

Cross Linguistic Study of the New Creation Story / Man on Day Three in Genesis

Languages 401 through 474
The Indigenous and Island List

Read against 7 Days to Perfection, banner revision of September 7, 2026

Three studies for each language · the last volume

Why this list exists

And why it comes last rather than not at all.

Ranking languages by how many people speak them puts almost nothing from the Americas, Aboriginal Australia or the Pacific in the top four hundred. Samoan scraped in. Everything else fell below the line.

That is a fact about population, not about what these languages hold. Several of them carry the fullest creation accounts found anywhere in this study, and some of them carry writing systems, calendars and navigational methods invented independently of the rest of the world.

So this list was made separately, and the languages on it are here for what they hold rather than for how many speak them. Sixteen of the ninety already appear in the volumes ranked by speakers; those are marked and cross-referenced rather than repeated.

The question this study is asking

What is God speaking — and do we have ears to hear?

7 Days to Perfection



Pleading the Cause of the Poor,
the Needy, the Fatherless...
TO WIN IT...

"Is that not what it means
to know Me?" says Yahuah



"In the whole land," declares the LORD,
"two-thirds of the 'fetuses'
will be struck down and perish;
yet one-third will be left in it.
This third I will put into the fire
I will refine them like silver
and test them like gold.
Zechariah 13:7-9 • present day



The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Do Not Lay a Hand on Him! The Mystery of God's Will: to End all Sacrifice & Offerings that Father be Glorified Again! Genesis 22:10-12

Jesus returns again as a Man, in a body prepared for Him in the fulness of the Book. Also as God the Maker, who by the power of His presence causes Old Heaven and Earth to pass away. **His Eternal Word & Name: Yashuah, exalted above the Heavens.**
The Master returns in the First Resurrection, in the Spirit of Prophecy, on the 3rd Day when the Hour of Judgment has come. He is **the Beginning** of the New Creation, and **the End** of the Old.
The Good Shepherd and Teacher returns as a thief, suddenly, unexpectedly robbing all claims of authority from those who throughout history have supposed themselves worthy to speak for God.
The Bridegroom is seeking a Bride from His side who rejoices seeing Him. One who is desiring to bring forth the generation not yet created, precious jewels of Zion, who inherit eternal life.
The Overcomer. The ONLY one found worthy. It is NOT GOOD that He be alone. — Revelation 12:11 **...and they overcame...** not loving their own souls even unto death.



01 DAY ONE

Light of the World

1 In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth.
2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.
3 And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.
4 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.
5 And God saw the light, that it was good.
6 And God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.
7 And the evening and the morning were the first day.

...we will no longer be infants, tossed back & forth by the waves & blown here & there by every wind of teaching & by the cunning & craftiness of people... speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ.

02 DAY TWO

Wisdom Above & Below

1 And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.
2 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.
3 And God called the firmament Heaven.
4 And the evening and the morning were the second day.



Looking for evidence for a God?
One whose existence is eternal & therefore being communicated with us beyond time & space?

The Little Scroll

Revelation 10 & 14:6-8 & 5:1-5...
Psalm 118:22-24 — Haggai 2:6-9

03 DAY THREE

Humility: the End of Pride
Old Creation Order Passes Away

1 And God said, Let the waters under the Heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.
2 And God called the Dry Land: Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas:



There was no one found worthy to open The Bible or even look inside. Not even anyone who claimed unbiased Science, Reason & Skepticism, nor Materialism & Atheism.

God set aside all arguments as proud, foolish & stupid, shaking up every claim of knowledge & authority throughout history. **Two unshakable things in His Word** — hidden in plain sight — **expose the blindness of proud institutions of men.** They have become worth less than nothing, for having despised the Day of small beginnings.



Great White Throne Lamb's Book of Life
Very Good Judgment
Most Names Expunged
God Justified & Glorified
Revelation 20:11-21:4



John wept & wept. The Little Scroll.
Mystery of God revealed. Knowledge passes away. Proud waves halt.
Must prophecy again.

03 THE MAN ON DAY 3

Making All Things New. **Rising** to Live Without Scars



3 This is the Genealogical Record of the Heavens and of the Earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the Earth and the Heavens,
4 And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew:
5 for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.
6 But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.
7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.
8 and God saw that it was good.
9 And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his

kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.
10 And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind.
11 And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.
12 And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden,
13 and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.
14 And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.
15 The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold;

16 And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone.
17 And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia.
18 And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates.
19 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it:
20 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:
21 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.
22 and God saw that it was good.
23 And the evening and the morning were the third day.

04 DAY FOUR

Solving for Not Good

1 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him an help meet for him.
2 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:
3 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.
4 And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.
5 And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth.
6 And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness:
7 And God saw that it was good.
8 And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

05 DAY FIVE

Restoring the Fish & Birds

1 And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, **2** and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.
3 And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, **4** and every winged fowl after his kind:
5 and God saw that it was good.
6 And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.
7 And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.



"Throw your net on the right side of the boat..." Even with 153 large fish, the net was not torn.
John 21:4-11

06 DAY SIX

Counting Mother AND Child 好 — **Valuing** Life AND Liberty — **The End of Child Sacrifice**

1 And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.
2 And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind:
3 and God saw that it was good.
4 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them:
5 and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.
6 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air; and to

every Beast of the field;
7 but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.
8 And God said, Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness:
9 and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.
10 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;
11 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.
12 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he

him; male and female created he them.
13 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.
15 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.
16 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.
[the child, at moment of conception; Malachi 2:15]
17 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

18 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.
19 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.
20 And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.
21 And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.



07 DAY SEVEN

Perfect Prince of Peace

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.
2 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made.
3 And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

Key findings across the ninety

Ten results, before the individual studies.

1 **The Hawaiian creation chant is itself a genealogy.**

The **Kumulipo** runs to some two thousand one hundred lines and is constructed as a line of descent. It begins in deep darkness, proceeds through paired beings of the sea and the land born in order, and ends in the ancestry of a living chief. A creation account whose form is a genealogical record.

2 **And it begins with the coral polyp.**

The first living thing named in the Kumulipo is **ko'a**, the coral. Then the grub, the sea cucumber, the sea urchin, each paired with a plant of the land born at the same time. The order runs from the simplest upward.

3 **The Māori hold that sky and earth were locked together until their children forced them apart.**

Ranginui and **Papatūānuku** lay clasped, and their children were held in darkness between them. Tāne pushed them apart with his legs, and light came in. Day 1 verse 6 divides the light from the darkness; Day 2 divides the waters from the waters.

4 **A man who could not read any script invented a complete writing system.**

Sequoyah worked for years and produced a Cherokee syllabary of eighty-six characters. Within a few years of 1821, Cherokee literacy was higher than that of the settlers around them, and a newspaper was being printed in it.

5 **Three peoples of the American southwest say the first people came up from below.**

Navajo, Hopi and Zuni all hold that people emerged upward through a series of worlds into this one. It is a different account from the clay, the plant and the bone, and it is shared across three unrelated languages in one region.

6 **Marshallese navigators mapped the sea in sticks.**

Charts of bound sticks and shells recorded how swells bend around islands. A navigator learned them ashore and then lay in the hull of the canoe to feel the pattern in his body. They found atolls beyond the horizon by the shape of the water.

7 Australian languages hold country in song, and the Dreaming is not the past.

Songlines record the making of the land and are sung in sequence along it, so a song is also a map. The time in which the making happened is not over and is not behind the speaker; it is held to be present and continuing.

8 Murrinh-Patha has one of the most complicated verbs ever described.

A single Murrinh-Patha verb can carry the subject, the object, the number, whether the participants are siblings, and a classifier from a set of thirty-five. Australian kinship systems require speakers to track relations English has no words for at all.

9 Rapa Nui has a script nobody has read.

Rongorongo survives on a few dozen wooden tablets from Easter Island. It appears to be writing and has never been deciphered, and everyone who could read it died in the slave raids and epidemics of the 1860s.

10 Two languages here were made by people who had been enslaved.

Garifuna grew among Africans who survived shipwreck and joined the Caribs of St Vincent, and it keeps men's and women's vocabulary from two different source languages. **Jamaican Patois** carries African grammar under English words, and its Bible appeared in 2012.

North America

Twenty-nine languages. Ten of them received studies in the volumes ranked by speakers and are cross-referenced here.

Already studied in the ranked volumes: Nahuatl (255), Q'eqchi' (317), K'iche' (332), Yucatec Maya (358), Mam (373), Tzeltal (377), Tzotzil (380), Kaqchikel (385), Mixtec (389), Zapotec (397). The Popol Vuh material stands behind all the Mayan entries.

Otomi

Speakers: about 300,000 · **Family:** Oto-Manguean · **Where:** central Mexico · **Bible:** partial, several varieties

One What the language holds

Otomi is tonal and is a cluster of varieties, several not intelligible with each other. It belongs to Oto-Manguean, a family found only in Mexico.

Two What the tradition holds

Otomi make paper by beating the inner bark of the fig or mulberry, the practice called **amate**, which predates the Spanish and continues. Figures are cut from the paper for healing and for the fields, and each cut figure is a particular spirit.

The Otomi were widely disparaged by their Nahua neighbours before the conquest, and their traditions were recorded less than those of the peoples who ruled.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 7 into verse 8, where a figure of a person is made and given life, meets a people who cut figures out of bark paper and hold them to act.

Totonac

Speakers: about 250,000 · **Family:** Totonacan · **Where:** Veracruz, Puebla · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Totonac forms its own small family with no established relatives. It has an elaborate set of verb prefixes for direction and location.

Two What the tradition holds

The **voladores** climb a pole some thirty metres high. Four men tie ropes to their waists and fall backwards, circling down head first while a fifth plays a flute and drum on the top. Each makes thirteen turns, and four times thirteen is fifty-two, the years of the Mesoamerican cycle.

It was performed to ask for rain in drought and is listed by UNESCO. A calendar danced in the air.

Vanilla comes from Totonac country, and the Totonac account explains its origin as a girl and a young man transformed.

Three At the seams

The crossing out of Day 4 verse 1 into verse 2, the lights for signs and for seasons and for years, meets a people who count the years by turning on a rope in the air.

Huastec

Speakers: about 200,000 · **Family:** Mayan · **Where:** San Luis Potosí, Veracruz · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Huastec is Mayan, separated from every other Mayan language by several hundred miles of non-Mayan territory. It split from the rest of the family earlier than any other branch, perhaps three thousand years ago.

A Mayan language whose speakers have been apart from the rest since before the classic Maya cities were built.

Two What the tradition holds

The Huastec kept their own tradition rather than the Popol Vuh material, being long separated. They are associated with the wind deity in Nahua accounts, and their region was known for cotton and for music.

The **huapango huasteco**, sung in falsetto with violin and two guitars, carries improvised verse.

Three At the seams

A Mayan people who have been separated from the rest of their family for three thousand years show what divergence does over that span, which is roughly the age of the text on the banner.

Navajo (Diné Bizaad)

Speakers: about 170,000 · **Family:** Na-Dené, Athabaskan · **Where:** Arizona, New Mexico, Utah · **Bible:** complete 1985

One What the language holds

Navajo is built on the verb. A single verb carries prefixes for who acts, on what, how, in what direction and in what manner, and the stem changes shape depending on the kind of object handled — a round thing, a long thing, a flexible thing, a load, a liquid. A speaker cannot say they gave something without saying what shape it was.

It is tonal, has four tones counting nasalised vowels, and its consonants include sounds that require distinctions English does not make.

It was used as an unbroken code in the Pacific in the Second World War because no outsider could learn it quickly enough.

Two What the tradition holds

The people came up from below

The **Diné Bahane'** tells of successive worlds beneath this one. The beings in each world spoiled it by their conduct and had to climb up into the next. From the first dark world to the second, to the third, to the fourth and into this one — the Glittering World — through a reed.

Changing Woman is found as an infant on a mountain, grows, and from her the Navajo clans come. She is the one who ages and becomes young again with the seasons.

The first man and first woman are present from the lower worlds rather than made in this one.

Hózhó is the Navajo word for the state in which things are as they should be: beauty, order, health and rightness in one word. The ceremonies exist to restore it, and the closing words of many of them say that it is restored in beauty, spoken four times.

The **hooghan** faces east to the sunrise, and its construction is itself governed by the account.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 7 into verse 8 meets a people whose first man and woman were not made here but came up.

The crossing at Day 6 verse 20, where God saw everything that he had made and behold it was very good, meets **hózhó**, which is the nearest single word in any language in these volumes to what that verdict says.

Purépecha

Speakers: about 140,000 · Family: none · Where: Michoacán, Mexico · Bible: partial

One What the language holds

Purépecha is an isolate — no demonstrated relatives anywhere, like Basque and Zuni. It sits in the middle of Mexico surrounded by

Oto-Manguean and Uto-Aztecan languages and belongs to neither.

Two What the tradition holds

The Purépecha empire was the one state the Aztecs never conquered, and it was the only Mesoamerican people working metal at scale — they had bronze.

The **Relación de Michoacán**, compiled in the 1540s, records their history and beliefs from their own elders and is one of the fullest such accounts from the Americas.

Curicaueri, the fire deity, was central, and the fire in the temple was not allowed to go out.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 1 verses 4 and 5, let there be light and God saw the light that it was good, meets a people whose central duty was keeping a fire alight.

Cree

Speakers: about 96,000 · **Family:** Algonquian · **Where:** across Canada · **Script:** Cree syllabics · **Bible:** from 1862

One What the language holds

A syllabary that spread by itself

Cree syllabics were developed in the 1840s, with the missionary James Evans credited and Cree speakers' own contribution increasingly recognised. Each character's orientation shows the vowel: the same shape turned four ways gives four syllables.

It spread from person to person faster than anyone taught it, because the system can be learned in a day once the principle is seen. It was carried north and east and adapted for Inuktitut, Ojibwe and others.

Cree sorts every noun as animate or inanimate, and the assignment is not obvious: stones are animate, and so are raspberries and kettles. The grammar makes a claim about what is alive.

Two What the tradition holds

Wisakedjak is the transformer, present at a flood after which the land is remade from a scrap of earth brought up from underwater by a diving animal — the earth-diver account found across northern North America.

Wahkohtowin is the Cree word for the state of being related: the whole web of kinship and obligation that a person stands in, including toward animals and the land.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 1, the waters gathered and the dry land appearing, meets a people whose account has the land brought up from under the water by a diving animal.

The crossing at Day 6 verses 4 to 7 meets a grammar that has already decided which creatures are alive.

Kalaallisut (Greenlandic)

Speakers: about 57,000 · **Family:** Eskimo-Aleut · **Where:** Greenland · **Bible:** from 1900

One What the language holds

Kalaallisut is polysynthetic: a single word can carry what English needs a sentence for, built by stacking suffixes, and there is in principle no limit to how long a word can be.

It is the only indigenous language of the Americas that is the sole official language of a country.

Two What the tradition holds

Sedna, or Sassuma Arnaq, the mother of the sea, lives below and holds the sea creatures. When people offend, she withholds them, and an angakkoq must travel down to comb her hair, which she cannot do herself, before the animals are released.

A tradition in which the food of a people is held by someone who must be reconciled.

The **qilaat** drum and the drum-dance contest settled disputes: two people sang at each other before the community, and the matter ended there.

Three At the seams

Day 5, where the waters bring forth abundantly and the first blessing falls on the creatures of the sea, meets a people for whom the sea's creatures are held by someone and released.

Ojibwe (Anishinaabemowin)

Speakers: about 50,000 · **Family:** Algonquian · **Where:** Canada and the United States, Great Lakes · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Ojibwe sorts nouns as animate or inanimate, as Cree does, and is built on the verb. Most Ojibwe words are verbs: what English calls a thing, Ojibwe often calls an ongoing action.

It is written in Latin script and in syllabics.

Two What the tradition holds

Bark scrolls that hold a migration

The **Midewiwin** kept birchbark scrolls incised with figures, which recorded the ceremonies and the account of the people's migration from the eastern sea to the Great Lakes, guided by a prophecy about the place where food grows on the water — wild rice.

The scrolls are a mnemonic record rather than an alphabet, and they were kept hidden through the periods when the ceremonies were banned.

The earth-diver account is held here too, with the muskrat bringing up the scrap of earth after the flood and the land growing on a turtle's back.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 1, the waters gathered and the dry land appearing, meets a people whose land was brought up from the bottom by an animal that nearly drowned doing it.

The crossing at Day 3 verse 2 into verse 3, into the genealogical record, meets a people whose scrolls carry a migration account.

Inuktitut

Speakers: about 40,000 · **Family:** Eskimo-Aleut · **Where:** Nunavut and northern Canada · **Script:** syllabics · **Bible:** complete 2012

One What the language holds

Inuktitut is polysynthetic, building long words from stacked suffixes. It is written in a syllabary adapted from the Cree one, and a complete Bible in it was finished in 2012 after some three decades of work by Inuit translators.

The much-repeated claim about words for snow is misleading in the way it is usually told, but the underlying point holds: a polysynthetic language can build a precise term for any condition of snow on the spot, and speakers do.

Two What the tradition holds

Sila is the air, the weather, the sky and a kind of intelligence pervading them, in one word. A person of good sense is said to have sila.

The **inuksuk**, a stone figure built on the tundra, marks a route, a cache or a place where something happened, and stands where there are no trees and no landmarks.

The Sedna account is shared with Greenland.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 1 verse 3, where the Spirit of God moves upon the face of the waters, meets a language in which the air and a kind of mind are the same word.

Western Apache

Speakers: about 13,000 · **Family:** Na-Dené, Athabaskan · **Where:** Arizona · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Western Apache is close to Navajo, with the same verb-centred structure and the same classificatory stems for the shape of what is handled.

Two What the tradition holds

Place names that carry teaching

Western Apache place names are descriptive sentences: water flows down on a succession of flat rocks, or coarse-textured rocks lie above in a compact cluster. Each names a place precisely enough to find it.

And each is attached to a story about something that happened there, usually about someone behaving badly and the consequence. To speak the name to someone is to remind them of the story, and it is done gently, as correction.

The elders describe it as the land doing the teaching, and say that the names are the trail the ancestors left.

Changing Woman and the emergence material are shared with the Navajo.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 6 verses 4 to 7, where the man gives names and the names stand, meets a people among whom a name holds a whole account and is used to teach with.

Tohono O'odham

Speakers: about 12,000 · **Family:** Uto-Aztecan · **Where:** Arizona and Sonora · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Tohono O'odham is Uto-Aztecan, a distant relative of Nahuatl. Its name means desert people.

Two What the tradition holds

The year begins with the ripening of the saguaro fruit in early summer. The fruit is knocked down with a long rib of the cactus, boiled to syrup, and fermented, and the drink is consumed at a ceremony to bring the rains. The rains follow within weeks.

The O'odham calendar sticks recorded years by notches and marks, each standing for one event, and a keeper could read the community's history from one.

I'toi, the elder brother, lives in a cave on Baboquivari and brought the people up from below.

Three At the seams

The crossing out of Day 4 verse 1 into verse 2, the lights for signs and for seasons, meets a people whose year begins when a particular fruit ripens and whose ceremony calls the rain.

A fourth people of the southwest whose first people came up from below.

Central Alaskan Yup'ik

Speakers: about 10,000 · **Family:** Eskimo-Aleut · **Where:** southwest Alaska · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Yup'ik is polysynthetic and is among the indigenous languages of Alaska still learned by children in some villages.

Two What the tradition holds

The **Nakaciuq**, the bladder festival, was kept at midwinter: the inflated bladders of the seals taken that year were kept, honoured, and then returned to the sea through a hole in the ice, because the animal's spirit was held to be in the bladder and would be born again if treated rightly.

A practice in which what is taken for food is returned so it may come back.

Yuuyaraq is the way of being a human being, the body of teaching about how to live rightly with people and with animals.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 6 verses 18 and 19, where the herb and the fruit are given for meat to people and to every beast, meets a people whose central rite returns what was taken.

Zuni

Speakers: about 9,500 · Family: none · Where: New Mexico · Bible: partial

One What the language holds

Zuni is an isolate. No relatives have been demonstrated anywhere, and proposals connecting it to other families have not held. Like Basque and Purépecha, it stands alone.

It is still spoken by most of the community, which is unusual among languages of this size in the United States.

Two What the tradition holds

The Zuni emergence account has the people coming up through four lower worlds into this one, led by the twin children of the Sun, and then travelling in search of the **Middle Place**, testing one site after another until they found where they were meant to be. Zuni Pueblo is that place.

A people whose account is a search for the centre, ended when it was found.

The Zuni calendar is set by a sun priest watching the sunrise against fixed points on the horizon.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 11, where the man is put into a particular place that had been prepared, meets a people whose account is about finding the one place they belonged.

The crossing out of Day 4 verse 1 into verse 2 meets a calendar read from where the sun comes up.

Choctaw

Speakers: about 9,000 · **Family:** Muskogean · **Where:** Oklahoma and Mississippi · **Bible:** from 1848

One What the language holds

Choctaw was written early and has a substantial nineteenth-century literature, including the Bible and newspapers. Choctaw speakers served as code talkers in the First World War, before the Navajo did in the Second.

Two What the tradition holds

Choctaw tradition holds **Nanih Waiya**, a mound in Mississippi, as the place the people came out of the earth — another emergence, in the southeast rather than the southwest.

In 1847, having walked the Trail of Tears sixteen years earlier, the Choctaw collected money and sent it to Ireland during the famine. The gift is remembered in both countries and was repaid in kind during the pandemic.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 7 into verse 8 meets a people who hold that they came out of the ground at a named mound they can still visit.

Hopi

Speakers: about 6,000 · **Family:** Uto-Aztecan · **Where:** Arizona · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Hopi was the subject of a famous claim that it has no way of expressing time, which turned out to be wrong — Hopi has tense-like marking and terms for periods. But the underlying observation survives in a weaker form: Hopi distinguishes what is manifest from what is still becoming, and grammatically prefers the latter for what English would put in the future.

The claim is worth knowing because it is still repeated, and because the correction matters more than the claim.

Two What the tradition holds

The Hopi emergence account has the people coming up through three previous worlds, each abandoned when its people went wrong, into this fourth one through a **sipapu**, an opening in the ground. The kiva floor has a small hole standing for it.

The **katsinam** come to the villages for half the year and return to the mountains for the other half, and the ceremonial calendar turns on their arriving and going.

Hopi farming is dry farming — corn grown in the desert with no irrigation, in a place that should not support it, using varieties bred to send roots very deep.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 10 into verse 11, the plants and the garden, meets a people who grow corn where corn should not grow.

A third people of the southwest whose account is an emergence upward.

Blackfoot

Speakers: about 5,000 · Family: Algonquian · Where: Montana and Alberta · Bible: partial

One What the language holds

Blackfoot is Algonquian but has diverged far from the rest of the family, to the point that the relationship was long doubted. It sorts nouns as animate or inanimate.

Two What the tradition holds

Napi, Old Man, shapes the land and the people and is also a fool in many of the accounts — the maker and the trickster are one figure.

The buffalo were the whole economy, and the buffalo jumps, where herds were driven over a cliff, were used for thousands of years. Head-Smashed-In in Alberta is listed by UNESCO.

The medicine wheels on the plains, rings of stone with spokes, are aligned to the summer solstice sunrise and to the rising of certain stars.

Three At the seams

The crossing out of Day 4 verse 1 into verse 2, the lights for signs and seasons, meets a people who laid out stone wheels on the ground aligned to the sunrise and the stars.

Mohawk (Kanien'kéha)

Speakers: about 3,500 · **Family:** Iroquoian · **Where:** New York, Ontario, Quebec · **Bible:** partial, from the 18th century

One What the language holds

Mohawk is polysynthetic, building long verbs that carry a whole clause. It has no labial consonants — no p, b, m, f — which is rare among the world's languages.

Two What the tradition holds

Sky Woman falls, and the land is built on a turtle

A woman falls from the sky world through a hole where a tree was uprooted. The water birds catch her and set her on a turtle's back. Animals dive for earth from the bottom; the muskrat brings up a little and dies doing it, and the earth spread on the turtle grows into the land.

Her daughter bears twins, and between them they shape what is good and what is difficult in the world.

The **Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen**, the words that come before all else, is spoken at the opening of every gathering: thanks given in turn to the people, the earth, the waters, the fish, the plants, the food plants, the medicine herbs, the animals, the trees, the birds, the winds, the thunders, the sun, the moon, the stars, the teachers and the Creator. Each is named and thanked before business begins.

That order — earth, waters, fish, plants, animals, birds, sun, moon, stars — is close to the order of the days.

Three At the seams

The whole banner is met by a people who open every meeting by thanking the created things in nearly the order the seven days make them.

The crossing at Day 3 verse 1, the dry land appearing, meets the earth brought up from the bottom by an animal that gave its life for it.

Lakota

Speakers: about 2,000 · Family: Siouan · Where: the Dakotas · Bible: partial

One What the language holds

Lakota has separate speech forms for men and women — certain sentence-ending particles differ, so a speaker's sex is marked in ordinary speech.

Mitákuye Oyás'ín — all my relations, or all are related. Spoken at the end of prayers, it names every living thing as kin.

Two What the tradition holds

White Buffalo Calf Woman brought the pipe and the ceremonies. The **Wiwányang Wačhípi**, the sun dance, is held in summer with fasting and with flesh offered.

The Black Hills are held as the place of origin, and Wind Cave as where the people came up from below — a fifth emergence account in this volume.

Lakota star knowledge maps the Black Hills onto constellations, so a journey on the ground mirrors a movement in the sky at the right season.

Three At the seams

The crossing out of Day 4 verse 1 into verse 2 meets a people whose sacred geography on the ground is matched to the sky and walked at the season the stars say.

Cherokee (Tsalagi)

Speakers: about 2,000 · **Family:** Iroquoian · **Where:** Oklahoma, North Carolina · **Script:** Cherokee syllabary · **Bible:** from 1860

One What the language holds

One man made a writing system from nothing

Sequoyah could not read English or any other script. He understood that marks could carry speech and set out to make marks for Cherokee, working at it for years while people mocked him for it.

He tried a symbol for every word, which failed. Then he broke the language into syllables and made a character for each — eighty-six in the end, some borrowed in shape from a Latin alphabet he could not read and given entirely different sounds.

He demonstrated it in 1821 by having his daughter read aloud a message he had not heard. The nation adopted it. Within a few years Cherokee literacy exceeded that of the settlers around them, and the **Cherokee Phoenix** was printing in it by 1828.

It is the clearest case anywhere of a complete writing system invented by one person from the bare idea that writing is possible.

Cherokee is Iroquoian, polysynthetic, with a verb that carries a great deal, and it distinguishes an inclusive from an exclusive we — so Day 6 verse 8 takes a position in Cherokee.

Two What the tradition holds

The Cherokee account has the earth hung from the sky vault by four cords, and a water beetle diving to bring up mud that spread and became the land — the earth-diver again.

The animals and plants were told to stay awake seven nights. Most failed. Those that stayed awake were given something: the

cedar, pine, spruce, holly and laurel keep their leaves, and the owl and panther see at night.

A seven-night watch, with what was given depending on who stayed awake.

Selu, the corn mother, and **Kanati**, the hunter, are the first couple, and corn came from Selu's body.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 1, the dry land appearing out of the water, meets a people whose land was brought up as mud by a diving beetle.

The seven days of the banner meet an account in which seven nights decided what each creature would be given.

Tlingit

Speakers: a few hundred fluent, mostly elders · **Family:** Na-Dené · **Where:** southeast Alaska, British Columbia, Yukon · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Tlingit is Na-Dené, a relative of Navajo and Apache at a great distance, and one of the languages at the centre of the proposal linking Na-Dené to Ket in Siberia. It has a very large consonant inventory, with ejectives and uvulars, and no labial sounds in its traditional form.

Its verbs mark whether an action is done once, repeatedly or habitually, and carry a system of classifiers that change with voice.

Two What the tradition holds

Raven steals the light

The world was dark. An old man kept the sun, the moon and the stars in boxes in his house. **Yéil**, Raven, made himself into a pine needle, was swallowed in a drink by the old man's daughter, and was born as her son.

The grandfather could refuse the child nothing. He was given the stars, and let them out through the smoke hole. Then the moon. Then, at last, the box with the daylight, and he took his raven form and flew out with it, and there was light.

Day 1 verses 4 and 5: Let there be light, and there was light, and God saw the light, that it was good.

At.óow are owned things: crests, songs, names and stories that belong to a clan, paid for with a life or a great deed, and shown at the memorial feast called the *ku.éex'*. A crest is not decoration; it is title.

Society is divided into two halves, Raven and Eagle, and a person marries into the other.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 1 verse 3 into verse 4 meets a people whose account has the light kept in a box until it was let out.

The crossing at Day 6 verse 11 into verse 12 meets a society of two halves that must marry across.

And if the Ket proposal holds, this language and one on a Siberian river were once the same speech.

South America

Twelve languages. Three received studies in the volumes ranked by speakers.

Already studied in the ranked volumes: Southern Quechua (127), Guarani (133), Aymara (229).
Quechua holds breath, life and rest in one word; Guarani holds that speech was unfolded before anything else; Aymara puts the past in front and the future behind.

Kichwa

Speakers: about 1 million · **Family:** Quechuan · **Where:** Ecuador, Colombia · **Bible:** from 1970s

One What the language holds

Kichwa is northern Quechua, distinct enough from the southern varieties to need separate translation. It marks the source of knowledge and distinguishes an inclusive from an exclusive we, so Day 6 verse 8 takes a position.

Two What the tradition holds

The Amazonian Kichwa of Ecuador hold that dreams are consulted before hunting and travelling, and that a shared morning telling of dreams sets what the household will do.

The **Inti Raymi** at the June solstice is kept in the highlands, and **Pachamama** receives the first of what is poured.

The **ayahuasca** traditions of the Amazonian communities are their own and are held by specialists.

Three At the seams

The crossing out of Day 4 verse 1 into verse 2 meets a people who keep the solstice.

The crossing at Day 6 verse 9 into verse 10, the deep sleep, meets a people who begin the day by telling what they dreamed.

Wayuu (Wayuunaiki)

Speakers: about 400,000 · **Family:** Arawakan · **Where:** Colombia and Venezuela · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Wayuunaiki is Arawakan, a family that once stretched from the Caribbean to the Amazon. It is the largest indigenous language of Colombia and Venezuela.

Two What the tradition holds

The Wayuu were never subdued by Spain. Their society is matrilineal, and the **pütschipü'ü**, the word-carrier, settles disputes between clans by going between them and negotiating compensation, usually in goats or in necklaces. UNESCO lists the office.

A society whose justice runs through a person whose whole function is to carry words between parties.

Wayuu women weave the **mochila**, and the patterns, the **kanás**, are named and are taught at the girls' seclusion.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 6 verse 15 into verse 16, where a man leaves his father and mother, meets a matrilineal people among whom a husband joins the wife's line.

Mapudungun

Speakers: about 250,000 · **Family:** Araucanian · **Where:** Chile and Argentina · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Mapudungun means the speech of the land. It is an isolate family with no demonstrated relatives, and it has a dual as well as a plural, so it can say exactly two. At Day 6 verse 12, male and female created them, Mapudungun has a form for two.

Its verbs mark the relation between speaker and listener directly: there is one form for I act on you and another for you act on me, built into the verb.

Two What the tradition holds

The Mapuche held the Spanish and then the Chilean state south of the Bío Bío for three hundred years, longer than any other people of the Americas resisted.

Ngen are the owners of places — of a particular spring, a particular hill — and permission is asked. The **machi**, usually a woman, mediates and heals, and climbs a carved step-trunk, the **rewe**, during ceremonies.

The **Ngillatun** is the great communal prayer, held over days to ask for the land's fertility.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 6 verse 11 into verse 12 meets a language with a form for exactly two.

The crossing at Day 3 verse 11, the man put into the garden to dress it and keep it, meets a people who ask a particular place's owner before using it.

Emberá

Speakers: about 100,000 · Family: Chocoan · Where: Colombia and Panama · Bible: partial

One What the language holds

Emberá belongs to the small Chocoan family of the Pacific rainforest, with no established wider relatives.

Two What the tradition holds

The Emberá hold **Karagabí** as the one who shaped people and taught them, and their accounts include a great tree that held all the world's water until it was felled and the rivers ran out of it.

A tree cut down that released the waters.

Jagua dye from the fruit is painted on the body in patterns that last some weeks, and the designs carry meaning and occasion.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 14 into verse 15, where a river went out of Eden and was parted into four heads, meets a people whose own account has all the rivers come out of a single tree.

Ticuna

Speakers: about 50,000 · **Family:** none established · **Where:** Brazil, Colombia, Peru · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Ticuna is an isolate or forms a tiny family with one other language, and it is the largest indigenous group of the Amazon basin by population. It is tonal, which is rare in Amazonia.

Two What the tradition holds

Ticuna tradition holds that the people were fished out of a stream by **Yoi**, who used a bait and pulled them from the water one at a time. Those he pulled out became the Ticuna and the neighbouring peoples.

The girls' initiation, the **Worecū**, involves the whole community over days and is the central ceremony.

Ticuna painting on bark cloth records the clans and their marks, and every person belongs to a clan named for a bird or a plant.

Three At the seams

Day 5, where the waters bring forth abundantly, meets a people whose own account has humanity pulled out of the water on a line.

Shipibo-Conibo

Speakers: about 30,000 · **Family:** Panoan · **Where:** Peruvian Amazon · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Shipibo is Panoan and is spoken along the Ucayali. It has an evidential system marking how the speaker knows.

Two What the tradition holds

A pattern that is also a song

The **kené** designs the Shipibo paint on cloth, pottery and skin are held to be visible forms of songs. A healer may look at a design and sing it, or hear a song and draw it.

The patterns are said to be seen in vision and then set down, and they are understood as the same thing as the melody rather than a picture of it.

Shipibo women make the designs; the singing is done by both.
UNESCO has recognised the tradition.

Three At the seams

A people for whom a pattern and a song are the same thing meet
a text whose claim is that two accounts laid together make one.

Nheengatu

Speakers: about 20,000 · **Family:** Tupian · **Where:** the upper Rio Negro, Brazil · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Nheengatu means the good speech. It descends from Tupinambá and was developed by Jesuit missionaries as a general language for the Amazon, then spread far beyond the peoples who originally spoke Tupi.

It was the main language of the Brazilian Amazon into the nineteenth century, and it is co-official in one municipality — the first indigenous language to hold such standing in Brazil.

Two What the tradition holds

Nheengatu carries what its speakers hold rather than a tradition of its own: the peoples of the upper Rio Negro have their own accounts, including the Desana and Tukano material of an anaconda canoe carrying the ancestors upriver, each emerging at their proper place.

Much Amazonian vocabulary in Portuguese and in English — jaguar, piranha, tapioca, açaí — came through Nheengatu.

Three At the seams

A language made to be shared between peoples who had no common tongue meets a text meant to reach every one of them.

Kaingang

Speakers: about 18,000 · Family: Macro-Jê · Where: southern Brazil · Bible: partial

One What the language holds

Kaingang is Macro-Jê, a family of the Brazilian interior quite separate from Tupian and Arawakan.

Two What the tradition holds

Everything is divided in two

Kaingang society is built on two halves, **Kamé** and **Kairu**, named for two brothers who came out of the ground. A person belongs to one, must marry into the other, and is buried by the other.

The division extends outward: animals, plants, weather and objects are each assigned to one half or the other. The world is sorted in two all the way down.

The Kamé marks are long — streaks and lines. The Kairu marks are round — spots and circles.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 6 verse 11 into verse 12, male and female created he them, meets a people whose entire order runs on two

halves that require each other and cannot marry within themselves.

Yanomami

Speakers: about 15,000 · Family: Yanomaman · Where: Brazil and Venezuela · Bible: partial

One What the language holds

Yanomaman is a small family with no demonstrated relatives. Its speakers were among the last large populations in the Americas to have sustained contact with outsiders, from the mid twentieth century.

Two What the tradition holds

Omama is the creator in Yanomami accounts, and the **xapiri**, the spirits, are called by shamans. **Davi Kopenawa**, a Yanomami shaman, set down an account of his people's cosmology in a book made with an anthropologist over many years, and it is among the few such statements made by a practitioner in his own terms and published as his own.

The Yanomami hold that the sky fell once before and could fall again, and that the shamans' work holds it up.

Illegal gold mining has brought disease and mercury into their land, and the population has suffered severely within the last decade.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 2, where the firmament is made and the waters above divided from those below, meets a people who hold that the sky is held up and has fallen before.

A people whose numbers are falling now meet a text that says be fruitful and multiply.

Aboriginal Australia

Ten languages, from a continent that held several hundred and now holds a few dozen still spoken by children.

Kriol

Speakers: about 20,000 · **Family:** English-based creole · **Where:** northern Australia · **Bible:** complete 2007

One What the language holds

Kriol took English words into a grammar shaped by Aboriginal languages. It is the first language of more Aboriginal people in the north than any traditional language, and it grew where people speaking many different languages were brought together on missions and stations.

The complete Kriol Bible of 2007 was the first full Bible in any Australian language, and it took nearly thirty years.

Two What the tradition holds

Kriol speakers hold whatever their own people hold — Kriol is the shared tongue, not the inheritance. Many are connected to country and to ceremony in languages they may no longer speak fluently.

The language itself carries the history of being brought together, which is what it was made by.

Three At the seams

The crossings are met in plain speech, which was much remarked on when the Bible appeared, because the familiar verses sound ordinary in it.

Yolŋu Matha

Speakers: about 5,000 · Family: Pama-Nyungan · Where: Arnhem Land · Bible: partial

One What the language holds

Everything belongs to one of two halves

Yolŋu society divides everything into **Dhuwa** and **Yirritja**. Every person, every clan, every stretch of country, every animal, plant, song, design and ceremony belongs to one or the other. A person must marry into the opposite half.

The two are not opposites but counterparts: neither is complete without the other, and ceremonies require both to be present.

Yolŋu Matha is a group of related varieties, and clan identity and language identity run together, so a person's language is part of what they inherit and hold rights in.

Two What the tradition holds

The **Djan'kawu** sisters travelled along the coast making the land, the water holes and the people, naming as they went. The **Wagilag** sisters' account is shared in ceremony.

Songs, designs and dances are property: a clan holds the right to a particular song and design, and these are evidence of who belongs to which country. In 1963 the Yolŋu sent a petition to the Australian parliament on bark, painted with the clan designs that showed their title.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 6 verse 11 into verse 12, male and female created he them, meets a people for whom everything that exists belongs to one of two halves and neither half is whole alone.

The crossing at Day 6 verses 4 to 7, the naming, meets a people whose land was made by sisters who named as they travelled, and whose names carry title.

Kalaw Lagaw Ya

Speakers: about 3,000 · **Family:** Pama-Nyungan · **Where:** western Torres Strait · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Kalaw Lagaw Ya is the Australian language of the Torres Strait, and it has borrowed heavily from the Papuan language of the eastern islands, so it sits at a meeting point between two continents' language families.

It has a dual, and a trial for three, as well as a plural — so it can say exactly two and exactly three.

Two What the tradition holds

Torres Strait Islanders are seafarers, and their tradition is of the sea and the reef rather than of the desert.

The **Coming of the Light** is kept every July, marking the arrival of missionaries on Erub in 1871. It is a public holiday in the islands and is celebrated with dance and re-enactment.

The 1992 Mabo decision, which overturned the legal fiction that Australia had belonged to no one, was brought by Torres Strait Islanders on the basis of their own continuous gardening and inheritance of land.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 1 verses 4 and 5, let there be light and God saw the light that it was good, is kept as a public festival by these islands under that name.

The crossing at Day 6 verse 11 into verse 12 meets a language with forms for exactly two and exactly three.

Pitjantjatjara

Speakers: about 3,000 · **Family:** Pama-Nyungan · **Where:** the Western Desert · **Bible:** New Testament 2002; more since

One What the language holds

Pitjantjatjara has a dual as well as a plural, and distinguishes an inclusive from an exclusive we — so Day 6 verse 8 takes a position and Day 6 verse 12 can say exactly two.

Its kinship terms are a full system: every person in the community stands in a named relation to every other, and the term used determines how they may speak and what they owe each other.

Two What the tradition holds

Tjukurpa

Tjukurpa is usually translated Dreaming, which is misleading. It is the account of how the country was made, the law that came with it, and the relationships it set — and it is not in the past. It is held to be present and continuing.

The features of the land are what the ancestral beings did, still there. Uluru's surface records events, and particular parts of it may only be spoken of by particular people.

Tjukurpa is sung, and the songs run in sequence along the routes the beings travelled, so singing the song in order is also travelling the country in order.

Some Tjukurpa is open and some is restricted by gender or by initiation, so a great deal is held and not published.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 2 into verse 3, into an account of how things came to be, meets a people whose own such account is law, map and song at once, and is not held to be over.

Warlpiri

Speakers: about 3,000 · Family: Pama-Nyungan · Where: Tanami Desert · Bible: partial

One What the language holds

Warlpiri has free word order to an extreme degree: the words of a sentence can come in almost any sequence because the endings carry the grammar. It has been much studied for that reason.

A sign language used by widows

Warlpiri has a full sign language, developed and used chiefly by women in mourning, who are under a speech ban for a period after a death that may last a year or more.

It is not a gesture system but a language with its own vocabulary and grammar, and it is used for everyday communication during the ban. Women who have been through it remain fluent.

Warlpiri kinship assigns every person to one of eight subsections, and that determines whom they may marry, what they call each other and what they owe.

Two What the tradition holds

The **Jukurrpa** holds the ancestral travels, and Warlpiri painting — which began on the ground in ochre and moved to canvas in the 1970s at Yuendumu — sets down those routes as seen from above.

Many of the paintings now in galleries are maps of country and records of law, made by people entitled to them.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 1 verse 3, where the Spirit moves before anything is said, meets a people among whom a whole language exists for the period when speech is forbidden.

Murrinh-Patha

Speakers: about 2,500 · **Family:** Southern Daly · **Where:** Wadeye, Northern Territory · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Among the most complex verbs ever described

A Murrinh-Patha verb carries the subject, the object, the number, the tense, and one of thirty-five classifiers that categorise the kind of action. It also marks whether the two people involved are siblings, which almost no other language does grammatically.

A single word can mean what English needs a full clause for, and speakers produce them without effort.

It is one of the few Australian languages still being learned by children, and it is not closely related to the Pama-Nyungan languages that cover most of the continent.

Two What the tradition holds

Wadeye holds several language groups together in one town, a result of mission settlement, and ceremony is maintained across them.

The **Lirrga** and **Wangga** song traditions are performed with didjeridu and clapsticks, composed by named songmen, and new songs are still made.

Three At the seams

A language that marks whether two people are siblings meets Day 6 verse 13, where the man says this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh — a statement about exactly that kind of relation.

Arrernte

Speakers: about 2,000 · **Family:** Pama-Nyungan · **Where:** Central Australia, around Alice Springs · **Bible:** partial, from 1890s

One What the language holds

Arrernte has an unusual sound system, with a large set of consonants distinguished by where the tongue sits and whether the lips are rounded. Its syllable structure is analysed as running vowel-first, which is rare.

Arrernte was one of the first Australian languages recorded in depth, by Lutheran missionaries at Hermannsburg from the 1870s, and by Spencer and Gillen — whose work was read by Durkheim and Freud and shaped European theories of religion.

Two What the tradition holds

The **Altyerre** holds the ancestral beings' travels and the law. The word was translated as Dreamtime by early recorders and Arrernte speakers have objected that the translation misses what it means.

Albert Namatjira, an Arrernte man, painted the country in watercolour in a European technique and became the most famous Australian painter of his generation while still being denied citizenship in his own country for most of his life.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 2 into verse 3, into an account of how things came to be, meets the language whose own such account was carried to Europe and used to build theories about what religion is.

Alyawarre

Speakers: about 2,000 · Family: Pama-Nyungan · Where: Central Australia · Bible: partial

One What the language holds

Alyawarre is close to Arrernte and shares its sound system. It has a dual and an inclusive-exclusive distinction, so Day 6 verse 8 and verse 12 both take positions.

Two What the tradition holds

Alyawarre country is desert, and the tradition is of water — the soakages and rock holes, where they are, and who may use them. That knowledge is held in song and passed to those entitled.

Women's ceremony, **awelye**, involves painting the body with designs held by particular women for particular country, and singing through the night.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 1 into verse 2, the waters gathered together into one place, meets a desert people whose most valuable knowledge is where the water is.

Tiwi

Speakers: about 2,000 · Family: none · Where: Bathurst and Melville Islands · Bible: partial

One What the language holds

Tiwi is a language isolate — not related to the Pama-Nyungan languages of the mainland or to anything else. The islands are twenty-five kilometres off the coast, and that was enough.

Old Tiwi was polysynthetic with extremely long verbs; the Tiwi spoken by younger people is grammatically much simpler, and the two are studied as a case of rapid change within living memory.

Two What the tradition holds

The **Pukumani** burial poles are carved from ironwood and painted, and set around a grave some months after a death. They are made for the occasion and then left to weather away.

The **Kulama** ceremony is held at the end of the wet season, when a particular yam is prepared — it is poisonous raw and must be processed — and new songs are composed and sung. Each man composes his own each year.

A ceremony whose content is new every time it is held.

Three At the seams

The crossing out of Day 4 verse 1 into verse 2, the lights for signs and for seasons, meets a people whose chief ceremony comes at the turn of the season and requires new songs each year.

Anindilyakwa

Speakers: about 1,500 · **Family:** Gunwinyguan · **Where:** Groote Eylandt · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Anindilyakwa sorts every noun into one of five classes and marks the class on everything that agrees with it. Its words are long and its verbs carry a great deal.

It is one of the few Australian languages still learned by all the children in its community.

Two What the tradition holds

A calendar of six seasons

The Anindilyakwa year has six named seasons, read from the wind, the flowering of particular plants, and the movement of stars and of animals. Each says what may be hunted and gathered and what must be left.

The people of Groote Eylandt also had long contact with Makassan traders from Sulawesi, who came annually on the monsoon for sea cucumber from at least the 1700s. Makassan words entered the language, and rock art records the praus.

Day 4 verse 2 gives the lights for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.

Three At the seams

The crossing out of Day 4 verse 1 into verse 2 meets a people running a six-season calendar read from wind, flower and star.

And the traders who came to them each year spoke
Makassarese, whose own La Galigo material appears earlier in these volumes.

Polynesia

Eleven languages. Samoan received its study in the ranked volumes.

Already studied in the ranked volumes: Samoan (390), which holds Tagaloa drawing the islands up out of the water, and a grammatical form for exactly two.

Tongan

Speakers: about 190,000 · **Family:** Austronesian, Polynesian · **Where:** Tonga · **Bible:** 1862

One What the language holds

Tongan has a dual and a plural and distinguishes inclusive from exclusive we, so Day 6 verse 8 and verse 12 both take positions.

It keeps three levels of vocabulary: one for the king, one for chiefs and one for everyone else, with different words for the same acts. A speaker must choose the level before saying anything about anyone.

Two What the tradition holds

Tonga was never colonised and keeps its monarchy. **Tangaloa** fished up the islands, and the first Tu'i Tonga is held to be descended from him.

The **Ha'amonga 'a Maui**, a coral trilithon raised around 1200, is aligned to the solstice sunrise.

Faka'apa'apa, respect, and the obligations between brother and sister — in which a sister ranks above her brother and he owes her deference — organise the family.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 1, the dry land appearing, meets a people whose islands were fished up out of the sea.

The crossing out of Day 4 verse 1 into verse 2 meets a stone gate aligned to the solstice.

Māori (Te Reo Māori)

Speakers: about 190,000 · **Family:** Austronesian, Polynesian · **Where:** New Zealand · **Bible:** complete 1868

One What the language holds

Māori has a dual and distinguishes inclusive from exclusive we, so Day 6 verse 8 and verse 12 both take positions.

Whakapapa — genealogy, and also the framework by which everything is understood. Mountains, rivers, canoes, winds and people all have whakapapa, and to explain a thing is to say what it descends from.

A person introduces themselves by naming their mountain, their river, their canoe and their ancestors before their own name. The genealogy comes first and the individual last.

Two What the tradition holds

The sky and the earth are pulled apart

Ranginui, the sky father, and **Papatūānuku**, the earth mother, lay clasped together, and their children were held between them in the dark, unable to stand or move.

The children argued about what to do. Tūmataurangi said kill them. Tāne said separate them. They tried in turn and failed, and then **Tāne** lay on his back and pushed with his legs, and the sky was forced up and away.

Light came into the world between them. Rangi's grief is the rain and the dew; Papa's is the mist rising.

Then Tāne formed a woman from the earth at Kurawaka and breathed into her nostrils, and she was **Hineahuone**, the earth-formed woman.

Before all of it, in the recitations, is **Te Kore**, the nothing, and then **Te Pō**, the long night, counted through many stages before anything is.

Matariki, the Pleiades, rises in midwinter and marks the Māori new year. It is now a public holiday in New Zealand — the only national holiday anywhere that is set by that cluster of stars.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 1 verse 2 into verses 4 and 6, the darkness on the face of the deep and then the light divided from it, meets a people whose account begins in nothing and a long night and turns on light entering when two were forced apart.

The crossing at Day 3 verse 7 into verse 8 meets Hineahuone, formed from the earth and given breath in the nostrils.

The crossing at Day 3 verse 2 into verse 3, into the genealogical record, meets a people for whom genealogy is how everything is explained and how a person says who they are.

Tahitian

Speakers: about 68,000 · **Family:** Austronesian, Polynesian · **Where:** French Polynesia · **Bible:** 1838

One What the language holds

Tahitian has a dual and an inclusive-exclusive distinction. It has one of the smallest consonant inventories of any language — around nine — so words are built largely of vowels.

Two What the tradition holds

Ta'aroa existed alone in a shell in the darkness, turning. He broke it, and made the sky from one half and the ground from the other, and then drew the world out of himself — his flesh the earth, his bones the mountains, his feathers the trees.

A creator who was alone before anything, and who used his own body.

The **marae**, stone courts, held the ceremonies, and Taputapuātea on Raiātea was the centre from which voyaging canoes departed across the eastern Pacific. UNESCO lists it.

Three At the seams

The crossing out of Day 4 verse 1, not good to be alone, meets an account in which the creator was alone in a shell before there was anything at all.

The crossing at Day 1 verse 1 meets a sky and a ground made from the two halves of one broken shell.

Hawaiian (‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i)

Speakers: about 24,000 · Family: Austronesian, Polynesian · Where: Hawaii · Bible: 1839

One What the language holds

Hawaiian has eight consonants and five vowels, the smallest sound inventory of any language in these volumes. It has a dual and an inclusive-exclusive distinction, so Day 6 verse 8 and verse 12 both take positions.

It was banned as a medium of instruction in 1896 and had fallen to a few hundred native speakers by the 1980s. Immersion preschools, the **pūnana leo**, were started in 1983, and there are now children raised in it again.

Two What the tradition holds

A creation chant that is a genealogy

The **Kumulipo** runs to some two thousand one hundred lines. Its name means the beginning in deep darkness. It was composed for a chief and chanted to establish his descent, and it was written down in the nineteenth century.

It opens at the time when the earth turned hot and the heavens turned, when the sun was darkened and the moon shone faint. Then things are born, in order, each named with a partner.

The first living thing born is **ko'a**, the coral polyp. Then the grub, the sea cucumber, the sea urchin, the starfish, the cowry, the limpet — and with each sea creature a plant of the land is born at the same moment, paired with it.

The chant proceeds upward through the fishes, the crawling things, the flying things, the pig, the dog, the rat, and finally the human beings — and then continues as the genealogy of a living family.

A creation account whose form is a line of descent, running from the simplest thing in the dark sea to the person the chant was made for.

The chant is divided into sixteen **wā**, periods, the first eight in darkness and the last eight in light. The turn from darkness to light comes in the middle.

Aloha 'āina, love of the land, is the phrase that carries the political and the religious together, and the land is spoken of as an older sibling who feeds the younger.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 2 into verse 3, out of the seven-day account and into the genealogical record of the heavens and of the earth, is the crossing this language has the most to say about. Its own creation account is a genealogical record and is nothing else.

The crossing at Day 5, the waters bringing forth abundantly and the fowl above, meets a chant that names the sea creatures and the land plants born in pairs.

The crossing at Day 1 verse 2 into verse 4, darkness and then light, meets a chant built in halves with the turn from dark to light at its centre.

Wallisian

Speakers: about 10,000 · **Family:** Austronesian, Polynesian · **Where:** Wallis and Futuna · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Wallisian is close to Tongan and has a dual and an inclusive–exclusive distinction. More Wallisians live in New Caledonia than on Wallis itself.

Two What the tradition holds

Wallis retains three customary kingdoms alongside the French administration, and the **Lavelua** is still installed. Catholic and customary authority run together closely.

The **kava** ceremony orders precedence: who is served in what order states the standing of everyone present.

Three At the seams

Day 6 verse 8 and verse 12 both take positions in the language.

Tuvaluan

Speakers: about 10,000 · **Family:** Austronesian, Polynesian · **Where:** Tuvalu · **Bible:** complete 1987

One What the language holds

Tuvaluan has a dual and an inclusive–exclusive distinction. Tuvalu's highest point is under five metres above the sea.

Two What the tradition holds

The **fatele** is sung and danced by the whole community on mats, building in speed and volume, and new ones are composed for occasions.

Tuvalu is among the countries most likely to become uninhabitable from rising seas, and its government has begun constructing a digital record of the nation against that possibility.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 2, where the waters are divided and the firmament set between them, meets a people whose land may not be above the water in a century.

The crossing at Day 3 verse 1, let the dry land appear, is read by a people asking whether theirs will remain.

Cook Islands Māori

Speakers: about 8,000 · **Family:** Austronesian, Polynesian · **Where:** Cook Islands, New Zealand · **Bible:** 1888

One What the language holds

Cook Islands Māori, or Rarotongan, is close to New Zealand Māori and to Tahitian, with a dual and an inclusive-exclusive distinction.

More Cook Islanders live in New Zealand than in the islands, so the language is largely spoken in another country.

Two What the tradition holds

The Cook Islands account has the world beginning inside a coconut shell, with **Avaiki** below and the layers rising, and **Vari-ma-te-takere**, the very beginning, at the bottom.

The vaka, the voyaging canoes, left from here for New Zealand, and the names of the canoes are held in the genealogies of both places.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 2 into verse 3, into the genealogical record, meets a people whose canoe names connect their genealogies to another country's.

Niuean

Speakers: about 8,000 · **Family:** Austronesian, Polynesian · **Where:** Niue, New Zealand · **Bible:** 1866

One What the language holds

Niuean has a dual and an inclusive-exclusive distinction, and is ergative — unusual among Polynesian languages, and shared with the Mayan and Caucasian languages elsewhere in these volumes.

Around ninety per cent of Niueans live in New Zealand. The island's population is under two thousand.

Two What the tradition holds

Niue is a raised coral atoll with no rivers and no soil to speak of, and its people farmed in pockets in the limestone.

The **hair-cutting** and **ear-piercing** ceremonies mark a child's coming of age and involve the whole extended family contributing.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 10 into verse 11 meets a people who grew food in holes in rock.

Tokelauan

Speakers: about 4,000 · **Family:** Austronesian, Polynesian · **Where:** Tokelau, New Zealand · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Tokelauan is close to Tuvaluan and Samoan, with a dual and an inclusive-exclusive distinction.

Tokelau has three atolls, no airstrip, and is reached by boat from Samoa. It runs entirely on solar power.

Two What the tradition holds

The **inati** is the Tokelauan distribution system: the catch or the harvest is divided among all households according to size,

regardless of who did the work. Nobody goes without because somebody else caught more.

A standing arrangement that food is shared out rather than kept by whoever gathered it.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 6 verses 18 and 19, where the herb and the fruit are given to everything that has life, meets a people who divide what is caught among everyone by household.

Rapa Nui

Speakers: about 3,000 · Family: Austronesian, Polynesian · Where: Easter Island · Bible: partial

One What the language holds

A script that has never been read

Rongorongo survives on about two dozen wooden objects — tablets, a staff, a bird-man figure — incised with rows of small glyphs. The lines run in alternating directions, so the reader turns the tablet at the end of each.

It has never been deciphered. Nobody knows whether it is full writing, a mnemonic system, or something else.

The people who could read it were taken in the Peruvian slave raids of 1862 and died of smallpox, and the knowledge went with them within a few years.

Rapa Nui is the most isolated inhabited place reached by the Polynesian voyages, more than three thousand kilometres from anywhere.

Two What the tradition holds

Makemake is the creator, and the **tangata manu**, the birdman, was an annual competition: contestants swam to an islet to bring back the first sooty tern egg of the season, and the sponsor of the winner held authority for the year.

The **moai** stand on ahu facing inland, toward the people rather than the sea, and are understood as ancestors watching over their descendants.

Three At the seams

A people whose own writing can no longer be read, because everyone who could read it was taken away, meet a text about a book that no one was found worthy to open.

Melanesia

Ten languages, from the most linguistically diverse region on earth. Papua New Guinea alone holds over eight hundred languages.

Fijian

Speakers: about 350,000 · **Family:** Austronesian · **Where:** Fiji · **Bible:** 1847

One What the language holds

Fijian has a dual, a paucal for a few, and a plural — four number categories where English has two. It distinguishes inclusive from exclusive we in each of them.

So Fijian can say we two including you, we few excluding you, and so on, as distinct grammatical forms. At Day 6 verse 8 and verse 12 the translator has more choices than in almost any language in these volumes.

Two What the tradition holds

The **yaqona** ceremony orders any formal occasion, with the cup passed in an order that states everyone's standing.

Vanua means the land, the people and the customary order together in one word, and a person's vanua is where they belong and who they answer to.

The **sevusevu** is presented on arriving at a village: a gift offered and accepted before anything else happens, after which the visitor is under the village's care.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 6 verse 7 into verse 8, Let Us make man, meets a language with four ways of saying we and a compulsory choice about who is included.

Enga

Speakers: about 230,000 · **Family:** Trans-New Guinea · **Where:** Papua New Guinea highlands · **Bible:** from 1980s

One What the language holds

Enga is the largest indigenous language of Papua New Guinea. It marks evidentiality — how the speaker knows — and has a system of verb endings that specify how recently something happened, distinguishing several degrees of past.

Two What the tradition holds

The **tee** is a ceremonial exchange running across many clans: pigs and valuables move along a chain of partners in one direction and then back, over years, with each man's standing resting on what he can move rather than what he keeps.

An economy whose whole point is the passing on of wealth rather than its accumulation.

The Enga highlands were among the last large populations on earth to meet outsiders, in the 1930s.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 6 verse 15 into verse 16, the blessing and the multiplying, meets a people whose entire system of standing depends on what is given away.

Huli

Speakers: about 150,000 · **Family:** Trans-New Guinea · **Where:** Papua New Guinea highlands · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Huli has fifteen distinct tenses, marking degrees of past and future with a precision that English has no equivalent for — what happened earlier today, yesterday, some days ago, long ago, each with its own form.

It also has a separate ritual vocabulary used in spells, with different words for ordinary things.

Two What the tradition holds

Huli men wore wigs of their own hair grown in a bachelor's house under a discipline of rules and then cut and shaped, and the practice continues in modified form.

Dama are the spirits, and Huli accounts hold that the land itself is deteriorating over time and that rituals were performed to slow it — a tradition with a sense of decline built in.

Three At the seams

A language with fifteen tenses meets an account whose seven days are carried in English by one.

The crossing at Day 6 verse 20, where God saw everything and it was very good, meets a people who hold that things have been getting worse since.

Melpa

Speakers: about 130,000 · **Family:** Trans-New Guinea · **Where:** Mount Hagen, Papua New Guinea · **Bible:** from 1980s

One What the language holds

Melpa has a dual as well as a plural, so Day 6 verse 12 can say exactly two.

Two What the tradition holds

The **moka** is the great exchange of the Hagen area: a man gives pigs and shells to a partner, who must later return more, and the escalation builds standing on both sides over a lifetime.

The obligation runs forward permanently — the exchange is never settled, because settling it would end the relationship.

The **sing-sing** gatherings bring clans together in body paint and feathers, and the display is itself part of the exchange.

Three At the seams

A people whose central institution is a debt deliberately never closed meet a text whose covenants are the same shape.

Tok Pisin

Speakers: about 120,000 first language, several million as second · **Family:** English-based creole

Where: Papua New Guinea · **Bible:** complete 1989

One What the language holds

A creole that kept the dual and the inclusive we

Tok Pisin took English words but built its pronouns on the pattern of the Austronesian languages its speakers already had. It has **mitupela** for we two excluding you, **yumitupela** for we two including you, **mipela** and **yumi** for larger groups.

So at Day 6 verse 8, Let Us make man, and at Day 6 verse 12, male and female, Tok Pisin takes positions that English cannot — in a language made out of English.

It is the shared tongue of a country with over eight hundred languages, and its complete Bible of 1989 is the one many Papua New Guineans read.

Two What the tradition holds

A Tok Pisin speaker carries whichever tradition their own people hold. The language is the bridge, not the inheritance — as with Nigerian Pidgin and Krio and Sadri.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 6 verse 7 into verse 8 is answered by the language, which is a striking thing for a language built from English to do.

Kuman

Speakers: about 120,000 · **Family:** Trans-New Guinea · **Where:** Chimbu, Papua New Guinea · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Kuman has a dual and marks how the speaker knows. Chimbu is among the most densely populated rural areas in the Pacific, farmed in intensive gardens on steep slopes.

Two What the tradition holds

Sweet potato is the staple and is grown in raised mounds with composted material buried inside them, a method developed locally and studied for its efficiency.

Pigs are the measure of wealth and are exchanged at ceremonies, and a pig killing marks every major occasion.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 11, the man put into the garden to dress it and to keep it, meets a people who farm the steepest ground in the Pacific by hand and feed one of its densest populations from it.

Solomon Islands Pijin

Speakers: about 25,000 first language, most of the country as second · **Family:** English-based creole
Where: Solomon Islands · **Bible:** complete 2008

One What the language holds

Pijin, like Tok Pisin, kept the dual and the inclusive-exclusive distinction from the Austronesian languages beneath it, so Day 6 verse 8 and verse 12 take positions.

The Solomons hold some seventy languages for six hundred thousand people.

Two What the tradition holds

Wantok means one talk — someone who speaks your language — and names the obligation to help them. It is the organising social fact of the country and is spoken of both as a strength and as a burden.

Shell money is still made and used for bride price and compensation, strung in lengths and valued by type.

Three At the seams

A country whose central social term means someone who speaks your language meets a text about a text meant for every language.

Motu

Speakers: about 15,000 · **Family:** Austronesian · **Where:** the Papuan coast · **Bible:** from 1890s

One What the language holds

Motu has a dual and an inclusive-exclusive distinction. A simplified form, Hiri Motu, became a trade language and is one of Papua New Guinea's official languages.

Two What the tradition holds

The voyage for food

The **hiri** was an annual voyage: Motu men sailed west on the southeast trades in **lakatoi**, multi-hulled craft with crab-claw sails, carrying clay pots their wives had made, and traded them for sago in the Gulf. They waited months and came home on the northwest monsoon.

The Motu land could not feed them. The voyage did. The wives' pots were the whole basis of it.

The Hiri Moale festival still marks it, though the voyages ended in the twentieth century.

Three At the seams

The crossing out of Day 4 verse 1 into verse 2, the lights for signs and for seasons, meets a people whose survival depended on sailing out on one wind and returning on the other, at the right time.

Bislama

Speakers: about 10,000 first language, most of Vanuatu as second · **Family:** English-based creole
Where: Vanuatu · **Bible:** complete 1998

One What the language holds

Bislama has the dual and the inclusive-exclusive distinction, so Day 6 verse 8 and verse 12 take positions.

Vanuatu has the highest density of languages of any country on earth: around a hundred and ten languages for three hundred thousand people.

Two What the tradition holds

Kastom is the word for the whole body of customary practice, and it is held deliberately alongside Christianity rather than being replaced by it.

The land dive on Pentecost, the **nagol**, has men jumping from a wooden tower with vines at the ankles, done at the yam harvest to ensure the crop. Bungee jumping was taken from it.

Sand drawing, made with one finger in a single continuous line, encodes stories and is listed by UNESCO — the same principle as the Chokwe sona in Angola, arrived at independently.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 10 into verse 11 meets a people who jump from a tower to make the yams grow.

A people whose stories are drawn in one unbroken line meet a text braided from two.

Drehu

Speakers: about 12,000 · **Family:** Austronesian · **Where:** Lifou, New Caledonia · **Bible:** from 1890s

One What the language holds

Drehu is the largest Kanak language of New Caledonia and has a dual and an inclusive-exclusive distinction. It is taught in schools and can be taken in the French baccalauréat.

Two What the tradition holds

The **coutume** is the Kanak customary exchange: a gift is presented and speech made on arriving, on asking anything, and on leaving. Nothing of consequence happens without it.

The yam is the ceremonial crop and its planting and harvest set the year. Kanak clans hold land through the customary senate, which has standing in law.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 10 into verse 11 meets a people whose year is set by one plant and whose every meeting opens with a gift.

Micronesia

Nine languages, across an area of ocean larger than the continental United States.

Gilbertese (Kiribati)

Speakers: about 120,000 · **Family:** Austronesian · **Where:** Kiribati · **Bible:** 1893

One What the language holds

Gilbertese has an inclusive-exclusive distinction. Kiribati spreads across thirty-three atolls over three and a half million square kilometres of ocean, and its land area is eight hundred square kilometres.

Two What the tradition holds

Nareau, the spider, is the creator in Gilbertese accounts. He found the sky and the earth clinging together, and had them prised apart; the sky was raised, and from the body of the being who had held them the sun, the moon and the stars were made.

A third account in these volumes of sky and earth held together and forced apart, alongside the Māori and the Kiribati neighbours.

The **maneaba**, the meeting house, seats every family in a fixed place along its sides, and where a family sits states who they are.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 2, where the firmament is set and the waters above divided from those below, meets a people whose account has sky and earth pulled apart and the lights made from what had held them.

Chamorro

Speakers: about 60,000 · **Family:** Austronesian · **Where:** Guam and the Northern Marianas · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Chamorro has taken in a great deal of Spanish vocabulary over three centuries — numbers, days, much of the everyday lexicon — inside an Austronesian grammar.

It is endangered; most fluent speakers are older, and revitalisation programmes are running.

Two What the tradition holds

The Chamorro account has **Puntan** and his sister **Fu'una**: Puntan, dying, tells his sister to use his body to make the world, and she makes the sky from his chest, the sun and moon from his eyes, the earth from his back. Then she turns herself into a rock, and from that rock people come.

A brother and a sister, one giving his body for the world and the other becoming the stone that people come out of.

The **latte** stones, pillars with capstones on which houses were raised, still stand across the islands.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 7 into verse 8, the man formed and the verdict, meets a people whose own account has people come out of a rock that had been a person.

Marshallese

Speakers: about 60,000 · **Family:** Austronesian · **Where:** Marshall Islands, and the United States · **Bible:** complete

One What the language holds

Marshallese has an inclusive-exclusive distinction and a dual. Its vowel system is unusual: the vowels change quality depending on the consonants around them, so the same vowel sounds different in different words.

Two What the tradition holds

The sea mapped in sticks

Marshallese navigators made charts of bound sticks, with shells for islands. The sticks record how ocean swells bend and reflect around land and where the patterns cross.

The charts were not carried on the voyage. They were studied ashore and memorised, and then the navigator lay down in the hull of the canoe and read the swells through his own body — feeling where the patterns met, and steering to atolls he could not see.

Each navigator made his own charts and they were not generally readable by others.

The Marshall Islands were the site of sixty-seven nuclear tests between 1946 and 1958. Bikini and Enewetak were evacuated, and people from Rongelap were exposed to fallout. A concrete dome on Runit holds contaminated soil and is cracking.

Marshallese poets and speakers have brought that history to international climate forums, where the same islands now face the sea.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 2, the waters divided and the firmament between them, meets a people who navigated by reading the shape of water with their bodies.

The crossing at Day 6 verse 20, where God saw everything that he had made and behold it was very good, meets an atoll that was used to test what could unmake it.

Chuukese

Speakers: about 50,000 · **Family:** Austronesian · **Where:** Federated States of Micronesia · **Bible:** complete

One What the language holds

Chuukese has an inclusive-exclusive distinction. It uses a set of classifiers for counting, so the number word changes depending on what is being counted — long things, round things, people, and so on take different forms.

Two What the tradition holds

Chuuk is matrilineal: land passes through women, and a man's obligations run to his sister's children as much as to his own.

Chuuk lagoon holds the wrecks of a Japanese fleet sunk in 1944, and the lagoon is now among the most visited wreck-diving sites in the world. The dead of that fleet are still in them.

Traditional navigation knowledge of the Carolines — the star compass, the **etak** system in which the canoe is held still and the islands move past — was preserved here and on Satawal.

Three At the seams

The crossing out of Day 4 verse 1 into verse 2, the lights for signs, meets a people whose navigation system names the stars around the horizon as a compass and holds the canoe still while the world moves.

Pohnpeian

Speakers: about 30,000 · **Family:** Austronesian · **Where:** Federated States of Micronesia · **Bible:** complete

One What the language holds

Pohnpeian has an inclusive-exclusive distinction and an elaborate honorific vocabulary: separate words used when speaking to or about chiefs, covering eating, sleeping, dying and much else.

Two What the tradition holds

Nan Madol is a city of about a hundred artificial islets built on a reef from columnar basalt logs, laid like timber, with canals between them. It was the seat of a dynasty for centuries and is listed by UNESCO. How the stones were moved is not settled.

The **sakau** ceremony orders any formal gathering, and the yam competitions at feasts involve tubers so large they must be carried by several men.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 1, the waters gathered and the dry land appearing, meets a people who built a hundred islands out of the reef by hand.

Palauan

Speakers: about 17,000 · Family: Austronesian · Where: Palau · Bible: complete

One What the language holds

Palauan is Austronesian but has changed enough that its place within the family is debated. It has an inclusive-exclusive distinction.

Two What the tradition holds

Palau is matrilineal, and the women of a clan choose and can remove the male title-holders.

The **bai**, the men's meeting house, has its gables painted with story boards, each panel a narrative, so the building's face is a set of accounts.

The **bul** is a customary prohibition placed on a reef or a species for a season so that it can recover. Palau has extended the principle into national law, closing most of its waters to commercial fishing.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 20 into verse 21, where the man may eat freely of every tree but one, meets a people whose customary law is built on declaring particular things off limits for a time so that they last.

Kosraean

Speakers: about 9,000 · **Family:** Austronesian · **Where:** Federated States of Micronesia · **Bible:** complete

One What the language holds

Kosraean has an inclusive-exclusive distinction. Kosrae is a single high island with no lagoon, unlike its neighbours.

Two What the tradition holds

Lelu, a walled city of basalt on an islet, was the seat of the paramount chief, built with the same columnar stone technique as Nan Madol.

Kosrae's population fell from perhaps six thousand to under three hundred in the nineteenth century through introduced disease, and much of what was held was lost in that collapse. The island became almost entirely Christian in the decades after.

Three At the seams

A people who lost nineteen in twenty of their number within a century meet a text that says be fruitful and multiply, and whose verdict of very good the banner reads as waiting on children without number.

Yapese

Speakers: about 7,000 · **Family:** Austronesian · **Where:** Federated States of Micronesia · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Yapese is Austronesian but has diverged far from its relatives and is difficult to place. It has an inclusive-exclusive distinction.

Two What the tradition holds

Money too big to move

Rai are stone discs, some over three metres across, quarried in Palau and brought four hundred kilometres by canoe and raft at considerable risk. They stand where they were set down.

Ownership changes by agreement and is remembered by the community; the stone does not move. One rai is known to have sunk on the voyage, and it is still owned and still counted, because everyone agrees it exists on the sea floor.

Value held entirely in what people agree and remember.

Yap also sat at the head of the **sawei**, a network of exchange and obligation reaching across hundreds of miles of ocean to the outer islands, who sent tribute and received help in famine.

Three At the seams

A people whose wealth rests on a shared remembering rather than on anything held meet a text whose transmission rested on the same thing for most of its history.

Nauruan

Speakers: about 6,000 · **Family:** Austronesian · **Where:** Nauru · **Bible:** complete 1918

One What the language holds

Nauruan is Austronesian and is not closely related to any other Micronesian language. Its Bible was translated by a German missionary interned during the First World War, who used the time to finish it.

Two What the tradition holds

Nauru's interior was almost entirely phosphate — fossilised seabird droppings accumulated over millennia — and it was mined out through the twentieth century. For a period Nauru had among the highest per capita incomes in the world.

The phosphate is gone, the money is gone, and eighty per cent of the island is mined-out limestone pinnacles on which nothing grows.

Nauruan tradition held frigate bird catching, and the birds were tamed and kept and used to fish.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 11, where the man is put into the garden to dress it and to keep it, meets an island whose ground was sold and carried away.

Other Islands

Nine languages. Malagasy, Haitian Creole and Tetum received studies in the ranked volumes.

Already studied in the ranked volumes: Malagasy (52), an Austronesian language of Africa whose people lift and rewrap their dead; Haitian Creole (87), made by people in bondage; Tetum (392), whose speakers hang a visible prohibition on a tree.

Jamaican Patois

Speakers: about 3 million · **Family:** English-based creole · **Where:** Jamaica and the diaspora · **Bible:** New Testament 2012

One What the language holds

Patois took English words into a grammar shaped by the West African languages of the people brought to Jamaica. It marks no gender, does not change verbs for time, and uses repetition for emphasis in a way English does not.

The Jamaican New Testament of 2012 caused real argument: many objected that Patois was not dignified enough for scripture, and others answered that this was exactly what had been said about English, German and every other vernacular in its turn.

Two What the tradition holds

The **Maroons** escaped the plantations and held the interior, fighting the British to a treaty in 1739, and their communities and their **Kromanti** practice continue.

Rastafari reads the scriptures with Africa at the centre and Ethiopia as Zion, and its language, **Iyaric**, deliberately remakes English words held to carry the wrong meaning.

Jamaican storytelling keeps **Anansi**, the spider, brought from the Akan and still telling.

Three At the seams

A people whose ancestors were forbidden to read meet a text in the tongue they actually speak, and had to argue for the right to have it there.

Mauritian Creole

Speakers: about 1.1 million · Family: French-based creole · Where: Mauritius · Bible: complete 2009

One What the language holds

Mauritian Creole took French vocabulary into a grammar shaped by Malagasy, East African and later Indian languages. It marks no gender and no tense inflection.

Mauritius had no indigenous population. Everyone there came from somewhere else — French settlers, enslaved Africans and Malagasy, indentured Indians, Chinese traders — and the Creole is what they made to speak to each other.

Two What the tradition holds

The **séga** is the music of the enslaved, sung with the ravanne drum, and UNESCO lists it. It was danced at night and was suppressed.

Mauritius holds Hindu, Catholic, Muslim and Chinese communities, each keeping their festivals, and the Creole is spoken by all of them.

The dodo lived here and was extinct within a century of the first settlement.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 6 verses 4 to 7, where the creatures are brought to be named, meets an island that lost its most famous one before anyone recorded what it was properly.

Papiamentu

Speakers: about 300,000 · **Family:** Iberian-based creole · **Where:** Aruba, Curaçao, Bonaire · **Bible:** complete

One What the language holds

Papiamentu draws on Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, African languages and some Arawak, and it is tonal — unusual for a creole, and taken as evidence of African influence on its structure.

It is used in schools, in parliament and in newspapers, which is rare for a creole and was achieved deliberately.

Two What the tradition holds

Curaçao was a major slave-trading depot, and the Jewish community there is the oldest continuous one in the Americas, with a synagogue from 1732 whose floor is covered in sand.

The **tambú** is the drum music of the enslaved, long suppressed and now recognised.

Three At the seams

A Papiamentu reader may meet the seams on an island where the Hebrew text has been read continuously in a synagogue since before most European vernacular Bibles were common.

Garifuna

Speakers: about 200,000 · **Family:** Arawakan · **Where:** Belize, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua · **Bible:** partial

One What the language holds

Men's words and women's words from two languages

Garifuna is Arawakan with a large layer of Carib vocabulary, and the two are distributed by sex: some words are used by men and others by women for the same thing, with the men's forms tending to be the Carib ones.

It came about when Carib men took Arawak-speaking women, and the split has lasted.

The Garifuna descend from Africans who survived shipwrecks or escaped, and joined the Caribs of St Vincent. They resisted the British and were deported in 1797 to an island off Honduras, from which they spread along the coast.

UNESCO listed the language, dance and music together in 2001.

Two What the tradition holds

The **dügü** is a ceremony held when illness or misfortune indicates the ancestors are unsatisfied: the family gathers from wherever they are, food is prepared, and the drums call the ancestors into the temple over several days.

A rite that requires the scattered family to come back to one place.

Yurumein, St Vincent, is remembered in song as the homeland they were taken from, and some make the journey back.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 6 verse 11 into verse 12, male and female created he them, meets a language in which men and women use different words for the same things, inherited from two different peoples.

Seychellois Creole

Speakers: about 73,000 · **Family:** French-based creole · **Where:** Seychelles · **Bible:** complete

One What the language holds

Seselwa is close to Mauritian Creole and is one of three official languages of the Seychelles, used in schools and in the assembly.

The Seychelles, like Mauritius, had no indigenous population.

Two What the tradition holds

The **coco de mer**, which grows only in the Seychelles, produces the largest seed of any plant — and its shape led some early European visitors to identify the Vallée de Mai as the site of Eden.

The **moutya** is the drum dance of the enslaved, held at night and banned for long periods, now recognised by UNESCO.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 3 verse 10 into verse 11, the plants into the garden, meets a valley that was once proposed, in print, as the garden itself.

Maldivian (Dhivehi)

Speakers: about 340,000 · **Family:** Indo-European, Indo-Aryan · **Where:** Maldives · **Script:** Thaana · **Bible:** limited

One What the language holds

A script built out of numerals

Thaana was devised around the eighteenth century. Its first nine consonants are the Arabic numerals one to nine, and the next nine are the older Indic numerals — so the alphabet is built from two sets of counting signs given sound values.

It is written right to left, like Arabic, though Dhivehi is an Indo-Aryan language related to Sinhala.

Dhivehi is the only Indo-Aryan language written right to left.

Two What the tradition holds

The Maldives were Buddhist before converting to Islam in 1153, and Buddhist remains have been found on several atolls.

The islands are the lowest-lying country on earth, averaging about one and a half metres above the sea.

The **bodu beru**, the big drum, is played by a group with a lead singer, building in tempo until the dancers are in a kind of trance.

Three At the seams

The crossing at Day 2, the waters divided and the firmament between them, and at Day 3 verse 1, let the dry land appear, are read by a people whose ground stands a metre and a half above the sea.

Where this leaves the study

Four hundred and seventy-four languages studied across ten volumes.

Ten volumes are now complete. Four hundred languages ranked by native speakers, and ninety on this separate list, of which sixteen overlap — four hundred and seventy-four distinct languages, each with the same three studies.

The largest recurring findings across all of them: the Pleiades named as the season-marking stars in scores of unrelated traditions, and inherited from Proto-Bantu across an entire language family. Peoples on four continents whose first humans came out of a plant. Clay that failed to hold before a making that worked, in Santali and in K'iche' independently. Creators who were lonely before they made anyone. A first man alone until a woman came. Accounts of the sky and the earth being parted. And, in the Popol Vuh and nowhere else, a deep sleep with the woman there on waking.

What has not been done is the seam matrix rebuilt on the corrected footing, with Hebrew as its own row rather than the baseline. That is the next work.

Cross Linguistic Study of the New Creation Story / Man on Day Three in Genesis — languages 401 through 474
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Verse references follow the banner revision of September 7, 2026. Restricted traditional material has been left out throughout: where an account is held only by initiates or by one sex, only what those communities have themselves made public is given here. Native speaker and specialist review welcome throughout, and is especially wanted for the languages in this volume.