, is written entirely in Syriac alphabet.

Keeping Turoyo alive at home

Thanks to the efforts by the diaspora communities that are supported by the European governments, notably of Sweden, Turoyo seems to have better prospects in Europe than at home. This, however, should not be taken to indicate that Turoyo is far from danger of disappearing from use in daily life in Europe. The dialectal differences in the homeland have been largely levelled in Sweden, and all speakers are either bilingual or multilingual. The three-generation rule for heritage speakers seems to apply to the Assyrian/Syriac community in Sweden as well. The older generations are much more fluent in Turoyo than the younger ones. Woźniak-Bobińska (2020:166) reports that 74.4% of Assyrian-Syriacs in Sweden use Swedish at home while 38.8% speak (also) Neo-Aramaic, including Turoyo. Because many parents prefer to send their children to Swedish state schools, either because they believe the children will have better opportunities or because they see such schools as largely experimental, the two schools that belong to the community attract a small number of the target children (Woźniak-Bobińska 2020:169). This puts Turoyo in a vulnerable position in Sweden. Similar appeal was also made by Talay (2014) for Turoyo in Germany.

The situation is much more desperate in the homeland. The number of the speakers dwindled to a fragment of what it was one and a half century ago. In 1985, Jastrow already foresaw that the language would

die out in two or three decades if immigration from Tur Abdin were to continue in the same pace as it was in the 1970s and 80s. It has not happened yet, perhaps largely due to the stricter policies against immigration by Sweden and Germany; however, the language is in a critical threshold in Turkey.

While it is certainly a good sign that a department opened for Assyrian/Syriac language literature in Mardin, its effect on the sustainability of the language within the community is moot. Turoyo is not part of the school curricula, neither are there people qualified enough to teach it. There is rather limited readership in the language; the different alphabets and hence lack of standardization seems to be a major obstacle. The publications in the diaspora, whether in Syriac or in Latin script, have little distribution within the community. There is only one local newspaper, *Sabro,* of the community in Tur Abdin, which, however, publishes mostly in Turkish and Classical Syriac. *Alef FM* broadcasts programs in Syriac for 15-20 minutes a day since 2020. Each program must be approved by RTÜK (Radio and Television Supreme Council of Turkey) prior to airing.

Perhaps the most promising development in the modern history of Assyrian/Syriacs of modern Turkey is the official permission granted in 2014 by the Turkish government for the establishment of the first Assyrian/Syriac daycare center in Istanbul, namely the St. Ephrem Syriac Daycare Center (Özel Mor Efrem Süryani Anaokulu). While this is certainly an important milestone, it is as yet unclear how many of the staff can converse in Turoyo and how much Turoyo is used daily. In short, there are few attempts to reallocate a better status to Turoyo within Turkey.

There are clearly notable reasons for why Turoyo came to the verge of extinction in Tur Abdin in slightly over a century after orally surviving for about a millennium. The recent history of Assyrian/Syriacs in Tur Abdin is marked with massacres and displacements, the latter for either survival or economic welfare. These incidents and the state policy against minorities left the community with more urgent problems than the spoken vernacular. Many Assyrian/Syriacs for instance left their homes without any administrative paper showing their assets in the homeland and are either unwilling or unable to return. Besides, Neo-Aramaic vernaculars, except for Christian NENA, which raised itself to a literary language in the past few centuries (Murre-Van den Berg 1999), have always remained as oral languages, Classical Syriac being the language of literature and liturgy. Even though Turoyo is treated as a marker of identity in Tur Abdin and in Sweden, many people in the latter regard Turoyo as a less prestigious and less pure dialect of Syriac (Woźniak-Bobińska 2020:167). The role of clergy in the emergence of this belief is notable. Many have explicitly expressed their discontentment about teaching Turoyo at schools, without Kthobonoyo receiving attention first, and there has been some criticism against writing in Turoyo with orthographic conventions based on the Latin alphabet as well as on the Syriac alphabet, the latter of which deviates from the orthographic conventions of Kthobonoyo. Without the full support of the Church and the malfone, attempts for a unified orthography will not succeed completely, and material development will continue in a slow pace. Ultimately, however, the fate of Turoyo is not exactly dependent on developing more written materials in it; nor on the numbers of speakers. As Fishman (2001:13) states, "it is [...] vacuous to suggest that the speakers of threatened languages should be 'larger in number', should establish 'more and stronger language institutions', or should 'provide their language with more status'."

Turoyo was just fine as an oral language since time unknown. The future of Turoyo correlates with the fate of Christianity in Tur Abdin (cf. Jastrow 1985b). The important point, it seems, is to overcome the hurdles imposed by the state and entrenched within the communities, in endowing the language with the space and functional diversification, something which apparently it had until recently.

References

Akyüz, G. (2005). *Tüm yönleriyle Süryaniler* [Assyrian/Syriacs from all aspects]. Mardin: Mardin Anadolu Ofset.

Akyüz, G. (1998). *Mardin ilinin merkezinde ve civar köylerinde ve ilçelerinde bulunan kiliselerin ve manastırların Tarihi* (The history of monasteries and churches in Mardin and its towns and villages). Mardin: Mardin Kırklar Kilisesi.

Atalay, T. (2005). *Lozan Antlaşması öncesi ve sonrasında Süryani eğitim kurumları* (Educational institutes belonging to Assyiran/Syriacs before and after the Treaty of Laussanne). http://www.suryaniler.com/makale-havuzu.asp?id=391 (last accessed: August 2, 2023)

Atto, N. (2011). Hostages in the Homeland, Orphans in the Diaspora: Identity Discourses among the Assyrian/Syriac Elites in the European Diaspora. PhD dissertation, Leiden University.

Aydın, S., Emiroğlu, K., Özel, O. & S. Ünsal. (2001). *Mardin: aşiret-cemaat-devlet [Mardin: tribes-religious groups-government].* Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları.

Bilge, Y. (2012). "Turabdin: süryani kilise ve kültürünün beşiği (The Cradle of Syriac Church and Culture)." In İ. Özcoşar (ed.), *Keşfi Kadim uluslararası Midyat sempozyumu sempozyum bildirileri,* 507–526. Mardin: Mardin Sesi ve Gazetesi Matbaası.

Bulut, R. (2020). *Gramatiqi du le'zo turoyo* (Grammar of the Turoyo langua-

ge). Istanbul: Anadolu Ofset.

Coghill, E. (2016). *The rise and fall of ergativity in Aramaic. Cycles of alignment change.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Çelik, T. (2021). *Turabdin'de Süryani Yerleşimi.* İstanbul: Sabro.

Dimmendaal, G. J. & F. K. Erhard Voeltz. (2007). "Africa." In C. Moseley (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the world's endangered languages*, 579–634. London: Routledge.

Doron, E. and G. Khan. (2016). "The morphosyntax of definiteness agreement in Neo-Aramaic and Central Semitic." In J. Audring, F. Masini and W. Sandler (eds.), *Quo vadis morphology? MMM10 On-line Proceedings,* 45–54. DOI: https://doi.org/10.26220/ mmm.2723.

Eberhard, D. M., Simons, G. F. & C. D. Fennig (eds.). (2023). *Ethnologue: languages of the world.* Twenty-sixth edition. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: http://www.ethnologue.com.

Fishman, J. A. (2001). "Why is it so hard to save a threatened language? (A Perspective on the cases that follow)." In J. A. Fishman (ed.), *Can threatened languages be saved? Reversing language shift, revisited: a 21st century perspective, 1–22*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Fitzmyer, J. (1979). *A wandering Aramean: collected Aramaic essays*. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press.

Gaunt, D. (2006). *Massacres, resistance, protectors: Muslim–Christian relations in Eastern Anatolia during World War I.* Piscataway, NJ: Gorgiyas.

Häberl, C. G. (2009). *The Neo-Mandaic dialect of Khorramshahr.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Ishaq, Y. M. (1990). "Turoyo: From spoken to written language." In W. Heinrichs (ed.), *Studies in Neo-Aramaic,* 189–199. Harvard Semitic Studies 36. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press.

Jastrow, O. (1971). "Ein neuaramäischer Dialekt aus dem Vilayet Siirt (Ostanatolien)." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 121, 215–222.

Jastrow, O. (1985a). "Mlaḥsó: An unknown Neo-Aramaic language of Turkey." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 30, 265–270.

Jastrow, O. (1985b). "The Turoyo language today." *Journal of the Assyrian Academic Society* 1, 7–16.

Jastrow, O. (1993). *Laut- und Formenlehre des neuaramäischen Dialekts von Midən im Ṭur ʿAbdin*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Jastrow, O. (1994). *Der neuaramäische Dialekt von Mlaḥsô.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Jastrow, Otto. (2011). "Ṭuroyo and Mlaḥsô." In S. Weninger (ed., in collaboration with G. Khan, Streck, M. P. & J. C. E. Watson), *The Semitic languages,* 697–707. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

Karpat, K. H. (2003). *Osmanlı nüfusu (1830–1914): demografik ve sosyal özellikleri* (Ottoman population 1830–1914: Demographic and social characteristics). Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları.

Kaufman, S. (1997). "Aramaic." In R. Hetzron (ed.), *The Semitic languages,* 114–130. London: Routledge.

Khan, G. (2019a.) T"he Neo-Aramaic dialects of eastern Anatolia and northwestern Iran." In G. Haig & G. Khan (eds.), *The languages and linguistics of Western Asia: an areal perspective,* 190–236. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

Khan, G. (2019b). "The Neo-Aramaic dialects and their historical background." In D. King (ed.), *The Syriac world*, 266–289. London: Routledge.

Khan, G. (2016). *The Neo-Aramaic dialect of the Assyrian Christians of Urmi* (four vols). Leiden: Brill.

Khan, G. (2011). "North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic." In S. Weninger (ed., in collaboration with G. Khan, Streck, M. P. & J. C. E. Watson), *The Semitic languages,* 708–724. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

Kim, R. (2008). ""Stammbaum" or "Continuum"? The Subgrouping of Modern Aramaic Dialects Reconsidered." *Journal of the American Oriental*

Society 128, 505–531.

Kiraz, A. G. (2011). "Kthobonoyo Syriac: Some Observations and Remarks." *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 10, 113–124.

Moseley, C. (ed.). (2010). Atlas of the world's languages in danger. (third edition). Paris: UNESCO Publishing. URL: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000187026 (last accessed: August 1, 2023).

Murre-Van den Berg, H. L. (1999). *From a spoken to a written language: the introduction and development of literary Urmia Aramaic in the nineteenth century*. Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten.

Nöldeke, T. (1881). "Review of "Eugen Prym and Albert Socin, Der neuaramaeische Dialekt des Tur 'Abdin. I. Teil: Die Texte. 2. Teil: Uebersetzung (Syrische Sagen und Maerchen aus dem Volksmunde gesammelt und uebersetzt)"." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 35, 218–235.

Oez, M. (2014). *Modern Aramaic in practice*. Modern Aramaic Press.

Oez, M. (2020). *Aramäisch Lehrbuch* I-IV. Modern Aramaic Press.

Prym, E. & A. Socin. (1881). *Der ne-uaramäische Dialekt des Ṭūr 'Abdîn*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Ritter, H. (1990). *Ṭūrōyo. Die Volkssprache der syrischen Christen des Ṭūr 'Abdîn*. C: Grammatik. Stuttgart: Steiner.

Ritter, H. (1967). *Ṭūrōyo. Die Volkssprache der syrischen Christen des Ṭūr 'Abdîn. A: Texte*. Stuttgart: Steiner.

Takashina, Y. (1990). "Some Remarks on Modern Aramaic of Hertevin." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 40, 85-132.

Talay, S. (2015). "Literacy in Turoyo, the Aramaic language of Turabdin and the translation of Alice." In J. A. Lindseth &A. Tannenbaum (eds.), *Alice in a World of Wonderlands. The translations of Lewis Carroll's masterpiece,* 605–607. New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll.

Talay, S. (2014). Mother tongue and integration – Surayt (Turoyo) as a Case

Study. Paper presented at the international conference *Assyrian Diaspora in Europe: Past, Present, Future,* May 304, 2014, Berlin.

Tsereteli, K. (1977). "Zur Frage der Klassifikation der neuaramäischen Dialekte." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 127, 244–253.

Waltisberg, M. (2016). *Syntax des Ṭuroyo*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Weaver, C. M. & G. A. Kiraz. (2016). "Turoyo Neo-Aramaic in northern New Jersey." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 237, 19–36.

Werner, A. (2019). "Western Neo-Aramaic." In S. Weninger (ed., in collaboration with G. Khan, Streck, M. P. & J. C. E. Watson), *The Semitic languages*, 685–696. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

Woźniak, M. (2012). "Far from Aram-Nahrin: The Suryoye diaspora experience." In A. Eamer (ed.), *Border terrains: world diasporas in 21st century,* 73–83. Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press.

Woźniak-Bobińska, M. (2020). *Modern Assyrian/Syriac diaspora in Sweden*. Lodz: University of Lodz.

Yifrach, M. & E. Coppock. (2021). Defining definiteness in Turoyo. *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics* 6, 116, doi: https://doi.org/10.16995/glossa.5874.

8 Zazaki

İlyas Arslan

Introduction

Today, a considerable number of the languages are endangered across the world due to both global and local factors. Without intervention, these languages may not even continue their existence until the end of the century.[1] Although some information about the languages that could be documented will be carried into the future, they will no longer be spoken. Most of the languages of Turkey—languages from a myriad of different language families—face extinction, with only a handful of exceptions. In addition to the languages that are well-known, like the Turkic Languages (Turkish, Gagauz, Kipchak, Ahıska Turkish), Indo-Iranian languages (Zazaki, Kurmanji), Caucasian languages (Georgian, Laz, Circassian), Semitic languages (Arabic, Syriac, Hebrew), Slavic Languages (Albanian, Pomak), there are languages such as Hamshetsnak, Romeyka, Avar, Ossetian that are hardly ever heard of. Apart from the official language of Turkey, namely Turkish, only a couple of languages spoken in Turkey are not classified as endangered. These include Arabic, which has an official status in many countries, and Kurmanji which has a large population of people who speak it. It's fortunately unlikely that these languages will disappear soon. All other indigenous languages of Turkey, however, face different levels of endangerment, according to the Endangered Languages Project[2] and 19 of them, including Zazaki, are the most vulnerable.

1 https://www.geo.de/wissen/1500-sprachen-in-aller-welt-akut-vom-aussterben-bedroht---31465976.html (Last Accessed: 01 September 2023).

2 https://www.endangeredlanguages.com/#/9/41.074/41.578/0/100000/0/low/mid/high/dormant/awakening/unknown (Last Accessed: 03 September 2023).

Awareness should be raised for the protection of these cultural treasures, whose living spaces are shrinking day by day. Suggestions on this issue are presented at the end of this article.

Although different sources provide different figures, around 50 languages are spoken in Turkey. According to Ethnologue (pre-2023 edition), 36 of these languages are indigenous to Turkey and 14 are refugee languages. The fact that language and dialect classification criteria are usually determined from an ideological point of view rather than a linguistic one is responsible for the discrepancies between different sources. For example, Zazaki, the language of the Zaza people, can sometimes be classified as a dialect of Kurdish by some political groups. Moreover, the absence of official data on the distribution of Turkey's ethnic populations makes this issue open to speculation. Zaza language, which is classified as an endangered language by the Unesco criteria (Varol 2015), is ranked as the most widely spoken language in Turkey after Turkish and Kurmanji. The study called *"Who Are We?"* conducted by Konda Research Company[3] in 2006 has shown that 1.01% of the population define themselves as Zaza while figures from Ethnologue indicate that the Zaza population in Turkey corresponds to approximately 2%. Upon closer look, the data from the Konda Research Company shows a significant number of people who define themselves as Turks (Turkish citizen) even though their native language is not Turkish. For some people, being Turkish is a matter of citizenship rather than ethnic identity, which may mislead the statistics. "In addition, 8.82% of those who identified themselves as Kurdish or Zaza stated that their mother tongue was Turkish" (Konda 2006:19). Lack of participants from regions that are most densely populated by Zaza people, namely Bingöl, Tunceli and Erzincan regions (Konda 2006:4), is another factor

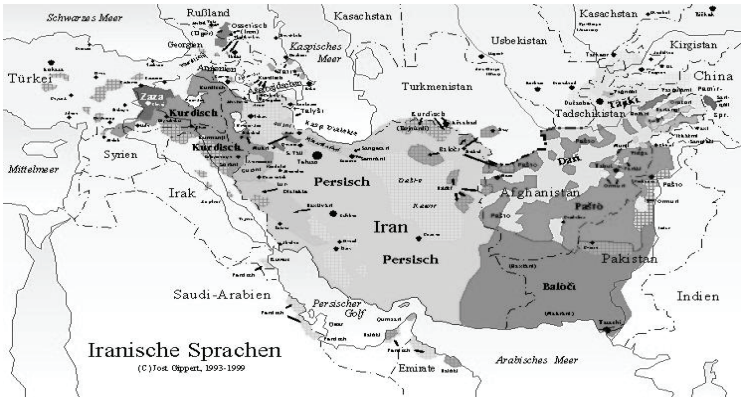
[3] https://konda.com.tr/rapor/160/biz-kimiz-toplumsal-yapi-arastirmasi (Last Accessed: 03 September 2023).

that has an impact on the results. Moreover, many minorities in Turkey still exhibit a certain amount of reluctance to state their identities freely due to negative experiences in the past. A study that is conducted in an environment where people feel safe to express themselves freely will surely yield more reliable results. Another factor is the fact that people tend to define Zaza identity in conjunction with the Kurdish population, especially people from outside both communities. The political developments of recent years have reinforced this misconception. A Zazaki-speaking person may state that they speak Kurdish in an interview that is conducted in Turkish when in fact they speak Zazaki. Linguist Ludwig Paul mentions an estimated population of 1.5-2 million Zaza in his doctoral study on Zazaki (Paul 1998:xiii). Selcan, a Zaza linguist, estimates the population of Zaza people at 3 million (Selcan 1998). There are also sources claiming that the number of people of Zaza origin is somewhere between 4 to 6 million (Kararabeyeser 2021:1). In the light of these conflicting estimates, it seems clear that the gathering and the interpretation of the data regarding the number of Zaza should be handled with care. Creating an environment where people feel free and safe to answer the questions truthfully and formulating those questions well is key to obtaining reliable data.

Current state of Zazaki

Zazaki, within the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European Language family (Haddank 1932, Paul 1998, Selcan 1998, Arslan 2016), is spoken in the Upper Euphrates-Tigris basin of Turkey (see Map 1). It is the majority language of the cities of Tunceli (Dersim), Bingöl (Çewlig) and Elazığ (Xarpêt) and it is also spoken intensively in many neighbouring provinces such as Diyarbakır and Erzincan (Arslan 2018:253). It is spoken in some regions within the borders of Muş, Adıyaman, Erzurum, Bitlis, Ma-

latya, Urfa, Sivas, Tokat, Aksaray and in several villages in Kayseri, Kars, Batman, Mardin and Konya. Some of the Zaza people who lived in the big cities migrated or were displaced to Western Anatolia, following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. Outside Turkey, the last generations of the Zazas live in Germany, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. In Germany, they support different political views and have dozens of associations. In certain big cities of Germany with a dense Zaza population, there are organizations such as the Zaza Parents Association (Ger. Elternverein).



Map 1. Distribution of Zazaki in the Indo-Iranian geography. [4]

Historical background

Before the year 1980

The first written works in the Zaza language were religious texts dated back to the last years of the Ottoman Empire. Ahmede Xasi's *Mewluda Nebi* was written in 1898 and was published in 1899.

[4] s. http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/didact/karten/iran/iranm.htm, Ware (1996) Nr. 10, S. 53f. (Last Accessed: 03 September 2023).

Written in 1906 using the Ottoman alphabet like the *Mewluda Nebi,* Osman Efendiyo Babij's *Biyişa Pêxemberi* (The Birth of the Prophet) was published in Damascus in 1933 (Selcan 1998). There is no record of earlier texts. With the proclamation of the republic, such texts were started to be written in secret, but their authors either wouldn't or couldn't publish them due to harsh measures (Varol 2019). The years following the 1980 military coup saw the destruction of countless valuable texts as the military collected and burned books that they deemed harmful to society. Many of the books that were hidden from the military out of fear were deeply damaged over the years or were forgotten and left to rot. Among these works, there were genealogies of many Alevi Zaza families and Ottoman and Arabic texts written by religious leaders. Although many international treaties regarding minority rights have been signed, these languages and their speakers remained oppressed until the peacetime.

1980 to 2012

The efforts of the Zaza people who had to flee abroad due to the military coup of September 12 have contributed immensely to the advancement of the language. Thanks to the democratic environment in Europe, Zazaki began to be written and publications in numerous subjects emerged. These efforts cultivated a positive interest in the Zaza language. These developments in the diaspora were inspiring for the Zaza living in Turkey, too. However, at that point, minority languages were starting to become a focal point of negative political discourse in Turkey, under the shadow of the intense political conflicts of the time. Both the official approach and the shared opinion of the majority of political circles was that

Zazaki is a dialect of Turkish or Kurdish. In line with this approach, the RTÜK (the Supreme Board of Radio and Television) Regulation of 2004 banned broadcasting in languages or dialects other than Turkish. [5]

Diaspora-centred language and culture studies, and scientific studies arguing that Zazaki is an autonomous separate language have been carried out in mostly Europe. It was in this period that the language shifted from being mainly based on oral tradition to written records. Since 1994, many Dersim Associations have been established where the Zaza language and culture is represented. These associations helped organize Zaza language lessons, seminars on how to teach the Zaza language and religious cem rituals in Zazaki. Although these activities are carried out regularly and frequently, meeting the demands of the community fully is not always possible.

After 2012

The beginning of the peace process generated mitigations in the minority language policies of the state and efforts to revitalize and strengthen these languages were seen to a degree. While students in higher education were given the opportunity to be educated in certain minority languages, students in secondary schools were only given the choice of an elective course of two hours per week. Such a practice was not implemented in preschools, kindergartens, primary schools, and high schools. In addition, even though the language bans in the 1982 constitution are still in practice, Zazaki, Kurmanji, Laz, etc. courses have been opened in Public Education

[5] http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2004/01/20040125.htm (Last Accessed: 01 September 2023).

Centres. Article 42 of the "Right of and Duty to Education and Training" section of the 1982 Constitution, officially forbids languages other than Turkish with the phrase "No language other than Turkish can be taught to Turkish citizens as their mother tongue in educational institutions." (Arslan 2019:99).

Although there was an issue of staff at first, the system is now quite established. The fact that the Ministry of National Education appoints only 1 teacher per year for Zazaki affects both the students and the teachers. The competition this creates greatly hinders the motivation of students studying in higher education in the hopes of finding a job in the future. Research institutions should also be established by the state for these languages, which could not be used in official settings for nearly 90 years. It is not possible to keep a language alive with two hours of elective courses in secondary school. The social and economic domains in which these languages are used should also be supported.

Zaza's current sociolinguistic state and linguistic background

Zazaki has 38 sounds, and the alphabet adopted to write in it consists of 32 letters (Table 1). Not all sounds are represented in the alphabet. Those that are not are indicated by diacritics. One of the oldest Indo-Iranian languages, Zazaki is rare in the sense that it still carries some ancient Iranian language features. The simplest example of this is the passive suffix /-i/ found in the ancient Indo-Iranian languages. Also, the ergative case system, which entered the Indo-Iranian languages at the beginning of the middle period and was discarded at the end of the same period, can still be found in Zazaki (and a few other Iranian languages.)

Letter	IPA	north	south	Example	Letter	IPA	north	south	Example
A a	[a]	+	+	*asme* 'moon'	O o	[o]	+	+	*olvoz* 'friend'
B b	[b]	+	+	*bervi* 'witness'	P p	[p]	+	+	*poṙ* 'hair'
C c	[dz]	+	-	*cor* 'up'	Ṗ ṗ	[p']	+	+/-	*ṗudi* 'gums'
	[dʒ]	+	+	*cêr* 'down'					
Ç ç	[ʦ]	+	-	*çıla* 'lamp'	Q q	[q]	+	+	*qor* 'leg'
	[ʧ]	+	+	*çêneke* 'girl'					
Ḉ ḉ	[ʦ']	+	-	*ḉem* 'river'	R r	[r]	+	+	*radon* 'radio'
	[ʧ']	+	-	*ḉıraene* 'to squeak'					
D d	[d]	+	+	*dest* 'hand'	Ṙ ṙ	[r:]	+	+	*bıṙ* 'forest'
E e	[ɛ]	+	+	*estene* 'to throw'	S s	[s]	+	+	*sare* 'head'
Ê ê	[ˌe]	+	+	*dês* 'wall'	Ş ş	[ʃ]	+	+	*şêne* 'chest'
F f	[f]	+	+	*fek* 'mouth'	T t	[t]	+	+	*tüye* 'mulberry'
G g	[g]	+	+	*gule* 'rose'	Ṭ ṭ	[t']	+	+/-	*ṭüye* 'owl'
H h	[h]	+	+	*hengure* 'grape'	U u	[u]	+	+	*sur* 'red'
Ḥ ḥ	[ħ]	-	+	*ḥeş* 'bear'	Ü ü	[y]	+	+/-	*cüamerd* 'man'
I ı	[ɨ]	+	+	*tıvar* 'trust'	V v	[v]	+	+	*vore* 'snow'
İ i	[i]	+	+	*Iqrar* 'comradery'	W w	[w]	+	+	*welat* 'country, fatherland'
K k	[k]	+	+	*kal* 'uncooked'	X x	[x]	+	+	*xanıme* 'wife'
Ḳ ḳ	[k']	+	+/-	*ḳal* 'old'	Ẋ ẋ	[ɤ]	+	+	*ẋezale* 'deer'
L l	[l]	+	+	*lew* 'lip'	Y y	[j]	+	+	*yar* 'lover'
M m	[m]	+	+	*meṙe* 'mouse'	Z z	[z]	+	+	*zan/zon* 'tongue'
N n	[n]	+	+	*nast* 'acquaintance'	Ẓ ẓ	[ʒ]	+	+	*ẓia* 'dry'

Table 1. Phonetic Alphabet of Zaza Language (Arslan 2016:213)

Although Zazaki has two fundamental dialects (Selcan 1998, Arslan 2016), there are Iranists who claim there are three (Paul 1998). The differences between dialects are based on differences in factions. Northern

regions (Sivas, Erzincan, Tunceli, Varto, Hınıs etc.) subscribe to the "Alevi" faith and live in close-knit communities called 'Ocak' where their faith is the core of their lives. There are also differences among the dialects of the Zazas living in middle Turkey (Elazığ, Bingöl, Northeast Diyarbakır, Mutki etc.) who subscribe to the Shafi faith and the Hanafi Zaza living in the southernmost regions (Siverek, Gerger, Çermik etc.). There has been more migration to the outside in the northern region due to multidimensional problems. In this area, many villages were completely emptied, while large villages turned into villages with just a few households.

Typologically, it does not differ from Turkish or Persian with its SOV (Subject-Object-Verb) sentence structure. The interaction of Turkic and Iranian languages goes back to the 6th century. Numerous Sogdian inscriptions, a central Iranian language, have been found in the regions inhabited by the Uyghur Turks and in Mongolia (Erdem 2014). Today, Sogdiana is a region of Uzbekistan. There are also parts of the Turfan Tomb Inscriptions discovered in the East Turkestan Province of China that were written in Sogdian.

The ergative system, which concerns morphological case, is observed in only a few Indo-Iranian languages today, one of which is Zazaki (Prejko 1979). Some Indo-Iranian languages switched back to the accusative system at the end of the middle Iranian period. While Zazaki too retained certain syntactic properties of the accusative system, many morphological properties of the ergative system were also adapted. For this reason, Zazaki is a semi-ergative language. In transitive verbs, verb agrees with the subject of the transitive predicate in present tense, but it agrees with the object in past tense. Since there is no object in intransitive verbs, the verb always agrees with the subject. The Ergative system of Zazaki illustrated in (1)–(3) (Arslan 2016:66).

(1) Intransitive

Mordemek-Ø	amê.
man-NOM	come.PST.3SG.M

'The man arrived.'

(2) Transitive [+Past]

Mordemek-i	cênike	diye.
man-ERG	woman	see.PST.3SG.F

'The man saw the woman.'

(3) Transitive [–Past]

Mordemek-Ø	cênıke	vineno.
man-NOM	woman	see.PRS-3SG.M

'The man sees the woman.'

Another feature of Zazaki is its complex verb structure. While the standard form of the present tense suffix is /-en/, 8 different variations of it can be found in the past tense. Infinitive constructions are formed by adding the suffix /-ene/ or /-iş/ to the past tense root of the verb: *nustene* 'to write', *nuşiyaene* 'to be written', *rusnaene* 'to send'.

(4) [–Past]

a. O sanıku nus-en-o.
3SG.M.NOM story.PL.OBL write-PRS-3SG.M
'He is writing stories.'

b. O sanıku rusn-en-o.
3SG.M.NOM story.PL.OBL send-PRS-3SG.M
'He is sending stories.'

(5) [+Past]

a. Ey sanık-i nuş-t-i.
3SG.M.OBL story.PL.NOM write-PST-3PL
'He wrote stories.'

b. Ey sanık-i rusn-a-y.
3SG.M.OBL story.PL.NOM send-PST-3PL
'He sent stories.'

It is the ergative system and verb structure given in the above examples is notoriously hard to learn. Most individuals who learn Zazaki later in life tend to adapt the cases to the accusative system when they speak it. For people whose first language is one with a different system (Turkish, German, French, etc.), it usually takes longer to master a language with ergative system as the tense-case agreement is foreign to them. Mistakes such as *Ez kar kerd* (?) instead of *Mı kar kerd* 'I did my chores' and *o nan werd* '?' instead of *ey nan werd* 'he/she ate a meal' are very common.

Socio-political factors

Since there are no records dating back to before 1893, it is not possible to classically categorize Zazaki into periods as old, middle, or new. As it is a language that has not undergone fundamental changes since the time it was first attested, it can only be divided into periods according to the socio-political developments. The events which effected the range of the language are taken into consideration which gives us these three periods: the time before 1938, 1938 - 1994 and after 1994.

It is also possible to trace this period to the foundation of the Republic. The Republic of Turkey has followed a policy of Turkification of minorities since its early years. The new system, which occasionally faced backlash and challenges, implemented this policy full force. This approach, which involved resorting to violence from time to time, persisted until the 2010s. There are instances of local pushback against the state's harsh assimilationist policies. The 1925 Sheikh Said Operation—although usually painted in a different light—was essentially a campaign against the Zaza as it predominantly took place in the regions where the Zaza population was dense. Although the Sheikh Said Operation was not as destructive as Dersim '38, it still caused great damage to the region and the language. Some of community leaders were executed, while the rest were sent into exile for many years.

The most violent of these events was the Dersim Operation, which was carried out in the shadow of World War II. The sheer violence of the operation is still fresh in the minds of people. The operation is tried to be exculpated based on the propaganda that it was the Dersim tribes that struck first with the help of foreign powers. A long-term operation was organized to destroy the foundation of the community and to discredit

the survivors. With the Tunceli Law[6] enacted on 25.12.1935, efforts to assimilate the culture in a gradual manner was initiated and, if assimilation efforts proved to be unsuccessful, to destroy it. By 1934, most of the community leaders (pirs, agas) were arrested or sent into exile. In May 1937, a large-scale extermination operation was launched and 13,806 people were killed.[7] Apart from the murders, thousands of people were lost, were starved to death, or fell prey to wild animals. Many children were kidnapped and were adopted by Turkish families. After the operation, the survivors were sent into exile and so, the area the locals called Dêsim[8] was completely evacuated and declared a forbidden zone. This exile is best described by a poem[9] written by Cemal Süreya found in a letter he wrote to his ex-wife. Süreya was exiled with his family at that time.

They stuffed us in a truck,

as two soldiers with rifles in hand watched us.

Then, those two soldiers loaded us into a freight wagon.

After days on the road, they threw us into a village

as dogs older than dirt barked.

That journey never leaves my mind; those barks, the cops…

Perhaps the sharpness of my memories is heightened by a child's despair

My mother died in exile; my father died in exile."

---

[6] https://www5.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc016/kanuntbmmc016/kanuntbmmc01602884.pdf (Last Accessed: 02 September 2023).

[7] https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/askeri-istihbaratci-dersim-katliamini-anlatti-337118 (Last Accessed: 02 September 2023).

[8] Dersim, whose administrative boundaries changed frequently during the Ottoman period, and the geographical area defined as Dêsim are different. Dêsim is an area within the borders of Tunceli.

[9] Süreyya, Cemal. (2019). On Üç Günün Mektupları. İstanbul: Can Modern.

In 1948, with the amendment of some articles of the Settlement Law[10] No. 5098, the deportees were allowed to return and re-establish their villages outside the forbidden zones. The forbidden zones were abolished on 1 July 1950 with the Decision of the Council of Ministers 3/11461 (Zeytinli, 2012, 7). The language and the culture have survived despite everything. With the exiles, people of the Alavi faith had to become Sunnis in the regions where they were settled. The Dersim Oral History Project[11] and the 'Lost Daughters of Dersim' [12] narratives conducted by director Kazım Gündoğan reached out to people from Dersim who became Sunnis after the exile. Both projects have been published into a book. The accounts of the soldiers[13] who served in the region during the operation and the people who survived it helps us better understand what happened.

Although the 1937-38 Operation was deeply traumatic, the language, culture and faith survived. In regions outside Dersim such as Erzincan, Sivas, Varto, Hınıs, there were no mass exiles except for the families of leaders. The Zaza in those regions were left alone. That is not to say, they weren't affected by the events that transpired in Dersim.

The rapid organization of the youth movement rooted in the 1968 generation, especially in the Dersim region, foreshadowed the greatest destruction in the memory of Zaza people. Although the armed conflicts subsided briefly with the 1980 coup d'état, it was not long before they accelerated again with the Kurdish separationist group, PKK, actions in

[10] https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/arsiv/6950.pdf (Last Accessed: 02 September 2023).

[11] https://tr-tr.facebook.com/DersimTertele/ (Last Accessed: 02 September 2023).

[12] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ta8Qvzo4i_0&ab_channel=NaderHelmy (Last Accessed: 02 September 2023).

[13] https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/dersim-tanigi-asker-munzur-kipkirmizi-akardi-haber-1521274 (Last Accessed: 02 September 2023).

1984. The presence of armed extremist groups and Kurdish organizations in Dersim had a negative impact on people's lives. A certain segment of society was sympathetic to these movements for emotional reasons, but the elderly were worried for they had lived through similar things before. As a result of the increasingly violent clashes, villages began to be evacuated. Most of the villages in Eastern and South-eastern Anatolia were evacuated as the Kurdish movement was highly active in those regions. Even the residents who were displaced at the previous exile were denied housing. Most of the villagers who had to evacuate soon returned to their villages. Most residents from regions such as Bingöl and Diyarbakır returned home but not the residents of Dersim. Dersim lost its language. This cultural crumbling had an impact not only on the language but also on the faith. The Zazas, who were forced to leave their places of worship ('ziyaret', etc.) behind showed a tendency to return to their own culture even after years of living far away from it.

Although there was intense political migration to Europe after the 1980 coup, the basic elements of language and culture remained. The fact that the language of the opposition working to change the political system was Turkish and that these structures were organized in all areas of Dersim further accelerated the disintegration of Zazaki. Of course, one of the factors contributing to the decline of the Zaza Language is globalization. The fact that people prefer learning lingua francas like English instead of learning their mother tongue hurts the languages without official status.

After the 1994 events, language studies in Europe, which started in the 1980s, gained momentum. Books and magazines began to be published in Zaza Language. Zazaki was featured in Kurdish-language media outlets. Zazaki use in the written sphere began to rise while its usage as an everyday language dropped. What's saddening is that Zazaki started to

be perceived as a political tool. Religious groups, leftist organizations and Kurdish movements took an interest in Zazaki and began to publish in it. Although most of these publications were short-lived, there are some that continue. The state's alleviation of language bans began the peace process.

In 2012, opportunities to do research on minority languages emerged. Department of Zaza Language and Literature were opened at Munzur and Bingöl Universities. Although the opening of these departments cultivated a very positive response, they did not meet the expectations. Without the prospect of conventional success and job opportunities, the interest towards these departments began to fall. It was no different for the 'Living Languages and Dialects' programme that was introduced as an elective course in the secondary school curriculum around the same time.

Revitalization efforts

In the past, many languages died without people even noticing their death while today, there is a growing understanding that languages should be preserved. There are countries that realize that minority languages are the most important element of cultural heritage and implement new policies to protect them (Arslan 2019). Even languages that are on the brink of extinction are included in educational programs to sustain them. Some forgotten languages have been revived in preschools that employ the immersion method. Breton in France and Sorpic in Germany are typical examples of this. With globalization, languages without official status face extinction. Although bilingual education and multilingual education systems are helpful, they are not, by themselves, sufficient to sustain a language, especially those in countries that are home to a lot

of languages. “The fact that while the number of mother tongues is in the thousands and that the number of official languages is only slightly higher than the number of existing countries shows that the issue of the language of education is very serious, not only for Turkey but for all countries” (İnceoğlu 2015:153). Languages that are not languages of education are in danger across the world. To keep languages alive, it is very important that we include them in the field of education. The use of modern techniques in education makes great contributions to not only endangered languages but to all languages of the world. It is also essential that language materials are made available digitally for sustainable education. Digitized language materials will retain parts of a language even if no one is speaking it anymore. Plus, new technologies generate new advancements and models in education. One of the most important of these technologies is language collections.

Whether or not Zazaki is used as an everyday language depends on local factors. The prolonging of the process of returning people to their villages after the 1994 evacuations caused people to be even more estranged from their language. While minority languages in rural areas thrive, languages of those who migrated to the cities or abroad falters. The transmission of the native language to the next generation, which is the most important factor for the survival of the language, has been interrupted. Together with many other factors, the emergence of an almost entirely global economic system has led to changes in production. When the economic environment on which the language is fundamentally dependent changes, some languages may be unable to adapt. Zazaki was weakened in this process and its speech domain has narrowed. Although it has begun its journey to become a language of education thanks to the increase of academic studies done on it in recent years, it has declined as language of everyday communication.

Although efforts to raise awareness for language permanence have increased in recent years, the speech domains of many minority languages continue to diminish. The interest in elective Zazaki courses given in secondary school fluctuates. In urban Tunceli, the Zazaki course were taken as an elective course by 4 classes in the 2021/22 academic year. In the 2022/23 academic year, in less than a year, it was taken by 16 classes. Zazaki courses are offered in many associations abroad, especially in Germany. In some states of Germany, Zazaki is offered in public schools as an elective course. Zazaki courses are taught regularly in Duisburg and Berlin. Unfortunately, in other cities, these courses cannot be offered due to a lack of teacher candidates that meet the requirements. In Cologne, a job ad was posted twice in 2022, but to no avail. In October 2022, the Zazaki teacher advertisement was posted for the 3rd time. The low interest in the Zaza language, especially in the Dersim region, is attributed to the reasons below (Arslan 2018:106-109):

1. Fear rooted in trauma from the past,
2. Classification of minority languages in hierarchically lower posi tions compared to the official language Turkish,
3. The economic and social power of the official language,
4. Insufficient teaching staff,
5. Failure to grasp the importance of one's mother tongue.

Suggestions

It is obvious that the issues surrounding minorities in Turkey, which were made into insurmountable problems throughout the history of the

Republic, will take time to be addressed. Many minority communities, who endured countless attempts of being stripped of their diverse identities, have managed to protect their heritage. This assimilation attempts have been somewhat slowed down by the "solution process" that has recently emerged. With the effect of globalization, the process of minority assimilation continues at a rapid pace. The reason the Solution Process has not been successful is because it lacks a strong foundation. Although this process focused mainly on the Kurdish issue, it involved all minorities in the country. Turkey needs to take even greater steps with realistic projects to achieve social peace within itself (Arslan 2018:111-112).

In Arslan (2018), where the issues surrounding mother tongues are discussed in detail, the following suggestions are listed for minority languages, which are the most important part of a country's historical heritage.

Constitutional security

Minority languages, which are the most important component of Turkey's cultural wealth, must be constitutionally protected. This is crucial to their survival. 'In addition, it would be beneficial to include in the new Constitution a statement like the one in Article 75/1 of the French Constitution "Regional languages are part of the shared heritage of France"' (İnceoğlu 2013:163). Unless the necessary constitutional arrangements for a strong future are made, this gangrenous problem will always stand as an obstacle to Turkey's advancement.

Learning about and getting to know each other

Zumini nas bıkerê ke zumini ra has bıkerê 'Know one another so that

you may love one another'. As can be seen in the idiom, the words *nas* 'know' and *has* 'love' are phonetically very similar. The first condition for loving each other is to know each other. Prejudices against each other on both an individual level and a societal level disappears when we make the effort to get to know one another. Education is key in learning about each other. A lesson may be added to the school curriculum along the lines of getting to know each other and ourselves. In this course, all minorities living in Turkey should be presented in an unprejudiced manner enabling children to learn about cultures that are different from their own from a young age. The basis of being one and of being whole, is to learn to know each other and to respect each other.

Multilingual education

Especially in state schools, bilingual or multilingual education should be offered in regions where minority languages are spoken. In cities such as Tunceli, Bingöl, Elazığ, Diyarbakır, Erzincan, where the first language of the majority is Zazaki, bilingual education (Turkish and Zazaki) can be offered. In fact, multilingualism should be added to the curriculum. Children should be enabled and encouraged to use and learn their mother tongue and the official language, as well as other languages. The proverb 'A language is a person' means that every language carries within itself the culture, the ways of knowing and the life of a person. One of the countries that embody the message of this proverb is Austria. There are 24 languages in the mother tongue education programme offered to foreigners in Austria and Zazaki is among them. Zazaki lessons have also begun to be offered in numerous states of Germany. The European Countries that provide these opportunities to Zaza people who reside there presents a great model which, if

adapted to Turkey, would make a great contribution to the country's social peace.

Academic institutions

Academic institutions established for minority languages should carry out research for their respective languages just as the Turkish Language Association does for Turkish. Zaza Language Institute should be officially established and academic language studies on Zazaki should be conducted. These institutes should operate within a university as well as being able to conduct their research independently. Finally, a University of Anatolian Languages in Turkey, which provides education on languages of Turkey, should be established.

Broadcasting institutions

Official broadcasting institutions airing in Zazaki should be established urgently and support efforts in education.

References

Arslan, İ. (2016). Verbfunktionalität und Ergativität in der Zaza Sprache. PhD Dissertation, University of Dusseldorf.

Arslan, İ. (2017). "Zaza dilindeki ergatif sistemin tarihi gelişimi." *Munzur Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 4(8), 63-87.

Arslan, İ. (2019). "Anadilde eğitim ve Zaza Dili." In M. Özcan & H. Çağlayan (eds.), *Tarihsel ve sosyolojik gelişimi ile Zazaca,* 93-114. Tunceli: Kalan.

Arslan, İ. (2018). "Zonê Zazaki Sero." In D. Kose (ed.), *Innovative approaches in philology,* 87-102. Ankara: Gece. https://www.gecekitapligi.com/Webkont-

rol/uploads/Fck/Innovative_Approaches_in_Philology.pdf (Last Accessed: 01 September 2023).

Erdem, M. (2014). "Soğdca, Türkçedeki Soğdca kelimeler ve bunların Türkçeye uyumları." *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Türkoloji Dergisi* 21(1), 65-90.

İnceoğlu, S. (2013). "Eğitimde anadilin yeri: uluslararasi belgeler ve yeni anayasa." *Marmara Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Makale Kolleksiyonu* (422).

Karabeyeser, A. (2021). Zazaki dı Bestoği (Conjunctions in Zazaki). PhD Dissertation, Bingöl University.

Pirejko, L. A. (1979). "On the genesis of the ergative construction in Indo-Iranian." *Plank* 1979, 481-489.

Paul, L. (1998). Zazaki. *Grammatik und Versuch einer Dialektologie*. Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert Verlag.

Selcan, Z. (n.d.) Zaza Dilinin Gelişimi. http://zilfiselcan.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ ZazaDilininGelisimi_tr2.pdf (Last Accessed: 01 September 2023).

Selcan, Z. (1998). *Grammatik der Zaza-Sprache: Nord-Dialekt* (Dersim-Dialekt). Berlin: Wissenschaft & Technik.

Varol, M. (2015). "UNESCO'nun dil raporlarına göre Zazaca'nın durumu ve geleceği." *Journal of Turkish Studies* 10(2), 997-1006. DOI:10.7827/TurkishStudies.7825.

Zeytinli, M. (2012). Zorunlu Göçler ve Türkiye'de Dersim 1938 Örneği. PhD Dissertation. İstanbul University.