

can still be done about that. I would say even when there are no more speakers of child-bearing age, when there are no more fluent speakers, something can still be done, but I doubt whether a full-page ad in *The New York Times* is exactly what to do at any particular time.

Let us turn our attention to different kinds of things that could be tried. Some of the things that could be tried, some of the things that should be avoided. For example, do not start too high. That is *The New York Times* start. Do not start there. Do not start too far away, if you are interested in the mother tongue being self-sustaining. Do not start too far away from things that have to do with home, family, and community on an inter-generational basis. That is where a mother tongue or vernacular is handed on. Particularly do not start too far away if you are weak and your language is about to crumble because it might crumble in another generation while you were paying attention to full page ads in *The New York Times*.

When Hebrew was being revived — a very unlikely success story — it had not been spoken in two thousand years, and those who knew the language best were opposed to its vernacular use. It was revived through terminologies, first by working out terminologies for carpentry and for kindergarten. Very close to what you need to have for every day, what adults needed every day and what teachers needed every day with those new children who were going to be the first children to be given the language very early, but not by their parents because their parents did not speak it. Rather by the few teachers who had learned to speak it. They were the ones to whom the children were entrusted. Children did not live with their parents. They lived in the children's home in a kibbutz with

those teachers, the few teachers who had forced themselves to learn how to speak it, not naturally but fluently. They needed a vocabulary for kindergarten, and the parents needed a vocabulary for carpentry. So, start low. Start exactly where the mother tongue starts and try to aim at that. Even the school can help you aim at that. Another bit of advice is, do not concentrate along institutional lines. Most languages are not institutional, but informal and spontaneous. That is where language lives. Children live; they play; they laugh; they fall; they argue; they jump; they want; they scream.

When the illegal Basque schools were working under the Franco regime, they became underground schools. It was prohibited to speak Basque in pub-

lic because the Basques had resisted Franco, the Fascist dictator, and had resisted him bitterly until the end. Franco got even with them. They were arrested; they were punished; they were killed; they were shot; and their language was outlawed and was laughed off the stage as vulgar, barbarous, barbaric, uncouth, and animalistic. So they had to run primary schools and pre-schools centered around resistance. They provided nursery and child care when you started school, and they provided health care for people who were afraid to visit the doctor. Because of their Basque nationalist association, doctors were afraid to treat them.

They did not institutionalizing Basque on a narrow basis. Quite the contrary, the school was a haven in the society, an underground parallel society. The schools were creating their own cultural space. Creating cultural space is very important for a language if it is to become competitive within its own culture.

I remember when the psychologist John MacNamara told a story about having studied Irish all his childhood in school. He was scolded one day by the lady who ran a candy store. He had just bought the candy from her and began talking English to his sister. "You have learned Irish all your life. How come you're speaking English? You should be talking Irish to your little sister." Later, out on the street, the sister asked him, "Is Irish really for talking?" That really did happen. It had not occurred to them that Irish was for talking. It was a school subject like geography and arithmetic. How many people go down the street talking geography or arithmetic? So a real — not institutional — social space has to be created for the language. And in the revivalist movement that Irish went through, they tried to create that space. A young adult community, a sports community, a language community for young people. All-Irish, mainly Irish, and partly Irish schools were recognized by the government, but not really very sympathetically recognized.

It was a kind of tokenism. The school has to go beyond the tokenism. We must know enough to beware of tokenism. The Romansh and Friulians have an exchange program between their respective districts, all over those little valleys where they may live just a couple of miles apart but will never see each other. They send tapes to each other, so they are communicating. They send games to each other and not only that, they send games and tapes and videos home from school as family home work.

Something for the family to do together, and the whole family listens to the tapes. They stay in touch that way with folks that they are not going to see as flesh and blood, talking to them and playing with them.

Creating community is the hardest part of stabilizing a language. Lack of full success is acceptable, and full successes are rare. Now that Hebrew is so well-established and vernacularized, the minister of education of Israel recently tried to open some English schools. He was attacked and raked over the coals for his efforts because some advocates of Hebrew still feel insecure. So the sense that the Hebrew language is safe has still not arrived in Israel, even though objectively it is safe. Emotional safety comes a lot later. The Franco-Canadians in Quebec are also not sure they are successful yet. They think they are suffering. The Catalans are not sure they are successful. A culture has been traumatized a long time, but it came back. So even in your lack of full success, dedicated language workers, whether they be Maoris, Bretons, or whatever, become committed to each other and therefore they are members of the community of belief.

In conclusion I want to tell you something about my grandchildren. My wife engages in laptop publishing. She publishes in the Yiddish language for our grandchildren. But let me tell you, the true lap top here is my lap and the laps of the children's mother and father. That is a bond with the language that will stay with them after we are long gone. That is the lap top of language. And if you want that language revived, you have to use your lap also with your children or your grandchildren or somebody else's children or grandchildren. Adopt a grandchild. Adopt the grandparents. It is your lap that is part of the link to sanctity, the link to kinship, and the link to purpose. Now, in our affluent American society it turns out that one of my grandchildren already has an e-mail account. He writes messages to me to give to one of his cousins on the other coast. I go from coast to coast throughout the year because I have grandchildren on each coast. I have got to be sure that they sit on my lap during the year. So he writes to his cousin on the other coast on e-mail. He has to transliterate the Yiddish language into Roman characters because e-mail only works in Roman characters, and he makes a lot of mistakes in that. But it is recognizable. He is only seven, and the last e-mail I received was a little note saying, "I have got a little

mechanical bird. It speaks Yiddish. Ha, ha. That's a joke."

So there are family building, there are culture building, and there are intimacy building prerequisites for language fostering, things that you have to do because no school is going to do them. However, the school can put that on the agenda of what has to be done. The school has intellectuals in it. The school has a building, a budget, a time, and a place. Now it has to put the life of the language, not just the literacy of the language, not just the grammar of the language, not just the lexicon of the language, but the life of the language in the home and the community on its agenda if the language is going to be passed along.

Reversing language shift is a research field, it is an applied field, it is a cultural values field, it has new horizons, there are new things to do, things that are, if you like, differently focused than the ordinary school has been. And reversing language shift asks, "What happens with the mother tongue before school, in school, out of school, and after school?" so that it can be passed on from one generation to another. I started with a good question and I am ending with a good question and that is the question. "What are you going to do with the mother tongue before school, in school, out of school, and after school?"

Because that determines its fate, whether it is going to become self-renewing. That is my question for you, no joke!



Crickets: The Akha collect these crickets and sell them to the low lands two crickets for one baht.

Doi Chang Coffee Festival

Doi Chang Akha village has taken care to planting its coffee for several years, an Akha led effort and it has finally paid off. Coffee projects for the hill tribe generally withered on the vine after foreign funding to the Thai government stopped.

This year coffee at Doi Chang paid off big with many families benefitting from their crops.

So much was the jubilation that the headman Ah Jah put together Doi Chang's first Coffee Festival.

An all "Traditional Akha for Akha" event, no one made insults and no one told the "cute little token Akha girls" it was their turn to dance. Rather the Akha women danced all night long to a huge crowd of Akha from scores of villages who came to attend the party.

No missionaries showed up either, wondering why they hadn't succeeded in destroying all of traditional Akha culture.

Villages wanting to start coffee plantations only need visit Doi Chang Akha!





The Akha Nature Conservancy

The Akha have seldom been consulted about the care for the forest they live in or who would have access to it.

While forest and lands were destroyed, the forestry department came in with the idea that pine tree farming for profit would work, that nature is really no more than a park or farm where you plant trees in rows, yes, this will work for an eco system.

And plant pine trees they have. Their swath of death can be seen where ever they were planted. The large trees from the original forest were logged off by the Thai logging companies more than twenty years ago. Yet it is common to blame the hilltribe for all of this.

For these reasons the Akha see it in their self interest to head up their own nature conservation projects.

Coffee has become an integral part of this effort, along with varieties of tea.

Dance it up!

Ah Burh of Cheh Pah Kah puts on a show for the Doi Chang crowd.

The women below do a cross dance between bamboo poles on a wooden deck, beating out a cadence into the chill mountain air.





Akha Coffee

Akha coffee is best if planted from imported seeds. Otherwise the coffee can be gathered from established coffee farms when the beans sprout under the plants or by pulling up small plants. Many Akha have had to start their coffee plantations in this fashion. Plants or seeds can be placed in soil bags. Potting soil should contain topsoil, charred rice husk and raw rice husk to improve and keep

the soil soft. Bags without rice chaff will compact during the dry season and prevent almost all root growth, stunting the plants. Planted in rice chaff soil, the larger plants are big enough after the first year to plant out in the fields. Fields should be completely turned over by hand, small trees protected, the field should NOT be burned. Coffee plants should be planted no closer than a meter and a half.





Coffee plants for villagers makes a difference. Sparse funds can go a long way in an Akha village to keep families together. 500 plants, enough for a small family starter plantation only costs 1000 baht.





A store house and restroom go in at the coffee plantation. Below the women of Doi Chang head off for a day of picking coffee berries.





Ah Shurh, an Akha woman in Doi Chang village picks ripe red coffee berries to take back to the village. After arriving back to the village berries are run through a dehusker that takes the meat off the coffee beans and then they are rinsed in a water vat to remove all the last flesh.

After this cleaning the coffee beans still in their parchment layer, are laid out in the sun in any flat space that can be found and dried over a number of days.

When the drying process is done the beans are stored until they are scheduled to go to the dehusker in the village. When the dehusking is done, the beans are sorted, all the small and ununiform beans being removed, leaving only uniform full coffee beans which are then either sent to Doi Chang Coffee Company for roasting or are sold to Bangkok Brokers. This year was an especially good year for Doi Chang for which reason they had good cause to throw a Akha party, full with dancing.



Coffee beans are cleaned, dried and dehusked. After that sorting is done by hand to leave only the best beans for selling or roasting. Many Akha villages are now planting coffee after seeing the success here.



Sports

Bah Mah Hahn Football for the local villages was a big event lasting two days. Interrupted slightly by rain, the Pah Nmm teams successfully stomped the visiting Lahu and Lisu teams, leaving the Akha on top one more time. Girls and boys events.







Ah Burh Chauh

A popular girls game is played on an incline where girls toss a large black bean gathered from long pods in the tree tops. The bean is sent rolling down the hill with the intent of knocking over other beans that are carefully set up by the waiting girl below. Each girl gets two throws in a turn if the first one doesn't go all the way. The game is noisy and wild, up to ten girls playing a time, cheering and jeering while their friend's bean flies out of bounds or overshoots the target. Coming within close range the girls manipulate their last toss to knock down up to four of the beans in front of them. This is also one of the games of the year end festival called Gah Tauh Pah.

For collection the large beans can readily be found in Chiangmai for sale. The large beans polish beautifully in the hand, reminding one of flat chestnuts.



Tops and Projectiles

Gah Tauh Pah is the year end festival, usually held late December. Heavy wooden tops are carved and vigorously played against each other.





Akha Music Scene

Doi Chang Akha

Starting to work on their own band, the boys from Doi Chang found something to do with their extra coffee money. The group puts together a catchy Akha folk sound and hopefully we'll get to hear them at the next Coffee Festival.

The Singing Man

Ah Baw Gurh of Huuh Yoh Akha is a well known Akha singer. He knows many a traditional Akha ballad or can just make up a tune and the poetry to go with it as he goes along. A tiny man, he is more than glad to sing for an hour if you give him the chance, out in the field or sitting along side the fire in the hut at night, nothing but the glow of the flames and the twinkle in his eye. The plaintive songs of the Akha can be heard across the fields as they work, singing of lost love or poverty, the words aren't hard to figure out.



Akha Art

Ah Baw Pooh draws on scraps of paper, favors birds. A truck driver from Pah Nmm Akha village in Ampur Mae Faluang, his art work is visible in numerous huts to which he visits.

