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**Unwritten minority languages of Dagestan:
state, functioning and problems of preservation**

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Dagestani group of the North East Caucasian language family includes 18 unwritten languages: 13 Andi-Tsezic and 5 Lezgian languages. Avar-Andi-Tsezic group consists of Avar and Andi-Tsez languages. Nine of them make Andian subgroup (Andian, Botlikh, Godoberi, Akhvakh, Karata, Bagwal, Tindi, Chamal) and five of them are Tsezic (Bezhta, Hunzib, Hinukh, Tsez, Khwarshi).

The majority of Andians live in the mountainous part of Dagestan. The western border between Dagestan, Chechnya and Georgia coincides with the ethnic boundary. Andians also live in Azerbaijan.

Since ancient times Tsezic people reside in the west part of Dagestan and Georgia. Intermediate language in intra-group communication was Bezhta (for Hunzibs and Hinuks) and Tsez (for Hinukhs), and now they partly perform these functions. Currently, Avar is the language of the interethnic communication among Tsezic people.

The Andi-Tsez languages became conversational-household languages. Creation of writing systems in these languages is a necessary for preservation and development of ethnic groups.

Nowadays the imminent threat of extinction of unwritten languages of Dagestan does not exist yet. However, due to bilingualism, migration and other processes there are already facts of loss of such essential components of language activity. There is strong influence of Russian on minority languages as young people communicate in Russian.

Thus, the main and urgent task is to document linguistic, historical, cultural, and ethnographic material of small ethnic groups of Dagestan. Preserving all this material is a prerequisite for deep study of history, ethnography and language, familiarizing the younger generation with folk wisdom and handover of language and works of folklore on the whole for future generations.