

QUADERNI DEL CERM



MINORITIES IN THE POST-SOVIET SPACE THIRTY YEARS AFTER THE DISSOLUTION OF THE USSR

EDITED BY
PAOLA BOCALE, DANIELE BRIGADOI COLOGNA, LINO PANZERI



When the Soviet Union broke apart in 1991, the Russian Federation and the newly independent republics of the Baltics, the Caucasus and Central Asia engaged in redefining their national identity in a challenging regional and global context. The stances and policies towards the minorities living in these countries became part of the striving towards national independence and identity formation. Despite vastly different post-Soviet nation-building trajectories, the development and implementation of state policies towards minorities had similar relevance and importance across the region. Thirty years after the end of the USSR what is the situation of minorities and minority issues in the countries that emerged from that multi-ethnic state? How have the former republics – including Russia dealt with their minorities and minority affairs? To what protection and rights are minority communities entitled to?

Studies of the dissolution of the USSR and of nation-building in the independent post-Soviet states have flourished over the past decades. However, despite the relevance of the theme, there is a dearth of specialist publications which address the many issues related to minority communities in the post-Soviet space. This volume attempts to fill this gap by providing a collection of essays covering some of the most relevant aspects of the contemporary status and situation of minorities in the area.

The cover illustration by Daniele Brigadoi Cologna is a watercolor rendering of the Chinese character chū 出 "to exit, to grow out of" in small seal script.

www.ledizioni.it
www.ledipublishing.com



€ 24,00

QUADERNI DEL CERM N. 4. MINORITIES IN THE POST-SOVIET SPACE THIRTY YEARS AFTER THE DISSOLUTION OF THE USSR



Ledizioni

Quaderni del CERM
Centro di Ricerca sulle Minoranze
dell'Università degli Studi dell'Insubria

Minorities in the Post-Soviet Space Thirty Years After the Dissolution of the USSR

Edited by
Paola Bocale, Daniele Brigadoi Cologna, Lino Panzeri

Ledizioni

The publication of this volume was made possible through the generous support of the Department of Human Sciences and Innovation for the Territory and the Department of Law, Economics and Culture of the University of Insubria.

© 2022 Ledizioni LediPublishing
Via Boselli 10 - 20136 Milan - Italy
www.ledizioni.it
info@ledizioni.it

Paola Bocale, Daniele Brigadoi Cologna, Lino Panzeri (Eds.), *Minorities in the Post-Soviet Space Thirty Years After the Dissolution of the USSR*

First edition: December 2022

ISBN print 978-88-5526-853-0
Graphic design: Ledizioni

Catalogue and reprints information: www.ledizioni.it

Scientific Committee

Daniele Brigadoi (Cologna)
(Università degli Studi dell'Insubria) - Scientific Director
Quaderni del CERM

Paola Bocale
(Università degli Studi dell'Insubria) - Scientific Codirector
Quaderni del CERM

Maria Nieves Arribas Esteras (Università degli Studi dell'Insubria)

Paola Baseotto (Università degli Studi dell'Insubria)

Stefano Becucci (Università degli Studi di Firenze)

Stefano Bonometti (Università degli Studi dell'Insubria)

Renzo Cavalieri (Università degli Studi di Venezia - Ca' Foscari)

Alessandro Ferrari (Università degli Studi dell'Insubria)

Anna Granata (Università degli Studi di Torino)

Lino Panzeri (Università degli Studi dell'Insubria)

Valentina Pedone (Università degli Studi di Firenze)

Barbara Pozzo (Università degli Studi dell'Insubria)

Fabio Quassoli (Università degli Studi di Milano - Bicocca)

Oleg Rumyantsev (Università degli Studi di Palermo)

Andrea Sansò (Università degli Studi dell'Insubria)

Fiorenzo Toso (Università degli Studi di Sassari) †

Alessandra Vicentini (Università degli Studi dell'Insubria)

Valter Zanin (Università degli Studi di Padova)

Dorothy Louise Zinn (Libera Università di Bolzano)

Editorial Committee

Paola Bocale

Elisa Bianco

Maria Paola Bissiri

Daniele Brigadoi Cologna

Francesco Cicone

Omar Hashem Abdo Khalaf

Ruggero Lanotte

Francesca Moro

Lino Panzeri

Table of Contents

Preface	11
Minority Finno-Ugric Languages in the Post-Soviet Space: Thirty Years On <i>Tatiana Agranat</i>	13
The Historical Development of Buryat Pan-Mongolism <i>Davor Antonucci</i>	29
The Sakha Language in the School System of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia): Situation and Problems <i>Ekaterina Arutyunova</i>	41
Competing Language Ideologies and Language Policies in Ukraine and Their Impact on Minorities <i>Paola Bocale</i>	55
The Chinese Diaspora in the Post-Soviet Space <i>Daniele Brigadoi Cologna</i>	73
Jewish and Polish Heritage in Western Ukraine. Old Issues and Recent Trends <i>Andrea Corsale</i>	83

On Iranian-Speaking Minorities in the Post-Soviet Space: the Case of the Pamir People and Their Languages	95
<i>Joy I. Edelman, Leyli R. Dodykhudoeva</i>	
The Legal Protection of National Minorities in Ukraine from a Comparative Perspective	111
<i>Caterina Filippini</i>	
The End of the USSR and the Role of the “Nations”	131
<i>Mario Ganino</i>	
The Languages of Ethnic Minorities in post-Soviet Georgia	145
<i>Tamari Lomtadze</i>	
Soviet Legacies in Minority Protection Thirty Years Down the Road	161
<i>Francesco Palermo</i>	
The “Constitutional War” with the USSR and the Restoration of Sovereignty in the Baltic Republics	171
<i>Lino Panzeri</i>	
The Linguistic Landscape of the Post-Soviet Republic of Moldova: Chişinău, Tiraspol and Comrat	185
<i>Feodora Punga</i>	
Sayan Turkic Minorities in the Post-Soviet Linguistic Space	201
<i>Elisabetta Ragagnin</i>	

Aspects of the Development of Yiddish as the Language of the National Minorities in the Republic of Belarus	219
<i>Veronika Rabzevich, Inna Petrashevich</i>	
Minorities in an Independent Ukraine: Issues of Language and Identity (1991-2013)	225
<i>Oleg Rumyantsev</i>	
Kazakhstan's Unintended Minority: The Oralmans	229
<i>Tommaso Trevisani</i>	
Cultural Hybridization and Postcolonial Identity	243
<i>Elina Usovskaya</i>	
The Linguistic Landscape of Grodno	257
<i>Darya Vashkialevich</i>	
The Reasons for Ukraine's Independence	273
<i>Alessandro Vitale</i>	
The Orthodox Church and the Politics of Denationalization in Bessarabia	291
<i>Alessandro Zuliani</i>	

Preface

This volume presents selected and edited papers and keynote lectures from the international research conference “Minorities in the post-Soviet space thirty years after the dissolution of USSR”, held in Como on December 1-3, 2021. The conference was promoted and coordinated by the Centre for Research on Minorities (Cerm), a cross-institutional and interdisciplinary research network based at the University of Insubria.

When the Soviet Union broke apart in 1991, the Russian Federation and the newly independent republics of the Baltics, the Caucasus and Central Asia engaged in redefining their national identity in a challenging regional and global context. The stances and policies towards the minorities living in these countries became part of the striving towards national independence and identity formation. Despite vastly different post-Soviet nation-building trajectories, the development and implementation of state policies towards minorities had similar relevance and importance across the region. Thirty years after the end of the USSR what is the situation of minorities and minority issues in the countries that emerged from that multi-ethnic state? How have the former republics - including Russia dealt with their minorities and minority affairs? To what protection and rights are minority communities entitled to?

Studies of the dissolution of the USSR and of nation-building in the independent post-Soviet states have flourished over the past decades. However, despite the relevance of the theme, there is a dearth of specialist publications which address the many issues related to minority communities in the post-Soviet space. This volume attempts to fill this gap by providing a collection of essays covering some of the most relevant aspects of the contemporary status and situation of minorities in the area.

Several institutions and individuals deserve thanks for contributing to the realization of the conference and this volume. We are

particularly grateful for funding from the Department of Human Sciences and Local Innovation, and the Department of Law, Economics and Culture of the University of Insubria which made it possible for us to pursue this exciting field of research and realize the conference. We would also like to thank all contributors to this volume for the effort and energy they have dedicated to their pieces. This volume is a truly international collaborative endeavour, in which authors come from a wide range of post-Soviet and European countries.

The work of the conference has contributed significantly to our understanding of the impact of the dissolution of the USSR upon the minorities living in the former Soviet bloc. It is our sincere hope that this book will help other researchers and the broader public to gain awareness and knowledge of minority issues in the post-Soviet space.

*Paola Bocale
Daniele Brigadoi
Cologna
Lino Panzeri*

Como, Italy

Minority Finno-Ugric Languages in the Post-Soviet Space: Thirty Years On

Tatiana Agranat

1. Introduction

Most Finno-Ugric languages are located in the post-Soviet space. Among them, Estonian is the state language of Estonia and, of course, does not belong to the category of minority languages. The other Finno-Ugric languages have different sociolinguistic status, ranging from being official languages of subjects of the Russian Federation (e.g. Udmurt, Komi, Mari, Erzia, Moksha and others) to the condition of non-written minority languages. According to Russian legislation, minority languages are those languages, that are spoken by fewer than fifty thousand people, that is on the basis of a quantitative, not qualitative criterion. This article will consider the dynamics of the functioning of such languages thirty years since the dissolution of the USSR.

First of all, let us determine the list of languages that should be the subject of analysis. The Finno-Ugric languages spoken by less than fifty thousand people are the following: Khanty, Mansi, Saami, Vepsian, Ingrian, Votic and Karelian¹ in Russia, Livonian in

1 There are a little more than 25 thousand Karelian speakers in total. But since there are several Karelian idioms, the most modern point of view is that there are four or even five such idioms. Their sociolinguistic status is determined differently by different linguists: some believe that these are separate languages, some prefer to talk about several dialects of the same language. In any case, four of these idioms have their own

Latvia, and Seto, spoken in Estonia and Russia.

The spheres of usage and functions of these minority languages will be analysed on the basis of UNESCO language vitality and endangerment factors (UNESCO 2003).

We identified six factors as being determinants to evaluate a language's vitality and state of endangerment, two factors to assess language attitudes, and one factor to evaluate the urgency for documentation. Taken together, these nine factors are especially useful for characterizing a language's overall sociolinguistic situation (UNESCO 2003).

2. Factor 1: Intergenerational Language Transmission

No single factor alone can be used to assess a language vitality or its need for documentation (UNESCO 2003). This, of course, is true, but in the UNESCO document the first six factors are named Major Evaluative Factors of Language Vitality. However, if intergenerational language transmission stops, measures to preserve the language are too late, and revitalization is not always possible. Thus, it seems that this factor is perhaps the most crucial.

The Khanty language is still passed on to children, at least those idioms spoken by the largest number of native speakers (Koškareva 2016).

The transfer of Mansi from parents to children remains only in the north of the area of language distribution (Berezovo district of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous region) (Amelina & Akbash 2016). Thirty years ago, the language was passed on to children in other places as well.

The Vepsian language, perhaps with rare exceptions, is not currently transmitted to children. Already thirty years ago, in some Vepsian ethno-local groups, only the older generation spoke the language. In the most prosperous places, children still spoke Vepsian, but prefer, nevertheless, to use Russian. More often children passively absorb the language (Myznikov 2005).

In the 1970s, 50% of Saami children spoke Saami (Ivanisheva 2014). By the dissolution of the Soviet Union, this number had

scripts. Functionally, these idioms are very different. They should be described separately, but in this article, space does not allow us to dwell on each in detail. To describe Karelian as a single phenomenon would mean to over-generalize and obscure the real picture. Therefore, I have decided not to touch on Karelian idioms within the framework of this article.

decreased; by now there are practically no children who speak Saami. However, recently a 'language nest' has begun to function and some positive results have appeared. All this concerns only Kildin; the shift of other Saami languages has gone very far.

The intergenerational transmission of Ingrian, as well as Votic, ceased after World War II. However, some Ingrian (but not Votic) people, even those born in the 1960s, spoke to their grandmothers in Ingrian as children. However, after the fall of the USSR, they had already become adults; younger generations do not speak neither Ingrian nor Votic.

The intergenerational transmission of Livonian ceased a long time ago. The last Livonian native speaker was born in 1920; she almost forgot Livonian, because she spoke Latvian most of her life. In 2011, she was my language consultant and she hardly remembered the language she had not used for a long time. However, today there are descendants of Livonians who have fully mastered the language from their grandparents, in courses or by self-study (Ernštreits 2012).

Seto people are divided into three ethno-local groups. One lives in Estonia and two others live in Russia - in the Pechory district of the Pskov region, near Estonia, in their historical homeland, and in Siberia. Some Seto people moved to Siberia in the late 19th - early 20th century under Stolypin's agrarian reform.

In the course of sociolinguistic research among Setos in Estonia in 2011, respondents were asked to assess their level of proficiency in Seto and Estonian on a scale from 0 to 4 points. According to their own estimates, the level of competence in oral Estonian exceeded Seto in all age cohorts, except those over 65 years old. The latter have the same level of proficiency in both languages. Respondents under the age of 30 rated their level of oral Seto proficiency much lower than representatives of older generations; among younger cohorts, the gap between Seto and Estonian proficiency turned out to be much more significant (Chalvin 2015).

Among Setos of the Pechory district, intergenerational language transmission persisted until recently. Despite the fact that formally in Soviet times it was part of the Russian Federation, there were schools with the Estonian language of instruction, in which Seto children studied. After the fall of the USSR, and until 2005, in the city of Pechory one of the schools taught in Estonian. In the 1990s, children living in border villages were allowed to cross the border daily and go to Estonian schools. Since 2005, all school education has switched to Russian. Those Seto children who studied in Es-

tonian also spoke Seto and Russian. Intergenerational language transmission stopped completely. Nowadays, the generations who study in Russian at school speak neither Seto nor Estonian (Agranat 2019a).

However, in Siberia Seto grandmothers traditionally used to pass on their language to their grandchildren. The youngest native speakers are 30 years old. Today, all children can understand Seto speech, but none of them can speak the language (about peculiarities of language transmission in the Siberian Seto community see Agranat 2021a).

3. Factor 2: Absolute Number of Speakers and Factor 3: Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population

Language communities are complex and diverse; even assessing the number of actual speakers of a language is difficult (UNESCO 2003).

It is difficult to trace the dynamics of change in absolute numbers of speakers, since in the last Soviet census of 1989 such a question was not directly asked. Instead, questions included which language respondents consider native and speaking an ethnic language as a second language.

Language	Mother tongue	Ethnic language spoken as 2nd language
Khanty	13615	487
Mansi	3140	252
Vepsian	6355	1857
Saami	797	133
Ingrian	302	95
Livonian	99	30

TABLE 1. QUESTIONS ABOUT LANGUAGES IN THE LAST SOVIET CENSUS OF 1989

The terms of the census implied that the first language was native, but respondents often considered it to be the language of their ethnic group, regardless of whether they spoke it or not. All field linguists who work with the languages of Russia are aware of this circumstance. Therefore, it is impossible to determine real numbers of speakers.

Language	2002	2010 ²
Khanty	13568	9584
Mansi	2746	938
Vepsian	5753	3613
Saami	787	353
Ingrian	362	123
Votic	774	68

TABLE 2. ABSOLUTE NUMBER OF SPEAKERS IN RUSSIAN CENSUSES

Khanty people live in a large territory, in several regions. The census data reflect an average picture. The number of Khanty speakers among those who call themselves Khanty ranges from 56.5% in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous region, to 17% in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous region (Koškareva 2016).

The question of the dialectal division of the Khanty language has not been resolved yet. Some linguists speak of several Khanty languages; others prefer to call them far-flung dialects (Koškareva 2016). Without discussing here the sociolinguistic status of Khanty idioms, it should be noted that the numbers of speakers of these idioms are also vary. As for the dynamics of the absolute number of speakers, it is decreasing.

The results of the censuses show a sharp decrease in the number of native speakers of the Mansi language; the same point of view is shared by experts (Amelina & Akbash 2016).

There are several Saami languages in the former USSR. All of them are located in Russia, on the Kola Peninsula: Kildin, Akkala, Ter and Koltta. Nevertheless, Russian censuses do not distinguish between the Saami languages³. However, this is not relevant, since the vast majority are native speakers of Kildin; only very few

2 I use 2010 census data, since data of the last Census held in 2021 were not available at the time this article was written.

3 In the Soviet tradition, as well as in the more recent Russian one, Saami idioms were considered as a single Saami language with many widely divergent dialects. Some Russian authors still use the old terminology. In the European tradition, it is held that there are several Saami languages, and some of them have dialects; recently this view has been shared by Russian linguists (Agranat 2015). The differences between the different Saami languages are so great that, for example, Kildin and Ter speakers do not necessarily understand each other, and use Russian as a lingua franca to communicate (Ruotsala 2005).

people speak other Kola Saami languages. The data show a sharp decrease in the number of Saami native speakers, confirming the assessment of researches.

Votian people were not taken into account in Soviet censuses since 1926. In the 2002 census, the number of 774 Votic speaking people cannot be considered as reliable (Agranat 2005). In the 2010 census the number is also overstated; in fact, less than ten old Votic speakers remained. I have traced the dynamics of change in the absolute number of Votic speakers since 1995, when I first conducted fieldwork in this area; then there were about 50 people.

As for Livonian, it is impossible to obtain information about the number of speakers from the Latvian censuses, since they do not report small numbers. Ernštreits writes about an increase in the number of speakers due to the emergence of new speakers, who have learned the language either from their grandparents, or through language courses or self-study. Thus, it can be argued that today there are about 40 people worldwide who can communicate in Livonian at level B1 or higher, of whom only a half are of Livonian origin and only one is a native speaker. At best, there are up to 210 A1 and A2 level speakers (Ernštreits 2012).

Although there are ethnic Setos recorded in Russian censuses (see Table 3), the Seto language is absent.

According to the 2011 Estonian census, about 12,800 people in Estonia understand Seto. In fact, the number of Seto speakers may not be the same. In a situation where official statistics in Estonia do not recognize Seto as a national minority, the only way to affirm this ethnicity is to claim the use of the ethnic language in censuses. This claim is not necessarily related to either real knowledge of the language, or its practical use (Chalvin 2015).

Unfortunately, decreases in the absolute number of speakers have been registered in all three Seto ethno-local groups.

In order to measure the proportion of speakers within the total population, let us consider the size of the ethnic groups (Table 3).

Ethnic group	Soviet census 1989	Russian censuses	
		2002	2010
Khanty	22521	28678	30943
Mansi	8484	11432	12269
Veps	12501	8240	5936
Saami	1890	1991	1771
Ingrian	820	327	266

Votes	-	73	64
Seto	-	197	214 + 12800 in Estonia
Livonian	226	Latvian censuses	
		2000	2011
		177	180

TABLE 3. SIZE OF ETHNIC GROUPS

As it can be inferred from data presented in Table 3, only the Khanty and Mansi populations have increased. The number of Saamis has decreased slightly, while Veps have halved. The number of Livonians has decreased quite a lot, and the number of Ingrians has decreased by almost three and a half times.

As mentioned above, since 1926 Votian people were not taken into account in Soviet censuses. According to my observations, the process of assimilation of the Votic people occurred very quickly.

Until recently, Setos were not recognized as a separate ethnic group; they were considered Orthodox Estonians and were counted together with Estonians in Soviet censuses. According to my observations, there are many more Setos living in Russia than those accounted for in censuses, the reason being that Seto people sometimes call themselves Estonians, although they consider themselves a different ethnic group. In reality, their population is several times larger.

Let us now analyse the proportion of speakers within the total population. Although the Khanty and Mansi populations have increased, the absolute number of speakers of both ethnic groups has decreased, so the proportion of speakers within the total population has been reduced sharply. Among the Veps, the number of speakers has decreased in proportion with the decrease in size of the ethnic group, that is, the ratio has been approximately preserved. The number of Saamis decreased slightly, while the number of Saami speakers decreased substantially, and the proportion of speakers within the total population has changed dramatically for the worse. The proportion of Ingrian speakers within the total population has changed even more considerably. I came to the same conclusion after many years of fieldwork with native speakers of Ingrian, as well as with native speakers of Votic, among whom this proportion has also worsened. The same trend is observed in Seto. For Livonians, the situation is improving thanks to new speakers.

4. Factor 4: Trends in Existing Language Domains

None of the analysed languages have ever been used in official domains. There was an attempt to use the Khanty language in the field of legislation, but Khanty is used first of all as a language of family communication and traditional economic activity: fishing, hunting, reindeer husbandry. The breadth of functions depends on the region and dialect. For some dialects, there has been an expansion of functions and an attempt to introduce them into the sphere of formal communication. For others, on the contrary, there has been a reduction in functions and even displacement from the sphere of home communication (Koškareva 2016).

Mansi has gradually lost the function of the language of home communication. It is now used mainly by a few families engaged in traditional forms of economy (Amelina & Akbash 2016).

Saami has also lost the function of a home language, as the traditional Saami economic activity is now practically lost. However, several Saami families, who have decided to revive nomadic reindeer husbandry, use the Saami language in the production process and at home.

The Vepsian language is used to a limited extent in the field of research: some students write term papers. More often it is used in family and household communication, in friendly conversations, or when engaged in traditional fishing.

No other ethnic groups are engaged in traditional forms of management. In several families the Seto language is still used at home, although this function is fading. Votic, Ingrian and Livonian have not functioned as languages of family communication for a long time. New speakers of Livonian have begun to use it in communicating with friends. Votic is mainly used as the language of public speeches made on rural holidays. All the languages are used to sing traditional songs on ethnic holidays and festivals.

Some other domains will be discussed in connection with Factor 5: Response to New Domains and Media, and Factor 6: Materials for Language Education and Literacy.

5. Factor 5: Response to New Domains and Media

Poetry is published in the Khanty language; journalistic works are published in some Khanty dialects. Newspapers are published in various dialects. There are now TV and radio broadcasts, as well as theatre performances, and attempts to create cartoons (Koškareva 2016).

Fiction and periodicals continue to be published in the Mansi language (Amelina & Akbash 2016).

Since the 1990s, radio and television programs have been broadcast in Vepsian. Fiction has been published, as well as periodicals, including those for children. These decades have also seen the release of several films and puppet performances. An online dictionary has also become available (Kovaliova & Kondraškina 2016).

A newspaper in the Seto language is published in Estonia. There is a cartoon in the Votic language, but the Ingrian language is not used in any new domains and media.

Young people compose and perform ethnic rock songs in Livonian; one might wrongly assume that this meant a high degree of vitality of the language. However, the same young people have trouble translating even the 100-word Swadesh list (Agranat 2014).

6. Factor 6: Materials for Language Education and Literacy

Khanty is a language with a recent written tradition. There is writing in all dialects, although the principles of spelling for each dialect are different. Khanty is taught as a subject in schools and some universities. Some dialects are taught only in elementary school, for others there are textbooks for all classes. There is no teaching in Khanty. Educational dictionaries in various Khanty dialects have been published (Koškareva 2016).

Writing in the Mansi language has existed since Soviet times. Mansi is taught as a subject in all school grades and in some universities. The problem is that the textbooks were written in those years when children spoke Mansi and they had to be taught to read. Now, when there are almost no children who speak Mansi, there is a need for textbooks that could be used to learn the Mansi language. But there are no such textbooks (Amelina & Akbash 2016).

Vepsian belongs to the languages with an interrupted written tradition. Writing was created in 1931 and was banned in 1937. In the early 1990s, writing was created anew; a new Vepsian literary language was created as an inter-dialect phenomenon. The Vepsian language is taught as a subject in several schools, but it is not a language of instruction. Several universities train teachers of the Vepsian language. There are primers, textbooks, and educational dictionaries (Kovaliova & Kondraškina 2016).

Among the Saami languages of the post-Soviet space, writing has been developed only for Kildin. In the era of language construc-

tion, several alphabets were created, but writing was soon abolished. From 1979 to 1991, six different alphabets were created by different authors and groups of authors (Agranat 2021b). Textbooks, teaching aids, and methodological literature were published in all alphabets. Alphabets were used in parallel, there were even cases when a textbook for grade 1 was published in one alphabet, and for grade 2 in another. Such a number of simultaneously existing alphabets greatly hinders language learning. Since Kildin is taught in schools as an optional subject, some teachers refuse to teach it because of problems with writing. However, Saami teachers are being trained at university.

Writing in Ingrian begun in the era of language construction; a primer was written, and the language was taught in elementary schools. But in 1937, teaching stopped, and writing ceased to exist. Since then, no attempts have been made to resume writing.

Votic has never had a written language. Seto until recently was a non-written language; a primer has recently been published in Estonia, and extracurricular classes are being conducted. But Seto is not taught in Russia.

Livonian has been written since the middle of the 19th century; then the Gospel of St. Matthew was published in two dialects (Moseley 2002). In Soviet times, Livonian was taught at school as an optional subject. In the post-Soviet period, a primer was published for non-Livonian speaking children. There is quite a large amount of educational literature, including texts for learning the language at university and language courses.

7. Language Attitudes and Policies

The section of the UNESCO document under Factor 7 includes: "Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies, Including Official Status and Use", and under Factor 8: "Community Members' Attitudes toward Their Own Language".

National language policies, including the lack of overt policies, have a direct impact on the language attitudes of the communities (UNESCO 2003).

Khanty, Mansi, Vepsian, Saami, Ingrian, and Votic have the status of languages of the indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation, as well as Seto, which received this status relatively recently. The Unified List of Indigenous Minorities of the Russian Federation was approved in 2000; subsequently it was amended.

Khanty and Mansi peoples are guaranteed the right to use the

languages of indigenous peoples in official business. Vepsian can be used by local governments. No other languages analysed in this paper have such rights.

In 2018, a federal law was issued abolishing the compulsory study of all languages of the Russian Federation, except Russian. This corresponds to the UNESCO definition: “The government encourages minority groups to abandon their own languages by providing education for the minority group members in the dominant language. Speaking and/or writing in non-dominant languages is not encouraged” (UNESCO 2003: 13). Those languages that are not taught or are taught optionally, are not affected by this law. For those languages, whose teaching was compulsory before the passage of the law, there have been major changes. Their prestige has dropped sharply, and many parents have decided that their children should give up learning ethnic language in order to increase the time spent learning Russian.

Let us look at the dynamics of community members’ attitudes toward their own languages. An indirect indicator of this can be considered the number of those who call their ‘ethnic language’ their ‘native language’. As mentioned above, respondents often refer to the language of their ethnic group as their native language, regardless of whether they speak it or not. This is because “when members’ attitudes towards their language are very positive, the language may be seen as a key symbol of group identity” (UNESCO 2003: 14).

The question about mother tongue was asked in the Soviet censuses, but it was not asked in the 2002 Russian census, as its organizers found that respondents do not always reply to this question as expected. In the 2010 census, the question reappeared.

Language	Mother tongue		Size of ethnic group		Absolute number of speakers
	1989	2010	1989	2010	2010
Khanty	13615	11439	22521	30943	9584
Mansi	3140	1490	8484	12269	938
Vepsian	6355	1821	12501	5936	3613
Saami	797	336	1890	1771	353
Ingrian	302	74	820	266	123

TABLE 4. SUMMARY TABLE

If we look at data presented in Table 4, the number of Khantys has increased since 1989, but fewer respondents named Khanty as their native language. However, it seems important to note that according to the 2010 census, there are more people who name Khanty their native language, than the absolute number of speakers of the Khanty language. This indicates a positive attitude of the community towards their language. Approximately the same ratio is observed in the Mansi community, which allows us to draw the same conclusions.

Among the Veps, the dynamics of change in the size of the ethnic group is opposite, but the ratio between the size of the ethnic group and those who named Vepsian their native language is approximately the same as that of the Khanty and Mansi. However, according to the 2010 census among the Veps, unexpectedly, the number of speakers turned out to be twice as large as those who named Vepsian their native language. Perhaps this to some extent indicates the low prestige of the language among the community members.

Among the Saami, according to the 2010 census, the number of Saami speakers also exceeds the number of those who have named their ethnic language as their mother tongue, but this excess is insignificant. At the same time, with an almost unchanged size of the ethnic group, the number of those who consider the Saami language as their mother tongue has more than halved. It is unlikely that this can be evidence of a highly positive attitude of the community towards their language. And this is quite consistent with my field observations.

The decline in the prestige of Ingrian is demonstrated not only by indirect census data, but also by much more reliable sociolinguistic survey material. In the course of my sociolinguistic surveys, almost all members of the Ingrian community expressed an indifferent, if not negative, attitude towards their language (Agranat 2019b).

During my fieldwork among the Votic living in close proximity to the Ingrians, completely opposite results were obtained. All members of the community hold their language in high regard and want it to be promoted (Agranat 2019b).

As for Seto, the definition in the UNESCO document is ideally suited to its case: "When members' attitudes towards their language are very positive, the language may be seen as a key symbol of group identity. Just as people value family traditions, festivals and community events, members of the community may see

their language as a cultural core value, vital to their community and ethnic identity” (UNESCO 2003: 14)⁴.

The increasing prestige of the Livonian language is evidenced by the interest of young people in it, the emergence of new speakers, as well as its use in new areas: the composing and performing of ethnic rock song.

8. Factor 9: Amount and Quality of Documentation

The amount and quality of documentation in each of these languages varies. The Ingrian language is not documented well enough. There are a few grammatical sketches, but there is no complete grammatical description, although field data have been collected in recent years.

Seto is very poorly documented, although this gap is now being eliminated. If there are any materials on the dialects common in the historical homeland of Seto, then the Siberian Seto idiom first came to the attention of linguists in recent time.

Documentation of all languages is currently ongoing. Documenting Livonian is now almost impossible, since no native speakers remain; the language is spoken only by those who learned it in language courses or at university, but there is a body of field materials collected in previous centuries.

Conclusion

I have analysed the dynamics of the functioning of the minority Finno-Ugric languages in the post-Soviet space, from the dissolution of the Soviet Union to the present. All of these languages have a reduced number of speakers, some to a critical level. Many of these languages have ceased to be transmitted to children, while others have reduced intergenerational transmission. For the most important factors, all languages show a negative trend. All of these languages are in need of conservation measures and some of them need revitalization measures.

4 About the Seto language, culture and traditions, see for details Agranat (2019a).

References

- Agranat, T.B. (2005), "Vtoroje prišestvije vodi v perepisi 2002 goda", *Vserossijskij kongress antropologov i etnologov 2005*, Saint Petersburg.
- Agranat, T.B. (2014), "Dal'nejšije puti otmiranija dvukh pribaltijsko-finskih jazykov", in Mullonen, I.I., Zajtseva, N.G (Eds.), *V Vserossijskaja konferencija finno-ugrovedov "Finno-ugorskije jazyki i kul'tury v sociokul'turnom landshafte Rossii". Materialy*. Petrozavodsk.
- Agranat, T.B. (2015), "Saamskije jazyki", *Bošaja rossijskaja enciklopedija*, v. 29, Moskva.
- Agranat, T.B. (2019a), "Jazyk, kul'tura i tradicii pečorskikh seto", *Vestnik Moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo lingvističeskogo universiteta*, 4 (820): 219-226.
- Agranat, T.B. (2019b), "The Categorization of the Languages in Ingria and Language Loyalty of their Native Speakers", in Moskvitcheva, S., Viaut, A. (Eds.), *Minority Languages from Western Europe and Russia. Comparative Approaches and Categorical Configurations. Language Policy*. Vol. 21, Springer, Cham.
- Agranat, T.B. (2021a), "Osobnosti (ne)peredači jazyka u sibirskikh seto", *Tomskij žurnal lingvističeskikh i antropologičeskikh issledovanij*, 3: 9-18.
- Agranat, T.B. (2021b), "Pravila orfografii dlja mladopis'mennogo jazyka: slučaj kil'dinskogo saamskogo", *Rodnoj jazyk. Lingvističeskij žurnal*, 1: 30-42.
- Amelina, M.K., and Akbash E.U. (2016), "Mansijskij jazyk", in Mikhal'čenko, V.J. (Ed.), *Jazyk i obščestvo. Enciklopedija*. Moskva, 261-268.
- Census of USSR 1989, http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_lan_89_ru_1.php
- Census of Russia 2002, <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/census.php?cy=7>
- Census of Russia 2010, <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/census.php?cy=8>
- Chalvin, A. (2015), *Les Setos d'Estonie*. Armeline, Crozon.
- Ernštreits, V. (2012), "Livonian in 21st century", *Études finno-ougriennes*, 44:127-144.
- Ivanisheva, O. (2014), "The Kola Saami languages Contemporary sociolinguistic situation", *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 1.6: 96-109.
- Koškareva, N.B. (2016), "Khantyjskij jazyk", in Mikhal'čenko, V.J. (Ed.), *Jazyk i obščestvo. Enciklopedija*, Moskva, 535-539.
- Kovaliova S.V., Kondraškina, E.A. (2016). "Vepsskij jazyk", in Mikhal'čenko, V.J. (Ed.), *Jazyk i obščestvo. Enciklopedija*, Moskva, 103-106.
- Moseley, C. (2002), *Livonian*, Lincom Europa, Muenchen.

- Myznikov, C.A. (2005), "Etnojazykovaja assimil'acija vepsov i eje refleksy v russkikh govorakh", *Malyje jazyki i tradicii: suščestvovanie na grani 1*, Jazyki slavjanskich kul'tur, Moskva, 135-144.
- Ruotsala, H. (2005) "Kola Saami: history", in Kulonen, U-M. Seurujärvi-Kari, I., Pulkkinen, R. (Eds.), *The Saami. A Cultural Encyclopaedia*, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, Vammala, 161-164.
- UNESCO (2003), <https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/00120-EN.pdf>

The Historical Development of Buryat Pan-Mongolism

Davor Antonucci

1. Introduction

The first half of the 20th century was a period of great political and cultural ferment for Mongolian peoples. After centuries of division and the loss of independence and autonomy to the Russian and Manchu empires, in conjunction with the political crises that affected these empires the Mongols saw a chance to free themselves from the subordinate condition to which they had been relegated. However, the Mongols were in a position of great weakness; not only they had been always divided into tribes and clans - whose union was made possible by the figure of Chinggis Qan in the 13th century - but they had long been the subjects of two different empires, whose strength and nature were extremely different, but whose will to rule over the subjugated peoples was the same. It is therefore not incomprehensible that the Mongols of Buryatia in the Russian Empire, and those subject to the Manchu Empire, came up with different strategies to achieve their goals. Nevertheless, the idea of belonging to the same ethnic lineage not only united all the Mongolian people, but also directed their aspirations for self-determination, and their claims for cultural and territorial unity in what came to be known as "Greater Mongolia". In this historical context, the pan-Mongolian movement, the first modern nationalist ideology among the Mongols according to Szmyt (Szmyt, 2012), was born and developed; the

events of this movement would have great influence in shaping the fate of the different ethnic groups of the Mongolian people. As a matter of fact, pan-Mongolism can be regarded as a movement characterized by pluricentrism; it was multifaceted as well. Buryat intellectuals, Mongolian nobles and activists from both Inner and Outer Mongolia used it over half a century to build their national identity and pursue their own goals of autonomy or independence. Even foreign powers such as Japan saw pan-Mongolism as a means to achieve their political aims. In this short essay I will focus my attention on the historical events and developments of the pan-Mongolian movement related to Buryatia and its intelligentsia by reconstructing its development from its origins to the contemporary period.

Many scholars have been interested in the events that in the past century led to the emergence of the Mongolian People's Republic and its achievement of independence from China on the one hand, and to those related to Inner Mongolia and Buryatia on the other, clearly paying attention to pan-Mongolism as a historical phenomenon. But what do we mean by Pan-Mongolism? According to S. Chimitdorjev, a Buryat historian, pan-Mongolism "was a movement for national self-determination, political and cultural-ethnic rebirth of Mongolian peoples, for unification of Mongol land. It expressed interests of populations of the all-Mongol world, conduced conservation and consolidation of all-national ethnic, historical and linguistics bonds" (Bugat 2004). This movement originated quite recently, particularly after contacts with ideas coming from the West - especially through Russia - and its development unfolded, with ups and downs, throughout the 20th century.

2. Buryats in the Russian Empire

The Russian conquest of Siberia, considered an almost endless source of fur-bearing animals, was completed with incredible speed between the late 16th century and the first half of the 17th century. The Russian conquest of Siberia was made possible and more secure through the construction of a network of forts (*ostrogs*) located along river networks that served both as centres for colonization and outposts for the occupation of new territories, and for the advance to the east. Located at strategic points, *ostrogs* ensured control of transportation and trade as well as a safe refuge in case of attack. From these forts merchants and officials spread

to the surrounding areas to exploit the indigenous people through the collection of tributes (*iasak*), in furs, mainly sable (Mancall 1971)¹. In 1628, the first encounter with the Buryat Mongols took place along the Oka River, where the Russians had gone in search of silver mines. The Buryats were defeated, women and children taken prisoner. In the following decades there were several clashes between Russians and Buryats generally favouring the former who boasted in firearms the main factor of superiority on the battlefield. A similar fate befell the tribes settled east of Lake Baikal. A common strategy of all Buryat tribes was to escape Russian control and *iasak* payment by fleeing south and seeking refuge in Mongolia. However, sometimes because of the unstable situation in Mongolia, or because they were fomented by the Manchus to engage in anti-Russian activities, they went back to their own lands.

The Treaty of Kiakhta (1727), between the Russian and Manchu governments, established Russian-Mongolian boundary lines in northern Mongolia, effectively preventing free movement, while providing trade concessions to the Russians, who were granted the privilege of sending trade missions every three years to Beijing. In the 18th century, the Buryats east of Lake Baikal enjoyed wide autonomy, the aristocracy was granted social status, retention of judicial power, and exaction of taxes (Forsyth 1992). For a hundred years, Buryats and Tungus served as auxiliary troops of the Russians to control the borders of the region, becoming the 'Tungus and Buryat Cossacks regiments' of the Transbaikial region. Some Buryat nobles achieved important positions and became rich through corruption by seizing huge estates. However, the increase of Cossacks and Russian settlers in the region was such that by the end of the 19th century Buryats and Tungus constituted less than one third of the population of Transbaikalia. According to Forsyth (1992), the adoption of Tibetan Buddhism was the most significant new development among the Buryats in the eighteenth century. Thanks to Catherine the Great's tolerant religious policy, not only was the spread of Buddhism not hindered, especially in the Transbaikalia region, but an independent Lamaist Church was created,

1 The Russian government did not demand the adoption of Russian customs or language or religion. The main interest of the authorities was the collection of tribute in furs and, of course, the subjugation of the tribes. For these reasons, officials were instructed to establish friendly relations with the tribes, and chiefs were often given titles and gifts. However, more often they were victims of abuse and theft by the officials themselves (Rossabi 1975).

and as a consequence the number of lamas rapidly increased (there were 4673 in 1831).

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Buryats were still a thriving community, yet Russian government policies led to a gradual loss of autonomy on the one hand, and profound changes in the economy and nomadic lifestyle on the other. Particularly in the regions west of Lake Baikal, the Buryats were forced to abandon nomadism and embrace agriculture; land was confiscated by the state for redistribution between Russian and Buryat settlers. These profound changes pushed the Buryats into political activity: at a meeting held in Chita in 1905 they claimed greater democratic self-government autonomy, as well as the opening of schools where teaching was to be carried out in Mongolian Buryat.

Changes in the international environment offered new opportunities for the Mongols. As a matter of fact, the collapse of the two great Russian and Manchu empires at the beginning of the 20th century opened up space for Mongolian nationalist aspirations. During this period, pan-Mongolian ideas of a Greater Mongolia became more and more pressing. As Rupen pointed out “the Pan-Mongolism espoused by the Buryats was... an anti-Russian weapon and a Buryat expression of separatism, a threat that the Buryats would leave the Russian Empire and join a Greater Mongolia” (Rupen 1964). As a matter of fact, by the second half of the 19th century many Mongolian Buryats, such as Mikhail Bogdanov (1878-1919), Tsyben Zhamtsarano (1880-1940), El’bekdorji Rinchino (1885-1937) and others, had graduated from Russian universities, and they formed a new elite that contributed to the formation of a national ideology supporting and fostering the pan-Mongolian Buryat movement.

3. In search of independence, 1905-1921

Following the First Russian Revolution in 1905, liberal and socialist ideas circulated in the Russian Far East. Due to poor living conditions and the massive arrival of land-grabbing settlers, the Buryats reacted against Russian expansionism with pan-Mongolian political and nationalist claims. In 1905 Buryat nationalists convened in the first Buryat Congress of the Transbaikalia Region held in Chita (another one was held in Irkutsk in December of the same year²), presenting a programme of cultural pan-Mongolism with

² This was because the Buryat territories were divided into two administrative units west (Irkutsk province) and east (Transbaikalia) of Lake

Buddhism as a key element of pan-Mongolian identity (Murray, 2012). Several members of the young Buryat intelligentsia, who had received a Western education in Russian schools, attended this meeting, including Batu-dalai Ochirov, Zhamtsarano, Bazar Baradin and others, as well as *noyons* and delegates from Buddhist monasteries. Both meetings focused on claims for self-government, for laws and legal proceedings in Buryat, for religious freedom, and also for popular education in the Buryat language. In addition the delegates demanded the end of Russian colonization (Montgomery, 2011; Sablin, 2017a, 2017b). It is noteworthy that this 'cultural pan-Mongolism' caused the Orthodox Missionary Society a great deal of concern.

A few years later, in 1911, the Manchu Empire fell and the Chinese Republic was proclaimed. Taking advantage of the new political situation, on 29 December 1911 the rJe-btsun-dam-pa Qutuytu of Outer Mongolia was proclaimed ruler (Bogdo Qan) of a new Mongol state independent from China. On this occasion several letters were sent to the Inner Mongolian banners, the Barguts, the Oirats, the Uriyangqans asking to join the new pan-Mongolian state. According to Šima, many Buryats actively participated in the national liberation movement, members of the Buryat intelligentsia had brought revolutionary ideas to Mongolia even before the revolution (Šima, 1974). As a matter of fact, the revolution was led only by the nobility and the clergy, there was no popular uprising, it was primarily guided from above. In a similar way to the Buryats, a strong nationalistic and progressive sentiment animated the rebels who were aware of the need to reform the state apparatus in a modern sense.

This period is also characterized by the emergence of the Buryat intelligentsia in all-Mongol political arena with its idea of pan-Mongolism. Zhamtsarano, who travelled in Inner Mongolia in 1909-1910 and in 1911 moved to Outer Mongolia, was one of the main ideologists of pan-Mongolism. According to his opinion "Unification of Mongolia with Inner Mongolia, Buryatia, Kalmykia, and Mongol people of Xinjiang and Tuva will allow restoring historical region of inhabitation of Mongols, and turn the country into an authentic self-governing and sovereign state, independent from influences of Japan, China and Russia. In this case Mongolia can pursue the neutrality as Switzerland" (quoted in Bugat 2004). Nevertheless, due to the repressive policies of Nicholas II, it was not until the February Revolution of 1917 that the Buryats were

Baikal.

able to resume their political activities. In fact, the Russian Revolution marks the transition of pan-Mongolism from the cultural to the political sphere. Not only did the more radical Buryats thought they could exploit the Russian crisis to consolidate and expand what they had gained in autonomy in order to politically consolidate the entire Mongolian ethno-cultural community, they also expected to gain a privileged status within it. As Luzyanin observes “the Buryat version of Pan-Mongolism... implied a certain subjugation of the Mongolian tribes to themselves” (Baldano, Varnavskij 2017). The idea that the Buryats should play an important role and stand as the leader of the other Mongolian peoples is clearly expressed by the nationalist and pan-Mongolist Rinchino in a letter to D. Sampilon. He considered the Mongols and other Central Asian peoples to be too backward and consumed by Buddhist clericalism and thus of little use for the creation of a pan-Mongolian state: “Here we Buriats, the relatively more educated nation, would play and apparently will play an important role” (quoted in Kuzmin 2015). Immediately members of the Buryat intelligentsia convened an All-Buryat Congress to be held in Chita in 1917, during which a Buryat National Committee (Burnatskom) was formed. In the chaos of the civil war in Russia, and in the international historical context, several actors tried to play the pan-Mongolian card for their own interests.

On one hand the Russian Bolsheviki saw pan-Mongolism as an opportunity to bring the socialist revolution to the East, and to that end considered the unification of all the Mongolian tribes a valuable support for the emancipation of all the other oppressed peoples of Asia. On the other hand, opponents of the Bolsheviki - such as Ataman Semenov - also sought in the same way to use the pan-Mongol card to pursue their own purposes. Ataman Grigorii Semenov (1890-1946), a half-Buryat Cossack, was obsessed with the idea of creating a pan-Mongolian state under his control. He was born in a small Cossack village in south eastern Buryatia, had served in the Transbaikalian Cossack Army and fought in Europe in World War I. When he returned to the East he began recruiting soldiers and striking the Bolsheviki. When in mid-1918 Semenov's forces took control of Transbaikalia and Irkutsk provinces with the help of the Japanese, he began to create local governments. His activities aimed at creating a pan-Mongolian state included the creation of national Buryat military formations - something that was supported by the Burnatskom -, military assistance from Japan, as well as the involvement of other Mongolian peoples. To

this end, he had sent Tsydygov to conduct negotiations with the *noyons* and clergy of Inner Mongolia to gain their support for his pan-Mongolian movement especially in the matter of Mongolian self-determination (Kuzmin 2015).

Semenov's aspirations took shape in 1919 when a congress of pan-Mongolists convened in Chita was attended by delegates from Buryatia, Inner Mongolia, and Barga, while Outer Mongolians, though not represented, gave their support to the initiative. The Congress established the creation of a federal Great Mongolian State that was to include Inner Mongolia, Outer Mongolia, Barga and Buryat Transbaikalia. Semenov was invited to become the first adviser to the new government led by Inner Mongolia's Qutuγtu Neisse Gegen. A delegation was sent to the Versailles Peace Conference with the intent of having the pan-Mongolian state recognized, but without success (Kuras 2010). The contingent situation prompted Japan to withdraw its support to the new pan-Mongolian state; another blow to the movement was dealt by the refusal of Outer Mongolia to be part of the new federal state. Why did Outer Mongolia not support the new pan-Mongolian state? According to Rupen "perhaps the dominant reason was suspicion of Semenov and the many Buryats who organized it" (Rupen 1964). Finally, in 1920 the establishment of the Far Eastern Republic controlled by the Bolsheviks marked the end of this pan-Mongolian project strongly supported by Semenov and other members of the Buryat intelligentsia.

4. The Communist period - unity betrayed

With the advance of the Bolsheviks and the withdrawal of the Japanese, the Buryats sought to negotiate broad autonomy within the Soviet Union, rather than pursue a difficult independence. In return they would help the Soviets in Outer Mongolia. With the end of the civil war and the victory of the Bolsheviks, the two Buryat-Mongolian autonomous regions were united in order to form the Buryat-Mongolian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (1923) with Verkhneudinsk (Ulan-Ude) as the capital. It is interesting to note that at that time Buryats were already a minority in Buryatia (43.8 percent of the total population in 1926).

At the beginning, the Soviet leadership viewed pan-Mongolism as a useful tool for exporting the revolution to the Far East. This is why they supported initiatives aimed at unifying the Mongolian tribes. In this sense "the pan-Mongolism of the Buryat-Bolsheviks

served the Comintern well” (Bugat 2004). In fact, several Mongolian Buryats – such as Rinchino and Zhamtsarano who drafted the first platform of the Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party (1921) – played an important role in the founding of the Mongolian People’s Republic (MPR, 1924), still others held positions within the government (e.g. Dashi Sampilon was Minister of Economics and Trade). Rupen considers that “this extension of Buriat activity to Outer Mongolia is itself one face of pan-Mongolism” (Rupen 1956). During the 1920s, Ulan-Bator was frequented by Mongols from all backgrounds who had often studied in Russia, China or Japan. They were moved by a sincere spirit of brotherhood and animated by the idea of reuniting all Mongolian tribes with the now independent MPR. This pan-Mongolian sentiment finds expression in Rinchino’s words to the Third Congress of MPRP in 1924: “We must be the cultural centre for our races, we must attract to ourselves the Inner Mongols, Barga Mongols, etc...” (Rupen 1964). However, this was not the orientation of the Comintern, which aimed to keep Inner and Outer Mongolia separate. As a result, the pan-Mongolian ideas advocated by Rinchino were attacked and he was charged with ‘chauvinist deviation’.

In the same years in Buryatia, an early Soviet policy of *korenizatsija* was carried out for the development of the Buryat language and culture, in the aim of building an inclusive socialist society (Chakars 2014). Basically the economy continued to be based on nomadism, even Buddhism could continue to be practiced. The situation changed radically from 1929 onward. The policies of forced collectivization initiated by Stalin had serious consequences on traditional Buryat society; the creation of collective farms and the forcing of people to reside in sedentary villages found great resistance among the nomads. These economic policies were also accompanied by measures that affected the Buryat culture and language, which from 1939 was written in Cyrillic. Those who opposed directives from Moscow were accused of threatening the country’s Soviet modernizing goals. The purges of the 1930s hit the old elite, the lamas, and pan-Mongolist intellectuals. Stalin established a climate of terror where thousands of Buryats were accused of being ‘pan-Mongolists’, ‘Japanese spies’ and ‘bourgeois nationalists’. Many were arrested, executed, or died in prisons or labour camps (Chakars 2014). Among them Rinchino (1937), the Communist Party Secretary M. N. Yerbanov (1937), and the president of the Buryat Republic Dampilon. In response to Mao’s policies, who used pan-Mongolism to try to bring all Mongolian peoples back

under Chinese hegemony³, in the USSR, in order to prevent the return of pan-Mongolism, contacts between the Mongolian peoples - i.e. in MPR, Inner Mongolia and Buryatia - were not allowed. The term 'Mongol' was even removed from the Buryat-Mongol Autonomous Region (and also from other district names). In the 1970s, the teaching of Mongolian in schools was abolished. The overall aim was to separate Buryat national consciousness from general-Mongolian consciousness, and replace it with Soviet cosmopolitanism (Bugat 2004).

5. Post-Soviet period

The fall of the Soviet regime, and the consequent process of decentralization in Russia, gave the opportunity in the territories of the Russian Federation inhabited by Mongols for the rebirth of nationalist and separatist drives. At the same time there was a revival of Buryat culture and language, promoted by institutions and the media. A Centre of Buryat National Culture was created in Ulan-Ude sponsored by Popatov's government (Chakars 2014). Since the late 80s, the newly re-established contacts with the other Mongols led among the intellectuals to the revival of pan-Mongolian aspirations. The high degree of autonomy and decentralization of power allowed the Republics of Tuva and Buryatia to reorient their national culture and re-construct non-Russian identities. As a consequence, from 1990 onwards pan-Mongolian ideas re-emerged in Buryatia, new nationalistic movements were founded like the Buryat-Mongol People's Party (founded with the purpose of independence and unification with Mongolia), and the Negedel (i.e. Buryat Movement for National Unity), among others. The first All-Buryat Congress for the Spiritual Rebirth and Consolidation of the Nation was held in Ulan-Ude between February 22 and 24, 1991 (other congresses were held in 1996 and 2002). Notably, an All-Buryat Association for the Development of Culture, sponsored by the Republican government, was founded in order to formally coordinate Buryat cultural activities throughout the USSR. However, according to Bugat (2004), its real purpose was to contrast the pro-liberation movements. During the same period in Mon-

3 The Soviets' position regarding the Buryats is exemplified by an episode that occurred during the visit of the Soviet delegation in Beijing in 1954. When Mao officially asked Khrushchev to reunite the MPR with China, he answered that "there are no Mongols living in the USSR" (Bugat 2004).

golia the Movement for Unity of the Mongol Nation was founded. It had close contacts with the Buryat-Mongol People's Party and Negedel, and also assisted Inner Mongolia dissidents who fled from China. As a consequence, tensions between Mongol nationalists and Chinese authority increased in the 1990s, many Inner Mongols were arrested and put in jail. In Tuva, the Tuva Popular Front asked for a referendum on the independence and secession from the Russian Federation. The re-emergence of nationalist positions in the 1990s made it clear to the Russian and Chinese governments that pan-Mongolism was still alive and could pose a threat to their territorial integrity. Eventually, taking into account mainly economic aspects, Buryatia decided to remain within the Russian Federation (1992) as an autonomous republic. As Humphrey (1996) pointed out, looking at the difficult economic situation of their Mongolian neighbours, the Buryats wondered what advantage they would gain from joining with Mongolia. Eventually, in 1994 the first free elections were held.

During the post-Soviet period, the Mongolian Republic's economic and political weakness in the international context made it impossible for any pan-Mongolian ideas to return. The two big powers, the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, have always viewed any Mongolian nationalist initiatives with suspicion. As a matter of fact, the friendship treaties concluded with these two super powers have for the time being decreed the end of any pan-Mongolian aspirations.

Finally, it should be mentioned that during the early 90s nationalist and pan-Mongolian ideas emerged, but they failed to gain the support of the majority of the population, both in Buryatia and in Mongolia. Although widespread among intellectuals, they did not receive the necessary support in political circles.

References

- Baldano, M. N., Varnavskij, P. K. (2017), "«Velikaja Mongolija»: koncepcija političeskogo edinstva i popytka eë realizacii (1900-1920 gg.)", *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, 419: 99-108.
- Bugat, A.L. (2004), *Greater Mongolia Without Pan-Mongolism?*, The Institute for Strategic Studies Vol. XXIV, Ulaanbaatar.
- Chakars, M. (2014), *The Socialist Way of Life in Siberia. Transformation in Buryatia*, Central European University Press, Budapest-New York.
- Forsyth, J. (1992), *A History of the Peoples of Siberia Russia's North Asian*

- Colony 1581-1990*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Humphrey, C. (1996), "Buryatiya and the Buryats", in Smith, G. (Ed.), *The Nationalities Question in the Post-Soviet States*, Longman, London: 113-125.
- Kuras, L. (2010), "Panmongolizm v vozzreniyah Atamana Semenova", *Vlast'*, 8: 31-34.
- Kuzmin, S. L. (2015), "Panmongol'skoe dviženie 1919-1920 gg. i mongol'skaja gosudarstvennost'", *Eurasia: Statum et Legem*, 1, 4: 97-107.
- Mancall, M. (1971), *Russia and China: Their Diplomatic Relations to 1728*, Cambridge, Mass.
- Montgomery, R. W. (2011), "Buriat Political and Social Activism in the 1905 Revolution," *Sibirica* 10, 3: 1-28.
- Murray, J.D. (2012), *Building Empire among the Buryats Conversion Encounters in Russias Baikal Region, 1860s-1917*, Ph.D. dissertarion, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- Rossabi, M. (1975), *China and Inner Asia. From 1368 to the Present Day*, Thames and Hudson, London.
- Rupen, R. A. (1956), "The Buriat Intelligentsia", *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, 15, 3: 383-398.
- Rupen, R. A. (1964), *Mongols of twentieth century*, Indiana University Press, Blomington.
- Sablin, I. (2017a), *Governing Post-Imperial Siberia and Mongolia 1911-1924: Buddhism, Socialism, and nationalism in state and autonomy building*, Routledge London-New York.
- Sablin I. (2017b), "Democracy in the Russian Far East during the Revolution of 1905-1907", *Russian History*, 44, 2-3: 449-475.
- Šima, J.P. (1974), "On the Character of the So-Called Pan-Mongol Movement After 1911", *Archív Orientální* 42: 97-119.
- Szmyt, Z. (2012), "The History of Nation and Ethnicity in Mongolia", *Sensus Historiae*, VIII, 3: 11-28.

The Sakha Language in the School System of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia): Situation and Problems

Ekaterina Arutyunova

Introduction

The relevance of the topic of this article is determined by several reasons. Ethnic languages, their statuses and the perception of these statuses are not only among the most debated topics in ethnopolitics, but also an extremely sensitive area of research in ethnic identity and interethnic interactions in Russia. The educational model concerning languages, and the regional component of education have changed several times in the post-Soviet period, mainly due to debates and conflicts over the use of the state languages of the republics in school education, most notably in 2017-2018 (Arutyunova, 2019) and after subsequent changes in federal legislation. As a result of these amendments, the state languages of the republics are studied voluntarily, the native languages are studied within the possibilities provided by the education system, and the Russian language can be chosen for study as the subject 'Native Language', which was not the case before. Language activists in the republics perceive the new version of the law as Russification and suppression of ethnic languages (Rossija: Jazykovaja reforma, 2019), although the actual language situation differs significantly in the republics.

This article examines the case of Sakha (Yakutia), which is a

republic within the Russian Federation with a specific situation regarding the use of the Sakha language in everyday life and in education. Sakha (Yakutia) is the largest region of the Russian Federation, located in the Far East and Siberia. The permanent population of the republic is less than a million people. According to the 2010 Census, slightly less than half are Sakhas (Yakuts) - 49.9%, 37.8% - ethnic Russians, 2.2% - Evenks, 2.2% Ukrainians, 1.6% Evens (Vserossijskaja perepis' naselenija 2010). Ethnic Russians (as well as Ukrainians, Tatars and people of various nationalities from all over the Soviet Union) came to the republic *en masse* in the second half of the 20th century to work in the industry, which was then actively developing. The Republic still has a pronounced zoning in terms of economy and employment. Its highlights are industrial areas, agricultural areas (in central Yakutia and northern regions), and also the capital city of Yakutsk. The proportions of the non-Sakha population are large in industrial areas and in Yakutsk. There is a small proportion of Russian old-timers whose ancestors settled in the region back in the 17th century. In the republic, there is a rather noticeable differentiation of the industrial employment of "newcomers" and the local population (segregation model, or niche model, see Drobizheva, 2002). Sakhas are much more represented in the republican and local government, science, culture, and education sectors, while ethnic Russians are more represented in industry. Back in Soviet times, there were attempts to attract the local population to the industrial sector. These efforts are still being undertaken now and some progress is noticeable, but it does not become a trend.

Sakha (Yakutia) is a republic, that is, one of the varieties of equal subjects of the Russian Federation. For this article, it is important to consider that one of the differences between republics and other types of subjects of the Russian Federation is the possibility for republics to establish their own state (republican) languages along with Russian. According to the "Law on Languages in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)" (1992), the two state languages in the republic are Sakha (Yakut) and Russian. Evenk, Even, Yukaghir, Dolgan, and Chukchi languages have the status of local official languages in places where these ethnic groups belonging to the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East live compactly.

The result of the early 1990s period of sovereignization in the republic was a noticeable rise in the ethnic identity of Sakhas. This period is often called the 'national revival'. The contents and forms of language policies in education in the 1990s were largely deter-

mined by the “Concept of renewal and development of National schools in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)”, commonly referred to as the “National Concept” (1991; see Slepcev 2003). Its key principles were teaching in the native language, the use of elements of ethnopedagogy, and familiarization with traditional culture. As a result, the share of Sakha speakers among the Yakuts significantly increased, the range of subjects taught in the Sakha language expanded, as well as the social and cultural functions of the Sakha language. The concept has become a tool of ethnic construction, which has instilled in young Yakuts an orientation to their native language, traditional culture and lifestyle as a key ethnic values.

However, the position of the Sakha language has been determined not only by this. Between the censuses of 1989 and 2002, there was an outflow of ethnic Russians (as well as Ukrainians, Belarusians, Tatars). The share of Sakhas in the population of the republic increased from one third in 1989 to half in 2010. In addition, a significant part of the Yakuts are rural residents, and the rural environment is predominantly monoethnic. As a result, the preservation and functionality of the Sakha language is very high. However, economic instability, unemployment and a low standard of living encourage rural residents to move, mainly to the capital, Yakutsk, where half of the population of the republic lives. As a result, the share of Sakhas in the city’s population structure increased 2.5 times compared to 1989 (Ivanova, 2017). As a cumulative result of all these processes, new trends of the sociolinguistic Yakut space emerged, including:

- expansion of the functioning of the Sakha language in the language landscape of the capital. As a consequence, there is a high degree of its preservation as a native (first) language;
- reduction of assimilation trends among Yakuts, increasing fluency in the Yakut language among native speakers;
- a slight decrease in levels of Russian language proficiency among Sakhas, with preservation of positive language attitudes towards it;
- a moderate increase in the social functions of the Yakut language along with a moderate reduction in use of the Russian language. Replacement of monolingualism (Russian or Yakut) with functional bilingualism (Ivanova, 2017).

Taking into account these trends, as well as the increased importance of language subjects in education, the next paragraph will present the ‘language landscape’ of the republic in 2019. The anal-

ysis is based on the results of a sociological study conducted with the participation of the author in April – May 2019. The study included a survey based on a representative sample of the republic population (n=1500), as well as 30 expert interviews and 4 focus groups in the cities of Yakutsk and Mirny. The study was aimed at a comprehensive analysis of interethnic relations in the republic; however, given the urgency of the language problem in school education, almost all participants addressed this issue. The questionnaire included a special block of questions on language topics. The analysis is focused on Sakhas and Russians for two reasons. First, these are the most numerous ethnic groups in the republic, and, secondly, Sakha and Russian are the state languages in Sakha (Yakutia). Statistical representation of other ethnic and linguistic categories in this study was impossible due to the small sample size.

Language situation in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)

Language remains the most important indicator of ethnicity: 84% of Sakhas and 63% of ethnic Russians in the republic answered that language relates them to people of their ethnicity. All other indicators turned out to be less important, in particular, culture, history, appearance and others. Sakhas consider 'Language support' and 'Preservation of culture' the most important features (58% for each category). Their importance is deemed even higher than economic and social well-being, and strengthening the independence of the republic.

In the republic, there is a marked differentiation in the use of languages in the home sphere, as well as, to some extent, in the working and educational spheres of life, depending on ethnicity. Among other things, this indicates a high degree of preservation and functionality of the Yakut language, as well as its high symbolic value for Sakhas. In home communication, three quarters of Sakha (73%) use mainly the Yakut language, another 18% speak both languages.

More than a quarter (27%) of the Sakha respondent children are taught in the Yakut language, 18% - in Russian and every third (31%) in both languages (Table 1). However, this indicator cannot be the basis for an analysis of formal educational statistics, since respondents can assess the situation subjectively, not in the categories of the education system. Teaching in both languages may well mean studying in Yakut classes or schools, but almost every-

where after the 4th grade the educational process uses Russian-language textbooks while taking place in Yakut.

The language of home communication 2019 (%)		
“What language do you mostly speak at home?”	Sakhas	Ethnic Russians
Sakha	73	1
Russian	8	97
Both languages (Sakha and Russian)	18	2
Other language	0	0
No answer	1	0
The language in which respondent children study at school 2019 (%)		
“What language are (were) your children taught in at school?”	Sakhas	Ethnic Russians
Sakha	27	0
Russian	18	70
Both languages (Sakha and Russian)	31	4
Other language	0	0
There are no children or they are not studying yet	22	25
No answer	2	1

TABLE 1

Sakhas living in villages, cities and the capital of the republic clearly differed in their use of Yakut, how it could be expected. Among rural Sakhas, Yakut is much more common as the language of home communication (83%), and as the predominant language of work (58%). About 30% of rural Sakhas use both languages at work.

In the capital and in other cities, Yakuts mostly speak Sakha at home (59-64%), although noticeably less than in villages, if compared with above data. About 17% of Sakhas in Yakutsk speak mainly Russian at home, in other cities - 13%; every fifth Sakha (20-21%) uses both languages at home.

In cities and the capital, the Yakut language is noticeably less frequent, but still very actively used in the working environment. Yakuts in the capital city of Yakutsk most often speak Russian at work (38%) or both languages (35%), and one in five (21%) speaks mainly Sakha. Yakuts living in cities, compared with Yakuts living

in the capital of the republic, show significantly higher shares of Yakut use at work - 36%, almost the same (34%) of Russian, while another 25%, i.e. every fourth speaker, speaks both languages at work.

The vast majority of Sakhas (95%) considers the Sakha language their native language. Given that in Russia a native language is mostly understood on the basis of ethnic rather than functional features, it can reasonably be concluded that the native language has a high symbolic value for Yakuts, especially considering that slightly smaller numbers of Sakhas report speaking Sakha fluently (85%).

Russian is defined a native language by 18% of Sakhas, so part of the respondents has two native languages. Basically, such people live in the capital of the republic: 90% of the capital's Sakhas call Sakha their native language, and 38% Russian. In cities and towns, 96% of Sakhas answered that Sakha is their native language, 18% - Russian. This proves that bilingualism does not weaken the perception of the value of the Sakha language.

The vast majority of Sakhas, judging by their answers, speak Sakha to one degree or another: 85% are fluent and another 11% are good speakers, but not fluent. Among Sakhas, there are practically no respondents who answered that they do not speak Sakha well or do not speak it at all (only 2% and 1%, respectively). There are almost no age differences: over 80% of Sakhas of different ages speak Sakha fluently.

Sakhas who permanently live in the capital of the republic speak Sakha fluently less often (73%) than in villages and cities (88-89%). It should also be considered that this data is largely due to the number of speakers who moved to Yakutsk from villages, and were not born here. Thus, among Sakhas born in Yakutsk (29% of the total), slightly less than half speak Sakha fluently (46%). Among those residents of the capital who moved from other cities of the republic, 70-74% speak Sakha fluently, and among those who moved from villages, 89% are fluent in Yakut. About 6% of Yakuts born in the capital do not speak Sakha at all.

Among ethnic Russians, 9% speak Sakha fluently or well, another 16% speak poorly, and 72% do not speak at all. Russians speaking the Sakha language mainly live in Yakutsk: 6% of the Russians from Yakutsk answered that they speak Sakha fluently, while another 9% answered that they speak it well, but not fluently. Still, another 23% identify their Sakha language skills as poor. In industrial areas, Russians report Sakha language skills much less often, that is, 2% speak fluently, 2% speak well, and another 13% speak Sakha poorly.

Among Sakhas, the demand for knowledge of the language is very high, this is confirmed by the fact that 85% would like their children or grandchildren to speak Sakha first of all. Such a request is slightly higher in cities and villages (87% each), than in Yakutsk (79%). Ethnic Russians reported a 15% request for knowledge of the Yakut language, this is slightly higher for older Russians (18% would like their children and grandchildren to speak Yakut), and lower for youngest generations (11%).

Language in education in Sakha (Yakutia)

At the moment, the use of state and native languages in school education in the republic is quite variable. Several models of such use can be distinguished:

- Teaching in Sakha. Getting a school education in the Sakha language is possible in two formats. The first is education in specialized schools, historically called 'national schools'. There are only a few such schools in the republic. The second, and much more common, format is teaching in Sakha in special classes in schools with Russian as a language of instruction ('national classes'). In this case, from grade 1 to 4 teaching is conducted in Sakha completely, Russian is studied as a subject. From the 5th grade, there is usually a transition to textbooks in Russian. This model prevails in Sakha-speaking areas, as well as in some schools in the capital of the republic. In 'national schools', education in Sakha can continue even after the 4th grade, but there are difficulties with textbooks for certain subjects in the Sakha language.
- Teaching in Russian with the study of the Sakha language as the subject 'Native language' (plus the subject 'Native literature'). It is implemented from the 5th grade, with regards to the model outlined above, or during the entire learning process.
- Teaching in Russian with the study of Sakha as a state language (if the school makes such a decision on the basis of its autonomy under federal law). The programmes for studying the language as a state language or as a native language differ. In this case, Sakha is studied one hour a week, mainly from grades 5 to 9. If a school decides that Sakha is going to be studied, then all students of that educational establishment will study it, regardless of their ethnicity.
- Teaching in Russian without studying Sakha as the state language (this model is widespread mainly in industrial areas of

the republic, where the proportion of non-Yakut population is large). Those who wish to study Sakha within the framework of the subject 'Native language' can study it, provided appropriate resources exist in a given school.

Schools determine curricula independently, the format of choice is open to consultations with the school administration, parents, and the city's education department. We are reporting 2019 data on the city of Yakutsk, where half of the population lives. Out of the 51 city schools, there are 5 national schools; 27 schools have 425 classes with Yakut as language of instruction. Classes with Sakha are formed every new academic year when school students are admitted to the first grade, at the request of parents (or legal representatives of the children).

In studies conducted in other republics of Russia, the author recorded opinions of language activists that the 'Yakut model' with significant use of Sakha in education has serious advantages in terms of language preservation over models which included the study of the second state languages of the republics by all schoolchildren, regardless of ethnicity. These previous models were available before amendments to federal legislation were introduced. Despite such proclaimed successes, the language issue is quite salient in the republic.

According to other fieldwork we conducted with the same sample conducted in 2021, almost half of Sakhas (47%) answered that the Sakha language should be mandatory for all schoolchildren in the republic. Among ethnic Russians, this opinion was shared by no more than 15%. Voluntary study of Sakha was supported by 37% of Yakuts, and by 66% of Russian residents of the republic (Table 2).

<i>Which of the opinions listed below do you support? 2021 %</i>	Sakhas	Ethnic Russians
Sakha should be a compulsory subject for all schoolchildren	47	15
Sakha should be studied voluntarily by those who wish	37	66
Sakha should be mandatory only for Yakuts	13	16
Sakha should not be taught in school at all	0	1
No answer	2	2

TABLE 2

Sakha attitudes regarding the obligation to study the Sakha language for all schoolchildren can be considered an indirect indicator of the perception of the status of the language as a state language of the republic, and in general, as an indicator of the idea that the Sakhas living in the republic are the titular ethnic group. This perception is greatly reinforced by language contradictions in other republics and tendencies towards excessive centralization in Russia.

Experts believe that despite the study of native languages in schools has become more complex due to changes in legislation on education, those changes had some positive impact on the attitudes of Sakhas towards their ethnic language. A language activist reported that:

"We have a trend of learning our native language. Thanks to this trend, a lot of people began to talk at home in Sakha, read in Sakha, and so on"

Despite the significant provision of education in Sakha, our fieldwork shows that language activists view the situation pessimistically, citing the following arguments. Sakhas moving from rural to urban areas often prefer to send their children to schools with the Russian language of instruction in order to provide them with more opportunities for social growth. Activists consider federal educational policies responsible for such choices, since All-Russian tests and Unified state exams are conducted in Russian.

As in other republics, activists are acutely aware of the new possibility of choosing to study Russian as a native language. They note that Sakhas in cities, and especially in the capital, often speak their native (ethnic) language poorly, or do not speak it at all (however, our research data does not confirm this). An activist observed that:

"It was probably necessary to develop it in more detail somehow. Now, [Russian] can also be chosen as a native language [for studying at school] by Sakha speakers, and this will lead to the loss of the language. If Russian as a native language was chosen only by [ethnic] Russians, then please, no problem. But here is the question: there are a lot of Russian-speaking Sakhas, yes? If they choose Russian as their native language, then I see a problem here. [...] I think it should be so that if [someone] was born Sakha, they should speak Sakha."

Even if parents want their children to study in a specialised school, or in a class with the Sakha language of instruction, they face a shortage of schools offering this option. This happens, for example, in Yakutsk city. The population there is growing due to internal migrants arriving from rural areas. As a result, classes in

schools are often overcrowded, and teaching is arranged in two shifts in some schools. Such logistic problems can be perceived by locals as infringement of their own rights, and not as systemic problems that concern all residents. Logistic problems affect the language situation in another aspect: since there is a general shortage of kindergartens in the city, not only those providing education in Sakha, the problem of continuing education in this language arises.

For specialized national schools, the territorial attachment of schools becomes a problem for preserving the language environment. Schools are required to accept students on the basis of their residence, regardless of whether they speak the language of instruction. Thus, children register at national schools without knowledge of the language of instruction. According to the law they have to be accepted, given that there may be only one or two schools in the micro district of the city where they live. Activists and teachers say that the language environment is under threat due to this situation. I will report on a specific case. Ajyy Kyhata School (Yakutsk) is a Yakut national school established in the mid-2000s with instruction in Sakha in order to preserve its linguistic and cultural environment. In 2019, the school moved to a new purpose-built building located in a dynamically developing new neighbourhood of the city of Yakutsk. There were no Russian-language schools in this micro district at that time, which meant that this national school was required by law to accept all school students living in the micro district, regardless of whether they knew Sakha or not. Initially, the school announced that it would not accept children who did not speak Sakha, relying on its own charter and the goals of preserving the Sakha cultural and linguistic environment. Activist parents (about 200 people of different ethnicities, including Sakhas) opposed this policy, asking for the opportunity for their children to study at this school, that is, they required the opening of classes with Russian as a language of instruction. The issue became the subject of publications in the media under titles such as “The Yakut school does not accept Russian children.” As a result, classes with the Russian language of instruction were opened at the school. In this mode, the school worked until September 2021, when a new school with instruction in Russian was opened in the micro district. This case is very revealing, since both sides were right. On the one hand, the right to preserve one’s linguistic and cultural identity, guaranteed by the Constitution and several other laws of the Russian Federation

had to be granted, and on the other, the right to attend school near home, also enshrined in law, also had to be taken into account.

Another problem in the situation of the Sakha language is the lack of textbooks for teaching in the language for many subjects (mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, and so on) for grades over the 4th, since such textbooks have not been created, or are not included in the Federal List of Textbooks. Only for the disciplines 'Native Language' and 'Native Literature' textbooks in Sakha for grades over the 4th are included in the federal list of textbooks. In high schools, language instruction is often based on Russian-language textbooks with explanations in Sakha. The federal list changes regularly, so textbooks sometimes end up being deleted from the list. In these cases, in some schools, the teaching of subjects in Sakha is carried out according to specially designed manuals that do not undergo such strict verification as textbooks.

According to language activists, the main problem with the Sakha language, beyond the sphere of education, is that there are not enough contents in it. At the same time, in comparison with many other languages of ethnic groups in Russia, Sakha enjoys quite prosperous conditions. There is language education in schools, and it can be studied as a subject. There is television in Sakha through the Sakha National Broadcasting Company. There is Yakut cinema, which has become a special phenomenon in cinema in Russia. However, there are no, or not enough, cartoons for children in Sakha, and YouTube and other popular Internet resources are in English and Russian. All this causes a language shift among young people, although in general there is still a noticeable Sakha-Russian bilingualism. Language activists are working on translating cartoons into Sakha, and on translating in Sakha Wikipedia. In general, this activity can be considered successful to some extent.

Ethnic activists are often focussed on the problems of preserving the language and expanding its teaching and learning. However, there are other problems besides recognition and promotion of language rights. Experts in the field of higher education speak about a certain decrease in the level of Russian language proficiency in the republic. If it concerns rural residents, then this is quite understandable, since their language environment is actually mono-ethnic.

A teacher of technical specialties for mining in the city of Mirny, one of the industrial districts of the republic, commented:

"I can tell you as a teacher. We take young people from the villages who came to the mining department. [There is] a language barrier. They don't understand. Russian is spoken there [in the villages] only in Russian language classes, and even in these classes, half of them speak Yakut. And their understanding is quite limited. They only begin to understand everything normally by the third or fourth year. We used to have a lot of Mirny residents [i.e. Russian speakers] in these groups, and when they communicate, progress is being made. And when there are only Yakuts from the village in groups, there is no such progress."

However, for rural youth, insufficient skills in Russian, combined with insufficient personal economic resources, may be the reason for limiting social mobility. The increased sense of inequality in such cases, as a rule, is the ground for tensions in interethnic communication. Representatives of mining companies also speak about the need for sufficient Russian language skills and problems due to a lack of it:

"Unfortunately, people even with very good inclinations, when they do not know how to communicate in a team, when they cannot clearly express their thoughts, what kind of future awaits them? [...] I am trying to make it clear to these people: if you are going to work in the industry, in a team, and not as an individual entrepreneur, this is necessary for you. You have to develop skills in yourself. When you come to get a job, you must present yourself in Russian. If a person is going to work in a rural school all his life, perhaps he does not need Russian at this level. If he wants to work in industry, the Russian language is very important to him."

Conclusion

The linguistic landscape of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) is a product of historical, demographic, and situational factors. The high degree of preservation and functionality of the Sakha language and its high symbolic value for Sakhas emerge as quite obvious from our surveys and observations. At the same time, they coexist with concerns of language activists about the prospects of the Sakha language. The language activists' alarmist discourses developed, among other things, as a result of a common agenda for ethnic and language activists in different Russian republics, actualized in connection with ethnolinguistic contradictions in education. The idea, widespread in Yakut public opinion, about the need for compulsory study of Sakha by all schoolchildren, regardless of ethnicity, testifies not only an influence of the language debate on educational issues. It also indirectly affects the perception of the status of Sakhas as the titular ethnic group of the

republic. The ongoing centralization efforts and narrowing of the powers of the regions in the Russian Federation, and the influence of global processes and technologies contribute to the growth of concerns about the status of the republic, and about the future of the Sakha language and the preservation of the original Sakha culture. At the same time, some contradictory situations, which on the surface could appear to be related to ethnicity and language rights, may in fact reflect completely different problems, including issues of poor infrastructure. Such cases can be perceived as attacks to ethnic concerns, even when they are solved by effective management in view of urban development.

In general, the functioning of the Sakha language in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) is guaranteed by the linguistic educational environment of the republic, including the opportunities for school education in Sakha; by the large proportion of Sakhas among the republic population, including the large proportion of rural population for whom Sakha is the main functional language; and by the active bilingualism and high level of ethnic identity among Sakhas.

References

- Arutyunova, E.M. (2019), "Jazykovej konflikt v raznyx izmerenijax: kejsy Tatarstana i Baškortostana", *Sociologičeskij žurnal*, 25(1): 98-120.
- Drobiževa, L.M. (Ed.) (2002). "Social'noe neravenstvo ètničeskix grupp: predstavlenija i real'nost'", Academia, Moscow.
- Vserossijskaja perepis' naselenija - 2010. http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis_itogi1612.htm (last accessed 14.04.2022)
- Ivanova, N.I. (2017). "Sociolingvističeskie aspekty funkcionirovanija jakutskogo jazyka v g.Jakutske: cifry i fakty". Institut gumanitarnych issledovanij i problem maločislennyx narodov Severa SO RAN, Jazyki Narodov Mira, Moskva.
- Rossija: jazykovaja reforma porodila obvinenija v prinuditel'noj rusifikacii. 11.03.2019. Eurasianet. <https://russian.eurasianet.org/россия-языковая-реформа-породила-обвинения-в-принудительной-русификации> (last accessed 16.04.2022)
- Slepcov, P.A. (2003) (Ed.). *Sovremennye jazykovye processy v Respublike Sakha (Jakutija): aktual'nye problemy*. Nauka, Novosibirsk.

Competing Language Ideologies and Language Policies in Ukraine and Their Impact on Minorities

Paola Bocale

Since the independence, language policies in Ukraine have been shaped by two contrasting and competing ideological stances. On the one hand, the recognition of Ukrainian as a fundamental marker of the national identity that would include everybody who lived in and supported Ukraine, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. This ideology has been implemented into language and educational policies aimed at linguistically unifying the country, making sure that standard Ukrainian is systematically learnt at schools and used throughout the nation. On the other, a willingness to acknowledge and accept the reality of the multilingualism of the country, particularly in what concerns the diffuse Ukrainian and Russian bilingualism. This ideological stance has been a recurrent topic in the political agenda, and has also found implementation, over time, in some policies and regulations. The tension between the two ideologies has been mediated, from time to time, by a centrist position, which advocates a common sense, pragmatic approach as a solution to Ukraine's complex coexistence of languages.

This work will analyse the various language ideologies that have informed language policies in Ukraine, contributing to the country's nation-building after its independence in 1991. It will start with a description of Ukraine's complex ethnic and linguistic diversity. It will then review the different language and educational

policies that have been introduced and implemented since 1989, analysing the language ideologies that have informed and shaped them. The last section of the paper will be devoted to a discussion of the impact and implications of Russia's war on Ukraine for language policies and practices.

The paper builds on the notion of language ideologies as beliefs about languages constructed in the interest of a specific social group, and embedded within a broader historical, political, economic, and social context (Kroskrity, 2004). Linguistic ideologies are not about language alone, but tied to issues of identity and power (Woolard, 1998).

Ukraine's complex and multi-layered diversity

Ukraine is a complex country from the point of view of its population's ethnic composition and historical development. The numerous minorities living in the nation testify to the multi-ethnic nature of this borderland country. According to the last census of the Ukrainian population (Vseukrajins'kij perepis) the largest ethnic group is Ukrainian, comprising 77.8% of the population, followed by Russians (17.3%). Smaller minority communities include: Belarusians, Moldovans, Crimean Tatars, Bulgarians, Poles, Hungarians, Romanians, Jews (with populations between 100,000 and 300,000); Armenians, Greeks, Tartars, Roma, Azerbaijanis, Georgians, Germans, Gagauzes (between 30,000 and 100,000); Estonians, Kurds, Karaites, Krimchaki, Komi-Permians, Kyrgyz, Italians and others (less than 30,000; Vseukrajins'kij perepis).

Some minorities are scattered throughout the country, while others are concentrated in specific areas: Russians mainly in Crimea (where they make up the majority of its population: Crimea is the only region with a non-Ukrainian majority) and in other eastern and south-eastern regions; Crimean Tatars in the Crimea; Hungarians and Slovaks in Transcarpathia (Hungarians are the majority in the Berehove/Beregszász district); Romanians in Bucovina and in the Odessa oblast; Bulgarians in the Odessa Oblast (they are the majority in the Budžak district).

Directly related to the presence of minorities are issues of minority languages. Article 2 of the law ratifying the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages lists thirteen minority languages: Belarusian, Bulgarian, Gagauz, Greek, Jewish, Crimean Tatar, Moldovan, German, Polish, Russian, Romanian, Slovak and Hungarian. In practice, however, the only real linguistic question

concerns the role of the Russian language, which has been one of the most hotly debated topics in the academic-cultural discourse, as well as in the political arena since the country's independence in 1991. As effectively summarized by Besters-Dilger "there is no other European state, where the language of an ethnic minority is on a level with the state language, and where the state language (Ukrainian) is spoken only by a minority in some parts of the country" (Besters-Dilger, 2009: 359).

In the 2001 Census, the share of census respondents reporting Ukrainian as mother tongue was 67.5%, while 29.6% claimed Russian. It is clear that no precise relationship between declared nationality and spoken language exist: in Ukraine, as in other post-Soviet contexts, there is a wide discrepancy between ethnolinguistic identification and linguistic practice, with consequent common use of Russian as the primary, if not exclusive, language of communication of ethnic groups which nevertheless indicate another language as a mother tongue in censuses and polls. The concept of mother tongue itself has, therefore, a different meaning in Ukraine than that commonly accepted internationally, as it reflects not so much the degree of skills or communication practices as the loyalty to the homonymous ethnic group (Kulyk, 2014). The roots of this complex situation lie in the Soviet language policies which promoted Russian as the *lingua franca* of international communication in the Soviet Union, while, at the same time, encouraging different ethnic groups to maintain their ethnic identification, the distinctive feature of which was considered to be possession of an ethnic language.

Sociolinguistic surveys carried out in 2016 and 2019 indicate that the west is overwhelmingly ukrainophone, with values of over 90% of respondents reporting only/mainly Ukrainian as the language used for communication at home. In the south and the east, the usage frequency of Ukrainian declines very sharply, falling to values lower than 20%, whereas the centre of the country has a middle position between the west and the other two regions (Hentschel & Taranenko, 2021). To complicate the picture, *surżyk*, a mixed subvariety with a Ukrainian substrate and a Russian superstrate¹ which emerged from the long contact between two very closely related Slavic languages, is spoken more or less widely throughout the country. Some linguists consider *surżyk* as the de facto third linguistic code used in Ukraine (Hentschel & Taranenko,

1 A "neo-Surżyk" on Russian-basis has emerged after Ukraine became independent (Del Gaudio 2015).

ko, 2021; Del Gaudio, 2015).

The spatio-linguistic polarization and the existence of *suržyk* were born out as a result of Ukraine's troubled history and geographical location. The western and central parts of the country, which had long been part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, were the cradle of Ukrainian nationalism from a cultural-linguistic, religious and political point of view. When Poland was partitioned among Austria, Prussia and Russia towards the end of the XVIII century, modern-day western Ukraine, then known as eastern Galicia, fell under the Austrian rule, which guaranteed a much greater degree of local autonomy and cultural freedom than the harsher Russian Empire, which controlled central Ukraine, including Kyiv, and the southern and eastern regions. It was precisely the existence of Galicia that allowed the survival of the Ukrainian language in the long years in which its use was banned in the Russian Empire by the Valuev Circular of 1863 and the Ems Decrees of 1876 (Vassallo, 2022).

Language and educational policies since 1989

In 1989, whilst still a member of the Soviet Union, the Ukrainian Parliament (Verkhovna Rada) passed the law "On languages in the Ukrainian RSR" (*Zakon Pro movy*), which gave Ukrainian the official status of the only state language. Russian was assigned the status of the language used for communication between the peoples of the Soviet Union, and its use was allowed alongside with the state language. Other minority languages were allowed in the public sphere in administrative units where national minorities constituted the majority of the local population (above 50%). The law has been interpreted by some researchers as a compromise between preserving the predominant position of Russian in public life, and granting the state language status to Ukrainian (Kulyk, 2006; Besters-Dilger, 2011). Other studies have described it as the first step towards de-Sovietisation and independence (Bilaniuk, 2003).

In 1996, Ukraine adopted its first Constitution since its independence in 1991. Article 10, paragraph 2, of the Constitution states that Ukrainian is the country's only official language. This is not just a passive recognition: the Constitution imposes an active duty on the state to ensure the "global development and functioning of Ukrainian in all spheres of public life throughout the territory of Ukraine". The approach followed in the 1989 law, i.e. finding a

balance between the willingness to establish Ukrainian as the sole state language while recognizing the role Russian played in the country, can be traced again in how the Constitution treats the issues of guaranteeing free cultural development of national minorities. Unlike all other languages of national minorities present on the territory, Russian is explicitly mentioned: "In Ukraine the free development, use and protection of Russian and other languages of Ukrainian national minorities is guaranteed".

There appear then that both the 1989 language law and the 1996 Constitution aim to find a satisfactory compromise between recognizing the need to establish Ukrainian as an important attribute of the Ukrainian nation, and the ethical, political, and pragmatic necessity to accept the complex sociolinguistic situation of the country. This middle ground position reflects, according to Kulyk (2010), a centrist ideology based on a consensual view of society, which assumes that the majority of Ukrainians does not consider language use neither a social, nor a political problem. The centrist stance support, thus, both the symbolic status of Ukrainian as state language, and the acceptance of other languages, first and foremost Russian, in public practices.

The different and conflicting imperatives at work can also be viewed in terms of personal ideological stances, as proposed by Bilaniuk (2018), who identifies two principal language ideologies in circulation: *language does not matter*, i.e. does not matter which language you speak, and *language matters*, i.e., language choice is a symbolic statement of identity. If the language does not matter ideological perspective could counterbalance the politicization of language choice, there is a risk that could help to undermine the revival of Ukrainian, currently the weaker member in the sociolinguistic context of Ukraine. The danger of the language matters ideology, instead, could lie in a reinforcement of an "essentialization of ethnolinguistic identity - the idea that true or good Ukrainians should speak Ukrainian, and that Russian speakers are not true patriots" (Bilaniuk, 2018: 148).

At the end of the 90s, and up until the political turnover in spring 2014, the pendulum seemed to have swung in favour of the supporters of the idea of a multilingual Ukrainian nation. In 1996, Ukraine joined the Council of Europe, pledging to ratify the core conventions. Accordingly, in 1997 the country ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), while in 1999 ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML). The ratification law listed 13 lan-

guages that Ukraine undertook to protect: Russian, Jewish, Byelorussian, Moldavian, Romanian, Crimean Tatar, Bulgarian, Polish, Hungarian, Greek, German, Gagauz and Slovak. The ratification law gave ample rights to use minority languages in regions where the ratio of national minorities was above 20%, thus creating more favourable conditions for using minority languages than the 1989 law, which had a 50% threshold (Csernicskó, Ferenc, 2016). Russian community leaders welcomed the enactment of the law by the parliament, while President Leonid Kuchma and a group of deputies in the Verkhovna Rada strongly opposed it (Bowring, Antonovych, 2008). The Ukrainian Constitutional Court invalidated the ratification law on the grounds that it had been signed by the President of the Parliament, not by the President of the country (even if all previous ratification laws had been signed by President of the Parliament without incurring in invalidating procedures). After several new drafts were presented to the parliament, the ECRML was ratified again in 2003. The 2003 version of the ratification law listed the same 13 languages, but did not define threshold of language use for applying the measures of support required by the charter.

The ECRML finally came into force for Ukraine on 1 January 2006. The difficulties and the delay in ratifying the charter were linked to fears, amongst Ukrainian speakers, that it would principally promote Russian, a language deemed not to need protection (Masenko, 2006). Opponents also proclaimed that endangered languages such as Karaim, Krimchak and Roma were not in the list, and that Moldavian and Romanian were listed as two separate languages (Csernicskó, Ferenc, 2016). The main object of discussion, however, was how the purposes and principles of the ECRML had been (mis)interpreted in the Ukrainian context, even at the level of the translation of the charter's name into Ukrainian. The original expression "minority languages" had been translated into Ukrainian as "languages of national minorities", thus changing the focus of the charter from the protection of endangered, or near extinction languages to the protection of the linguistic rights of the country's minorities (Kulyk, 2006).

The importance of the issue emerged again in 2012, when the Ukrainian Parliament adopted, under the presidency of the pro-Russian Viktor Janukovič, a new language law, replacing the one from 1989. Named "On the principles of the state language policy" (Zakon Pro zasadi), the law is also informally known as Kivalov-Kolesničenko Law (or LL Law), after the names of its main

promoters. Without questioning the main role of Ukrainian as the only state language, the law, in reference to the ECRML, introduced the label of “regional or minority language”, under which 18 languages were listed: Russian, Belarusian, Bulgarian, German, Modern Greek, Polish, Armenian, Gagauz, Yiddish, Crimean Tatar, Moldovan, Roma, Romanian, Slovak, Hungarian, Rusyn (officially not recognized as an independent language in Ukraine), Karaim and Krymchak. According to the law, certain rights were to be granted obligatorily and automatically by local authorities in those regions where the proportion of native speakers of one (or more) of the 18 languages was at least 10% (7th article, 3rd§). Among the rights guaranteed in the law there was the publication of official documents in minority languages; minority language use by public officials in their oral and written communications with minority language speakers; minority languages teaching in compulsory education; use of place names in minority languages.

The law considered ‘regions’ all administrative units of regional and local self-government: the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the oblasts, districts, cities, towns and rural villages. As a consequence, Russian was recognised as a regional language in most of the southern and eastern regions and cities (13 out of the 27 administrative subdivisions), whereas Hungarian and Romanian were recognized as regional languages in the regions where there was a significant number of speakers of these languages, such as, for example, Transcarpathia for Hungarian, and Bucovina for Romanian. In addition to Russian, Hungarian and Romanian, in some districts native speakers of Bulgarian, Gagauz, Crimean Tatar, and Moldovan also reached the demographic thresholds set by law.

In contrast to the 1989 language law, and to the ECRML ratification law, that both address the issue of the use of minority languages in Ukraine, the 2012 language law focuses on the rights of the speakers of regulated languages (Cserniczkó et al., 2020). The difference between the two approaches is fundamental because, as mentioned above, there is a significant variation in the composition of the population in terms of ethnicity as opposed to native language. In 2012, the linguistic situation in the country presented this picture: although the population was made up of about 79% ethnic Ukrainians, the share of those who declared they spoke Ukrainian at home was only 42.9%. Russian was reportedly used by 35.4% of the population, while those who used both languages made up about one fifth of the total (Vöcker, 2016). The extent of the 2012 law was, therefore, much wider than that of the 1989 law

and of the ECRML. It has been calculated that the number of native speakers of the 18 languages listed in the law was more than 15 million people, i.e. about 32% of Ukraine population (Cserniczkó, Ferenc, 2016).

The law was debated and passed amidst fistfights between government and opposition members of Parliament, and its practical implementation was not systematically enforced. It did not change much in the linguistic situation of Ukraine, and was used mainly to politicise the debate on language issues for purposes of electoral mobilisation (Iglesias, 2014). In February 2014, immediately after the Euromaidan revolution, the Ukrainian Parliament made an abortive attempt to revoke the law. Acting president Oleksandr Turčynov, however, did not sign the document that would have repealed it, and the law remained in force until 28 February 2018, when it was annulled by the Constitutional Court on the basis that the procedure for its adoption in Parliament had been violated. It should be noted that the contents of the law were not criticised by the Constitutional Court.

A brisk turn in the language policies of Ukraine towards a more monoglossic ideology focused on Ukrainian as a national and state symbol of the country came with the post-EuroMaidan presidential election of Petro Porošenko on 27 May 2014 with a historic 54.7% percent of the votes. Porošenko presented himself as a nation-builder, and under his presidency the importance of creating a culturally unified and cohesive Ukrainian nation-state was emphasized and implemented through a series of legislative initiatives, that had an impact also on language education policies (Fedorenko, Umland, 2021)². In September 2017, Porošenko signed a new law on education (*Zakon Pro Osvitu*). The law made Ukrainian the only language of instruction in schools starting from the fifth grade, notwithstanding the provisions of the Ukrainian 2012 language law, which allowed minority languages to be taught in schools in regions where minorities make up more than 10% of the population³. The law also provided for the cessation of the publication of school books in Russian; the possibility of creating separate classes with teaching in the languages of the indigenous peoples of Ukraine (Krymchaki, Crimean Tatars and Karaites); and

2 Language policies and language planning decisions are pivotal elements in nation-states' building, particularly in the post-Soviet space where education plays a fundamental role in society (Gugushvili 2017).

3 The contradiction between the two laws was eliminated when the Constitutional Court annulled the 2012 language law in 2018.

the authorization to teach one or more subjects in the languages of the European Union.

In 2017, 735 schools (about 400 thousand pupils in total) in Ukraine had provided education in languages other than Ukrainian. Of these, 581 schools had Russian as language of instruction, 75 schools - Romanian, 71 schools Hungarian, 3 schools Moldovan and 5 schools Polish (Oharkova, 2017). Not only Russia, but also Hungary, Romania, Poland, Bulgaria and Greece heavily criticised and opposed the education law, which abolished the possibility to obtain Ukrainian state school education in their state languages in Ukraine. The common thread in all of these protests was that the law infringed on the rights of non-Ukrainian ethnicities. The Russian State Duma even went so far as to decry the law as “an act of ethnocide against the Russian people in Ukraine” (Gosudarstvennaja Duma).

The education law was amended in 2019 to allow minority language students who started their education before September 2018 to continue to receive schooling in their languages until September 2023. The amendment, however, applies only to those minority languages that are also official languages in the EU, thus excluding russophones.

The strengthening of nationalistic forces and sentiments that characterized the political developments in Ukraine starting from 2014 onwards had a very strong impact on language and educational policies, exacerbating the polarization between the different language ideologies informing policies and sociolinguistic realities, and further politicizing the language issue. In April 2019, the Ukrainian parliament passed the new language law “On ensuring the functioning of the Ukrainian language as the state language” which entered into force on July 16, 2019 (Zakon Pro Zabezpečennja). The new law was necessary to fill the legal void in language policy left by the annulation of the 2012 law in February 2018.

It is important to contextualise the political climate within which the signing of the law by the outgoing President Porošenko took place. Throughout his election campaign for the 2019 presidential elections, Porošenko had promoted three ideological pillars of Ukrainian identity: army (*armija*), language (*mova*), faith (*vira*). During the five years of his presidential term, however, he had never pressed for a law on support of the state language. Porošenko and his party *Jevropejs'ka solidarnist'* (European Solidarity) suffered a massive defeat in the elections, which were won in a landslide by Volodymyr Zelenski and his party *Sluha narodu* (Serv-

ant of the people). The fact that, in a moment when voters had already clearly rejected his policy, the departing President rushed to sign a law that legally could have left to the new president to sign or return to parliament, has been interpreted as a deliberate attempt to weaken his successor's position by the burden of a highly divisive issue (Csernicskó et al., 2020).

Although the new language law in principle addresses only the functioning of the state language, in practice it applies to the use of all other languages in Ukraine. By defining Ukrainian as the only state and official language of the country, the law strips all minority languages of the status of regional languages, confining them to private life by drastically limiting their use in the public sphere. The text opens with a reference to the colonial past of linguistic assimilation of Ukraine, and with observations on the strong relationship between language and identity. Ukrainian is defined as the key trait of the identity of the Ukrainian nation, and its functioning is considered a guarantee for the preservation and strengthening of the Ukrainian nation. In this way the preamble establishes a primordial relationship between the Ukrainian language, the Ukrainian state, and the Ukrainian nation, thus creating a hierarchical relationship between members of the majority language and those of the minority languages (Csernicskó et al., 2020).

Sections II and III of the law establish the importance of knowledge of Ukrainian for acquiring Ukrainian citizenship, specifying that the state provides all the necessary resources. It is mandatorily prescribed that civil servants and public service employees shall be familiar with the State language. The law also strengthens the role of Ukrainian in education: article 21, which virtually repeats article 7 of the law 'On education', makes it clear that the language of instruction in educational institutions shall be the state language.

In what concerns culture and the media, Ukrainian must play a leading role. Print mass media shall be published in the state language. Print press products in other languages can only be published if, at the same time, the entire content, with the same title, size, number of copies etc., is also printed in Ukrainian (Article 25(1)). With regard to television and radio broadcasting, the law increases the minimum proportion of content in the state language from 75% to 90% for broadcasters with national coverage, and to 60-80% for regional or local TV and radio companies, without making exceptions for private broadcasters.

The law excludes criminal liability for not knowing Ukrainian. However, it specifies that attempts to introduce bilingualism or multilingualism, or to provide official status to any other language throughout the country or in a particular region, shall be regarded as actions aimed at changing or overthrowing the constitutional order, namely as a serious crime punishable by imprisonment up to a maximum of 10 years pursuant to Article 109 of the Criminal Code.

The law provoked strong condemnation in Russia and Hungary, where it was seen as violating the rights of their kin-minorities in Ukraine. TASS (2019) published an article denouncing how the use of Russian language was limited in Ukraine. Valentina Matvienko, Chairman of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, said that the foundations had been laid in Ukraine for the “genocide of the Russian language” (RIA Novosti 2019). The Venice Commission, at the request of the Chairperson of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe, examined the law and stated that it failed to find a compromise between the protection of the state language and the observance of minorities’ rights (European Commission Opinion). The Venice Commission also denounced the differentiation for the teaching of, and in the languages of, indigenous peoples of Ukraine, the official languages of the EU, and the languages of national minorities which are not the official languages of the EU established by Article 21 (which reflects article 7 of the 2017 Education Law) as constituting a breach of the principle of non-discrimination.

The same differentiation, however, was confirmed in the law “On Complete General Secondary Education”, which was voted by the Parliament in January 2020, and came into force on March 18, 2020 (Zakon Pro povnu). The law presents different language-in-education models, ultimately dividing students into four groups. Students, whose mother tongue is Ukrainian, the state language, receive education at all levels in their mother tongue. Students, who are representatives of indigenous peoples, that is Crimean Tatars, Crimean Karaites (Karaims) and Krymchacks⁴, also have the right to pursue all education in their mother tongue, along with in-depth study of Ukrainian. Minority students, whose languages are official languages of the European Union (Hungari-

4 According to the new Law “On Indigenous People of Ukraine”, adopted in July 2021. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1616-20#Text> (last accessed 14.07.2022).

ans, Romanians, Poles, Bulgarians), may receive education in their mother tongue in primary school (grades 1-4), but at 5th grade not less than 20% of lessons should be taught in Ukrainian. The ratio has to increase gradually in order to reach at least 40% by 9th grade, and 60% by grades 10-12. Minorities speaking non-EU languages (Russians, Belarusians) may receive education in their mother tongue in primary school, but starting from 5th grade not less than 80% percent of the annual amount of study time should be in Ukrainian.

If one of the crucial reasons for the adoption of the law on secondary education was the need to increase the provision of minority language education, which was still inadequate according to the 2017 education law (Rabinovych, Berg-Nordlie, 2021), the new legislation raised another set of thorny issues: how to justify the different treatment of indigenous peoples, minorities speaking EU languages, and minorities speaking non-EU languages? How to ensure the practical implementation of the provisions of the law, particularly in small municipalities? How to avoid that the new education policies did not impact negatively on interethnic cohesion and peaceful cohabitation among all ethnic groups of Ukraine? Shortly after its adoption, the secondary education law was severely criticised for breaching the principle of non-discrimination and for increasing the politicization of the already politically fraught debate on language in education (Csernicskó et al., 2020).

Conclusions

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a devastating invasion of Ukraine, marking a major escalation of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian conflict. Not surprisingly, the Russian invasion is clearly having a considerable relevance also for the language debate central to the political and social life of the country. On June 19, 2022 the Ukrainian Parliament passed three new laws designed to restrict the circulation of Russian books and music, while increasing the development of Ukrainian book and music publications, performances and recordings.

Law 7273-d (Proekt Zakonu 7273-d) prohibits music created or performed on media and on public transport by those who are or were Russian citizens after the 1991 collapse of Soviet rule, unless they give up their Russian citizenship and take Ukrainian passports. The ban will not apply to Russian singers who condemn

Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The law also increases to 40% the share of Ukrainian music in radio broadcasting, and to 75% the quota of TV broadcasts, including news and entertainment.

Law 7459 (Proekt Zakonu 7459) forbids the printing of books by post-1991 Russian citizens, while also prohibiting the commercial import of books printed in Russia, Belarus and occupied Ukrainian territories. The import of books in Russian from any other country will require a special permission.

Finally, law 6287 (Proekt Zakonu 6287) aims at stimulating the development of Ukrainian book publishing and distribution, providing, in particular, measures of compensation for those who rent premises for operating Ukrainian bookstores.

The war is not only encouraging legislative measures aimed at strengthening Ukrainian as the definitive marker of the country's national identity, it is also deeply influencing Ukrainians' perceptions about themselves and the "other", urging many to redefine and reassess the markers of their belongingness. Prominent intellectual and political figures, artists and well-known celebrities have publicly announced their switch to Ukrainian as their only language (Walker, 2022; Koshiw, 2022). The same is happening on social platforms of Ukrainian migrants abroad (Bocale, unpublished work). Ukrainian language and Ukrainian culture are embraced as a source of strength and a means of connecting with one another and mobilizing resistance under the shared experience of war (Armitage, 2022). The process of reasserting Ukrainian identity is also having an impact on memory policy, with streets and subway stops whose names evoke the history of the Russian Empire or the Soviet Union being renamed with the names of Ukrainian historical leaders and people who contributed to safeguarding Ukrainian culture (Balačuk, 2022; Kovalov, 2022; Solomon, 2022).

In summer 2022, school curricula were amended. The works of most Russian and Belarusian authors were removed, while works of foreign writers, including Pierre Ronsard, Robert Burns, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Heinrich Heine, and Adam Mickiewicz were added. Nikolai Gogol or Mikhail Bulgakov, who wrote in Russian but were born in Ukraine, will continue to be studied. The history curriculum was also changed to include a separate block dedicated to the Russian-Ukrainian war (Osadča, 2022).

At the same time, some Russian-speaking Ukrainian authors and intellectuals report being made object of hatred and suspicion, accused of being responsible for the war because of their language, and supposed to prove their national loyalty and consciousness

publicly (Kurkov, 2022).

The war has thus unavoidably - and quite understandably so - resulted in the enforcement of a linguistic ideology that equates Ukraine with the Ukrainian language: only those who possess Ukrainian are considered to truly embody and belong to the nation. The extent to which this ideology will completely dominate language and educational policies in the long run will depend largely on the duration and outcome of the conflict.

References

- Armitage, S. (2022), "Ukrainian has become a symbol", *The Guardian* 08.04.2022, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/apr/08/ukrainian-language-interest-spikes-support-country-war> (last accessed 10.08.2022).
- Balačuk, I. (2022) "Het' rosijs'ke: u Kijevi chočut' perejmenuvaty majže 3 sotni vulyc' i prybraty 60 pamjatnykiv", *Ukrajins'ka Pravda* 25.04.2022, available at: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/04/25/7341958/>, (last accessed 04.11.2022).
- Besters-Dilger, J. (2009), (Ed.), *Language policy and Language Situation in Ukraine: Analysis and Recommendation*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main.
- Besters-Dilger, J. (2011), "Nacija ta mova pislija 1991 r. - ukrajins'ka ta rosijs'ka v movnomu konflikti", in Kappeler, A. (Ed.), *Ukrajina. Procesy naciotvorennja*, Vydavnictvo K.I.S., Kyjiv, 352-364.
- Bilaniuk, L. (2003), "Gender, Language Attitudes, and Language Status in Ukraine", *Language in Society*, 32, 47-78.
- Bilaniuk, L. (2018), "Purism and Pluralism: Language Use Trends in Popular Culture in Ukraine since Independence", *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 35(1): 293-309.
- Bocale, P. (unpublished work), "Ukrainian has become a synonym for resistance: The impact of the war on Ukrainian migrants' social networks in Italy".
- Bowring, B., Antonovych, M. (2008), "Ukraine's long and winding road to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages", in Dunbar, R. (Ed.), *The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages: Legal Challenges and Opportunities*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 157-82.
- Csernicskó, I., Ferenc, V. (2016), "Transition in language policy of Ukraine (1989-2014)", in Sloboda, M. et al. (Eds.), *Sociolinguistic Transition in Former Eastern Bloc Countries: Two Decades after the*

- Regime Change*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 120-144.
- Csernicskó, I., Hires-László, K., Karmacsi, Z. et al. (2020), *Ukrainian Language Policy Gone Astray: The Law of Ukraine "On Supporting the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language"* (analytical overview), Termini Egyesület, Törökbalint.
- Del Gaudio, S. (2015), "Ukrainian-Russian mixed speech "Suržyk" within the system of Ukrainian and Russian interaction", *Slověne 2*, 214-246.
- European Commission Opinion - European Commission for Democracy through Law, Opinion on the Law on Supporting the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language. Opinion No. 960/2019, 9 December 2019, [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2019\)032-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2019)032-e) (last accessed 13.08.2022)
- Fedorenko, K., Umland, A. (2021), "A Triadic Nexus Conflict? Ukraine's Nationalizing Policies, Russia's Homeland Nationalism, and the Dynamics of Escalation in 2014-2019", in Aasland, A., Kropp, S. (Eds.), *The Accommodation of Regional and Ethno-cultural Diversity in Ukraine*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 53-82.
- Gosudarstvennaja Duma - Gosudarstvennaja Duma Federal'nogo Sobranija Rossijskoj Federacii, O nedopustimosti narušenija fundamental'nogo prava korennykh narodov i nacmen'synstv Ukrainy obučas'ja na rodnykh jazykakh, <http://duma.gov.ru/news/14345/> (last accessed 13.08.2022)
- Gugushvili, A. (2017), "Change or continuity? Intergenerational social mobility and post-communist transition", *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 52, 59-71.
- Hentschel, G., Taranenko, O. (2021), "Bilingualism or tricodalism: Ukrainian, Russian and «Suržyk» in Ukraine. Analysis and linguistic-geographical mapping", *Die Welt der Slaven*, 66(2), 268-299.
- Iglesias, J.D. (2014), "Ukraine, Romania, and Romanians in Ukraine", *Südosteuropa* 62 (3), 373-384.
- Kroskrity, P.V. (2004), "Language ideologies", in Duranti, A. (Ed.), *Companion to linguistic anthropology*, Basil Blackwell, Malden, 496-517.
- Koshiw, I. (2022), "Standing on your own': Ukrainian rapper on connecting with his country's culture", *The Guardian* 28.07.2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/28/ukrainian-rapper-culture-jockii-druce> (last accessed 12.08.2022)
- Kovalov, M. (2022), "When Lenin Becomes Lennon: Decommunisation and the Politics of Memory in Ukraine", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 74 (5), 709-733.
- Kulyk, V. (2006), "Constructing common sense: Language and ethnicity in Ukrainian public discourse", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*

29(2), 281-314.

- Kulyk, V. (2010), "Ideologies of language use in post-Soviet Ukrainian media", *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 201, 79-104.
- Kulyk, V. (2014), "Soviet Nationalities Policies and the Discrepancy between Ethnocultural Identification and Language Practice in Ukraine", in Beissinger, M., Kotkin, S. (Eds.), *Historical Legacies of Communism in Russia and Eastern Europe*, CUP, Cambridge, 202-221.
- Kurkov, A. (2022), "In Ukraine, this summer means blood and sirens - but fishing and the theatre go on", *The Guardian* 04.07.2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jul/04/ukraine-summer-blood-fishing-injured-andrey-kurkov> (last accessed 12.08.2022)
- Masenko, L. (2006), *(U)movna (U)krajina*, Tempora, Kyjiv.
- Oharkova, T. (2017), "Movnyj zakon: čomu obureni Budapešt, Bukharest ta Varšava?", *Hromads'ke.ua* 27.09.2017. <https://hromadske.ua/posts/movnyi-zakon-naskilkyobureni-budapesht-bukharest-ta-varshava> (last accessed 12.08.2022)
- Osadča, O. (2022), "Ponjattja 'rašizm' ta jak dijaty pid čas obstrilu: v Ukrajinі onovyly škil'nu prohramu u zv'jazku z vijnoju", *Ukrajins'ka Pravda* 16.08.2022, available at: <https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/2022/08/16/250032/>, (last accessed 04.11.2022).
- Projekt Zakonu 7273-d - Projekt Zakonu Pro vnesennja zmin do dejakych zakoniv Ukrajinjy ščodo pidtrymky nacional'noho muzičnoho produktu ta obmežennja public'noho vykorystannja muzyčnoho produktu deržavy-agresora, <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billInfo/Bills/Card/39702> (last accessed 13.08.2022)
- Projekt Zakonu 7459 - Projekt Zakonu Pro vnesennja zmin do dejakych zakoniv Ukrajinjy ščodo vstanovlennja obmežen' na vvezennja ta rozpovsjudžennja vydavnyčoji produkciji, ščo stosujet'sja deržavy-agresora, Respubliky Bilorus', tymčasovo okupovanoji terytoriji Ukrajinjy, <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billInfo/Bills/Card/39764> (last accessed 13.08.2022)
- Projekt Zakonu 6287 - Projekt Zakonu Pro vnesennja zmin do dejakych zakoniv Ukrajinjy ščodo stymuljuvannja rozvytku ukrajins'koho knihovydannja i knihorozpovsjudžennja, <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billInfo/Bills/Card/28189> (last accessed 13.08.2022)
- Rabinovych, M., Berg-Nordlie, M. (2021), "Regulating Minority Languages in Ukraine's Educational System: Debate, Legal Framework and Implementation", in Aasland, A., Kropp, S. (Eds.), *The Accommodation of Regional and Ethno-cultural Diversity in Ukraine*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 110-141.
- RIA Novosti (2019), "Na Ukraine založili osnovu dlja genocida ruskogo jazyka, zajavila Matvienko", *RIA NOVOSTI* 03.06.2019, <https://ria.ru/20190603/1555229481.html> (last accessed 12.08.2022)

- Solomon, E. (2022), "Goodbye, Tchaikovsky and Tolstoy: Ukrainians look to 'decolonize' their streets", *The New York Times* 07.06.2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/07/world/europe/ukraine-russia-rename-streets.html?campaign_id=249&emc=edit_ruwb_20220607&instance_id=63429&nl=russia-ukraine-war-briefing®i_id=160989316&segment_id=94468&smid=url-share&te=1&user_id=d67d57d6368bd6148a52685943fcae27 (last accessed 12.08.2022)
- TASS (2019), "Kak na Ukraine ograničivali ispol'zovanie russkogo iazyka", *TASS* 15.05.2019 <https://tass.ru/info/6433391> (last accessed 28.07.2022).
- Vassallo, M. (2022), *Breve Storia dell'Ucraina*, Mimesis, Sesto San Giovanni.
- Vöcker, J. (2016), "The Spirits That I Called - The Kiwalow-Kolesnitschenko Law as a turning point of Ukraine's language policy and law: A new chance or the end of a unified Ukrainian state?", cit. in Carpinelli, C. (2019), "Ucraina: la questione della lingua e le sue fasi di evoluzione politica e legislativa", *NAD*, 1(2), 64-95.
- Vseukrajins'kij perepis - Vseukrajins'kij perepis naselennja 2001 <https://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/> (last accessed 10.06.2022)
- Walker, S. (2022), "Enemy tongue: eastern Ukrainians reject their Russian birth language", *The Guardian* 04.06.2022 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/04/enemy-tongue-eastern-ukrainians-reject-their-russian-birth-language> (last accessed 13.08.2022)
- Woolard, K.A. (1998), "Language ideology as a field of inquiry", in Schieffelin, B.B., Woolard, K.A., Kroskrity, P.V. (Eds.), *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 3-47.
- Zakon Pro movy - Zakon Ukrajiny "Pro movy v Ukrajins'kij RSR", <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/8312-11#Text> (last accessed 13.08.2022)
- Zakon Pro povnu - Zakon Ukrajiny "Pro povnu zahal'nu serednju osvitu", <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/463-20> (last accessed 12.08.2022)
- Zakon Pro osvitu - Zakon Ukrajiny "Pro osvitu" no. 2145-VIII, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2145-19/ed20170905> (last accessed 12.08.2022)
- Zakon Pro zabezpečennja - Zakon Ukrajiny "Pro zabezpečennja funkcionuvannja ukrajins'koji movy jak deržavnoji" <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?nreg=2704-19#Text> (last accessed 13.08.2022)
- Zakon Pro zasadi - Zakon Ukrajiny "Pro zasadi dëržavnoji movnoji polityky" no. 5029-VI, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/5029-17>, (last accessed 12.08.2022)

The Chinese Diaspora in the Post-Soviet Space

Daniele Brigadoi *Cologna*

Encompassing about 40% of the Eurasian landmass, the former Soviet Union was heir to a great many land corridors historically connecting East Asia with Western Europe and the Mediterranean, from the ancient caravan routes crisscrossing the Inner Asian steppes, to the gargantuan engineering achievement of the Trans-siberian Railway. As it shared a 7.500 km long border with China, it is not surprising that several of its Soviet Socialist Republics not only featured havens of Chinese diasporic communities, which often traced their origin back to Tsarist times, but also served as important way stations of modern Chinese migration flows. In the early twentieth century, between the two World Wars, the Trans-siberian Railway transported hundreds of migrants from Zhejiang to Moscow, from where many then moved on to Berlin and Paris, eventually settling down in many countries of continental Europe. Italy's own oldest Chinese diaspora traces its origins back to these early flows of Zhejiang migrants. At the turn of the century, during the brief period of the Qing dynasty's active engagement with the world economy that followed the quelling of the Boxer uprising by the main imperial powers, several groups of Zhejiang merchants took part in Imperial trade delegations to the International Expositions of 1904 (St. Louis, Missouri, USA) and 1906 (Milan, Italy). Their forays abroad - which drew upon previous, less glamorous endeavors by individual trailblazers across Eurasia - paved the way for the first protracted mass migration from mainland China to continental Europe. Tightly knit family and business networks among different lineages hailing from a few dozen specific villages in southern Zhejiang provided busi-

ness and work opportunities abroad to a select group of kinfolk and business associates. These networks enabled the creation of a socio-economic opportunity structure that facilitated migration and settlement in different European countries. Their villages of origin were primarily located in the interior of the coastal port of Wenzhou, on both sides of a mountain divide that separates today's Qingtian district (*Qīngtián xiàn* 青田县) in the Municipality of Lishui (*Lìshuǐ shì* 丽水市), from the districts of Wenzhou-Ouhai (*Wēnzhōu-Ōuhǎi* 温州-瓯海), Rui'an (*Ruì'ān* 瑞安) and Wencheng (*Wénchéng* 文成) in the Municipality of Wenzhou (*Wēnzhōu shì* 温州市) (Thunø 2013; Brigadoi Cologna, 2019a, 2019b).

The earliest structured migration from Zhejiang was originally directed at Japan, where migrant workers from Qingtian and the Wenzhou hinterland had settled in Japan since the 1910s. This migration picked up the pace in the early 1920s, but most were forced to leave the country in the wake of the 1923 Kantō earthquake, after a wave of anti-Korean riots not only ended up killing thousands of Koreans, as they were wrongly accused of having spread the fire and thus targeted as scapegoats by roving bands of distraught and enraged Japanese citizens, but the wave of xenophobia spilled over into the mass murder of other Asian foreigners, namely the Chinese. Prudent estimates report the killing of over 700 Chinese Zhejiang migrants. As the Japanese authorities finally managed to quench the rioting, they opted for the mass internment and subsequent repatriation of most Chinese survivors. Several among the earliest Chinese migrants to Italy survived the ordeal, like Ou Lisang (Wu Lishan) and Hu Suzan (Hu Xizhen) who were interned in the Chinese refugee camp in Narashino until they could be repatriated back to Shanghai.

Although migration to Japan reprised temporarily during the early 1930s, the Kantō earthquake, as well as the Jinan incident five years later, eventually spelled the progressive decline of Chinese migration to Japan. Yet those who had been forced to cut short their migration project opted for a different destination where they could pursue their quest for a better life, traveling to continental Europe instead. Some chose the sea route from Shanghai to Marseilles via the Strait of Malacca, Colombo and Suez. But many others, especially during the late 1920s, opted for the long train ride across the Eurasian continent on the Trans-Siberian railway, which in those years was finally open to regular passenger travel after the turmoil of the October Revolution and its tumultuous aftermath (Wolmar, 2013). In 1925, the early pioneers of this migration who did not reach Europe by boat travelled by rail. The

Schlesischer Bahnhof in Berlin (today's Berlin Ostbahnhof) was at the time a veritable Gate to the East - the starting point of the long journey across the continent to distant Tokyo - so Germany became one of the first West European nations to witness the arrival of these Zhejiang traveling peddlers of household wares, which were called *Hausierer* in German (Amenda, 2006: 66; 134-36). But most of these migrants travelled on to the Marais district in Paris, where they could find Chinese merchants who could provide them with new merchandise.

In the summer and fall of 1925 they soon started spreading out to hawk their wares in cities and market fairs across France and Spain. Yet by the end of the year, they were confronted by a tightening of laws regulating the peddling of merchandise by foreigners in France and Spain, a turn of events that eventually forced them to try their luck in Italy. Thus, in the winter of 1925-26, a large group of several hundred Zhejiang Chinese, all of them male and purporting to be traveling salesmen peddling various wares, but especially keen on the kind of fake pearls that were all the rage among ladies in those years, entered Italy from France. The Fascist government, alerted by its police force, which suspected these young men to be former soldiers, possibly even sympathizers of the revolutionary Canton government (then aided by Soviet military advisers), and genuinely feared they could be Bolshevik spies. Most were deported in 1926 and 1927. Yet those who stayed opened the way for future prospective migrants, which they generally recruited among their kith and kin in their home villages. The land route across Eurasia became again very dangerous during the rising tensions among the Soviet Union and the Japanese Empire over Manchuria, but after Japan succeeded in propping up its puppet-state of Manchukuo in 1931, Stalin three years later finally decided to sell the Chinese Eastern Railway (the Manchurian leg of the Trans-Siberian railroad) to the Japanese: this was advantageous to the Zhejiang migrants who had opted to stay in Japan or Korea after 1923, but who now considered it increasingly unsafe to remain on Japanese-controlled territory, and were joining the ever larger group of Zhejiang migrants who were linking up with their kin in Western Europe. In the early 1930s, a small number of Chinese migrants had managed to settle down in Italy by establishing small workshops producing leatherette wares, such as wallets or belts, and silk ties, which they supplied to fellow countrymen who could peddle them on the streets and at market fairs across the country. Calling upon their relatives already abroad or ready to leave their home villages to join them, they consolidated

a chain migration process that would endure - albeit with long pauses during and after the Second World War - to this very day.

Historically, Chinese settlers were a common sight in the border regions of Russia and the former Soviet Union, especially along the banks of the Amur River, in the cities of Khabarovsk and Vladivostok. The Amur River basin may have seen a small number of Chinese settlers as early as the fifteenth century, but hunters, herders, fishermen and ginseng diggers from Northern China, as well as deported convicts and fugitives from Qing law, became even more common during the Qing dynasty, which extended its control over Dauria (or Transbaikalia) and the Siberian Northeast up to the Sea of Okhotsk. This region has often been referred to as "Manchuria" by European historians, as it was the historical homeland of the Jurchen people that invaded and then ruled northern China as the Jin dynasty (1115-1234 C.E.), and then established the gargantuan Qing dynasty four centuries later (1636-1911 C.E.), changing their ethnonym to "Manchu". The Chinese, though, know this area simply as Dongbei (*Dōngběi* 东北), "the Northeast". Well before the foundation of the Soviet Union, Chinese farmers and traders were settling down in the Northeast, especially in the southern river valleys of the Suifeng, the Daobi and the Oula, as well as along the coast of the Sea of Japan (Alexeeva, 2008: 20), while migrant Chinese would mainly continue to pursue seasonal work in the areas ceded to Tsarist Russia after the Treaty of Beijing in 1860 (Maslow, 1998; Alexeeva, 2008).

From 1860 to 1917, great numbers of Chinese migrant workers, mostly from Shandong and Dongbei, travelled freely to the Russian Far East and Siberia as they were employed as workers on the construction and maintenance of the railroads, the clearing of forests, the exploitation of gold mines and the construction of the harbor of Vladivostok (Maslow, 1998, p. 330). Until the 1880s, the Russian government favored the settlement of Chinese pioneers in the Far Eastern wilderness, giving them permission to buy arable land with a 20-year tax exemption (Alexeeva, 2008: 21). This policy changed by the turn of the century, when Russia feared that China might one day use the pretext of a large ethnic Chinese population to annex territories north of the Amur river, but efforts to curb migration and settlements were largely nominal as they were difficult to enforce. The very expansion of Russian power in the region required an ever growing number of workers, and Russian (but also American and German) private enterprise operating in the region began actively recruiting Chinese

migrant labor before and after the Russian-Japanese war of 1904-1905. According to the first universal census carried out in Russia in 1897, 57,000 Chinese were living in the country at the time, about 41,000 of them in the Siberian Far East. In the 1910s, after the completion of the Transiberian railway, their numbers swelled to 100,000 - 250,000, according to different estimates (Alexeeva, 2008: 22). As World War I led to severe labor shortages in Russia, in 1915 the government sanctioned the recruitment of Chinese indentured labor to be employed throughout the country, not just the Russian Far East. Estimates of the total number of Chinese workers recruited by the Tsarist government during the war vary considerably, from a minimum of 30,000 to a staggering half million, and some sources claim that they were even used close to the Eastern front (Maslow, 1998: 330). These complex flows of migrant workers helped consolidate the first core Chinese communities in the main urban centers of the Russian Far East, such as Khabarovsk, Blaogoveshchensk, Ussuriysk, and especially Vladivostok. These border settlements unnerved both Tsarist officials before and Soviet officials after the Revolution, even though the turmoil of the Great War, of the Revolution and the ensuing civil war gradually turned many Chinese away from the Siberian borderlands, be it to escape enrollment in the Red Army (which, according to Chinese and Russian sources, could count on up to 40,000 Chinese soldiers who were former indentured workers) or, in the case of well-off merchants and landowners, violent persecution (Larin, 1998:288-289). At the eve of Japan's invasion of China, in 1937, about 24,600 Chinese still lived in the Russian Far East, at least half of them in the so-called Millionka, or Vladivostok's Chinatown, an overcrowded and dilapidated neighborhood in the city's center (Sarkisova, 2015; Jersild, 2019). Chinese and Koreans living along the Siberian frontier were often portrayed by Soviet propaganda and by the NKVD kommissars as disorderly and politically unreliable, prone to unhealthy habits, such as gambling and narcotic use, and even as harboring counterrevolutionary tendencies. Their mobility across the frontiers of Russia, China, Mongolia, Manchukuo and Korea, was also considered hazardous for the security of the Soviet border in the late 1930s. Thousands of inhabitants of the Millionka were arrested and deported in 1936, after a dozen Chinese were identified by the NKVD as operatives spying for Japan. After Stalin and Chiang Kai-shek signed a peace treaty, the Soviet regime began treating suspect "diaspora nationalities" as political enemies and began ordering their deportation. In the winter of 1937, NKVD

head Nikolai Ezhov issued an order to “immediately arrest all Chinese, regardless of their citizenship, who are engaged in provocative activities or have terrorist intentions”. In the following year, more than 11.000 Chinese in the Far East were deported to China, Kazakhstan or far-flung rural areas in the Siberian hinterland (Jersild, 2019). By the start of World War II, the swift eradication of the Chinese historical presence in the Russian Far East was almost complete, yet it left behind a lasting stereotype of a minority marked by distrust, viewed as socially unhealthy and politically suspect. After the war and the victorious Chinese revolution, the Soviet Union and China entered a phase of “great friendship”, which allowed for increased Chinese mobility on Soviet territory. At the height of this period of political concord, in the mid-fifties, the Chinese community numbered about 350.000 (Maslow, 1998: 329). But it was not going to last: as the relations between the two major Communist Parties and their respective countries degenerated into a bitter ideological confrontation, fierce border skirmishes along the border once again marked the Chinese living in the Soviet Union as unreliable, and they again were suspected of being spies and “fifth columnists” (Maslow, 1998: *ibidem*). Migration to the USSR dwindled down to a trickle, and most Chinese living there were forced to move back to China. Only the collapse of the Soviet Union and the social and political liberalization of the 1990s made it possible once again for Chinese mobilities to reprise towards or across Russia and the many independent nations which were configuring a new post-Soviet space.

Throughout the twentieth century, the presence of Chinese citizens in the Soviet Union ebbed and waned, with a strong concentration of Han Chinese in the Russian Far East (particularly in Vladivostok, Blagoveshchensk, Khabarovsk, Irkutsk, Ulan Ude and Chita) and a smaller, but persistent, presence in Moscow, as well as in Central Asian cities like Karaganda and Tashkent. While the Chinese living in the Far East were mostly Northeasterners from old Manchuria and Shandong, in the 1920s and 1930s Moscow became an important hub for Zhejiang migration to continental Europe. These «old Chinese communities» then played an important role in facilitating the reprisal of outmigration from the PRC during the 1980s and 1990s, when Moscow once again became a crucial hub for migration to Western Europe. By the mid-nineties, according to a IOM report quoted in Maslow (Maslow, 1998), expert estimates put the number of Chinese living in Russia at about 200.000, mostly living in the Siberian Far East, but with about 10.000 residing

in Moscow and a smaller contingent in St. Petersburg. In the first decade of the twenty first century, the growing number of Chinese migrants travelling across or settling down in the Russian Federation rekindled old anxieties and fears of an encroaching “silent Chinese expansion” in the Russian Far East, but the stellar growth of the Chinese economy also purported to be a lifebuoy for the economically struggling borderlands north of the Amur river (Burbeau, 2002; Lukin, 2003). The migration of Han Chinese from Zhejiang, Fujian and Dongbei to Western Europe across post-Soviet space peaked during the 2000s, and then started to decline sharply in the following decade. New flows of students, traders, specialized workers, and expatriate entrepreneurs became gradually more prominent, sometimes following the expansion of Chinese logistic development initiatives such as the One Belt One Road project (also known as the New Silk Roads) (Frankopan, 2018). Before the Covid-19 pandemic, an increasing number of university students from all over the PRC moved to the main Russian universities, especially in Moscow and St. Petersburg, but the pandemic and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine have halted this student migration almost completely. Yet in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia as well as in Eastern Europe, these new kinds of Chinese mobilities still hold their sway and may very well become building blocks of a new, highly skilled and more diverse Chinese diaspora, both in terms of class background and in terms of areas of origin.

THE EURASIAN ROUTES FOR ZHEJIANG, FUJIAN, AND DONGBEI MIGRATION FLOWS DURING THE 1990s - 2000s



Source: illustration by D. Brigadoi Cologna, based on accounts of Zhejiang migrants of the 1990s and 2000s.

Apart from Han Chinese, the mobility of Chinese subjects during the Qing dynasty, and of Chinese citizens after the fall of the Empire in 1911, also involved many other ethnic minorities, most of them nomadic peoples who had inhabited the Inner Asian and East Asian borderlands for centuries. Whether they be hunter-gatherers like the Oroqen and the Hezhen (also known as Nanay or Goldi) from the Tungus forests of the Northeast, nomadic reindeer herders like the Evenki, traditional pastoral nomads such as the Mongols, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Uyghurs, and Tatars, or sedentary herders, farmers or city-dwellers such as the Dungan (known in China as Hui), Russians and Koreans, these peoples often crossed the border between the Russian and the Chinese Empire, and later the Soviet-Chinese border, in both directions, according to the economic or political contingencies of the day that drove them from one place to another. Besides Russia and Mongolia, these mobilities also involved Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and, especially, Kazakhstan. As had already been the case during the 1960s, after the famine years engendered by the disastrous economic policies of the Great Leap Forward, the growing repression of the Uyghur and Kazakh minorities in China's Xinjiang Autonomous Region during the last fifteen years has once again prompted mobilities across the Chinese-Kazakh border, both legal and illegal, voluntary or forced. These mobilities overlap with the growing presence of highly mobile temporary Han Chinese workers, and Kazakhstan may well become a crucial new hub of Chinese migration throughout post-Soviet space in the near future (Sadovskaya, 2018).

References

- Amenda L. (2006), *Fremde - Hafen - Stadt. Chinesische Migration und ihre Wahrnehmung in Hamburg, 1897-1972*, München - Hamburg, Dölling und Galitz Verlag.
- Alexeev M. A. (2003), "Economic Valuations and Interethnic Fears: Perceptions of Chinese Migration in the Russian Far East", in *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 40, no. 1: 85-102.
- Alexeeva O. (2008), "Chinese Migration in the Russian Far East", in *China Perspectives*, no. 3: 20-32.
- Benton G., Pieke, F. N., eds. (1998), *The Chinese in Europe*, London, Macmillan.
- Brigadoi Cologna D. (2019a), *Aspettando la fine della guerra. Lettere dei prigionieri cinesi nei campi di concentramento fascisti*, Roma, Carocci.

- Brigadoi Cologna D. (2019b), "La Grande guerra e le origini della migrazione dal Zhejiang all'Europa", *Sulla via del Catai*, Vol. 12, N. 20: 137-153.
- Bourbeau P. (2002), *La Chine et la Diaspora Chinoise. L'Extrême-Orient convoité*, L'Harmattan, Paris.
- Frankopan P. (2018), *The New Silk Roads. The Present and the Future of the World*, London, Bloomsbury.
- Jersild A. (2019), *Chinese in Peril in Russia: The "Millionka" in Vladivostok, 1930-1936*, in *Sources and Methods. A blog of the History and Public Policy Program*, posted on October 29, 2019 [<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/chinese-peril-russia-the-millionka-vladivostok-1930-1936>]
- Kuhn P.A. (2008), *Chinese Among Others. Emigration in Modern Times*, Lanham MD, Rowman & Littlefield.
- Larin A. G. (1998), "Chinese in Russia: An Historical Perspective," in Benton G. and Pieke F. N., eds., *The Chinese in Europe*, London, Macmillan: 281-300.
- Lukin A. (2003), *The Bear Watches the Dragon: Russian Perceptions of China and the Evolution of Russian-Chinese Relations Since the Eighteenth Century*, Armonk NY, M.E. Sharpe: 59-60.
- Ma Mung E. (2000), *La diaspora chinoise. Géographie d'une migration*, Paris, Ophrys.
- Martin T. (2001), *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, Ithaca NY, Cornell University Press.
- Maslow A. (1998), "Russia", in Pan L., ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Overseas Chinese*, Singapore, Archipelago Press - Landmark Books: 328-331.
- Nyri P. (1999), *New Chinese Migrants in Europe. The case of the Chinese community in Hungary*, Aldershot, Ashgate.
- Sadovskaya Y. (2018), "Ethnically diverse diasporas and migrations from China to Central Asia in the twenty-first century. Origin and contemporary challenges with special reference to Kazakhstan", in Wong B. P. and Tan C.-B., *China's Rise and the Chinese Diaspora*, Abingdon-New York, Routledge: 154-183.
- Sarkisova O. (2015), "Taming the frontier: Aleksandr Litvinov's expedition films and representations of indigenous minorities in the Far East", *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema*, vol. 9, n. 1: 6.
- Siegelbaum L. H. (1978), "Another 'Yellow Peril': Chinese Migrants in the Russian Far East and the Russian Reaction before 1917", in *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2: 307-330.
- Sullivan J., Renz B. (2010), "Chinese migration: still the major focus of Russian Far East/Chinese North East relations?", in *The Pacific Review*, vol. 23, no. 2: 261-285.
- Thunø M. (2013), "Moving Stones from China to Europe: The

Dynamics of Emigration from Zhejiang to Europe”, in F.N. Pieke, H. Mallee (Eds.), *Internal and International Migration. Chinese Perspectives*, London, Routledge: 159-180.

Wolmar C. (2013), *To the Edge of the World. The Story of the Trans-Siberian Express, the World Greatest Railroad*, New York, Public Affairs.

Zalesskaia O. V. (2020), “Chinese Migration and Cross-Border Practices in the Russian-Chinese Interaction in the Far East: Four Stages of Intercultural Dialogue”, in *Changing Societies & Personalities*, vol. 4, no. 4: 528-541.

Jewish and Polish Heritage in Western Ukraine. Old Issues and Recent Trends

Andrea Corsale

Introduction

The perception, representation, management, and use of cultural heritage demonstrate the importance of the attribution of meanings and values by individuals or groups at different times and for different purposes (Graham, 2002; Smith, 2006; Timothy and Boyd, 2003). Cultural relics, either tangible or intangible, can be read and managed to reinforce a particular social or ethnic identity, legitimize political power, or develop business in tourism or other sectors (Ashworth et al., 2007).

Dominant political, social, religious, ethnic, cultural, or economic groups tend to determine which aspects of the past should be made visible or hidden, and how the results should be interpreted and used (Coles & Timothy, 2004; Smith, 2006).

Smith (2006) and Timothy and Boyd (2003) note that narratives and uses of national heritage often tend to exclude the past or present role of minority groups, and support a particular social, ethnic, political, economic, or cultural hierarchy and hegemony, regardless of the present or past composition of that society or community (Lowenthal, 1998; Silverman, 2001). Indeed, such mechanisms of inclusion or exclusion, showing or hiding, accuracy or distortion, are crucial both in traditional cosmopolitan or multiethnic contexts and in contemporary societies characterized by more recent phenomena of immigration, multiculturalism, and/or trans-

nationalism, as they are important for maintaining a particular image and identity of a territory and its people, even in explicitly hierarchical terms (Diekmann and Smith, 2015). Highlighting or concealing the tangible or intangible heritage of a majority or minority, dominant or marginal, long-established or newly arrived group, is crucial for landscape, culture, and tourism dynamics. It also has far-reaching implications at the political, ideological, and geopolitical levels and can become highly controversial when it comes to issues of past atrocities, genocides, racism, and contested international borders that often involve different or divergent narratives (Chambers, 2005; Rampley, 2012).

According to Tunbridge and Ashworth (2006), instances of “dissonant heritage”, in the sense of divergent representations, differing priorities, and sociopolitical confrontations, often occur in places where minority cultural heritage has (re)emerged recently, leading to nationalistic reactions, tense contests for visibility, and distortions in local representation, with complex implications for development opportunities related to cultural tourism. Krakover (2016) notes that minority heritage can be suppressed, tolerated, or actively promoted by dominant groups, depending on the context. An inclusive approach is getting relatively widespread, due to its positive economic and political benefits in terms of tourism and image, although instances of dissonance are still common, especially in countries and areas with geopolitical or identity issues and tensions (Merrill & Schmidt, 2010).

The discrepancy between the interpreted heritage product and the objective historical truth can be significant (Timothy & Boyd, 2006). The primary cause of heritage dissonance lies in the role of interpretation. Not only what is interpreted, but also how it is interpreted and by whom, leads to different conclusions about the value and significance of heritage sites and the past represented, and can elicit different reactions. Conflicting meanings and representations of the past also create room for dissonance and lack of consensus in heritage management, especially in cases where different cultures maintain different attributions of value (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 1996).

The case of three small towns in western Ukraine, Berezhany, Pidhaysi, and Rohatyn, will be examined. These three towns of varying sizes are significant to the discussion because they are three formerly multi-ethnic communities with mixed populations of Ukrainians, Jews, and Poles. The Holocaust and the expulsion of the Polish population after World War II dramatically changed

the identity of the region, which is now predominantly inhabited by Ukrainians. Conflicting dynamics related to classic dissonant heritage issues, but also to the first steps in the development of multicultural tourism in a country and region still struggling for a distinct geopolitical identity, and slowly beginning to confront the darkest periods of its recent history with a more open and pluralistic approach, are examined and discussed.

Methodology

The study is based on a qualitative research method through observations, interviews and consultation of secondary sources. The field study was made between November 2016 and September 2019 through repeated visits to the towns of Berezhany, Rohatyn and Pidhaitsi, as well as other neighbouring towns and villages which were useful for a better contextualization. Observations included visits to the main cultural highlights and repeated walks in the relevant areas characterized by the presence of tangible and intangible memories related to the former presence of minority groups. A total of 25 interviews with key stakeholders dealing with heritage and local identity were held (12 in Berezhany, 9 in Rohatyn and 4 in Pidhaitsi), including municipal administrators, museum and tourist guides, tourist operators, owners of cultural sites, and other locals concerned with the preservation of heritage. The interviews focused on how the local communities perceive the presence of tangible and intangible heritage related to the former Jewish and Polish presence in their towns, and their vision on the potential development of cultural and roots tourism. More informal conversations were also held with local people encountered in the squares and in shops which represent the usual meeting places of the community. These often took the form of small casual crowds with passers-by adding a few sentences and comments, which was useful to better define the surviving memory of past Jewish and Polish presence, the representation of their heritage and the perceived perspectives of tourism development in the area. An approximate number of 35 people participated in these casual gatherings. Both the interviews and the conversations were conducted in Ukrainian, which is the dominant language in the area.

The three towns were selected as representative of formerly multi-ethnic communities that have now become ethnically homogeneous communities. They are located in rural peripheral areas

where minority heritage and sites associated with past atrocities have been neglected, concealed, disregarded, rediscovered, or promoted to varying degrees. The author also consulted several secondary sources, such as statistical data on the demography and economy of the region and materials dealing directly or indirectly with the management, representation, and use of minority heritage in western Ukraine. This consultation continued through November 2021 in order to follow and monitor the observed trends. The combination of these various sources made it possible to understand which aspects of history, memory, and heritage were or were not selected and promoted and why, which allowed for discussion of the contemporary dimensions of dissonance and inclusion.

The study area

The three small towns of Berezhany (population 17,300 in 2021), Rohatyn (7,600), and Pidhaitsi (2,700) are located at a relatively short distance of about 20 km from each other, between the Ternopil and Ivano-Frankivsk oblasts, in the historic Opillia region, part of the Podolian Highlands, in what is now western Ukraine.

These towns share a similar history: founded in the Middle Ages, they were long inhabited by dominant Polish or Polonized noble families and a mixture of Jewish, Polish, and Ukrainian settlers, with smaller German and Armenian minorities. The surrounding area always had a solid Ukrainian majority up to the 20th century, when the region passed from the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the Second Polish Republic and then to Soviet and Nazi occupation, then was incorporated into the Soviet Union for a long time and has been part of independent Ukraine since 1991 (Subtelny, 2000).

These multiple border changes created a traditionally composite, pluralistic, and multicultural society, but also ultimately led to its collapse. The Polish population was traditionally Roman Catholic, while the local Ukrainians were Greek-Catholic. The Jews spoke mainly Yiddish, but Polish, Ukrainian, German, and Hebrew were also occasionally spoken. A part of the Ukrainian community also attended Roman-Catholic functions, while the local Polish dialect was enriched with Ukrainian terms and vice versa. Smaller Orthodox, Armenian, and Protestant communities were also present. Local heritage, in the form of architectural styles, crafts, traditions and myths, food, music, and dress, showed clear cross-cultural influences. However, despite this cultural blending

and overlap, outbreaks of intolerance occurred repeatedly, affecting the coexistence between these different communities (Snyder, 2003; Hann & Magocsi, 2005).

The Jewish population (55% in Pidhaitsi, 40% in Rohatyn, and 35% in Berezhany before World War II) was exterminated between 1941 and 1944, while the Polish population (42% in Berezhany, 20% in Rohatyn, and 20% in Pidhatsi before World War II) suffered massive violence toward the end of the war and was massively displaced to Poland after 1945 (Rohatynjewishheritage.org/; Shtetlroutes.eu/). All three towns currently have an overwhelming Ukrainian majority (Ukrcensus.gov.ua/).

Despite considerable destruction during the two world wars, many old houses and churches and the traditional urban structure remain in the towns, except for the Jewish neighbourhoods, which were almost completely destroyed during the Holocaust. The ruins of the synagogues are barely visible through side alleys and courtyards, often in dilapidated areas, and are often used as warehouses or garbage dumps, while the Jewish cemeteries have been largely destroyed, and former Jewish community buildings are difficult to recognize today. A partial exception is Pidhaitsi, where the former synagogue and Jewish cemetery, although unused and neglected, still stand.

As for Polish heritage, the former aristocratic residences and castles have fallen into disrepair or are barely recognizable, while the Roman-Catholic churches and cemeteries are still used by the small local Catholic communities, which now speak mainly Ukrainian. Again, an exception is Pidhaitsi, where the Roman-Catholic church lies in disrepair and dominates the landscape with its collapsed roof and ruined bell tower.

The economy of the entire region was hit hard by these traumatic events and changes and is still struggling to recover from the post-communist economic transition, with agriculture, public administration, transportation, migrant remittances, and pensions as the main sources of income.

Minority heritage and local identities

The multicultural heritage that has remained in the region, even though severely affected by the tragic events of the 20th century, is still extensive, both in its tangible and intangible elements, and transcends the borders of the region and the country, reaching the descendants of Poles, Jews and Ukrainians who originated from

these three towns and now live abroad. As the interviewees reported, some elements of the local memory remain deeply divisive, while others seem to be gradually forming a solid basis for more inclusive narratives and identities.

Among the former are the difficult relations between ethnic groups before, during, and after World War II, characterized by discrimination, forced assimilation, violence, murder, collaboration with Nazi or Soviet authorities, and the erasure of identities and traditions, which have left deep scars on collective memory, also because local responsibilities were neither thoroughly investigated nor openly addressed and discussed (Golbert, 2008; Rykała, 2013). For this reason, different ethnic groups have established their own memorials to tragic or glorious events related to Ukrainian, Polish, or Jewish history, which are often either ignored or disregarded by the others. In the three towns, several streets and monuments are dedicated to controversial episodes and personalities of Ukrainian history, such as Stepan Bandera (1909-1959), considered by most local Ukrainians as a national hero who fought against Soviet oppression, and by Poles, Jews, and Russians as a Nazi collaborator responsible for violent ethnic cleansing during World War II. Former street names and monuments associated with Austrian, Polish, or Russian/Soviet history were largely erased after the two World Wars and the collapse of the Soviet Union. A continuing concern of the local population relates to the creeping fear of investigations into responsibilities for collaboration during World War II and the prospect of “compensation” or “restitution” of former Polish and Jewish properties that have been in the hands of Ukrainian residents since World War II. Although such fears are legally and practically unfounded, this may explain some of the resistance against the recognition of minority heritage (Redlich, 2002; Shwarzstein, 2019; Subtelny, 2000).

In addition to these contested or ignored memories, according to the interviewees, the case of “dissonant heritage” is also related to the perceived priorities of local communities in an area characterized by a chronic lack of funds for heritage conservation and promotion and weak tourism development dynamics. Thus, when public or private funds need to be raised, they are pragmatically used for heritage perceived by the local community as “Ukrainian”, rather than for sites associated with faded communities or minorities: the restoration of a Greek-Catholic church is thus seen as much more important to the community than a half-abandoned Roman-Catholic church or an already destroyed synagogue or cemetery.

“Why spend money on Jewish and Polish monuments? If they want to rebuild them, they should pay for it” (shopkeeper, Berezhany).

The selective forgetting of the tragic events of the past, strongly influenced by the one-sided official narratives from the Soviet era, is still clearly visible in the local museums. In particular, the Berezhany Municipal Museum, with its historical and ethnographic sections, contains very few references to the historical Jewish and Polish presence in the region and to the facts that led to their violent eradication. These problems have their roots in the post-war Soviet reappraisal of events in the region, which, in order to erase the ancient interethnic frictions that characterized the area, resulted in the erasure of both the memory of multiculturalism and the controversial wartime atrocities among subsequent generations, who today know very little about the ancient Jewish and Polish presence, the Holocaust, and the value or even existence of their heritage (Bartov, 2015; Redlich, 2002). A recurring fear that Poles and Jews might one day reclaim the properties that once belonged to their families before the war was also evident in the interviews.

The current official narrative of local authorities is strongly ethnocentric and incorporates the heritage of minority groups functionally and marginally as an evidence of a historically tolerant and pro-Western orientation of the Ukrainian nation. The Holocaust and the expulsion of Poles do not play a central role in this historical narrative and, when openly discussed, are essentially blamed solely on the Nazi and Soviet authorities. The historical periods marked by discrimination and oppression of the Ukrainian people under Polish, Nazi-German, and Soviet-Russian rule, are emphasized in the official narrative, in personal and family memoirs, and in public monuments.

“The Ukrainian people have always been victims and have done nothing bad to the Jews or the Poles, this is just Russian propaganda” (local administrator, Rohatyn).

Given the multicultural heritage, the potential for cultural tourism in the region, including roots tourism, is significant but still largely unexploited, as revealed in the interviews.

“Jewish and Polish tourists sometimes come to our town to look for their monuments, but they are hard to find and in poor conditions, so many of them are disappointed” (local guide, Pidhaitsi).

Despite these weaknesses, latent tensions, and memory fractures, however, the interviews revealed early signs of change, through a bottom-up rediscovery of the past and the writing of a more inclusive and plural local narrative.

In Rohatyn, a new museum opened in 2018 with great participation from locals and emigrants of different ethnicities, including their descendants. The “Opillya” museum offers a different approach compared to the older municipal museum and makes the town’s multicultural past much more visible. The museum continues to collect objects and stories to shape a shared and inclusive identity for the town and the region.

“The Jewish and Polish sections are still small, but we are constantly trying to reach out to the descendants of Rohatyn’s Jews and Poles to collect more objects and memories” (Museum staff, Rohatyn).

The museum has an active Facebook page where it regularly showcases its collections and other documents, such as old family photos and newspaper articles. Occasionally, images of former Polish noble families draw negative comments from Ukrainians, mainly motivated by an entrenched ideological and nationalist narrative about “foreign” aristocracy oppressing “native” proletariat, but most comments from visitors or Internet users show curiosity, appreciation, and enthusiasm about this rediscovery of the region’s multicultural past, as the museum staff attested.

Another relevant episode was the restoration of the largely abandoned and dilapidated Polish cemetery of Rohatyn, by students, volunteers, and cadets from the Polish town of Częstochowa, in collaboration with local Ukrainian authorities, in 2019.

Several local and international volunteers are dedicated to the preservation and reconstruction of the region’s Jewish heritage through websites and projects such as “Shtetl Routes” and “Rohatyn Jewish Heritage.” The former is a specialized website that allows tourists to trace and interpret the remains of Jewish heritage and history in a vast area between Poland, Ukraine and Belarus which includes several towns such as Rohatyn and Pidhaitsi. The latter relies on the participation of residents and national and international volunteers dedicated to restoring and maintaining abandoned Jewish cemeteries and the sites of mass graves. The project builds links with the community, local schools, and residents, to make Jewish heritage part of the region’s identity and heritage, and encourages local people to donate former Jewish gravestones that had been thoughtlessly used as building materials for decades

after the Holocaust.

“We were pleased to see that locals brought tombstones from unknown locations to the cemeteries by themselves, a sign that citizens recognize that the cemetery is being cared for” (Rohatyn Jewish Heritage project staff).

In the three towns, several locals and expatriates are constantly creating websites, brochures, and films dedicated to rediscovering the region’s multicultural past, which is another sign of change and increasing openness (Roman Zakharii; Rohatyn Jewish Heritage).

Conclusions

This study focused on a typical context in which multiculturalism intermingled with tragedy, as periods of cultural hybridization and flourishing alternated with violence and annihilation. The burden of this past is particularly heavy and difficult to cope with, as each group tends to evaluate the legacy of the others through their own lens, moral, and narrative. Traumatic events and atrocities are either misinterpreted or ignored as Poles, Ukrainians, Jews, and Russians emphasize the representation that is more functional to their own national visions and goals. The fact that the Ukrainian population is now dominant in the study area means that an outside observer will either ignore the fading Jewish and Polish heritage or highlight it as a symbol of nationalist abuse.

As was evident from the interviews, local Ukrainians still feel the need to stress their experiences and role as innocent victims of Polish, Nazi, Soviet, and Russian aggression. The prevailing Polish, Jewish, and Russian narrative, which repeatedly blames the Ukrainian people for the violence in the region during the war, is, at the same time, an instrument for other political, social, and cultural nationalist goals. Some of the Ukrainian national heroes are widely viewed as negative figures in Polish, Jewish, and Russian collective memories, and vice versa.

Nationalist mystification and distortion, stereotypes and prejudices, generalizations, blame, and animosity that still divide the ethnic communities involved can reflect on tourism and produce or reinforce biased perceptions and representations (Chambers, 2005; Nora, 1996). According to the dissonant heritage model, this is inevitable to some extent. Indeed, the selection of cultural heritage according to ethnic, ideological, and geopolitical interests

and agendas is often deliberately designed to create or reinforce a territorial representation and an identity narrative with important consequences for both the local and the broader community (Graham, 2002; Rampley, 2012). This could be in the direction of exclusion and omission or in the direction of more inclusive approaches. However, the latter may still be mixed with hierarchical and opportunistic attitudes aimed at presenting a tolerant and clean image that is not necessarily deeply sincere (Anderson, 1983; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983).

Nevertheless, the study's findings show some early local bottom-up signs of change. Despite the sometimes heavy-handed top-down approaches to national identity, local communities are showing a growing awareness of the importance of incorporating the various faces of history and heritage into their identity representations and tourism strategies. The study area seems to be moving in this direction, with the emergence of inclusive narratives in which heritage and tourism can be allies, beneficiaries, and motivators at the same time. Thus, the recognition, protection, and promotion of minority heritage and associated historical memories are not threats to national cohesion but can become solid opportunities for local development and for cultural, social, and political pluralism. Even in this case, however, it is difficult to distinguish between unbiased cultural and educational purposes and opportunistic motives aimed at exploiting heritage for political and economic benefits in terms of foreign relations and cultural tourism. Furthermore, since there are obviously different opinions and approaches within local communities, this could mean that certain groups engage in cultural tourism and minority heritage while others refrain from doing so, adding further dimensions of complexity that could form a basis for further studies.

Moreover, the wide impacts that the Russo-Ukrainian war is having on representations, narratives, practices, and projects, not to mention heritage tourism itself, will require further research steps. Indeed, the relations between Ukrainian, Polish, Jewish, and Russian history and memories, even at the local level, will be heavily influenced by the geopolitical context in the near future.

Thus, the main aim of this paper is to show the dynamics of re-interpretation and redefinition of the function that heritage can have in social, cultural, political, and economic spheres, within a constant redefinition of identities, practices, and visions at different levels and scales.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Professor Olha Vuytsyk (Ukrainian Catholic University) for her precious help and support.

References

- Anderson, B. (1983), *Imagined communities: Reflections on the Origins and spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London.
- Ashworth, G., Tunbridge, J. (1996), *Dissonant heritage: The management of the past as a resource in conflict*, Wiley, Chichester.
- Ashworth, G.J., Graham, B.J., Tunbridge, J.E. (2007), *Pluralising pasts: heritage, identity and place in multicultural societies*, Pluto, London.
- Bartov, B. (2015), *Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Chambers, D. (2005), "Heritage and the Nation: an exploration of a discursive relationship", *Tourism Analysis*, 9: 241-254.
- Coles, T.E., Timothy, D.J. (Eds.) (2004), *Tourism, Diasporas and Space*, Routledge, London.
- Diekmann, A., Smith, M.K. (Eds.) (2015), *Ethnic and minority cultures as tourist attractions*, Channel View, Bristol.
- Golbert, R. (2008), "Holocaust Memorialization in Ukraine", *Polin*, 20: 222-243.
- Graham, B. (2002), "Heritage as knowledge: Capital or culture?", *Urban Studies*, 39(5-6): 1003-1017.
- Hann, C., Magocsi P.R. (2005), *Galicia: Multicultured Land*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
- Hobsbawm, E., Ranger, T. (1983), *The invention of tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Krakover, S. (2016), "A heritage site development model: Jewish heritage product formation in south-central Europe", *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 12(1): 81-101.
- Lowenthal, D. (1998), *Possessed by the past: The heritage crusade and the spoils of History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Merrill, S., Schmidt, L. (Eds.) (2010), *A Reader in Uncomfortable Heritage and Dark Tourism*, BTU, Cottbus.
- Nora, P. (1996), *Realms of Memory*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Rampley, M. (2012), *Heritage, ideology and identity in Central and Eastern Europe: contested pasts, contested presents*, The International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies, Newcastle.
- Redlich, S. (2002), *Together and Apart in Brzezany. Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians, 1919-1945*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- Rykała, A. (2013), "Ethno-Religious Heritage of Former Eastern

- Territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in Contemporary Poland", *European Spatial Research and Policy*, 20(1): 49-71.
- Shwarzstein, D.G. (2019), *Remembering Rohatyn and Its Environs*, Meyer Schwarzstein Publisher, Beverly Hills.
- Silverman, H. (Ed.), *Contested Cultural Heritage: Religion, Nationalism, Erasure, and Exclusion in a Global World*. Springer, New York.
- Smith, L. (2006), *Uses of Heritage*, Routledge, London.
- Snyder, T. (2003), *The Reconstruction of Nations*, Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Subtelny, O. (2000), *Ukraine: A History*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
- Timothy, D.J., Boyd, S.W. (2003), *Heritage Tourism*, Prentice Hall, London.

Websites (last accessed May 2022)

- <http://facebook.com/opilliamuseum/>
- <http://facebook.com/rohatynjewishheritage/>
- <http://rohatynjewishheritage.org/>
- <http://shtetlroutes.eu/>
- <http://ukrcensus.gov.ua/>
- http://www.personal.ceu.hu/students/97/Roman_Zakharii/berezhany.htm
- <https://rohatynjewishheritage.org/en/history/fanny-holtzmann-film/>

On Iranian-Speaking Minorities in the Post-Soviet Space: the Case of the Pamir People and Their Languages

Joy I. Edelman, Leyli R. Dodykhudoeva

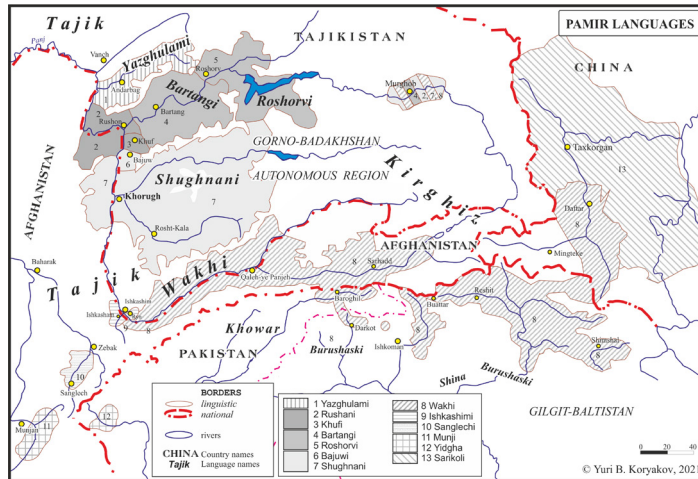
1. Introduction

The term *Pamir languages* is the conventional denomination of the languages belonging to the East Iranian branch of the Iranian language family. This term reflects a socio-historical and cultural language union – the Pamir-Hindu Kush ethnolinguistic region – today split between four countries of Central Asia: Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and China. Currently Pamir-language speakers live in enclaves: in the Mountainous Badakhshan Autonomous Region (MBAR, Tajikistan), Badakhshan province (Afghanistan), Chitral and Gilgit-Baltistan (Pakistan),¹ and in the Tajik district and Yarkand-Khotan area of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (China) (see Map 1).

The Pamir Languages group consists of: the Shughnani-Rushani subgroup with related Yazghulami; Ishkashimi, Sanglichi, and Wakhi; the Munji language with its relation Yidgha (sometimes considered part of this group). Earlier the group included recently extinct Old Wanji, Zebaki and probably the Sarghulami vernacular (languages spoken in Tajik and Afghan Badakhshan).

¹ Region designated by the United Nations and other international organisations as “Pakistan-administered Kashmir”. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilgit-Baltistan> (last accessed 25.04.2022)

The status of these languages or dialects is still discussed in Iranian Studies. The degree of their endangerment varies, depending on the number of speakers and the social and cultural vitality of these tongues. To a certain extent all Pamir languages are considered endangered, and four – Yazghulami, Roshorvi, Bartangi and Ishkashimi – are “severely endangered” and are included as such in the UNESCO Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger (2010).



MAP 1. PAMIR LANGUAGES OF MOUNTAINOUS BADA KHSHAN AUTONOMOUS REGION

Pamir (and also Yaghnobi) languages belong to the Eastern Iranian language subgroup, and are different from Western Iranian Tajik.

2. The sociolinguistic situation in MBAR in Soviet times: Change in the social environment

This paper focuses on the sociolinguistic situation in Tajikistan, previously one of the former Soviet republics, and since 1991, an independent state, the Republic of Tajikistan (Tajik Jumhurii Tojikiston). The Tajik people are the largest Iranian nationality and speak an Iranian language – Tajik, closely related to Persian. We focus on the sociolinguistic situation in the Mountainous Badakhshan Autonomous Region (Tajik Viloyati Muxtori Kūhistoni Badaxšon, MBAR) of Tajikistan, with a particular emphasis on Pamir-language speakers. For population figures concerning Tajikistan and MBAR (see Table 1).

Country/year	1989	2000	2015	2020
Tajikistan	5092	6128	8352	9537,6 ²
Dushanbe city	592,2	564	788,7	846,4
MBAR	160,9	206,2	214,3	228,9 ³
Khorog city	20,2	27,4	28,9	30,3

TABLE 1. POPULATION TRENDS IN TAJIKISTAN AND MBAR (IN THOUSANDS)⁴

2.1. The constitution and status of ethnic groups

In the past, Pamir communities, whose members follow Shi'a Ismaili Islam, were isolated from the outside world, surviving often under the threat of persecution and even extinction. However, within the community itself, there existed a strong sense of family kinship and close-knit neighbourhood support networks, which greatly informed social structures. In such a situation, the native language was a marker of the social network, closely linking people within one and the same ethnolinguistic group – a means of safekeeping the vitality of the entire community through the support of its fellow members. Consequently, Pamir-language speakers had a collective consciousness, reinforced by their location in secluded communities, and without the option of geographical mobility.

During the Soviet era, starvation and illiteracy were eliminated and the economic well-being of the people improved. From the 1940s, after the introduction in Tajikistan of a national education curriculum in the Tajik language, a Soviet Tajik intelligentsia emerged, along with increased urbanisation. The trend towards assimilation of language minorities under the umbrella of a national Tajik language in turn strengthened the integration of Pamir peoples with other sectors of Tajik society. Access to higher education was now also available only in Tajik, with some attention given to Russian. The Tajik language also prevailed in the media (newspapers, radio and TV).

With the higher level of education, more active language contacts and changing social values, the status of minority languages

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tajikistan#Languages> (last accessed 25.04.2022)

³ https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Население_Таджикистана (last accessed 25.04.2022)

⁴ Population figures for 1989–2015 (Number 2015).

and the ethnic identity of their communities within a national framework became a critical subject for debate.

In the 1920s-1930s, a policy of “demarcation” of the Central Asian Soviet republics (Russian *razmeževanie*) had assigned specific territories to ethnic groups (such as the Tajik and Pamir groups in Tajikistan); the now officially recognized Pamir ethnic minorities were granted their own territory of MBAR with a certain degree of autonomy.⁵ This was followed by a “nation-building” policy (Russian *nacional'noe stroitel'stvo*), intended to create a full range of ethnic entities within each Soviet republic, and aiming to involve the local workforce in administration, a process often referred to, in Soviet times, as “indigenization” (Russian *korenizacija*).

This process, along with the construction of national elites, entailed the eradication of illiteracy, and the development of a written language for native Pamir peoples (Shughnani and others); in the course of language planning, a Shughnani school was established, with teaching materials in the language. However, by the late 1930s, a change in “nation-building” policies brought these developments to a halt; the status of Pamir ethnic minorities was downgraded to a lower standing of subordinate ethnic groups, and by 1959, they were eliminated altogether from the census lists as autonomous entities.

The final Soviet census in 1989 considered Pamir and Yaghnob not as ethnic groups, but as mother tongues - Pamir and Yaghnob languages.

Today both the Pamir-language speaking people of Badakhshan and the speakers of Yaghnobi are designated merely as Tajiks, constituents of the independent Tajik nation (for discussion of their status, see Davydov 1989; Monogarova 1989; Kalandarov 2018).⁶ Consequently, the Tajik ethnic group is thought to constitute as many as 84.3% of the Tajikistan population (CIA).

2.1. Changes in the status and functions of minority languages

In parallel with the downgraded status of the Pamir peoples described above, the status of their minority languages in Tajikistan

5 In the first “All-Soviet Union” census in 1926, which mentioned Pamir peoples, “nationality” and “mother tongue” both served as identification criteria.

6 Cf. citizens of Tajikistan in all are called Tajikistanis (Russian *tadžikistancy*).

also suffered. After the 1930s, Pamir languages lost their distinctive recognition and were considered almost as mere dialects of Tajik in the discourse of administrators and the middle-class. For instance, in 1939, in its statement concerning Pamir language policy, the MBAR regional committee of the Tajik Communist Party declared that the main state language was Tajik, and thus the trend towards publishing textbooks and teaching in the Shughnani language was detrimental and becoming a brake on the development and prosperity of the culture of the Tajiks of Gorno-Badakhshan (MBAR Regional Archive F-1; cit. from Alamshoev 2009: 180). However, Pamir languages were still recognised as autonomous languages/dialects by scholars (see Karamshoev 1963, 1983; Edelman 1964, 2016; Edelman & Dodykhudoeva 2009).

Pamir languages remained in this ambiguous position until the Perestroika period. Changes in the social environment during Perestroika resulted in new trends in the hierarchy of languages, their functions and linguistic rights. Along with the struggle for linguistic rights, a number of ethno-political and socioeconomic objectives were advanced by Tajik intellectuals and by the broader population. This led to linguistic and cultural activism, namely the consolidation of various movements and groups with socio-cultural objectives, such as “La’li Badakhshon” (“Ruby of Badakhshan”).⁷

In this period, the problem of the status of mother tongues in general, and Pamir languages in particular, was widely discussed among scholars in Moscow and in the Tajik capital Dushanbe. In March 1989, a Round Table meeting was held at the Institute of Linguistics of the USSR Academy of Sciences, dedicated to the study of Soviet minority languages. Among the topics discussed by the Tajik linguists from MBAR D.K. Karamshoev, R.Kh. Dodykhudoev and P.D. Jamshedov was the status of Pamir languages, with a focus on key problems: the right to speak and develop these languages, the introduction of a written tradition and education, the creation of conditions for their use by the media.

In the same year, the law “On Language” came into force. In a breakthrough for Pamir minorities, this law, for the first time, acknowledged mother tongues as proper languages, and delegated to Soviet Republics the authority to take decisions on the functioning of minority languages (see Table 2).

⁷ This regional solidarity group was created in 1990, and advocated greater rights for MBAR in terms of economic and linguacultural autonomy. In March 1992, it formed an alliance with groups from other regions.

LAW OF THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN
“On Language”

<p>The Law “On Language” on July 22, 1989. Supreme Council of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic, 1989, N 15 Article 3</p> <p>The Republic of Tajikistan creates the conditions for the free development and use of the Gorno-Badakhshan (Pamir) languages and the preservation of the Yagnobi language.</p> <p>Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast decides independently on matters of functioning of local languages.</p>	<p>About the state language of the Republic of Tajikistan. Dushanbe, 5.10. 2009 No. 553 Article 4. Other languages</p> <p>1. All nations and the nationalities living in the territory of the Republic of Tajikistan, having the right freely to use the native language, except as specified, provided by this Law.</p> <p>2. The Republic of Tajikistan creates conditions for free application, protection and development of Badakhshan (Pamir) languages and Yagnobi language.</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

TABLE 2. LAW “ON LANGUAGE” OF TAJIKISTAN

3. The sociolinguistic situation in MBAR, Republic of Tajikistan: post-Soviet dynamics

3.1. Changes in the definition and status of minority languages

In Tajikistan, further changes in the social and economic environment in the post-Soviet period have affected language contacts, as well as the hierarchy of languages and their functions, resulting in linguistic modifications. Tajik has become the state language, as Russian has been relegated to the status of a ‘language of international communication’. Other languages, such as Uzbek and Kyrgyz, are now treated as minority languages (Law 1989, 2009). Although native Pamir and Yaghnobi speakers are considered full citizens of the Tajik nation, their languages are treated as local (Tajik *mahallī*) languages, because they lack a written tradition, and as such are unrecognized in the public sphere.

3.2. Factors contributing to language shift in the post-Soviet era: the position of the state Tajik language.

In the Tajik Constitution adopted in 1994 (amended in 2003), the governance of MBAR, as defined in the social, economic, cultural

and other spheres by Tajik constitutional law, is represented only in the most general terms.

A special article in the State Law of Tajikistan on Language Policy decrees that the Badakhshan (Pamir) and Yaghnobi languages should be preserved and promoted (Law 2009) (see Table 2). Compared to the previous Law of 1989, this formulation represents a step backward in terms of the status of Pamir languages.

3.3. Social and environmental factors contributing to language shift

3.3.1. Social upheavals and their aftermath

The severe political conflict that took place in Tajikistan after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 resulted in the social upheaval of civil war (1992–1997), known in Tajik as *jangi barodarkushī*, ‘fratricidal war’.

These events also led to repression and persecution of Pamir people, forcing some groups and individuals to disguise their ethnic identity or Ismaili faith, but strengthening their sense of community based on their shared ethnicity and religion, as well as the closeness of their linguacultural traditions.

As Pamir people (among other ethnic groups) opposed the central government military forces, the upheaval caused many Pamir-language speakers to flee central Tajikistan and return to MBAR, while after 1992 some went into exile beyond the borders of Tajikistan. MBAR itself was blockaded for some time, resulting in food shortages and famine.

During this period, natural and environmental disasters and accompanying social problems were also key factors in triggering resettlement and economic migration.

Gradually humanitarian and development aid was organised by international organisations, especially the Aga Khan Foundation under the leadership of the Ismaili spiritual leader Aga Khan IV. This continued for several years. However, the transition to agricultural labour and small trading was a difficult challenge for those displaced by civil conflict.

3.3.2. Migration

After the civil war ended in Tajikistan, and a more stable civil society emerged, some of the displaced population of Pamir origin returned from MBAR to central Tajikistan, and resettled there. However, others were forced to travel far and wide in search of

work, resulting in intensive labour migration outside MBAR and Tajikistan, to large cities of other Central Asian countries, Russia, Arab Emirates and the West.

This labour migration continues today, and involves not only single men, but also families with children. Owing to the seasonal or unstable nature of the labour, many of these Pamir families live in unsettled transnational conditions, triggering changes in their sociolinguistic and linguacultural habits. These migratory trends have led to new language contacts and, among young generations, the loss of their native languages.

3.4. Linguacultural profile of MBAR

With regard to the linguacultural and socio-economic situation of Pamir-language speakers in the Mountainous Badakhshan Autonomous Region, in some districts one language prevails, while in others a mix of languages is present, especially in the MBAR administrative centre Khorog (Khorugh); people speak Iranian languages, except in Murghab district, where Turkic Kyrgyz is spoken (see Table 3).

Some districts contain exclusively speakers of Tajik dialects, while others include both Pamir and Tajik speakers, meaning that these speakers are actively bilingual or even plurilingual. As most of the local population have one native language, apart from Tajik – the state language of Tajikistan – we can gauge the estimated total of prevailing Pamir, Tajik and Kyrgyz language speakers in MBAR.

District, incl. subdistrict	Population 2015	Population 2020	Language/dialect variety
Darwaz ⁸	22	24	Tajik of Darwaz
Wanj, incl. Yazghulam	31,9	34,4	Tajik of Wanj Yazghulami
Murghab	14,4	15,9	Tajik, Shughnani; Kyrgyz
Ishkashim, incl. Wakhan	30,5	32,9	Ishkashimi, Wakhi, Badakhshani Tajik Wakhi, Tajik of Wakhan
Ghoron			Badakhshani Tajik

8 Darwaz and Wanj Tajik-speaking regions were, at different times, administratively either included in, or excluded from, MBAR territory.

Roshqal'a, incl. Barwoz	25,7	27,4	Shughnani
Shughnan, incl. Bajū, Ghund	35,8	38	Shughnani
Rushan, incl. Khuf	24,8	25,8	Rushani Khufi
Bartang			Bartangi
Roshorv			Roshorvi
Khorog city	28,9	30,5	Shughnani, Inter-Pamir Tajik
Total	228,9	228,9	

TABLE 3. POPULATION OF MBAR IN TAJIKISTAN, BY DISTRICT AND LANGUAGE
(ESTIMATED FIGURES, THOUSANDS)⁹

4. Developments in Pamir languages: Advancement of literacy in mother tongues

4.1. Shughnani language: a discontinued written tradition and efforts to restore it

For centuries, in the area of Shughnan, the Shughnani language was traditionally the spoken language of everyday discourse and informal communication within the community and family.

In the Soviet period (1920s), Tajik (in the Romanised alphabet) became the written language of Tajikistan, while at the same time Shughnani was stipulated as the official administrative language of the whole of MBAR. Until the 1930s, in Tajik Badakhshan, the educational curriculum was delivered in the Shughnani language.

However, from the 1940s onwards, the Tajik administration determined to replace native languages with a single national language – Tajik.

Consequently, the Tajik language (based on the Cyrillic alphabet) became the sole written language of Tajikistan, marginalizing Shughnani, which returned to its function as the language of informal daily communication in the area. In the Tajik national education curriculum, Tajik was introduced as the official medium of instruction. Because children did not know Tajik before beginning their school studies, teachers unofficially used the children's mother tongue (one of the Pamir languages) to teach Tajik

⁹ Source: 2015 figures (Number 2015).

and other subjects. From that time onwards, the transition from monolingualism to mass bilingualism began.

Since the 1980s, in Tajikistan state promotion of the Tajik language as one of the factors of Tajik ethnic identity and as a marker of the nation's independence became more pronounced. At this time, grassroots movements in the Soviet Union began to emerge, advocating greater support for minority languages, including their use in education and literature. The status of the Yaghnobi and Pamir languages was reconsidered.

It is noteworthy that, as part of the struggle for MBAR autonomy and for the linguacultural revival of the area, the creation of a written culture was discussed, including the development of alphabets for the non-written languages of MBAR and for the promotion of a literary tradition. This campaign saw the publication of "A proposed consolidated alphabet for all Pamir languages (for both academic and non-academic discourse)" developed by the Department of Pamir Studies of the Tajik Academy of Sciences (Proekty alfavitov 1989).

Since 1990, Shughnani has been introduced in MBAR as a language to be studied, in addition to its use as a medium of instruction. Several primers and textbooks for primary school teaching have been published (Karamšoev 1992, 2000; Karamšoev & Alamšoev 1996, 2000). In addition, a variety of Pamir-language alphabets have been created based on Cyrillic, as well as a number of others based on Roman and Arabic scripts.

In further signs of an emerging written tradition, the years 1990–1992 also saw the publication of the monthly newspaper supplements "Ma'orifat(-i Shughnon)" (Enlightenment of Shughnan) and "Farhangi Badakhshon" (Culture of Badakhshan) – with stories and poems in all Pamir languages. In 2009 the monthly newspaper "Lozar" (Shughnani 'Glacier') began publication in Khorog, featuring poems, stories, and folk-tales in all the Pamir languages. Later years saw the emergence of the independent newspapers "Pomer" and "Pamir.Info", dedicated specifically to life in MBAR, and published in Tajik and Pamir (mainly Shughnani) languages. In 2014–2015, the "Imruz" radio station broadcast an ethnographic cultural programme on Badakhshan in the Shughnani language. These various initiatives were short-lived, however, due to financial constraints or political pressures.

4.2. Promotion of Pamir languages and culture

Today, speakers of Pamir languages continue to use them only in informal personal communication; these languages still have no official status outside the community.

Even so, Pamir intellectuals, academics and educators in Tajikistan have been positively promoting the native language, explaining the need for writing systems, alphabet primers, self-instruction manuals and other educational literature. As part of their preparation of native-language texts, many linguists and language activists have become involved in documenting Pamir languages and folklore, exploring these with the younger generation in a number of study groups.

Efforts in the field of language promotion find their reflection in various means of preserving tangible and intangible cultural heritage: the establishment of folk museums, cultural or educational clubs and theatre groups, as well as the development of literary, song and narrative traditions.

The academic community has been playing an important role in this regard, organizing a series of workshops and conferences on Pamir mother-tongue issues. In 2009 the Foundation for Endangered Languages held its 8th conference in Khorog, in cooperation with the Institute for Humanities of the Tajik Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London. The conference resolution included proposals for the promotion of alphabets and manuals, and the introduction of mother-tongue teaching in primary schools (Resolution 2009).

This was followed in 2011-2013 by a monthly series of workshops and seminars on Pamir mother-tongue topics, notably alphabets, organised jointly by the Tajik and Russian Academies of Sciences. Later, in 2018, the 1st Forum on Pamir languages was held in Khorog, addressing key issues concerning the creation of Pamir-language literature.

4.3. Maintaining literacy in mother tongues: print culture and literature

The rise of globalized culture and increased transnational mobility has prompted awareness among civil society organizations and native-language speakers that their languages could be endangered, prompting them to seek new initiatives to strengthen the overall status and vitality of minority languages.

Several socio-cultural organizations, including the Aga Khan Foun-

dation, are working in MBAR to promote the maintenance of mother tongues as a central component in the system of community values and identity, encouraging community participation in cultural and educational programs, raising awareness of Pamir-language endangerment and highlighting the need to revive and preserve these languages. Speakers have been taking a range of approaches to supporting their mother tongues in oral and written forms.

Among these, the first collection of Shughnani poetry intended for children was composed and published by the famous Tajik poet of Badakhshani origin Ato Mirkhoja, under the title “Stories about Rawshan” (“Rawšan qissaen” Mirxoja 2010). Additionally, from 2014, two NGOs – “Nur” and the “Nilufar Centre for education of younger generation” – have been publishing children’s books in various Pamir languages, as well as in Tajik, Russian and English, for early childhood development centres in MBAR. These publications were based on Cyrillic-script alphabets, designed by Shodikhon Yusufbekov for Shughnani-Rushani languages, and by Joy Edelman for Yazghulami.

Among other publications by these NGOs and other institutions were several collections of modern poetry and, in 2017, the first novel in Shughnani “If life began anew”, written by Khudobakhsh Khudobakhshov (Xudobaxšov 2017), who wrote it with a view to promoting his mother tongue. This paved the way for the consolidation of the Shughnani language and the establishment of a Shughnani literary tradition in the public sphere, not only in the area of Pamir itself, but on an international scale (Abdulhamidova & Yusufbekov 2017).

These developments were exemplified by “Pomere.Info”, a website about the Pamir area and its people, which launched a section entitled “Who can read in his mother tongue?” (*Xu ziv xeydowčay warðed*) and which published online a historical narrative (*qissa*) in Shughnani by Muzaffar Muborakshoen about life in the Pamir Mountains during the ancient period of the Ephthalites (an ancient Central Asian conquering tribe) (Pomere info 2021).

Recent years have also seen the publication of a scholarly manual on Shughnani grammar, prepared in Shughnani (Alamšoev 2016), and a Shughnani-Tajik-Russian-English vocabulary *Xuynūni-tojiki-wurusi-anglīsi luḡat* (Alamšoev & Alamšoev 2020).

Among other Pamir languages, the establishment of a literary tradition was most prominent in Wakhi, with the 2011 publication in that language of a book of short stories for children, as well as collections of Wakhi folklore and Wakhi folk-tales.

4.4. Promotion of Pamir cultures: new communication channels and special linguacultural programs

As globalized communication through the internet expands and new media platforms reach individuals in their domestic environment, the promotion and distribution of Pamir language and culture has benefited from these new opportunities for receiving and sharing information. Remote community members find it easier to stay in touch with friends and colleagues around the world, as well as to share social and creative endeavours reflecting Pamir cultures. In addition, communication through the exchange of written texts (SMS), emails and social media are leading to the development of a spontaneous written tradition in societies which previously had only oral means of transmitting information.

Social networks have emerged, virtual communities dedicated to various Pamir languages and cultures, offering authors new channels for the presentation of Pamir-language scholarly texts as well as poetry and prose literature, and allowing them to discuss their work with their audience, also in their mother tongue. These authors spontaneously apply their own system of writing, since there is no common official alphabet.

The internet has also created global opportunities for young people, who can now select and access their multimedia content, and appropriate their culture as part of their personal information spectrum. These initiatives include audio and video presentations and films, prepared in various Pamir languages for younger generations of speakers. Notable among such multimedia projects is the story of “Little Muk” by Wilhelm Hauff, first translated and published as a book in Shughnani in 1938, but presented in 2019 as an animated cartoon “Muk the messenger”. Another landmark was the release in 2015 of the feature film in Shughnani “Mushkilkuso” (“Overcoming”), directed by the local film-maker Umedsho Mirzoshirinov with a cast of native speakers.

At an international level, efforts to revive Pamir language and culture by fostering awareness of them have become increasingly prominent. With active migration and intensification of transnational links, most of the younger Pamiri diaspora have become bilingual or plurilingual. Many of them, aware of their cultural identity while living far from home, are displaying a growing consciousness of their native languages, and want their culture and language to become known internationally. Consequently, a growing number of these young people have been studying and teaching various Pamir languages.

In this regard, 2021 saw the launch of the Pamir Stories Series, initiated by the Endangered Language Alliance in collaboration with the Worldwide Education and Research Institute and members of the Pamir community. This online program featured traditional tales told in native Pamir languages (Shughnani, Rushani, Bartangi, Wakhi and Ishkashimi). In addition, in October 2021, two children's books in Pamir languages - Shughnani and Wakhi - were published in Roman and Cyrillic scripts (ELA 2021).

A generation of so-called "new speakers" of Pamir languages has also been emerging. These are outsiders, people who are interested in Pamir languages and culture, and have learnt one or several such languages themselves, even creating textbooks and teaching various Pamir languages online through blogs or video presentations.

Alongside the internet, live events continue to make a key contribution to the spectrum of opportunities for Pamir linguistic and cultural revival. An important community role in stimulating the revival of Pamir languages and culture has been played by Ismaili Centres in Khorog and Dushanbe, where a variety of multilingual and multicultural programs have been organized. These include the publication and promotion of books by famous scholars on Badakhshan and the Pamirs. One such volume, launched in 2020 by the Ismaili Centre in Dushanbe, was Mikhail Andreev's "Tajiks of Khuf valley" (2020), describing the cultural and linguistic heritage of the Pamir people living in that area. In another noteworthy initiative, a 2015 dramatized performance based on one of the "Stories about Rawshan", recorded in a YouTube clip entitled "Don't forget your mother tongue!" (Shughnani *Az xu ziv marines*), became so popular that in 2018 it was presented as a live public recitation at the Ismaili Centre in Dushanbe.

In addition, in light of increased social, often transnational mobility, projects have been undertaken, both within MBAR and elsewhere, to promote distinctive Pamir culture through special linguacultural programs and festivals (such as the annual Nawruz celebrations in Khorog, Dushanbe and Moscow). Other initiatives have even included a "Pax Pamir" board game, released in 2019, focusing on the Silk Road and in particular its Wakhan route.

5. Conclusion

To conclude we can highlight that in last three decades since the break-up of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the independ-

ent Republic of Tajikistan, Pamir communities have undergone increasing change, integrating into the wider world and moving away from an ideology of national collective consciousness - regulating the activities of individuals within the collective - to the self-awareness of a minority community, within which individuals function autonomously.

As a group the Pamir people have acquired an ethno-confessional focus, and the members of their diaspora, living in transnational conditions, have become more aware of their ethnocultural and religious identity.

In the sphere of language, apart from speaking their mother tongues and the state language (Tajik, Russian, or other languages depending on where they live), Pamir-language speakers have become more focused on international multilingualism, including the use of English as a lingua franca of the global Ismaili community.

References

- Abdulhamidova, P.S., Yusufbekov, Š.P. (2017), "Stanovlenie publičnogo šugnanskogo diskursa v SMI i social'nyx setjax", *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, 21(4): 858-869.
- Alamšoev, M. (2016), *Shughnani grammar*. Khorog. (in Shughnani)
- Alamšoev, M., Alamšoev, Š. (2020), *A Shughnani-Tajik-Russian-English vocabulary / Xuynūni-tojiki-wurusi-anglīsi luḡat*. Dushanbe.
- Atlas of the World's languages in danger. UNESCO 2010. www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/index.php (last accessed 21.04.2022)
- CIA - CIA World Factbook. Tajikistan <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/tajikistan/> (last accessed April 22, 2022)
- Constitution (Basic Law) of the Republic of Tajikistan. Adopted in 1994; amended in 1999; June 2003. Dushanbe, 2003. taj127450E.doc (live.com) (last accessed 21.04.2022)
- Davydov, A.S. (1989), "Ne obosnovanno, zato publicistično", *Sovetskaja ètnografija*, 5: 15-23.
- Edelman, D.I. (1964), "Sovremennoe sostojanie izučenija pamirskix jazykov", *Voprosy jazykoznanija*. 1: 128-138.
- Edelman, D.I. (2016), "Nekotorye problemy minoritarnyx jazykov Pamira (k stanovleniju pis'mennosti i literatury)", *Rodnoy jazyk*, 2(5): 87-113.
- Edelman, D.I., Dodykhudoeva, L.R. (2016), "The Pamir languages", in Windfuhr G. (Ed.), *The Iranian Languages*, Routledge, 2009.

- ELA 2021 - <https://www.elalliance.org/our-work/revitalization/storybooks> (last accessed April 28, 2022)
- Kalendarov, T.S. (2018), "Pamirskie narody, ix jazyki i perepis: ètničeskij diskurs", *Ètnografičeskoe obozrenie*, 5: 162-178.
- Karamšoev, D. (1963), *Badžuvskij dialekt šugnanskogo jazyka*, Akademija nauk Tadžikskoi SSR. Rudaki Institut jazyka i literatury, Dushanbe.
- Karamšoev, D. (1983), "O funkcionirovanii pamirskix jazykov na sovremennom etape", in *Razvitie jazikov v stranax zarubežnogo Vostoka*, Moscow, IV, 98-106.
- Karamšoev, D. (1992), *Alifboi favrii zaborhoi pomir̄ bo namunahoi adabī*. Khorogh.
- Karamšoev, D. (2000), *Alifboi zaborhoi pomir̄ dar asosi alifboi tojikī bo hattī sirillī*. Khorog.
- Karamšoev, D., Alamšoev, M. (1996), *Alifboi zaboni Shughnonī*. Maorif, Dushanbe.
- Karamšoev, D., Alamšoev, M. (2000), *Kitobi darsi sinfeni 2-4*. Pomir, Khorog.
- Law 1989 - Zakon Tadžikskoj SSR. 22 ijulja 1989 goda. Vedomosti Verxovnogo Soveta Tadžikskoj SSR. 1989. № 15.
- Law 2009 - Law of the Republic of Tajikistan of October 5, 2009 No. 553. Dushanbe, 2009. https://www.andoz.tj/docs/zakoni/1_№13_state-language-RT_ru.pdf (last accessed April 28, 2022)
- Mirxoja, A. (2010), *Rawšan qissaen*, Adib, Dushanbe.
- Monogarova, L.F. (1989), "Pamircy - Narodnosti ili Subètnosy Tadžikov? Otvet A.S. Davydovu", *Sovetskaja ètnografija*, 5 (September-October): 28-35.
- Number - *Number of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan as of January 1, 2015/Shumorai aholii Jumhurii Tojikiston to 1 yanvari soli 2015*. Agency on statistics under the aegis of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan. Dushanbe, 2015.
- Pomere info 2021 - All about Pamir and Pamirians <https://pomere.info/index.php/2021/11/20/1388/> (last accessed April 12, 2022)
- Proekty alfavitov - *Proekty alfavitov pamirskix jazykov, razrabotannye Otdelom pamirovedenija Pamirskoj bazy AN Tadzhikskoj SSR* (1989), Khorog.
- Resolution, 2009 - FEL XIII: Endangered Languages and History: Resolution from the conference. www.ogmios.org/conferences/2009/resolution.php (last accessed April 12, 2022)
- Xudobaxšov, X. (2017), *Zindagi az nav ca syd sar*, Khorog.

The Legal Protection of National Minorities in Ukraine from a Comparative Perspective

Caterina Filippini

The legacies of minorities rights protection of pre-soviet and soviet Ukraine

Ukraine experienced various models of national minorities rights protection.

After WWI, on the 9th (22) of January 1918, the Rada of Ukraine - influenced by the ideas of Karl Renner and Otto Bauer - passed the statutory law «On National Personal Autonomy» (Liber 1987). According to this, the citizens of the People's Republic of Ukraine - after declaring their belonging to a particular nation and registering in its list - could create «national personal unions» which coordinated all activities involving its members «regardless of where they were in the People's Republic of Ukraine».

This model ceased to be applied after the Bolsheviks seized power and founded the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (further: UkrSSR). Indeed, the first UkrSSR Constitution of 1919 only proclaimed the principle of non-discrimination and forbade any kind of oppression of «national minorities» (art. 32) (UkrSSR Const. 10.03.1919).

After the foundation of the Soviet Union in 1922, Ukraine adopted its second Socialist Constitution of 1929 (UkrSSR Const. 15.05.1929). This - besides the ban of any discrimination against national minorities - introduced the right to establish «national territorial administrative units» aimed at «ensuring in the best way

the interests of national minorities which represented the compact majority of people in one or another areas...» (art. 19).

The third UkrSSR Constitution of 1937 (UkrSSR Const. 30.01.1937) instead abolished the abovementioned national minorities' right to form «national territorial administrative units»¹. Furthermore, it replaced the expression «national minority» with «nationality» that, from the point of view of its etymology, did not reflect the conflict between minority and majority.

The same approach underpinned the last UkrSSR Constitution of 1978 (UkrSSR Const. 20.04.1978) until in the mid-eighties Gorbachev launched the reformist policies of Glasnost and Perestroika.

In fact, between late 1980s and early 1990s, Gorbachev's reforms also paved the way for the recognition of national minorities rights both at Soviet Union level and within its federated Republics.

Moreover, the Declaration «On State Sovereignty of Ukraine» - adopted by the Supreme Soviet of Ukraine on the 16th of July 1990 - proclaimed not only the «right of all nationalities residing in the territory of the Republic to free national cultural development», but also the possibility to set up «national administrative units». Thus, it could be inferred that the Declaration «On State Sovereignty of Ukraine» was inspired both by the pre-Soviet legacies (when mentioning cultural rights) and Soviet legacies of the late 1920s (when mentioning «national administrative units»).

The main content of the Declaration «On State Sovereignty of Ukraine» was used as a model by the subsequent Declaration «On the Rights of Nationalities of Ukraine» (Declaration On the Rights) adopted on the 1st of November 1991.

In fact, the latter continued to envisage the possibility of creating «national administrative units» stating in its art. 2 that the State should «guarantees all nationalities the right to preserve their traditional settlement and ensures the existence of national administrative units [...]». Secondly, in an even more detailed way, it reaffirmed the right of nationalities to create cultural centres, communities and associations. Thirdly, it reintroduced the expression «national minorities» though only in one provision which stated that: «National cultural centres and societies, representatives of national minorities have the right to free contacts with their historical homeland» (art. 7).

1 At the same time, the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, originally included in the RSSU, was transformed into the Moldova Soviet Socialist Republic directly federated to the USSR.

Finally, on the 25th of June 1992 the Supreme Rada of Ukraine passed the Law of Ukraine «On national minorities in Ukraine» (Law On national minorities).

This law on the one hand introduced the expression «national minorities» throughout all its text, stated that «national minorities» are «groups of citizens of Ukraine who by nationality are not Ukrainian, showing a feeling of national self-awareness and affinity among themselves» (Art. 3) and proclaimed that the State should guarantee all national minorities the right to «national cultural autonomy» (Art. 6).

On the other hand, the same law, contrarily from the Declarations «On State Sovereignty of Ukraine» and «On the Rights of Nationalities of Ukraine» still in force, did no longer provide for the creation of «national administrative units».

The Law of Ukraine «On National Minorities in Ukraine» which came into force in 1992 wasn't immediately followed by the adoption of constitutional amendments correspondingly replacing the word «nationality» with the expression «national minorities» within the 1978 Constitution of Ukraine still in force until 1996, even if no longer defined as «socialist».

In fact, only the new Constitution of Ukraine of 1996 (Constitution 28.06.1996) «re-constitutionalised» the term «national minorities» in its art. 10², 11³, 53⁴ and 119⁵.

2 Art. 10, par. 3 Const. UA: «In Ukraine, the free development, use and protection of Russian, and other languages of national minorities of Ukraine, is guaranteed».

3 Art. 11 Const. UA: «The State promotes the consolidation and development of the Ukrainian nation, of its historical consciousness, traditions and culture, and also the development of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of all indigenous peoples and national minorities of Ukraine».

4 Art. 53, par. 5 Const. UA: «Citizens who belong to national minorities are guaranteed in accordance with the law the right to receive instruction in their native language, or to study their native language in state and communal educational establishments and through national cultural societies».

5 Art. 119, 1 par., 3rd subpar. Const. UA: «Local state administrations on their respective territory ensure: 3) the implementation of national and regional programmes for socio-economic and cultural development, programmes for environmental protection, and also-in places of compact residence of indigenous peoples and national minorities-programmes for their national and cultural development».

However, following the adoption of the new Constitution the Law of Ukraine «On National Minorities in Ukraine» of 1992, whereas not in conflict with the content of former, continued to be applied. From a formal point of view, the latter was indeed in full compliance with art. 92⁶ of the new Constitution according to which national minorities and indigenous rights can be determined only by parliamentary statutory laws.

Furthermore, the Law of Ukraine «On national minorities in Ukraine» of 1992 underwent only few changes since its adoption.

The relationship between the Law of Ukraine «On National Minorities » of 1992 and the Law of Ukraine «On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as a State Language» of 2019

Even if, the Law of Ukraine «On National Minorities in Ukraine» of 1992 was only subject to minor changes, the regulation of national minorities languages rights have often been affected by modifications (Fedotov 2015).

To better understand these changes, it is necessary to start from the assumption that the Constitution of Ukraine takes a promotional approach towards the Ukrainian language. Indeed, it does not only establish that: «The state language in Ukraine is the Ukrainian language», but also declares that: «The State ensures the overall development and functioning of the Ukrainian language in all spheres of social life throughout the territory of the Ukraine...» (Art. 10, par. 1 and 2).

Secondly, the Constitution of Ukraine explicitly mentions only the Russian language within its provision dedicated to the guarantee of national minorities languages. In fact, in art. 10, par. 3 it states that: «In Ukraine, the free development, use and protection of Russian⁷, and other languages of national minorities of Ukraine, is guaranteed» (Art. 10, par. 3).

Thirdly, the Constitution of Ukraine affirms that: «The use of

6 Art. 92, par. 1, 3rd subpar. Const. UA: «The following are determined exclusively by the laws of Ukraine: 3) the rights of indigenous peoples and national minorities».

7 However, the Russian language is not expressively mentioned when the Constitution further establishes that all citizens belonging to national minorities «have the right to study and receive instruction in their mother tongue at state and municipal educational institutions or through national cultural association» (art. 53, par. 4).

languages in Ukraine is guaranteed by the Constitution of Ukraine and is determined by laws» (art. 10, par. 4) and that: «The procedure of the use of the languages» should be determined only by laws» (Art. 92, par. 4).

According to the wording of art. 92, par. 4 of the Constitution of Ukraine, from the formal point of view it was therefore also possible (as in the case of minorities rights) to apply a law concerning the regulation of languages rights adopted before and not in conflict with the former.

In fact, the Law of UkrSSR «On languages rights in the UkrSSR» of the 27th of October 1989 (Goodman 2009) was still applied after the Constitution of 1996 entered into force.

After all, even if acknowledging Russian as a «language for inter-ethnic communication», the Law of UkrSSR «On languages rights in the UkrSSR» already stated Ukrainian as «State language». In addition, it specified that «citizens of other nationalities - representing the majority in a given administrative-territorial entity could use their national languages in their relationships with State, regional and municipal public institutions» (art. 8).

Under the provisions of this Law, which left a rather wide margin of interpretation, the Presidents of Ukraine were able to pursue partially different linguistic policies. More specifically, some scholars (Csernicskó, Fedinec 2016) distinguish a period of cautious tolerance during the presidency of Kravchuk (1989-1994), a period of soft ukrainization during the presidency of Kuchma (1994-2004) and a period of hard ukrainization during the presidency of Yushchenko (2005-2010) whose victory in 2004 over Yanukovich (Kuchma's dolphin) was preceded by the so-called Orange Revolution (Maidan). However, the Law of UkrSSR «On languages rights in the UkrSSR» - under the Presidency of Yanukovich, who finally managed to win the 2010 presidential elections - was replaced with the Law of Ukraine «On the Principles of State Language Policy», adopted on the 3rd of July 2012 (Csernicskó, Máté 2017).

The Law of Ukraine «On the Principles of State Language Policy» - that also emended few provisions of the Law of Ukraine «On national minorities in Ukraine» of 1992 - introduced the possibility to establish «regional languages» whereas spoken by at least 10% of the population of a given administrative-territorial entities. Thus, according to the new Law, a series of oblast and local councils recognized Russian as their official regional language. In some western oblasts Hungarian, Moldavian, and Romanian also received regional language status (Charnysh 2013).

However, following the protests of November 2013 (Euro-maidan) and the regime change that took place on February 2014, the new majority of the Verchovna Rada immediately asked to repeal the law «On the Principles of State Language Policy».

Nevertheless, Turchynov - who became acting President on the 22nd of February 2014 as soon as Yanukovych escaped the country - deemed appropriate not to immediately support such request to avoid further tensions. Actually the Law - following the victory of Poroshenko in the presidential elections of the 25th May 2014 - would have been implemented for more than four years. However, the Supreme Rada in 2016 was already successful to enact some legislative novelties aimed at extending the use of Ukrainian language in the field of mass media (where Russian was still widely used) and in 2017, with the same goal, passed a new Law «On Education», that was submitted to the opinion of the Venice Commission.

Finally, on the 25th April 2019 President Poroshenko - after the Law «On the Principles of State Language Policy» had been declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court on the 28th of February 2018 - promulgated the new Law of Ukraine «On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as a State Language» (On Ensuring the Functioning).

The new law however entered into force only after Zelenskij assumed his presidential mandate.

As can be inferred from its title, the law «On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as a State Language» of 2019 governs «the functioning and use of the Ukrainian language as the State language throughout Ukraine in the spheres of public life» to which refers the same Law.

Moreover, it specifies that: «The procedure for the use of the Crimean Tatar language or other languages of indigenous peoples and national minorities of Ukraine in the respective spheres of public life is determined by the law on the procedure for the exercise of rights of indigenous peoples and national minorities of Ukraine, subject to the specific features determined by this Law».

Thus, by establishing the primacy of its provisions the Law of 2019 also affects the linguistic rights of indigenous peoples and national minorities determined by other laws.

Furthermore, the analysis of the implementation of the law «On Education» of 2017 (Art. 7) (Makarchuk et al. 2020), of the law «On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as a State Language» of 2019 (Art. 21), and of the Law on «Complete Second-

ary Education» of 2020 (Art. 5) led to the configuration of three different models concerning the use of the native/national languages as vehicular languages in the schools.

Indeed, the first model provides that citizens, belonging to indigenous peoples, have the right to receive all general secondary education in the native language of the corresponding indigenous people. Therefore, students belonging to an indigenous people from the 1st up to the (11)12th grade can study, except for the compulsory study of Ukrainian, all the subjects in their corresponding native language.

Instead, the second model provides that Ukrainian citizens belonging to a national minority - whose national language is also an official language of the EU - have the right to study all the subjects (except for the mandatory study of Ukrainian) in their national language only in the elementary school (therefore until 4th grade). From 5th grade on, at least 20% of the annual hours of teaching time must be in Ukrainian, in 9th grade - at least 40% and from the 10th to (11)12th - at least 60%.

In the end, the third model provides that citizens, belonging to a minority, whose national language is not an official language of the EU, can also receive instruction in their national language as a subject (in addition to the compulsory study of Ukrainian) only in the elementary school (therefore still until 4th grade), but in this case from the 5th grade until the (11)12th grade at least 80% of the annual hours of teaching time must be in Ukrainian.

Furthermore, it is up to the educational institutions to establish the list of subjects to be studied in the state language or in the language of a given national minority, as well as to provide for some subjects to be taught in English or in another official language of the EU.

These three different models can be considered «also the result of the profound, tragic forced Russification carried out in the country, first in the Tsarist era and then, especially, in the Soviet era» (Napolitano 2019).

However, the three above mentioned models introduced imbalances not only between indigenous people and national minorities, but also between national minorities whose national language at the same time is an EU official language and the national minorities whose national language is not EU official language.

Although the new President V. Zelenskyj, was somewhat disappointed with this “hereditary” legislative framework (Kulyk 2019), he preferred to promote the drafting of both a new law on indig-

enous peoples, that was never previously adopted (despite what stated by the Constitution of Ukraine) and that of a new law on national minorities to replace the outdated Law of 1992, rather than addressing the issue of the revision of the State language law.

After all, the Commission for democracy through law (Venice Commission) of the Council of Europe (of which Ukraine became member in 1997) recommended not only «to revise the State Language Law in order to ensure, in the light of the specific recommendations made in the present opinion, its compliance with Ukraine's international commitments...», but also «to prepare without any unnecessary delay the Law on Minorities and to consider postponing until adoption of the Law on Minorities the implementation of the State Language Law's provisions which are already in force» (Opinion on the Law).

European conditionality in the field of national minorities rights related to Ukraine

Actually, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe too - by adopting its resolutions containing conclusions and recommendations on the implementation of the FCPNM ratified by Ukraine in 1998 - often underlined the need to update the Ukrainian legal framework concerning national minorities.

More specifically, the Committee of Minister of the Council of Europe, in its first Resolution of February 2003 (Resolution CM/ResCMN(2003)5), on the one hand affirmed that: «Ukraine has made commendable efforts in terms of designing legislation of a general nature for the protection of national minorities and demonstrated commitment to the implementation of this legislation». But, on the other hand in the same Resolution it also underlined that: «Certain shortcomings remain, and some setbacks have been observed, in the legislative framework pertaining to the implementation of the Framework Convention...». Furthermore, in its Resolution of March 2011 (Resolution CM/ResCMN(2011)8) the Committee of Minister stressed that in Ukraine: «Apart from some legislative initiatives, there have been no major developments in the legislation pertaining to national minorities. The current legislative framework is partly outdated, lacks coherence and contains a number of shortcomings. There is, therefore, a vital need to adapt the national legislation, including the law on national minorities, to the relevant international standards, including the Framework Convention». In its Resolution of December

2013 (Resolution CM/ResCMN(2013)8) the Committee of Minister recalled again the Ukrainian authorities to «take all necessary steps to develop without delay and in close consultation with national minority representatives a comprehensive and consistent legislative framework pertaining to national minority protection and the status and restoration of rights of formerly deported persons, including as regards access to land». Finally, in its Resolution of December 2020⁸ the Committee of Minister reiterated that Ukraine should «Adopt as a matter of priority in close consultation with the groups concerned an adequate and comprehensive legal framework for the protection of national minorities with effective implementation mechanisms»

In 2021 the need to revise the legal framework concerning national minorities rights was stressed also by the European Union whose state members signed the 2014 EU-Ukraine Association Agreement (Van der Loo 2016; Petrov 2015) that embodies 'common value' conditionality⁹.

More specifically, the Association Implementation Report - covering the period from December 2019 until November 2020 - affirmed that: «...Ukraine is yet to adopt a Law on National Minorities, which is a recommendation made by the Venice Commission on Ukraine's adoption of the Law on State Language in May 2019» (Association Implementation Report 27.11.2020).

Instead, it is worth noting that the Association Implementation Report (covering the period from December 2020 until the beginning of Russia's military aggression on the 24th of February 2022) underlined that the process of: «drafting a law on national minorities, now renamed Law on National Communities - the adoption of which was a recommendation by the Venice Commission relating to adoption of the Law on State Language - continued». It also added that: «Representatives of national minorities should

8 Resolution CM/ResCMN (2020)13 on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Ukraine adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 8 December 2020.

9 Indeed, the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, among the General Principle, lists the «Respect for democratic principles, human rights and democratic freedom, as defined particular in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and in the Charter of Paris of 1990» according to which «the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities will be protected and that persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to express, preserve and develop that identity without any discrimination and in full equality before the law».

be closely involved in this process» (Association Implementation Report 22.07.2022).

The drafting of the new Law of Ukraine «On National Minorities in Ukraine»

Actually, already at the end of 2020 the Committee on Human Rights, Deoccupation and Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories in Donetsk, Luhansk Regions and Autonomous Republic of Crimea, National Minorities and Interethnic Relations (further: Committee on Human Rights) of the Supreme Rada introduced an ad hoc Working Group to resume the work on a new Law «On National Minorities in Ukraine».

On the 19th of February 2021 the drafting process was firmly supported by President Zelenskij who, in an ad hoc summoned meeting, underlined that the settlement of the status of national minorities would also help protect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. Indeed, during the meeting, he affirmed that: «This law will provide rights to national minorities, but will also protect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. As a State, we will protect the traditions, holidays, language, folklore of national minorities, but at the same time we will demand respect for Ukrainian traditions and language. Children of any minority must know the language of their people and Ukrainian language. This is fair» (Legislative Initiative on Regulating).

The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities was still involved in the preparation of the draft law by sending, at the request of the relevant Working Group, his comments and practical proposals on improving certain draft provisions.

Moreover, on the 4th of June 2021, following a series of monitoring visits by the same Head of the Committee on Human Rights to national minority compact settlement areas (Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Odesa, Chernivtsi, Zakarpatia Regions) at the end of May 2021, a public discussion of the draft law took place.

It is also worth noting that the draft was originally titled Law of Ukraine «On National Minorities in Ukraine». Instead, in summer 2021 it was renamed Law of Ukraine «On National Communities». Contextually, the expression «national minorities» was replaced with that of «national communities» throughout all the text of the draft. President Zelenskiy himself supported these changes. Indeed, on the 13th of July 2021 he announced that: «Now there is an active work on the law on the national communities of

Ukraine. Not minorities, but communities! Since no nationality in Ukraine should feel like a minority, less important, less protected or less happy. No one can be in a minority, because we all citizens of Ukraine are equal, worthy, dear...Ukraine is our big home: common, kind, warm, strong. And every community should feel it. To be an integral part of Ukrainian society, without losing its traditions and identity» (President: No nationality). However, in the draft law of Ukraine «On National Communities» the expression of «national communities» was equalised to that of «national minorities» by stating in its art. 2 that: «The national community (national minority) is a separate group of citizens of Ukraine who are not ethnic Ukrainians and traditionally live in territories of Ukraine, united by common ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic features, and which show a desire to preserve and develop their own linguistic, cultural, religious identity» (Draft law On National Communities). After all, keeping the expression «national minorities» in brackets in art. 2 was deemed necessary because it is precisely this expression that is used in the FCPNM.

Following the invasion of the Russian Armed Forces into the territories of Ukraine in February 2022, the drafting of the new law within the Working Group was actually suspended. Nevertheless, in May 2022 was already resumed. Indeed, starting from that month various meetings concerning the implementation of the final draft «On National Communities» were newly organised with national actors (included the national minorities associations), and representatives of OSCE and Council of Europe.

The finalisation of the draft has been also accelerated due to the increased conditionality exercised by the European Union with respect to Ukraine after the latter applied for membership of the European Union.

Actually, on the one hand, the European Commission, in its requested «Opinion on Ukraine's application for membership of the European Union of the 17th of June 2022 immediately recommended «that Ukraine be granted candidate status» since Ukraine «has demonstrated the resilience of its institutions guaranteeing democracy, rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities».

However, on the other hand, the same European Commission made the starting of the membership accession negotiations conditional upon the fulfilment of six further steps (conditions) (Dabrowski 2022), included the need to «finalise the reform of the legal framework for national minorities currently under preparation as

recommended by the Venice Commission, and adopt immediate and effective implementation mechanisms».

Indeed, taking precisely into account this further “request”, the Association Council – that on the 5th of September 2022 took place for the first time after Ukraine was granted the candidate status on the 23rd of June 2022 – emphasised that: «...Ukraine needs» not only to: «finalise its reform of the legal framework for national minorities as recommended by the Venice Commission», but also to: «adopt effective implementation mechanisms as indicated in the steps specified in the Commission’s opinion on Ukraine’s EU membership.

Moreover, in autumn 2022 the title of the draft was changed again from Law of Ukraine «On National Communities» to Law of Ukraine «On National Minorities (Communities)» this way giving a clear preference to the terminology used in the FCPNM, even if still as a result of a compromise.

Finally, on the 24th of November 2022 the draft Law of Ukraine «On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine» was registered in the Supreme Rada. Subsequently the bill – after being approved in first reading on the 1st of December 2022 – was passed into law with the support of 324 deputies on the 13th of December 2022 and the day after submitted to the signature of the President of Ukraine.

The content of the new Law of Ukraine «On National Minorities in Ukraine»

The Law of Ukraine «On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine» of 2022 (further Law of 2022) introduces some relevant novelties with respect to the Law of Ukraine «On National Minorities in Ukraine» of 1992 (further Law of 1992).

First of all, the Preamble of the Law of 1992 stated that the Supreme Rada «proceeding from the vital interest of the Ukrainian nation and all nationalities ... adopts ... this Law ... with the aim to guaranteeing national minorities the right to free development».

Instead, the Preamble of the Law of 2022 embodies the concept of «Ukrainian people» that was meanwhile introduced in the Preamble of the Constitution of Ukraine of 1996.

Thus, it affirms that the Supreme Rada «proceeding from the interest of the Ukrainian people – citizens of Ukraine of all nationalities... adopted this Law for the purpose of determining the features of social relations concerning the guarantees for the realization of

rights and freedoms by persons belonging to national minorities (communities) of Ukraine».

Nevertheless, it does not exclude any reference to the «Ukrainian nation» since it further stresses that the Law is approved while at the same time «consolidating the Ukrainian nation». After all, even the Constitution of Ukraine underlines the need to still consolidate the Ukrainian nation while protecting national minorities rights by stating in its art. 11 that: «The State promotes the consolidation and development of the Ukrainian nation, of its historical consciousness, traditions and culture, and also the development of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of all indigenous peoples and national minorities of Ukraine».

Finally, the Preamble of the Law of 2022 introduces the concept of «intercultural dialogue» aimed at «developing the mutual understanding, mutual respect and cooperation among all persons residing within the territory of Ukraine, regardless of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious affiliation».

The Law of 2022 also provides for a more specific definition of the concept of «national minorities».

In fact, the previous Law of 1992 established that «National minorities are groups of citizens of Ukraine who by nationality are not Ukrainian, showing a feeling of national self-awareness and affinity among themselves» (Art.3).

Instead, the Law of 2022 stresses that a: «National minority (community) of Ukraine (hereinafter - national minority (community) is a permanent group of citizens of Ukraine who are not ethnic Ukrainians, traditionally live on the territory of Ukraine within its recognized borders, united by common ethnic, cultural, historical, linguistic and/or religious features, realize their own belonging to it, show a desire to preserve and develop their language, cultural and religious identity» (Art. 1).

Despite this, by adopting the Law of 2022 the Supreme Rada was not yet ready to accommodate collective rights of national minorities.

Thus, the same Law only provides for rights of persons/citizens belonging to national minorities which they may exercise individually or in community with others.

Indeed, firstly it affirms that: «Citizen of Ukraine, regardless of ethnic origin, whether or not they belong to national minorities (communities), are guaranteed equal civil, political, social, economic, cultural and linguistic rights and freedoms defined by the Constitution of Ukraine»

Secondly, it lists specific rights of persons/citizens belonging to a national minority (community) in Chapter 5, p. 2 and regulates the same in Chapters 6-12.

Thirdly, in listing these rights, the Law of 2022 shows a preference for the expression: rights of «persons belonging to national minorities» rather than for that of: rights of «citizens belonging to national minorities». Nevertheless, according to the law «persons belonging to national minorities» are to be understood as persons that are citizens of Ukraine. Indeed, in art. 3, par. 1 the Law of 2022, first and foremost states that: «The State guarantees citizens of Ukraine belonging to national minorities (communities) (hereinafter referred to as persons belonging to national minorities/communities), the rights provided for in article 5 of this Law».

Fourthly, it is also worth noting that many of the enumerated rights were already stated by previously adopted sectorial laws. These, however, made the entry into force of the same rights conditional upon their reaffirmation in the Law on national minorities.

Finally, the Law of 2022 states that the individual rights of persons/citizens belonging to national minorities can always be limited by a statutory law if such limitation is «...necessary in a democratic society» (Art. 5, par. 6, subpar. 1).

On the other hand, the same Law identifies also some duties of persons/citizens belonging to national minorities (communities) when stating that they have to «respect the language, culture, traditions, customs, religious identity of the Ukrainian nation, of the national minorities (communities) and of the indigenous peoples of Ukraine» (Art. 5, par. 5).

Furthermore, besides defending state sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, they must also «promote the integration of the national minority (community) into Ukrainian society» (still art. 5, par. 5).

Actually, the new Law of 2022 particularly stresses the need to integrate national minorities and to promote multiculturalism. Indeed, it also states that: «National minorities are integral, integrated and organic parts of Ukrainian society» (Art. 1, par. 2), and that: «State policy in the field of national minorities (communities)» also aims to the «integration of national minorities (communities) into Ukrainian society on the basis of recognition of human and citizen rights and freedom» and to «strengthening national unity and ensuring multiculturalism of Ukrainian society» (Art. 13, par. 1, subpar. 2 and 4).

On the other hand, the state policy aimed at integrating national minorities (communities) into Ukrainian society cannot lead to assimilation.

More specifically, the definition of the state policy concerning national minorities is vested in the relevant Central executive body. To fulfil its duties, the latter must also form an advisory body, composed by representatives of public associations of national minorities (communities).

Otherwise, the Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the local government administrations (regional and district administrations) are vested with the competences to ensure the implementation of the Ukrainian legislation in the field of national minorities (communities) and of State and regional programs for the national and cultural development of national minorities (communities).

Finally, the local self-government bodies must support the activity of public associations of national minorities (communities) and carry out the planning of socio-economic and cultural development of the territories taking into consideration the need to protect and implement the rights and freedom of persons/citizens belonging to national minorities.

Likewise, as established at Central level, the Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the local government administrations and local self-government bodies can also form advisory bodies composed by representatives of national minorities (communities) public association.

Moreover, draft decisions of local state administrations and local bodies of self-government on issues - related to implementation the rights and freedoms of persons belonging to national minorities (communities) - are submitted for discussion by the corresponding advisory bodies. The proposals of the latter, even if of a recommendatory nature, are binding on consideration by relevant bodies and officials. Therefore, local state administrations and local self-government bodies are obliged to inform the relevant advisory bodies about the results of consideration of submitted proposals within ten days from the date of their receipt.

In addition to the above mentioned advisory bodies, the Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Regional and Kyiv and Sevastopol city state administrations can form, on the initiative of the public associations of national minorities (communities), the Centre of national minorities (communities) of the corresponding administrative-territorial unit.

Instead, in rural areas of traditional settlement of national minorities (communities) it is up to the village and city councils – still on the initiative of public associations of the national minorities (communities), to create the Centre of national minorities (community) of the relevant territorial community.

Finally, the new Law of 2022 – after having established the primacy of international treaties ratified by Ukraine over the Law – also guarantees the possibility for the persons belonging to national minorities (communities) and their associations to maintain relations with representatives of their Kin-States and national association of other countries.

At the same time, it stresses that the personal belonging to national minorities and their associations are prohibited to cooperate and receive assistance from foreign States and individuals, non-governmental organizations of other States, international non-governmental organizations, foundations and other foreign institutions whose activities are aimed, among others, at eliminating the independence of Ukraine, violating its sovereignty and territorial integrity, imposing changes to its constitutional order by force.

Final Remarks

To sum up, the system of minorities rights protection in Ukraine is not based on the recognition of territorial autonomy in the areas of compact settlement of national minorities, except in the case of Crimea. Indeed, in 1992 the status of the latter, was transformed from that of administrative Region (as it had been since 1954) into that of autonomous Republic within Ukraine (according to the 2001 census, 58.3% of Ukrainians living there declared themselves Russian, 24.3% Ukrainian and 12.0% Crimean Tatars).

In addition, no «national administrative unit» has so far been established in post-soviet Ukraine. Concerning this, it is worth noting, however, that the right to establish national administrative units is still provided both by the «Declaration on State Sovereignty of Ukraine» of 1990 and the «Declaration on the rights of nationalities of Ukraine» of 1991, but no longer by the Law of 2022, though based on the former.

Furthermore, the new Law of 2022, differently from the previous Law of 1992, does no longer establish the «right of national minorities to national and cultural autonomy...».

Therefore, the system of contemporary protection of nation-

al minorities rights in Ukraine, with the exception Republic of Crimea, is still based on the recognition of individual rights that persons/citizens, belonging to national minorities may exercise in community with others.

At the same time, the regulation of minority rights protection in Ukraine became increasingly affected by the processes of annexation of its territories by the Russian Federation. Therefore, provisions governing national minorities rights were also incorporated in various acts concerning the «temporarily occupied territories» of Ukraine.

Unfortunately, the same wording of the Law of 2022 also reflects the fact that it was approved under the ongoing invasion of the Russian Armed Force into the territories of Ukraine.

Indeed, in its art. 5, par. 6, subpar. 2 the Law of 2022 states that: «When implementing and/or protecting the rights and freedoms of persons belonging to national minorities (communities) is prohibited the popularization or propaganda of the terrorist state (aggressor state) and its organs, of Russian Nazi totalitarian regime, of symbols of military invasion of the Russian Nazi totalitarian regime into Ukraine, and of the authorities that represent the terrorist state (aggressor state) and their actions, which create a positive image of the terrorist state (aggressor state), justify or recognize as legitimate the Russian Federation terrorist state armed aggression against Ukraine or the occupation of the territory of Ukraine».

In addition to this, the final and transitional provision of the same Law specify that: «during the period of martial law in Ukraine and six months after its termination (cancellation)» the implementation and the protection of rights - determined in art. 7 (with respect to the right to peaceful assembly) art. 14, art. 18, art. 19, and art. 20, par. 3 - are subjected to temporary restrictions with respect to those national minorities who identify their affiliation by ethnic origin with the state recognized by Ukraine and/or by international organizations as the terrorist state (aggressor state) that commits acts of aggression against Ukraine.

References

- Association Implementation Report on Ukraine, SWD(2020) 329 final, Brussel 27.11.2020 available at https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020_ukraine_association_implementation_report_final.pdf (last accessed 30.11.2022).
- Association Implementation Report on Ukraine, Brussel 22.07.2022, SWD(2022)202 final available at <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Association%20Implementation%20Report%20on%20Ukraine%20%20Joint%20staff%20working%20document.pdf> (last accessed 30.11.2022).
- Charnysh V. (2013), "Analysis of current events: Identity mobilization in hybrid regimes: Language in Ukrainian politics", *Nationalities Papers*, 41, 1: 1-2.
- Constitution of Ukraine of 28.06.1996 available at <https://ccu.gov.ua/en/storinka/legal-acts> (last accessed 30.11.2022).
- Csernicskó I., Fedinec, C. (2016), "Four Language Laws of Ukraine", *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, 23, 4: 560-582.
- Csernicskó I., Máté R. (2017), "Bilingualism in Ukraine: Value or Challenge?", *Sustainable Multilingualism*, 10, 1: 16-17.
- Dabrowski M. (2022), "Towards a New Eastern Enlargement of the EU and Beyond", *Inter economics* 57, 4: 209-212.
- Declaration «On State Sovereignty of Ukraine» of 16.07.1990 available at <https://zakon1.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/55-12> (last accessed 30.11.2022).
- Declaration «On the Rights of Nationalities of Ukraine» of 01.11.1991 available at <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1771-12> (last accessed 30.11.2022).
- The draft law «On National Communities» available at <https://kompravlud.rada.gov.ua/uploads/documents/34043.pdf> (last accessed 30.11.2022).
- Fedotov E. (2015), "Weak language norm(s) versus domestic interests: Why Ukraine behaves the way it does", *Review of International Studies*, 41, 4: 740.
- Goodman B. (2009), "The Ecology of Language in Ukraine", *Working papers in educational linguistics*, 24, 8: 22.
- Kulyk V. (2013), "Language Policy in Ukraine: What People Want the State to Do", *East European Politics and Societies*, 27, 2: 283.
- Kulyk, V. (2019), "Memory and Language: Different Dynamics in the Two Aspects of Identity Politics in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine", *Nationalities Papers*, 47, 6: 1040.
- Law of Ukraine "On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine" of 25.07.1992 available at <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2494-12> (last accessed 30.11.2022).

- Law of Ukraine «On National Minorities in Ukraine», as adopted the 13th December 2022, in <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billInfo/Bills/pubFile/1582298> (last accessed 30.11.2022).
- Legislative Initiative on Regulating Legal Status of National Minorities Discussed at a Meeting Chaired by the President of Ukraine available at <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/zakonodavchu-iniciativu-shodovregulyuvannya-pravovogo-statu-66641> (last accessed 30.11.2022).
- Liber G. (1987), "Ukrainian Nationalism and the 1918 law on national-personal autonomy", *Nationalities Papers*, 15,1: 22-42.
- Makarchuk V. et al. (2020), "The Adjudication of the Language of Education Case in the Constitutional Court of Ukraine - a Comparative Analysis with ECtHR Jurisprudence", *Law Review of Kyiv University of Law*, 2: 94-104.
- Napolitano M. (2019), "Ukraine: the new Language Law, Porošenko 's last Act" available at www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng/Areas/Ukraine/Ukraine-the-new-language-law-Porosenko-s-last-act-194879 (last accessed 30.11.2022).
- On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as a State Language available at [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-REF\(2019\)036-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-REF(2019)036-e) (last accessed 30.11.2022)
- Opinion on the Law on Supporting the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language, adopted by the Venice Commission at its 121st Plenary Session (Venice, 6-7 December 2019), CDL-AD(2019)032-e available at [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2019\)032-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2019)032-e) (last accessed 30.11.2022).
- Petrov R. (2015), "EU Association Agreements with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia: New Instruments of Integration Without Membership", *European Studies - the Review of European Law, Economics and Politics* 2, 1: 29-38.
- President: No nationality in Ukraine should feel like a minority, because we are all equal and worthy available at <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/prezident-zhodna-nacionalnist-v-ukrayini-ne-maye-vidchuvati-69493> (last accessed 30.11.2022).
- Resolution CM/ResCMN(2003)5 on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Ukraine, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 5 February 2003.
- Resolution CM/ResCMN(2011)8 on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Ukraine, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 30 March 2011.

Resolution CM/ResCMN(2013)8 on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Ukraine adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 18 December 2013.

UkrSSR Constitution of 10.03.1919, available at <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/n0001316-19> (last accessed 30.11.2022)

UkrSSR Constitution of 15.05.1929 available at <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/n0001316-29> (last accessed 30.11.2022).

UkrSSR Constitution of 30.01.1937 available at https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/ru/001_001/ed19370130 (last accessed 30.11.2022).

UkrSSR Constitution of 24.04.1978 available at <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?nreg=888-09&ed=19780420> (last accessed 30.11.2022).

Van der Loo G. (2016), *The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area: A New Legal Instrument for EU Integration Without Membership*, Leiden Boston: Brill Nijhoff.

The End of the USSR and the Role of the “Nations”

Mario Ganino

“Will the Soviet Union survive until 1984?”. This is how the 31-year-old Andrej Amalrik, sent to confinement for three years after as many of forced labour, entitled a paper that appeared in that Country in a clandestine publication in 1969¹.

According to the dissident, the end of the USSR should have happened following a war, badly lost, with China, that should have led to a popular revolt or an explosion of discontent in Moscow, given the inability of the bureaucratic regime to manage both situations. In reality, the Soviet Union only lasted seven years longer, although it ended for other reasons. Amalrik had in any case foreseen the intensification of nationalist tendencies among the non-ethnically Russian populations, including Ukrainians, but he hoped that the nations of the USSR would eventually form “a kind of federation, in the same way as the British Commonwealth or the European Community”.

What resulted (the Commonwealth of Independent States) was a union closer to the first type given the rather loose ties between its components and was quite different from the European Community, which is a supranational organization.

The “Nations” mentioned in the title are in turn the “Federated Republics”, as essential components of the Soviet Union. More precisely, we are dealing with the “titular” Nations of each of these

1 The text was also printed in Italy in January 1971, with a Preface by Carlo Bo, for Coines Edizioni, Rome.

Republics, considering that the ordering principle for the subdivision of the Soviet area was in fact the national-territorial principle, i.e. territory defined on the basis of the national language (despite the great ethnic mix). This principle presided over the birth of the USSR, but also over its end. It had also been adopted for divisive purposes, especially in Central Asia, to prevent the compacting of States, that would otherwise have had greater power, and in fear of a pan-Islamic or pan-Turkish mobilization. An important example of this is the disintegration of Turkestan in 1924, desired by Stalin, and the consequent birth on its territory of a series of different Republics, or nation-States, destined to live in friction with each other since the ethnic groups did not entirely follow the territorial boundaries, while the dominant groups in a Republic not only claimed the territory but also a language and certain characteristics to be imposed on any others present, often under penalty of their exodus². This is State-building which produces minorities, even if formally they were not considered as such. Before dwelling on the formation and end of the USSR, some brief observations are required on the birth and development of Kievan Rus', at least according to the interpretation of this by Russia since the times of the Empire, which does not coincide in some fundamental areas – such as those relating to its respective importance and role in the foundation and development of Rus' itself – with that of Belarus and especially of Ukraine. In particular, the contribution of the Ukrainians to the foundation of this State structure developed between the end of the 9th century and the middle of the 13th century³, when it was destroyed by the Mongols, is downplayed

2 P. Karam (2002, 48 ff.). On the nations in Russia-USSR, from their origin until mid-1991, thanks to an Appendix to the original text of 1990, see Nahaylo, Swoboda (1991). Regarding the linguistic policy of the new titular ethnic groups, which had undergone Russification, initially oriented towards the rejection of Russian both as a language of inter-ethnic communication and as an official language and its subsequent slowdown, with tables also relating to the legal and *de facto status* of the Russian language in the various “CIS Countries”, see Cotta Ramusino (2014, 211 ff.). However, in 2019, in Ukraine a new law on language came into force which, albeit indirectly, further penalizes the use of Russian.

3 In the Thirteenth century, on the eve of the Mongol invasion, the Kievan Rus' did not constitute a unitary State structure but a set of principalities, up to fifty, competing with each other, the result of multiple subdivisions made by the princes among their own children. The first was established towards the end of the Eleventh century by Jaroslav I the

by the Russians, for example by asserting that the first documents were drawn up with writing attributable to the language of the great Russians and not of the white Russians (Belarusians) or of the small Russians (Ukrainians, also called Ruthenians), because these populations allegedly arrived in Rus' at a later date⁴.

In the view of the (great) Russians, they were a great population, even though divided into different Slavic linguistic groups, with a common identity and their own generalized institutions, in disregard of the divisions further established by the isolation that the 240-year-old Mongol domination entailed⁵. These institutions were interpreted by the lords of Moscow in a completely centralizing version. In fact, they considered themselves as final successors – ready to enforce their right to conquer all the lands they considered Russian, including those already belonging to Kiev – and they rejected in favour of the first of them the political synthesis by Rus' of its various constituent elements, namely the "autocratic", the "aristocratic" and the "democratic". This was particularly fostered by the (Greater) Novgorod City-State – from which the Rus' moved to Kiev in the year 882 – given the role assumed by the "Vece" or assembly of citizens in that City-State. It was summoned to the sound of a bell, a symbol of civil liberties, which the Muscovites silenced for Novgorod towards the end of the fifteenth century, transporting it in bonds as a prisoner to Moscow, when they put an end to the independence of that city with its very large territory.

Wise in favor of children by age, attributing to them the City-States with their territories in order of importance, starting from Novgorod (today in Russia), Cernigiv (currently in Ukraine), etc. Upon death there was then a rotation between brothers, with friction between uncles and nephews and lack of rooting in the territory, a further sign of weakness and disunity, while those who sat in Kiev assumed the title of Grand Prince (starting from the Twelfth century). See, among others, Riasanovsky (1996, 39 ff.).

4 Kondratieva (1996, 4 ff.). In any case, the largest population in the Principality of Kiev was represented by the Poljani, a Ukrainian Slavic tribe (Nahaylo, Swoboda, 1991, 19).

5 Accentuating therefore, as recalled Riasanovsky (1996, 74-75), "the ethnolinguistic differentiation of the Russians of Kiev into three groups", given that the subsequent history of the population of what was once the Kievan State structure led "to the fact that southwestern Russia and the West, seat of the Ukrainian and Belarusian nationalities, underwent Lithuanian and Polish domination and influences, while in practice the entire territory of the Great Russians was spared".

In fact, guided by the idea of territorial political unity, by liberating these lands from the Mongol Tatars, the Muscovites considered it indispensable to remedy the causes that had fostered foreign domination, namely the disunity resulting from a proto-federal State organization. In order to avoid the danger of new invasions, the tendency was to secure Russia by taking its borders further and further away from the Country's vital centres, through continuous expansion from the Fifteenth century onwards of first the Principality of Moscow and then the Empire, so much so that one could speak of a "border State"⁶.

Moreover, alongside the desire to make external invasion difficult, there was a desire to eliminate another negative element, namely the aforementioned internal division, using and assimilating an organization of power without limits typical of the Mongols. This led to autocracy as an undivided power, the driving force of politics from which others were excluded.

What they were seeking to protect in an absolute sense was the "sacred Russian land" – with a religious appeal dating back to the second half of the sixteenth century – which therefore had to be guaranteed in its "inviolability" and "integrity". However, this involved potential for expansion, also aimed at obtaining the redemption of subjugated populations, strongly connected to a concept of power such as the Byzantine-Orthodox imperial-territorial concept.

And so, the unitary principle was established and developed, which has accompanied the State organization of Russia to this day, through different forms of State. Thanks to this unitary principle, the various forms of State were both contrasting and constant⁷.

After the Tsarist era, in fact with the October Revolution, the unitarian principle adopted by the Bolsheviks on outlining the constitutional order of Russia and the USSR allows us to observe that, from this point of view, in their unifying function they can appear as the continuers of the Russian tradition and its historic unitary mission of power.

The ensemble of the Congress of Soviets, Supreme Soviet and Presidium, represented an apical State organization with legislative, executive and control functions not limited by other State bodies, thanks to the structural principle of the unity of State power. For its part, the Constitution of 1936 conferred (or rather, verbalized)

6 Carrere d'Encausse (1992, 15 ff.).

7 This is the thesis developed in Ganino (1999, 2010).

the unifying function of the political direction to the Party, the effective sovereign, so much so that the autochthonous model of State leadership, in particular as it had developed towards the end of the imperial era, continued to exist in many respects.

Consequently, the "socialist State model" was not a mere parenthesis, rather it made a decisive contribution to the overall formation of the model of Government with a modernization of aspects of the previous period for Russia. It culminated in Gorbachev's reforms, starting with the constitutional one of 1988, whereby, in agreement with the party, the role of direction was also attributed to the Congress of People's Deputies. With the revisions of 1990, on the other hand, the principles of the socialist State, which had now reached its end, were deeply compromised.

The unitarian principle was also confronted with a very special type of federalism - rather weak and ethnic-based - at the time of the formation of the Soviet Union in 1922 (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics: USSR). It prevailed and it ensured that this sort of cultural and linguistic based regionalism was to comply with supreme structural principles of the new type of State ("socialist"), among which, mainly, the abovementioned "unity of State power" with the addition of "Double dependence" that favoured vertical dependence and the "leading role of the Party", again with a unifying function.

On the other hand, federalism⁸ was historically foreign to the body of Russia. Federalist ideas were certainly advanced starting from the eighteenth century in particular by Ukrainians and Georgians, and they even influenced the Decembrists at the beginning of the Nineteenth century, but they remained marginal during the period of the Empire. Moreover, in 1917, the federal structure was rejected by the Commission set up by the Provisional Government to formulate a project to be submitted to the (transient) Constituent Assembly, in favour of regional institutions defined as "autonomous" within the framework of a "unitary and indivisible Russian State". This also occurred in the successive Dumas from 1906 to 1917, in which the federalist minority idea was supported by anarchists and populists. This gave the Socialist Revolutionaries good electoral results in 1917 in non-Russian regions, particularly in Ukraine.

One of the first acts after the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks was approval of the Declaration of the rights of the peoples

8 See Ganino (2003, 207 ff.); Filippini (2004).

of Russia⁹ by the Government. Amongst other things, this document declared the right of the people to “free self-determination, even to the point of separation and the formation of independent States” (Point 2) and the “free development of national minorities and ethnic groups settled in the territory of Russia” (point 4). Two relations were thus prefigured, both considered to be federal and substantially ethnic based, the first relating to the configuration of what would later be the USSR and the second to Russia (Soviet Federative Socialist Republic of Russia: RSFSR).

In reality, the principle of voluntary accession to the USSR was only applied to Finland, while it was arms that decided for other nations, such as Ukraine. This was followed by the Declaration of the Working and Exploited People by the III All-Russian Congress of Soviets in which the Soviet and federalist principles were reaffirmed (on the 12th of January 1918). In turn, the V All-Russian Congress of Soviets of the 10th of July 1918 approved the first Constitution of Soviet Russia (RSFSR) which incorporated this previous Declaration as its First Part.

The already few independent Soviet Republics existing (“separated”) after the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty had been reduced in 1920 to Ukraine and Belarus, while other Republics were considered “autonomous” and therefore within Russia and in a short time the overall Soviet system (excluding the “bourgeois” Republics in the west) extended to almost the entire territory of the former Tsarist Empire.

Already before 1922, on the basis of bilateral treaties, the independent Republics and Russia had established joint dicasteries and other mechanisms of dependence on Russia, thus implementing a unifying structure preceding the formal birth of the USSR, while the central Committees of parties for the independent Republics were assimilated with the regional committees of the Russian party. Stalin’s proposal of “autonomisation” - with an intermediate position for Ukraine - to absorb the independent Republics into the RSFSR was not accepted and on the 30th of December 1922 a Declaration and a Treaty on the formation of the USSR were signed between Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Transcaucasia, which in turn linked the States of the Caucasus, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, in a federation. The Declaration and the Treaty (which underwent some accentuation of centralism) then came to constitute (Part I and Part II respectively) the first Federal Constitution of the

9 The texts of constitutional significance of the Soviet period can be found in Biscaretti di Ruffia, Crespi Reghizzi (1979), and Codevilla (1996).

USSR, after a short Preamble, approved on the 31st of January 1924. This Constitution, unlike that of the RSFSR, was therefore based on an international treaty under which the Republics parties united in "a single federal State" with the right of secession. In fact, this was very difficult to exercise, so much so that it was never realized, not even when the law on secession was finally approved in April 1990, because it was the whole USSR that collapsed shortly after.

The Treaty was considered effective even after the subsequent federal Constitutions of 1936 and 1977, although these had not made any reference to it, unlike the right of withdrawal, recognized for example by art. 72 of the 1977 Constitution. In art. 70.1, it defined the Union as a "unitary multinational State, formed on the basis of socialist federalism, as a result of the free self-determination of nations and the voluntary union, with equal rights, of the Soviet Socialist Republics". The thesis of the covenant nature of the USSR finally became decisive at the time of its dissolution. Equally decisive was the failure of the federated Republics to renounce their sovereignty¹⁰, which, moreover, was proclaimed by the Federal Constitution of 1977 (art. 76 ff.).

As for the national composition of the USSR, during the period of effect of the 1977 Constitution, the Soviet Union was made up of 15 "federated Republics" (Art. 71), corresponding to the most important nationalities, each of which retained "the right of free secession" (Art. 72). Within four of these (Russia, Uzbekistan, Georgia and Azerbaijan), due to the presence of other nationalities of particular importance, provision was made for twenty "autonomous Republics" (Artt. 82 et seq.), sixteen of which were in Russia. However, within the federated Republics there could also be "autonomous regions" (Artt. 86 et seq.), five of which (out of eight) were part of Russia, the other three being respectively in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Tajikistan. The last subdivision on an ethnic basis was that of the autonomous districts, which were ten in number, however in the context of administrative territorial districts such as the Regions or the wider territories. Their representatives were, to a decreasing extent, part of the Second Chamber (Soviet of Nationalities), but also of other top bodies. Therefore, these overall fifty-three territorial entities had an ethnic base, but there were about 200 ethnic groups¹¹, since the territorial units mentioned included a combination of various ethnic affiliations.

It has already been mentioned that not only in the birth but also

10 Ganino (1996, 37 ff.).

11 Caratini (1990, 11 ff.); see also Ferro, Mandrillon (1993).

in the dissolution of the USSR the question of nationalities was of fundamental importance. In fact, the claims of the Republics were not understood in their deepest meaning by the Centre and especially by the President of the USSR Gorbachev - less experienced than his other predecessors were it only for their origin from federated Republics other than Russia - who repeatedly considered their requests late, when these had by now gone beyond those of an economic nature. He came to propose a "confederative democratic State", rather than a "Confederation", finding the hostility of the Russian delegation in the second chamber of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, because a "State", destined in time to prevail over the Republics¹², was no longer desired.

For Gorbachev, greater importance was given to the Soviet whole and not to the "nations" or federalism, an attitude that contributed to the revolt of the Republics.

The idea was that of aligning a troubled periphery, in an attempt to remedy local corruption, as in Uzbekistan, with purges that instead accelerated disintegration. The "Uzbek question" was experienced as an attack on an entire population, which felt condemned for its political tradition which, in its perception, the Russians wanted to treacherously eliminate. The same happened in Georgia, in Kyrgyzstan and in Kazakhstan, where they intervened from the centre with the accusation that in this Republic, they wanted to favour the local clans. The First Party Secretary was ousted and replaced by a Russian with experience in various Republics, but who did not know Kazakhstan. But above all, the balance dictated by a tacit rule was broken, according to which in the Republics the First Secretary, who represented his State in the Party, had to belong to the titular nation, while the Second Secretary, a sort of prefect who controlled all appointments in the Republic, was Russian or otherwise Slavic (Ukrainian or Belarusian). Thus, two Russians found themselves leading the Party, and therefore the State-national team, in Kazakhstan. In fact, the First Secretaries, as national dignitaries, came to be part of the Central Committee of the CPSU and sometimes of the Politburo where they defended the interests of their own nation. But the body became completely dominated by Russians who had no experience in the periphery and consequently it ended up with insufficient influence with the higher authorities of the Party, where in Brezhnev's time, for example, full members or alternates spoke on behalf of the Muslim Republics of Central Asia, the Caucasus, the two Slavic States of

12 Ganino (1992, 1 ff.); see also Filippini (1992, 13 ff.).

Ukraine and Belarus, in short, the most populous nations. In particular, the Asian and Caucasus Republics therefore ceased to have interlocutors in Moscow, where the protests were interpreted as acts due to corruption and clientelism and the true nature of the riots, which arose in the name of the denunciation of "Russian interference" in their Republic¹³, was not understood. Consequently, in more Republics the communist elite moved from being representative of the central power to an exponent and leader of the national struggle, in synergy with national exponents or liberals which were still weak but mutually reinforcing, which in several cases avoided civil war and favoured a peaceful transition in the name of the national interest and the defence of the nation-State, despite the numerous inter-ethnic conflicts in the former USSR¹⁴; so much so that for example the Ukrainian *apparatchik* Kravchuk became the first elected President and set himself at the helm of his own Country, making him an architect of the end of the Soviet Union.

As for the Baltic Countries, in aspiring to leave the USSR and to achieve independence, their final objective quickly revealed itself not so much as the recovery of a sovereignty lost with the 1940 annexation but as "necessary steps to return to Europe with a market economy and political democracy", recovering "the myth of European roots, real or imaginary"¹⁵.

But the Russians also have something to complain about. Thanks to "glasnost" they not only discovered that in the Baltic Countries the standard of living was higher, but that this was also the case in Georgia and that even in Central Asia and the Caucasus there were better supplies. Moreover, in their Republic the mortality rate was higher than in the rest of the USSR and in particular the mortality rate of newborns was higher than in the Baltic Countries, Belarus and Ukraine. They then thought that they had been sacrificed in favour of most of the other Republics, which in turn denounced the forced distribution of production in the USSR, such as that of

13 Carrere d'Encausse (1990, 30 ff.).

14 Carrere d'Encausse (1992, 85 ff.).

15 Thus Zaslavsky (1995, 254), and regarding "the main defects of Soviet policy towards nationalities", see also Zaslavsky (1991, 27 ff.); extensively, on the persistent criticalities in reference to the condition of minorities in the Baltic Countries see Panzeri (2021); for the "constitutional path" of the Baltic Countries, compared with the others in the European area defined as "central-eastern, Baltic and Balkan", see Di Gregorio (2019); see also Lorot (1991).

cotton imposed in the 1920s and 1930s in Uzbekistan. They felt disadvantaged, as citizens of Russia, to the advantage of the USSR, so much so that they did not have their own relevant structures, present instead in each of the other Republics, such as the Academy of Sciences or a Republican party organization of their own, because there were already those of the USSR. For example, Republican Academies of Sciences gave strong impetus to the strengthening of their own linguistic and cultural identity and a national awareness.

But above all the Republics believed that even from an economic point of view it was no longer convenient to belong to the USSR and in their “Declarations of Sovereignty” all, including Russia, claimed their autonomy, starting with economic matters and therefore the possession and exploitation of the resources present in their territory. Subsequently, with the sole exception of Russia, the Republics declared their independence, namely separation from the USSR.

These declarations of sovereignty and independence recalled the principle of self-determination of one’s own nation (as in that of the sovereignty of Ukraine of 16 July 1990, which was followed by the Declaration of independence voted by Parliament on 24 August 1991) evoked in the Preamble of several republican Constitutions (including Russia).

The failure of the attempted coup d’état of August 1991 further weakened the central structures of the Soviet Union¹⁶, also because the subsequent dissolution of the CPSU marked the end of the structure that had supported the Soviet State from the beginning, incapable of having a life of its own. The attempts undertaken with a joint declaration by the President of the USSR and the leaders of most of the Republics to form a “Union of sovereign States” were also thwarted. This was already evident on the 25th of November 1991, given in particular the contrary attitude of Ukraine, in which, the following 1st of December, the August Declaration of Independence was confirmed in a referendum by 90% of the voters (84% of those entitled), while at the same time, with 61% of the votes, Kravchuk, former President of the republican Supreme Soviet, was elected President of the Republic. On the 6th of December, the Ukrainian Parliament confirmed its intention not to sign any new Union treaty, while the previous day it declared the 1922 Treaty and all the consequent acts of a constitutional nature of the

16 For a recent examination of the failure of the ideas of October see Di Gregorio (2017, 993 ff.).

USSR null and void for Ukraine. On the 8th of December 1991, assuring that they wanted to build "a bridge over the abyss", the leaders of the three (Slavic) Republics of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, "founding States of the USSR, signatories to the 1922 Treaty of Union", signed in the Belarusian capital of Minsk¹⁷ an "Agreement on the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States" (CIS: *Sodružestvo Nezavisimych Gosudarstv - SNG*), which "ascertained" in the preamble the cessation of the USSR "as a subject of international law and geopolitical reality"¹⁸. On the same day, the Heads of the three Republics signed a "Declaration" which reaffirmed "the formation of a Commonwealth of Independent States"¹⁹.

It was actually a first Slavic version of the CIS which on the 21st of December 1991 gave way to a much wider Community, requested by the Asian Republics, which had actually proposed the constitution of a new "Eurasian Commonwealth of Independent States". Therefore, on that date there was a substantial re-edition of the Minsk Agreement in the form of a "Protocol" to it, which was signed in Alma Ata (then the capital of Kazakhstan) together with the "Declaration of Alma Ata". Moreover, faced with an ambiguous formulation of the preamble of the Minsk Treaty which did not clarify whether the USSR had already ceased or whether its dissolution was still in progress, it was written in the Declaration that "with the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independ-

17 The meetings, however, took place in the Belovezhskaya Pushcha nature reserve, near Brest.

18 The preamble of the Agreement speaks, among other things, of trying to "set up lawfully established democratic States, intending to develop their relations on the basis of mutual recognition of and respect for State sovereignty, on the basis of the inalienable right to self-determination, the principle of equality and non-intervention in internal affairs (...), considering that the further development and strengthening of relations of friendship, good neighborliness and mutually beneficial cooperation between our States responds to the fundamental interests of nations and other peoples (...). See the text, translated from Russian, together with that of the most relevant documents for the formation of the CIS, by Filippini, in Ganino, Filippini (1992, 33-77).

19 Ukraine, which soon made it known that this Community represented a temporary moment for it, in the meantime obtained assurances on the maintenance of its borders, however already questioned on the 23rd of January 1992 by the Russian Parliament for Crimea.

ent States the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics ceases to exist"²⁰. Since his attempt to maintain unitary citizenship also failed, Gorbachev resigned as President on December 25, 1991 and the flag of the Soviet Union was promptly lowered in the Kremlin.

It was immediately clear that the definition of the nature of the CIS was not easy. The use of the term "*Sodružestvo*" ("co-brotherhood") concerned not only the generic "Community of Socialist States" but was also used as a translation of "Commonwealth" and not for the European Economic Community ("*Soobščestvo*"), which was a supranational organization, expressly excluded by the Alma Ata Declaration. On the other hand, in English language literature, the CIS was not called "Community" but "Commonwealth" and this is the correct name for it, also in consideration of the fact that it was intended to establish an aggregate in which reciprocal relations were rather bland. In 1993, the organization was strengthened with the approval of a charter, not signed by Ukraine and Turkmenistan, which no longer appeared as official members, but the initial underlying tendency to establish loose relations between the parties was maintained. If from the internationalist standpoint the CIS seems to be comparable to an international organization, from a constitutionalist perspective it appears as a sort of confederation, however it differs from historical confederations and unlike them it came into existence after and not before the formation of a federal State, which was quite special in the case of the USSR.

However, after the last unified representation of the CIS at the 1992 Olympic Games, variable types of participation developed, with States more oriented to the West and others to the East. Some are part of the Council of Europe, and several are grappling with the EU's Eastern Partnership. The "Collective Security Treaty Organization" includes Asian Republics, in addition to Russia, Armenia and Belarus. A qualitative leap in the collaboration between States of the former USSR is represented by the entry into operation on the 1st of July 2011 of the "Customs Union" between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan and from the 1st of January 2012, between the same States, the "Single Economic Space", both characterized by the presence of structures defined as supra-State structures. As

20 Excluding the Baltic Countries from the beginning, the composition of the CIS has undergone change by way of a decrease in members, as well as presenting different levels of participation, with the departure of Georgia and Ukraine, but the CIS itself appears to be heading towards abandonment.

a further development, on the 29th of May 2014, the Presidents of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan signed the treaty establishing the "Eurasian Economic Union", which Armenia and Kyrgyzstan subsequently joined. According to the President of the Russian Federation in an article in *Izvestija* on 3rd of October 2011, it constituted the first step of a more ambitious project aimed at achieving an even higher degree of integration: "the Eurasian Union", as a supranational entity aimed at achieving a bond "between Europe and the Asia-Pacific region"²¹.

Subsequently, however, Russia seemed to increasingly emphasize the characteristics of its Asian soul, which had originated at the dawn of its statehood, when the centre of gravity of power shifted from Kiev to Moscow²².

References

- Almarik A. (1970), *Sopravviverà l'Unione Sovietica fino al 1984?*, Coines Edizioni, Roma.
- Biscaretti di Ruffia P., Crespi Reghizzi G. (1979), *La Costituzione sovietica del 1977*, Giuffrè, Milano.
- Caprio S. (2020), *Lo Zar di vetro. La Russia di Putin*, Jaca Book, Milano.
- Caratini R. (1990), *Dictionnaire des nationalités et de minorités en U.R.S.S.*, Larousse, Paris.
- Carrere d'Encausse H. (1990), *La gloire des Nations ou la fin de l'Empire soviétique*, Fayard, Paris.
- Carrere d'Encausse H. (1992), *Victorieuse Russie*, Fayard, Paris.
- Codevilla G. (1996), *Dalla rivoluzione bolscevica alla Federazione Russa*, Traduzione e commento dei primi atti normativi e dei testi costituzionali, Franco Angeli, Milano.
- Cotta Ramusino P. (2014), *A vent'anni dalla creazione della CSI: il russo nei Paesi dell'ex-Impero*, in Filippini C. (Ed.), *La Comunità di Stati*

21 During the meeting at the EU summit in Vilnius, on the 28th and 29th of November 2013, with the members of the Eastern Partnership for the signing of the Association and Stabilization Agreement with the Union, Ukraine did not sign the document due to pressure from Moscow, which provoked the Euromaidan revolt. Subsequently, on the 27th of June 2014 in Brussels, Ukraine, and also Georgia and Moldova, signed the Association and Free Trade Agreement with the European Union, which entered into force on the 1st of September 2017, even if parts of the Agreement had already been applied from 1st of September 2014 on a provisional basis.

22 On the Eurasian suggestion see Caprio (2020, 86 ff.).

- indipendenti a più di vent'anni dalla dissoluzione dell'URSS*, Maggioli, Santarcangelo di Romagna.
- Di Gregorio A. (2017), *Uno Stato "nuovo" e un diritto "nuovo": la Rivoluzione bolscevica e la sua eredità giuridica a cent'anni dall'"Ottobre"*, in *Diritto pubblico comparato ed europeo*, 4: 993 ff.
- Di Gregorio A. (Ed.), (2019), *I sistemi costituzionali dei Paesi dell'Europa centro-orientale, baltica e balcanica*, Cedam, Padova.
- Ferro M., Mandrillon M.-H. (1993), *L'Etat de toutes les Russies, Les Etats et les Nations de l'ex-URSS*, La Découverte, Paris.
- Filippini C. (1992), *La Comunità di Stati Indipendenti dall'Accordo di Minsk dell'8 dicembre agli Accordi della CSI del 30 dicembre 1991*, in Ganino M., Filippini C., *Dall'URSS alla Comunità di Stati indipendenti*, CUESP, Milano.
- Filippini C. (2004), *Dall'Impero russo alla Federazione di Russia. Elementi di continuità e di rottura nell'evoluzione dei rapporti centro-periferia*, Giuffrè, Milano.
- Ganino M. (1992), *La formazione della Comunità di Stati indipendenti*, in Ganino M., Filippini C., *Dall'URSS alla Comunità di Stati indipendenti*, CUESP, Milano.
- Ganino M. (1996), *I casi dell'URSS e della Russia*, in S. Bartole (Ed.), *La volontà degli Stati membri e delle Regioni nelle vicende del federalismo*, Giappichelli, Torino.
- Ganino M. (1999), *Dallo Zar al Presidente. Ricostruzione del modello di governo della Russia fra trasformazioni costituzionali e continuità*, CUESP, Milano.
- Ganino M. (2003), *I nodi del federalismo russo*, in M.P. Viviani Schlein, E. Bulzi, L. Panzeri (Eds.), *L'Europa tra federalismo e regionalismo*, Giuffrè, Milano.
- Ganino M. (2010), *Russia*, Il Mulino, Bologna.
- Ganino M. Filippini C., (1992), *Dall'URSS alla Comunità di Stati indipendenti*, CUESP, Milano.
- Karam P. (2002), *Central Asia. Le nouveau Grand Jeu*, L'Harmattan, Paris.
- Kondratieva T. (1996), *La Russie ancienne*, Puf, Paris.
- Lorot P. (1991), *Les Pays Baltes*, Puf, Paris.
- Nahaylo B., Swoboda V. (1991), *Disunione Sovietica*, Rizzoli, Milano.
- Panzeri L. (2021), *Nazione e cittadinanza nelle Repubbliche baltiche. Profili costituzionali e sovranazionali*, Editoriale Scientifica, Napoli.
- Riasanovsky N.V. (1996), *Storia della Russia. Dalle origini ai giorni nostri*, Bompiani, Milano.
- Zaslavsky V. (1991), *Dopo l'Unione Sovietica. La perestroika e il problema delle nazionalità*, Il Mulino, Bologna.
- Zaslavsky V. (1995), *Storia del sistema sovietico. L'ascesa, la stabilità, il crollo*, Carocci, Roma.

The Languages of Ethnic Minorities in post-Soviet Georgia

Tamari Lomtadze

Introduction

Ethnic and linguistic diversity has always been peculiar to Georgia. According to the 11th century Georgian historian Leonti Mroveli, alongside with Georgian five other languages were spoken in Georgia in the 6th century BC by the King of Kartli and the population: Assyrian, Greek, Hebrew, Armenian, Khazaric. Leonti Mroveli stresses not only the linguistic diversity, but the peaceful coexistence of majority and minority ethnic groups as well. This is also evidenced by Greek and Aramaic epigraphic inscriptions that date back as far as the 5th century. Throughout its long history, Georgia's ethnic and linguistic diversity has increasingly grown. Since the 19th century, the country was first part of the Russian and then of the Soviet empires, and was subject to Russian language policies.

According to the census of the year 1989, the last one held in Soviet Georgia, the total population of the country was 5,400,841. Seventy-one percent of the population spoke Georgian, nine percent Russian, seven percent Armenian, six percent Azerbaijani, and seven percent other languages. In other words, each language was spoken by the number of speakers each ethnic group consisted of. According to the 1989 census, Georgians constituted the majority of the population with 70.1%, Armenians made up 8.1%, Russians 6.3%, Azerbaijanis 5.7%, Ossetians 3%, Abkhazs 1.8%, other ethnic

minorities 5% (Grenoble 2003).

The linguistic context of Soviet Georgia was hierarchic: Russian was at the top as the most prestigious language and a means of communication between various ethnic groups (Qhaukhčičšvili 1955). In addition, it was the language of the Communist Party and the army. Since 1975, it was required to translate doctoral dissertations and abstracts of scholarly articles into Russian. Consequently, Russian has also been referred to as a superdominant language (Gogolašvili 2013). It was spoken by the elites and by privileged population in urban areas. Occasionally, Russian was also a domestic language for families of outstanding Georgian artists and officials. However, the most widely used language was Georgian.

In Abkhazia, alongside with Georgian, Abkzian held the status of an official/state language. However, because of the region's ethnic diversity, the main language in Abkhazia was Russian. In South Ossetia, located in Samachablo, only Georgian was granted the status of an official language, while Ossetian was not given equal status by Constitution. However, as a matter of fact, it enjoyed all privileges of a co-official language. For instance, similar to Abkhazia, in Ossetia there were Ossetian schools, TV and radio programmes. The language of communication was Russian there, as well as in Abkhazia.

Russian was the language of communication in regions with Azeri and Armenian majorities: Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti. Just as in Abkhazia and Ossetia, in these regions Azeri and Armenian unofficially had the status of languages of ethnic minorities. Thus, the linguistic situation in Soviet Georgia can be briefly described as follows: Georgian was spoken and enjoyed the status of official language in regions where Georgians were the majority, while in regions with other ethnic majorities the use of Georgian as an official language was quite limited.

In 1991, the Supreme Council of Georgia declared independence. The crumbling of the Soviet empire and the independence of the country brought about the need for implementing ethnic minorities policies corresponding to the new circumstances, given that the political reality was completely different. On the one hand, it was important to strengthen the status of the official language, on the other, it was perceived as necessary to encourage the development of ethnic minority languages.

In Georgia, the languages of ethnic minorities are protected by the Constitution. According to the Article 38 of the Constitution of Georgia, citizens of Georgia shall be equal in social, economic,

cultural and political life irrespective of their national, ethnic, religious or linguistic belonging. In accordance with universally recognized principles and rules of international law, they shall have the right to develop freely their cultures, to use their mother tongues in private and in public, without any discrimination and interference.

The constitution of Georgia defines the rights of ethnic minorities in Chapter 4, Article 129 in these terms: "The free social-economic and cultural development of any ethnic minority of the Republic of Georgia cannot be limited/prevented, especially their education in their native language and self-governance of cultural and national affairs. Everyone has right to write, publish and speak in his/her native language".

Soon after gaining independence, two important autonomous regions of Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, were occupied by Russia. These were multilingual regions. The occupation was followed by irreversible changes. First of all, the local population started to flee these regions in search of better economic conditions. The number of population critically decreased.

During the first decade of independence, in particular during the Zviad Gamsakhurdia's presidency, Georgian started to flourish thanks to bottom up language policies, even if the government did not implement any kind of top down linguistic policies. The language's *de facto* and *de jure* statuses became equal. It functioned as state language at all levels: administrative offices, courts, education, administration. At that time, the number of Russian schools declined, and Russian was also abolished at institutions of higher education. Russian advertisement signboards and traffic signs disappeared from streets and roads.

It should be noted that in the first decade of Post-Soviet Georgia literary/standard language comprised a wide range of fields and areas within which it was used: education, culture, science, scholarship, literature, politics, press, radio and television, and law. Later, the sociolinguistic functions of Georgian were partially restricted again, but this time by English instead of Russian.

In 2014 the total population of Georgia is about 4 million. Ethnic Georgians constitute 86.8 % of the population. The other groups total 13.2%, and consist of 6,2% Azeris, 4,1% Armenians, 0,8% Russians. Similarly to Georgians, ethnic minorities are also decreasing.

Kartvelian Languages

For the Georgian nation, language has always been the most important marker of national unity and identity. Since we are discussing languages of minorities, at first sight it seems we should skip Svanian, Megrelian and Laz, because the Svans, Megrelians and Lazi are ethnic Georgians, and their languages belong to the family of Kartvelian languages. However, first of all, they are used by small groups of native speakers and, secondly, in post-Soviet Georgia it is widely debated whether they are languages or dialects (Putkaradze 2006; Gogolašvili 2007; Vaxtangašvili 2007; Jorbenadze 1998). Some scholars argue that these debates are more political than linguistic.

Megrelian, Laz, and Svan originated from the same proto-Georgian language. Due to contacts with other languages, isolation and other factors they underwent linguistic changes, and nowadays are not mutually understandable. Svans, Megrelians and Laz are ethnic Georgians and their literary language has always been Georgian. In general, standard Georgian is the common language for all ethnic groups of Georgian origin. Megrelian, Laz and Svan are for domestic use within families/households, just as Khevsuri-an is a domestic language in Khevsureti, Imeretian in Imereti and so on. This is a controversial issue in Georgian linguistics given that there are countries (Germany, for instance) where although language varieties are not mutually understandable, they are not regarded as independent languages, but as dialects (Jorbenadze 1989; Saghliani 2016).

Megrelian is spoken in the districts of Samegrelo (Abasha, Martvili, Zugdidi, Chkhorotsku, Khobi, Tsalenjikha, partially in Poti). It is also spoken by the inhabitants of historical Samurzakano (mainly in Gali and some villages of Ochamchire district, see Kartozia et al. 2018). Starting from the 1990s, Georgian internal and external migration has been constantly increasing. Many Megrelians moved to the capital city of Tbilisi. Therefore, there are lots of native speakers of Megrelian in Tbilisi. Megrelian is not a standard language and it is often viewed as a dialect. Linguistic research into Megrelian takes its origins at the University of St. Petersburg in the 1980s. Since 1920s, it has been also studied at Tbilisi State University. Dictionaries and grammars have been published, Megrelian texts and works of folk poetry collected. At the beginning of the 20th century, Megrelian was taught at schools and there were even Megrelian newspapers in Georgian script.

The study of the Megrelian language was intensified in the independent Georgia. Within the framework of international projects led by Jost Gippert and Manana Tandashvili, Megrelian texts, dictionaries, grammars and other resources have been digitized. Megrelian is studied at universities in the USA, Germany, Canada, Japan and other countries. Nonetheless, it has not been standardized yet. It is not taught at schools either. However, Kartvelian languages are studied thoroughly and intensively at Tbilisi Ivane Javakhishvili State University and Ili State University (Kartozia et al. 2018).

Laz language is primarily spoken in Turkey (and only in Sarpı in Georgia) and it is heavily influenced by the Turkish language. Laz, as well as Megrelian and Svan, are domestic languages. Laz was studied at the University of St. Petersburg in the 1880s. The Soviet government made an attempt to create an alphabet for Laz in the 1920s-1930s. In 1927, the first Laz alphabet based on the Latin script appeared. Since 1929 the alphabet has been refined and developed, and the scope of its circulation has increased. In 1970, a Laz alphabet based on Georgian script and edited by Ts. Batchashi and M. Kurdiani was published. It widely spread in Turkey. In 1974, Pahlı Karaman used Dumezil's transcribed system and in 1991 Osman Tamtrul used Latinized and Georgian alphabets simultaneously. In independent Georgia scholarly interest to the study of Laz language has increased considerably. Dictionaries and texts have been published, and materials have been digitized under the guidance of Gippert and Tandashvili.

Svan is spoken by 45000 speakers approximately (Medea Sagliani, 2016) in upper and lower Svaneti, Kodori Gorge as well as by the Svans who were forced to leave Svaneti after a natural disaster in 1987.

European scholars are interested in studying and documenting Svan as an endangered language. Within the framework of international projects led by Gippert and Tandashvili, Svan texts, grammars and poetry have been digitized. Like Megrelian, it has never been standardized.

Hence, the study of Megrelian, Svan and Laz is one of the top priorities of Georgian linguistics.

Abkhazian

The biggest minority living in regions with autonomous status are the Abkhazians. According to the current constitution, Georgian is an official language throughout the whole territory of Georgia,

while in Abkhazia - Abkhazian has the status of official language alongside with Georgian.

According to the 1989 census, the population of Abkhazia was made up of ethnic Georgians, Abkhazians, Armenians, Russians, Greeks, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Jews, Estonians, Ossetians, Turks, Moldavians, Azeri, Poles, and Gypsies. Approximately 56% (250000 ca.) were ethnic Georgians, up to 18% (100000) Abkhazians, 15% (80000) Russians, over 14% (80000) Armenians, other ethnic groups constituted around 8% (50000) of the population.

Today Abkhazia is occupied. Therefore, recent data is not available. Before the occupation, Georgian and Abkhazian were the official languages of Abkhazia, according to the constitution. However, it should be noted that practically nobody spoke Georgian there, even among ethnic Georgians. The dominant language was Russian. Schools had mostly Russian as language of instruction. There were Abkhazian TV and radio channels.

Article 6 of the 1994 Abkhazian Constitution states: "The official language of the Republic of Abkhazia shall be the Abkhazian language". Russian is also recognized as a language of State and free use of other minority tongues is guaranteed.

Before the conflict of 1990s, Abkhazian was widely used at secondary schools, universities and mass media. It has been taught at Tbilisi State University since 1924. Even today Abkhazian students take entrance examinations to Georgian universities in their native language. Channel 1 broadcasts everyday news in Abkhazian. The linguistic situation in present-day Abkhazia remains unknown. Estonians as well as many other ethnic groups fled the region during the war. We have no idea what percent of the population speaks Abkhazian, or whether the majority of schools are Abkhazian or Russian.

In 2000 the study of Abkhazian was prioritized by the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation and provided with additional funding for research.

Ossetian

According to the 1989 census, the number of Ossetians living in Georgia was almost 164055, that constituted around 3% of the population. According to the 2014 census, their number is around 14000 i.e. 0,4% of the population.

Ossetian belongs to the Iranian subgroup of Indo-European Family. They use the Cyrillic script.

Ossetians live compactly in the north part of the Shida/Inner

Kartli region, as well as in some villages in South Georgia and in Kakhetia. Quite a few Ossetians live all over Georgia's territory.

Ossetian language has been taught at Tbilisi State University since 1918. Channel 1 TV and radio broadcasts news in Ossetian daily. Ossetian language is taught in more than fifty schools in Georgia.

Russian

According to the 1989 census, the number of Russians living in Georgia was almost 341172, around 7% of the population. Today they constitute only 0,7%.

According to the Soviet constitution, in some Soviet republics Russian was granted official status but not in Georgia. It was conferred the status of state language by the 1st Constitution of Abkhazia. It should be noted that Abkhazia was not a part of Georgia at that time. In independent Georgia sociolinguistic functions of Russian are considerably limited: many Russian schools have been shut down and Russian Departments were dismissed at institutions of higher education. Since 2004, the situation has changed even more dramatically. Russian TV and radio programmes were initially restricted, and after the 2008 August war cancelled altogether. The younger generation does not speak Russian any longer. Consequently, even interviews taken in Russia by journalists are translated into Georgian.

Today there are 75 Russian schools and one Russian newspaper in Georgia. However, lately the demand for Russian-speaking baby-sitters has increased. As a rule, Russian is taught as an optional subject at schools.

There are 75 Russian schools in Georgia today. There are no Russian TV programs, and only one Russian newspaper.

English

Today English is a supranational lingua franca. It is the most widespread and prestigious foreign language in Georgia. Since 2004 it has been a mandatory subject at schools, where it is taught from 1st grade. It is required to pass English at the unified national examination. Knowledge of English is also required to enrol in MA and PhD programmes. Conferences and official meetings are often held in English; scholarly articles are always supplemented by abstracts in English. It is necessary to speak English fluently for career advancement. Almost all employers require English writing, speaking and listening skills from their employ-

ees. The number of English language kindergartens, schools, courses, faculties and universities is increasing day by day. Georgia is a country of tourism. There are English language menus and programs in all restaurants, bars, cafes, hotels and places of interest. Traffic signs are both in Georgian and in English.

Caucasian languages in Georgia

There is a great number of Caucasian languages spoken in Georgia because of neighbouring Caucasian nations. During the Soviet period, as well as today, most Caucasian languages are only home languages. The difference is that today these languages are being documented actively. Some endangered ones like Udi and Bats are taught as optional subjects at schools in the villages where they are spoken.

Bats

Batsbian (better known as Bats or Batsbi), spoken by a subgroup of Georgians Tsova-Tush in the Akhmeta region, is a family/home language. Together with Ingushian, Batsbian belongs to the group of Chechen languages, but in Caucasia it is spoken only by Tsova-Tushs who consider themselves as Georgians. Bats is one of the first Caucasian languages to have had a published grammar, written in German. Bats speakers are bilingual in Georgian and use Georgian as their written language. Educated parts of the population speak Russian as well (Črelašvili 2001). Children no longer speak Bats, making the language seriously endangered (Holisky, Gagua 1994). The language is spoken only in one village, where it is taught at school.

Chechen

According to the 1989 census the number of Chechens/Kists living in Georgia was almost 7110. i.e. around 0,2%. According to the 2014 census, their number is 5,700, i.e. around 0,1%.

They speak Chechen at home, but use Georgian or Russian in communication with other ethnic groups. They use the Cyrillic script. Chechens living in Georgia are called Kists. Their language was taught in villages where they lived till 1944. Today Chechen is taught at a school in the Pankisi gorge. There is also a bilingual Georgian-Chechen radio broadcasting for 12 villages where Chechens live.

Khundzi

Avarians, called 'Khundzi' in Georgian, speak their native language at home and Georgian outside. According to the 1989 census the number of Avarians living in Georgia was almost 4230, around 0,1%. According to the 2014 census, there are now only 1996 speakers of Khundzi in Georgia.

The language uses the Cyrillic script. Khundzi is still taught at schools located in Khundzi villages. There is not broadcasting or press in this language.

Udi

According to the 1989 census the number of Udi people living in Georgia was 93. According to the 2002 census, there are 203 Udis.

Udi belongs to the family of Caucasian languages. They are the smallest ethnic group in Southern Caucasus and they are Christians. Udis live in the village of Zinobiani. They use their native language at home, while they interact in Georgian with the Georgians. Udi is an endangered language. The youth does not speak Udi any longer. It is taught only in Zinobiani. Books, textbooks and dictionaries are also published in Udi, but there is no press or radio broadcasting in the language.

The Biggest Ethnic Groups

After the Georgians, Azeris and Armenians form the largest ethnic groups.

Azeris

According to the 1989 census, the number of Azeris living in Georgia was almost 307556, around 5,7%. According to 2014 census, their number is 233000.

Only in Kvemo (lower) Kartli regions ethnic Azeri minorities constitute the majority of population, in particular in the Marneuli Municipality (83%) and in Dmanisi (67%).

The Azeri language belongs to the Oduzi group of Turkish languages. Azeris used Cyrillic script under the Soviet regime, but now they use Latin script. Azeris form the most populous compact settlement on the territory of Georgia. They mostly live close to the state border with Azerbaijan.

There are about 120 Azeri schools in Georgia. Azeris can take university entrance exams in their native language. Therefore, they

start studying Georgian only after having enrolled at university.

Around 20 Azeri journals and newspapers are published in Georgia. TV and radios broadcasts news in Azeri daily.

Armenians

According to the 1989 census, the number of Armenians living in Georgia was almost 437211.

Armenian belongs to the Indo-European family. Armenians have their own script, one of the 14 original scripts existing in the world.

Only in Samtskhe-Javakheti regions ethnic Armenians minorities constitute the majority of population: in Akhalkalaki (94%), Ninotsminda (96%) and Tsalka (55%).

Today there are 131 Armenian schools in Georgia, Armenian journals, newspapers and books are published, the TV Channel 1 and radio broadcast everyday news in Armenian. There are departments of Azeri and Armenian Philology at Tbilisi State University.

Most difficulties in terms of functioning of the Georgian language are associated with these two ethnic groups.

Other Ethnic Minorities

Greeks

According to the 1989 census the number of Greeks living in Georgia was almost 100124, around 1.9%. By 2014 their number has dropped to 5500.

Linguistically there are those who speak Pontic Greek, and those who speak Turkish, i.e. Anatolian Greeks. The latter were, more precisely, Turkish-speaking, given that younger generations do not speak Turkish any more. They study Greek. They communicate with the rest of the population in Russian.

Greek language is taught as a foreign language in several schools in Tbilisi. It is also taught at Tbilisi State University. Greeks communicate with other ethnic groups in Georgian and Russian.

Assyrians

According to the 1989 census the number of Assyrians living in Georgia was almost 6206, around 0.1%. By 2014 their number has dropped to 2400.

Assyrian belongs to the family of Semitic languages and is used

as a family/home language. It uses the Aramaic script. Assyrians speak Georgian fluently. In the Mtskheta region there is the Assyrian village Kanda. There is a Georgian school there. They can speak Assyrian, Georgian and Russian. Assyrian was taught at the Kanda school until 1940s when it was abolished. In 2015, the Georgian government revived this tradition, and Assyrian is now taught at school, as well as at the Centre for Assyrian Culture. In the Kanda cathedral liturgy is performed in Assyrian and a lot of tourists visit the place to listen to it.

Kurds/Yazidis

According to the 1989 census, the number of Kurds living in Georgia was almost 333131, around 0.6%. Now their number has dropped to 2514. According to the 1989 census, the number of Yazidis living in Georgia was almost 18329. Today their number is 12200.

They predominantly reside in the capital city of Tbilisi and the surrounding areas. Kurds are an ethnic and language group who practices different religions. Yazidism is the religion mostly practiced. Kurds speak their native language and mostly attend Russian schools. Their language is not taught at schools. Their Georgian is very poor.

In Soviet times Kurds used Cyrillic script. Now they use Latin script. Kurdish was taught in a few schools in Tbilisi until the 1970s. Today it is taught only at one school. Channel 1 TV and radio broadcast news in Kurdish daily.

Tat/Judeo-Tat

A small number of Tat people also lives in Georgia. The Tats are part of the indigenous peoples of Iranian origin in the Caucasus. The Tat language is a South-western Iranian language. Tats use the Tat language at home, and speak Russian and Georgian as well.

A variety of Tat language, Judeo-Tat, was spoken by the so-called Caucasian Jews who used to live in Georgia in the past.

Ukrainian

According to the 1989 census the number of Ukrainian living in Georgia was almost 52448, around 1%. By 2014 the number of the Ukrainian population had dropped to 6000.

Ukrainian belongs to the group of East Slavic languages and is written in Cyrillic. A few years ago a Ukrainian Cultural Center

and a school were established in Tbilisi. Today due to the war between Russia and the Ukraine the number of Ukrainians in Georgia is increasing day by day.

Estonian

According to the 1989 census the number of Estonians living in Georgia was almost 2316. As mentioned above, they lived in Abkhazia but returned to their homeland after the war. Today there are only small Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian populations living in Georgia, not enough to establish education in these languages.

German

Starting from 1827, Germans settled down in Georgia and formed compact settlements. Until 1956 there were over 20 German settlements in Georgia and German schools were also established. They founded the village of Marienfeld. The Germans built many buildings and monuments in Georgia. In 1941 they were deported to Kazakhstan and Siberia. Some of them returned to Georgia in 1956.

Like Estonians, the Germans do not live in Georgia any longer. There are a few of them left, as a result of mixed marriages after Georgia regained independence.

In Soviet Georgia, German as a foreign language was widely taught at secondary schools and universities. Today it has been replaced by English. However, it is still taught at schools and universities. There is a German school and a Goethe Institute popularizing German language and culture, as well as a centre for Georgian-German relations in Kutaisi.

Gypsies

According to the 1989 census, the number of Gypsies living in Georgia was almost 1744. Today their number has dropped to 472. It should be noted that these data may not be precise because Gypsies lead a nomadic life. Usually, they hardly speak Georgian.

Turkish

In the last few years the presence of the Turks has considerably increased in Georgia. Turkish belongs to the family of Turkic languages. Turks mostly live and work in Batumi near the border with Turkey. They also live in Tbilisi. There are lots of Turkish inscriptions in Adjara bordering Turkey to the South, as well as on

central highways of Georgia.

Arabic

According to the 1989 census the number of Arab population living in Georgia was almost 76. Today their number has risen because huge investments have been made in Georgia by Arabs. Most of them live in the capital city of Tbilisi.

Hebrew

According to the 1989 census the number of Jews living in Georgia was almost 24720, around 0.3%. Today their number has dropped to 2000.

The Jewish community in Georgia was marked with ethnic and linguistic diversity. In ethnic terms, it was divided in Sephardi, Ashkenazi and Mizrakhta. They settled down in Georgia in the 6th century BC when they escaped from captivity in Babylon. They spoke mainly Georgian and Russian.

A small number of Sephardi Jews could speak Hebrew, while most of the Ashkenazi Jews who settled down in Georgia in the 19th century could speak Yiddish. In Soviet Georgia Jewish schools, Yeshivas, were shut down. In the 20th century Kurdistan Jews speaking Neo-Aramaic came to Georgia. Neo-Aramaic was their domestic language. Today there is a programme in Jewish Studies at Ilia State University. Hebrew is taught at the centres for Hebrew/Jewish Culture and Tbilisi State University. There are Hebrew language centres in Tbilisi and Kutaisi.

Spanish and Italian

There is a handful of Spanish and Italians in Georgia today. However, the demand for the study of these languages has increased due to the fact that lots of Georgian immigrants live in Spain and Italy. There are Spanish and Italian schools in Tbilisi.

Conclusions

If we compare the situation in Soviet and Post-Soviet Georgia, at first sight we might think that minority languages were more privileged during the Soviet period. For instance, in the Georgian SSSR in the 1965/66 academic year there were 2959 Georgian schools, 287 Russian, 242 Armenian, 163 Azeri, 39 Abkhaz, 194 Osetin, and 372 mixed schools. Russian was the language of instruction in

Russian schools; elsewhere, it was studied as a secondary subject (Dešeriev, Protčenko 1976; Kurdadze 2018). Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russian has lost importance and large numbers of ethnic Russians have emigrated from Georgia (from 1989-1996, an estimated 150000 out of a total of 347000).

According to official data reported by Eduard Shevardnadze, in 1998 there were 89 Russian schools, 133 Armenian, 155 Azerbaijani, and 4 Osetin outside of the Southern Osetin region, showing a significant decline in the total number of Russian schools since the Soviet era (see Enokh 1994 for a discussion).

Nowadays, the number of minority language schools, TV and radio programs, journals and newspapers has decreased in independent Georgia. This can be explained by the fact that the total population, including ethnic minorities, has dropped due to Russian occupation, conflicts and financial hardship. Therefore, there is no need for as many schools as in Soviet times. Many newspapers were also closed because people now mostly use e-resources. However, minority languages are being documented very intensely in Georgia, and all of them are protected by the state (Gvantseladze, Tchaava 2021).

Despite the fact that the majority of the population in Georgia are Georgians, speaking Georgian, Georgia protects the languages spoken by national minorities and supports their development and use in everyday life. Besides Abkhazian, none of these languages have neither legitimate, nor constitutional status. Still, national minority languages are taught at schools. Moreover, in Georgia there are Armenian, Azeri, Russian and Ukrainian schools. Villages which are inhabited by these ethnical groups have schools with Bats and other Caucasian languages. At universities there are opportunities to learn Caucasian languages. It is also possible to study other Indo-European, Turkish and Semitic languages.

Overall, minority languages are well-protected and their development is facilitated and supported by the state.

References

- Črelašvili, K. T. (2001), "Bacbijskij jazyk", in Alekseev, M.E. et al. (Eds.), *Jazyki mira: Kavkazkie jazyki*, Academia, Moskva, 196-203.
- Dešeriev, Ju.D., Protčenko, I.F. (1968), *Razvitie jazykov narodov SSSR v sovetськуju èpokhu*, Prosveščenie, Moskva.

- Enokh, R. (1998), "Jazykovaja politika v Gruzii", *Central'naja Azija i Kavkaz* 1:142-146.
- Gogolašvili, G. (2007), *Kartveluri enebi da dialekt'ebi (erti samecniero polemikis gamo)*, Meridiani, Tbilisi.
- Gogolašvili, G. (2013), *Kartuli salit'erat'uro ena, nark'vevebi. Tsu gamomtsemloba*, Tbilisis saxelmwifo universit'et'is gamomcemloba, Tbilisi.
- Grenoble, L.A. (2003), *Language Policy in the Soviet Union*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, New York.
- Gvantseladze, T., Tchaava, S. (2021), *Afxazuri ena: warsuli, awmqho da ... (ekolingvist'uri da sociolingvist'uri analizi)*, Gamomcemloba samshoblo, Tbilisi.
- Holisky, Dee A., Gagua, R. (1994), "Tsova-Tush (Batsbi)", in Smeets, R. (Ed.), *The indigenous languages of the Caucasus, 4: North east Caucasian*, Part 2, Caravan Press, Delmar, 147-212.
- Jorbenadze, B. (1998), *Georgian Dialectology 2*, Metsniereba, Tbilisi (in Georgian).
- Kartozia, G., Gersamia, R., Lomia, M., Tskhadaia, T. (2010), *Megrulis lingvist'uri analizi*, Gamomcemloba meridian Tbilisi.
- Kurdadze, R. et al. (2018), *Universit'et'is idea da kartvelur enata kvlevisa da swavlebis mnishvneloba*, Tbilisis saxelmwifo universit'et'is gamomcemloba, Tbilisi.
- Lomtadze, T. (2010), *Modern Georgian Sociolects*, Meridiani, Tbilisi (in Georgian).
- Lomtadze, T. (2021), "Russophone Georgian Jews", in Cuadros, S. et al. (Eds.), *New Trends in Slavic Studies 2*, URSS, Moskva, 344-368.
- Lomtadze, T., Enokh, R. (2019), "Judeo-Georgian Language as an Identity Marker of Georgian Jews (The Jews Living in Georgia)", *Journal of Jewish Languages* 7(1): 1-27.
- Putkaradze, T. (2006), *The History of the Georgian Language*, Akaki Tsereteli State University Press, Kutaisi.
- Qhaukhčičšvili, S. (1955), *Kartlis cxovreba. Vol. 1*, Ganatleba, Tbilisi (in Georgian).
- Saghliani, M. (2016), *On the Structure of the Svan Language*, Tbilisis saxelmwifo universit'et'is gamomcemloba, Tbilisi.

Soviet Legacies in Minority Protection Thirty Years Down the Road

Francesco Palermo

A (former?) Soviet space in the treatment of national minorities

More than 30 years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a common paradigm for the approach to (and treatment of) minorities in the geographic area of the former USSR is still clearly identifiable.

With the partial exception of the Baltic countries, which have approached the issue of nation-building in a somewhat different and, in some cases (Estonia and Latvia),¹ even more drastic manner, the general approach follows the same explicit and implicit rules that in the Soviet era had characterised the overall attitude of the system towards ethno-national diversities: the understanding of settlement territories as the property of the titular group and the ill-concealed Russian ambition to act as a hat for other identities, inevitably subordinate to the Russian one, superior in number, prestige and historical destiny. The military invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has been the tip of the iceberg of this attitude, which was, however, widely present before and has been growing steadily since the turn of the millennium, after the ‘parenthesis’ of Yeltsin’s Russia. One may think of the ‘dress rehearsals’ of the Russian military operation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2009 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

1 See the chapter by L. Panzeri in this volume.

Even beyond the dramatic moments generated by violent conflicts, the overall approach presents significant elements of continuity with the Soviet era.

In the first place, what has remained from the Soviet attitude is a conceptual, inextricable overlap between one group and one territory, which reveals an interiorized ownership-relation that goes back even to the very names of groups and territories: territories have usually been named after the populations residing in them, and vice-versa, to an extent that makes it almost impossible, in most cases, to determine which name has been developed first (Connor 2001). Such an approach has been extreme in Soviet times, when the republics were designed based on ethno-national criteria: Georgia as the home of Georgians, Kyrgyzstan of the Kyrgyz, Azerbaijan of the Azeris, and the like. While under Soviet rule the ideological element prevailed over the ethnic one in the ambition to establish a common Soviet identity on top of (and progressively diluting) the ethno-national one, this attitude had a twofold negative consequence when the ideological, political and military glue stopped holding the different peoples together. On the one hand, it paved the way for the establishment of ethno-national republics alongside the borders that were designed in this way in Soviet times. On the other hand, and as a consequence, diversities were not really accepted in the resulting ethno-national post-Soviet republics, despite being significantly present, thus generating: a) a number of violent conflicts (in the Caucasus, in Central Asia, in Ukraine, in Moldova, and so on); or b) forced assimilation where numbers were less significant (in most Russian entities with the exception of Chechnya and Tatarstan); or c) more radical nation-building policies where the context allowed them (Estonia and Latvia). The idea of national-territorial autonomy (Malloy and Palermo eds. 2015) has left its deep traces in the whole post-Soviet space, permeating the understanding of diversity management in all successor countries of the USSR².

Secondly, based on this overall approach, minorities can be accepted only to the extent they cannot put the ownership of the titular nation into question. Thus, most countries portray minorities only in terms of folklore, while concrete rights are deliberately neglected³, and in some cases blatantly repressed, including

2 See the chapter by M. Ganino in this volume.

3 Like in the case of the prohibition of ethno-national parties, in, inter alia, Russia, Moldova, Ukraine and (outside of the post-soviet but not of the post-communist area) Bulgaria.

by laws punishing terrorism and ‘anti-national’ activities⁴. Some hypocritical legislation protecting and promoting the rights of minorities is adopted with merely symbolic purposes, such as the Ukrainian law on indigenous peoples from 2021 (Sribniak 2021), aimed to affirm Ukrainian sovereignty over Crimea, or some provisions in the 2022 Ukrainian law on national minorities clearly excluding the Russian minority from its provisions.

Third, the folklorization of minorities produces a formal recognition of a large number of minorities, making sure, however, that they remain irrelevant in determining political choices of the respective country, that should firmly remain in the hands of the titular population only. Accordingly, the Russian Federation recognizes not less than 193 minorities, all potentially benefitting from the guarantees offered by the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities⁵ (at least as long Russia has been a member of the Council of Europe)⁶, but, in practice, irrelevant in determining public choices⁷. The same is true for several other countries, such as Kazakhstan with 137 recognized minorities. The hierarchy in society is mirrored by worrying data, such as, lately, the number of soldiers belonging to minorities that were employed (and lost their lives) by the Russian army in the Ukrainian invasion⁸.

At the same time, despite the formal (and predominantly folkloristic) recognition of minorities, the use of languages other than the national one is decreasing in all post-Soviet countries⁹. In Rus-

4 See the chapter by C. Filippini.

5 See 5th report of the Russian Federation under the Framework Convention (2021): <https://rm.coe.int/5th-sr-russian-federation-en/1680a2234b>

6 On 15 March 2022 (in the aftermath of the invasion of Ukraine), the Russian Federation announced its withdrawal from the Council of Europe under Article 7 of the Statute of the Council of Europe. On 16 March, the Committee of Ministers decided to expel Russia with immediate effect according to Article 8.

7 See the last available opinion by the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention on the Russian Federation from 2018 (ACFC/OP/IV(2018)001): <https://rm.coe.int/4th-advisory-committee-opinion-on-the-russian-federation-english-langu/1680908982>

8 A. Kovalëv (2022) reports that in the Ukrainian war, until mid May 2022, 117 Russian soldiers from Buryatia (a republic in eastern Siberia) have lost their lives, against three from Moscow, while Moscow has a population 15 times bigger than that of Buryatia.

9 See again the 4th Opinion on Russia of the Advisory Committee on

sia, for instance, the ‘Strategy for State Ethnic Policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025’¹⁰ on its label aims to consolidate the awareness of the multinational nature of the Russian people and to maintain ethno-cultural diversity, but its practical implementation emphasises the role of the Russian language as a vehicle of integration and stresses concepts such as national unity, ethnic harmony, patriotism, and the like, which are typical of Putin’s pan-Russian rhetoric. Similarly, several other countries have subscribed on paper to a model of multilingual education and multiethnic society¹¹, but in practice have just reaffirmed the dominance of the national language and culture to the detriment of those of minorities.

Fourth, minorities are becoming less visible also in legislation. In many countries, including the Russian Federation, no general law on the rights of persons belonging to national minorities exists, and individual provisions are rather scattered in different pieces of legislation (laws on media, education, local self-government, public administration, and so on). Furthermore, and even more worryingly, also the countries that have (often reluctantly) adopted a law on minority rights, do not follow the international standards in this regard, especially on sensitive issues like freedom of affiliation, multiple identities, data collection, integrated education (Ulasiuk, Hadîrcă, Romans eds. 2018)¹².

The elephant in the room

While the attitude has not significantly changed since the Soviet times, the geopolitical context has.

Under Soviet rule, all the (ethno-national) republics were under the umbrella of the USSR, a nominally federal state with a clear Russian dominance in cultural and linguistic terms. Even more than that: Russia was territorially bigger, economically more powerful and politically more significant of all other Soviet republics.

the Framework Convention (ACFC/OP/IV (2018)001).

10 Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 1666 of 19 December 2012.

11 Inter alia Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, supported by especially the OSCE and its High Commissioner on National Minorities.

12 The reference international documents are in particular the Thematic commentaries on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (2002, 2008, 2012, 2016) and the OSCE Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies (2012).

After the dissolution of the USSR, the Russian domination was put into question, to a different extent, in all post-Soviet countries, with the sole exception of Belarus (Partlett 2020).

All countries engaged in more or less thorough nation-building processes, emphasizing the role of the national language and culture and reducing the space for the presence of minorities in the public space. Minorities are, however, often understood as synonymous of Russians, as the 'Russian issue' is at the core of every legislation regarding the rights of persons belonging to minorities. The containment of the Russian dominance is, of course, a legitimate aim, and so is the promotion of the state language, but this has often disproportionately impacted on the other minorities,¹³ while not necessarily achieving the goal of reducing Russian (cultural) influence.

Russia, by converse, has gradually and consistently pursued, at least from 2000, a policy of re-establishing the Russian leadership on the whole former soviet space (*russkij mir*). This was done using a number of instruments: linguistically, by strongly promoting and supporting the use of Russian as the "language of interethnic communication" (as was the formulation used in Soviet times, still present in the legislation of some countries, such as Moldova); culturally, by dominating the media landscape in most neighbouring countries; economically, by using Russia's economic power (especially in the energy field) to keep countries on leash; politically, by granting Russian citizenship with a facilitated procedure to all "compatriots" abroad, meaning to all those people in former Soviet countries who feels belonging to the Russian nation¹⁴, and in some cases granting such citizenship *en masse* (Palermo and Sabanadze eds. 2011), such as in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria and, more recently, the Donbass and even the whole of Ukraine after the military aggression in 2022; finally, militarily, by supporting breakaway territories such as Transnistria and others; by intervening in other frozen conflicts like in Nagorno-Karabakh¹⁵ or in

13 See among others the Opinion of the Venice Commission no. 960/2019 on the Law on Supporting the Functioning of Ukrainian Language as the State Language, CDL-AD (2019)032.

14 Such legislation, based on article 63 of the Russian constitution, exists since the early 1990ies and has been amended on the verge of the invasion of Ukraine (early 2022) to make it even easier to get a Russian passport for citizens of the former soviet countries.

15 First, in the 1990ies, by favouring the de facto takeover by Armenia and later, in 2020, by supporting Azerbaijan in its efforts of regaining con-

political crises in other countries such as Kazakhstan; by sending troops in neighbouring territories, such as in Georgia in 2008; by annexing territories such as in Crimea in 2014 and, lately, by the large-scale military invasion in Ukraine in 2022.

Therefore, the bulky presence of Russia has been the elephant in the room in every minority-related discourse in post-Soviet countries since independence¹⁶. This has hampered a rational approach, often promoting hyper-nationalistic attitudes¹⁷ and increased tensions.

The unresolved, bullying role of Russia in the region has made, and continues to make, it impossible to address minority claims (and even broader geopolitical issues) in a rational way. Spill-over effects are pre-programmed and often become self-realizing prophecies.

Is there a way out?

Such a gloomy picture, aggravated by open and bloody conflicts such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, don't offer much room for hope. In fact, if the described spill-over dynamic continues, as was the case for the past 30 years, the situation is unlikely to improve, both in general and with regard to the treatment of (persons belonging to national) minorities. After all, minorities are often a mirror of broader societal developments.

At the same time, and precisely because minority issues are a reliable indicator of societies as a whole, some changes in the attitude towards, and in the (legal) treatment of minorities, may prompt broader changes at societal level.

The key seems to break the vicious circle of the exclusivist, ownership-based approach of territories by groups, majorities and minorities alike. As long as a territory is only seen as the property of one ethno-national group only, ontologically excluding any other, it will unavoidably remain disputed (Osipov 2016). As the most advanced international soft-law instruments repeatedly remind¹⁸,

trol.

16 See the chapter by A. Vitale in this volume, with particular reference to the specific case of Ukraine.

17 One may think of, for instance, the post-2014 legislation in Ukraine, on, *inter alia*, education (2017) and language (2019), or the denial of territorial autonomy as a possible instrument for accommodating differential claims in the country. See Palermo 2020.

18 Such as the last two thematic commentaries on the Framework Con-

the challenge for contemporary societies is to accept and celebrate their diversity rather than pursuing a non-existing homogeneity.

It is crucial to break up with the idea of monoethnic territories. There are two main ways to do so.

The first one is to break the vicious circle that has so far surrounded (and hampered) the issue of territorial autonomy. Based on the Soviet legacy, territorial autonomy, especially in areas where minority groups are settled in consistent numbers, means to 'sell' that territory to those groups, with all connected fears in terms of threat to territorial integrity of the state. It is not surprising that such an approach leads to the self-realizing prophecy of splitting territories, as the case of Crimea and others have demonstrated (Filippini 2016). Autonomy and related concepts have, however, a potential that goes far beyond the accommodation of group claims. It is primarily an instrument of good governance, targeting a territory as a whole and not only the dominant group(s) within it. It was created for this purpose and this function becomes even more relevant the more complex the society and the more complex the administration. Underlying of the role of decentralization as an instrument to provide better services at local level could be seen as a step towards a positive reading of territorial issues.

The second, and related way is to embark in experimenting with non-territorial forms of autonomy. If territorial autonomy hopefully becomes less loaded in terms of ethnic property, the legitimate claims of minority groups could be more effectively channelled into different instruments that can address the quest for being respected in their cultural, linguistic, religious or ethnic difference without raising (more or less justified) concerns for the territorial integrity of countries. Such instruments are in first place the non territorial forms of autonomy for groups, such as personal autonomy, cultural autonomy, minority self-governments for cultural, educational and other issues¹⁹.

vention for the Protection of National Minorities ("The Language Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities", 2012, and "The Framework Convention: A Key Tool to Manage Diversity through Minority Rights", 2016, ACFC/56DOC (2016)001) and the mentioned OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities' Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies (2012).

19 For a classification and explanation of the various forms and instruments see, inter alia, Suksi 2015. For a strategy on how to make the best use of such instruments in the context of Central and Eastern Europe see Smith 2015.

These two steps could at least put a new awareness and a less disruptive attitude in motion. While they could be helpful in every context, in Europe and beyond, their need seems especially acute in the post-Soviet space, in order to (start to) overcome the long lasting legacy of the Soviet understanding of minority issues and its perverse impact on a world that has abandoned the Soviet era long ago. Instead, as long as the (fear of) oppression, explicit or implicit hierarchies among groups, and a property-based understanding of territories remain the guiding principles of minority policies, there is little hope for substantial improvements.

References

- Connor, W. (2001), "Homelands in a World of States", in Guibernau, M., Hutchinson, J. (eds.), *Understanding Nationalism*, Blackwell, Oxford, 53-73.
- Filippini, C. (2016), "Constitutions and Territorial Claims. Lessons from the Former Soviet Space", in Nicolini, M., Palermo, F., Milano, E. (Eds.), *Law, Territory and Conflict Resolution. Law as a Problem and Law as a Solution*, Brill/Nijhoff, Leiden-Boston, 174-193
- Kovalëv, A. (2022), La carne da cannone del Cremlino, *Internazionale* 1464 (June 2022), <https://www.internazionale.it/magazine/aleksej-kovalev/2022/06/09/la-carne-da-cannone-del-cremlino> (last access 12 July 2022)
- Malloy, T., Palermo, F. (2015) Eds., *Minority Accommodation through Territorial and Non-Territorial Autonomy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Osipov, A. (2016), "Studying Territorial Autonomy as a Multiplicity of Ways to Institutionalize Ethnicity", in M. Nicolini, F. Palermo, E. Milano (Eds.), *Law, Territory and Conflict Resolution. Law as a Problem and Law as a Solution*, Brill/Nijhoff, Leiden-Boston, 67-88
- Palermo, F., Sabanadze, N. Eds. (2011), *National Minorities in Inter-State Relations*, Brill, Martinus Nijhoff, Leiden-Boston.
- Palermo, F. (2020), "The Elephant in the Room: Ukraine between Decentralization and Conflict", *Ethnopolitics* 19(4): 369-382.
- Partlett, W. (2020), *The Importance of Constitutional Law for Belarusian Democracy: An Analysis of the Amended 1994 Constitution and Considerations for Democratic Reform*, International IDEA Interim

Analysis, Stockholm.

Smith, D.J. (2015), "NTA as Political Strategy in Central and Eastern Europe", in Malloy, T., Palermo, F. (Eds.), *Minority Accommodation through Territorial and Non-Territorial Autonomy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 161-178.

Sribniak, O. (2021), *Native Others: What Implications Does the Law on Indigenous Peoples Have for Ukraine's Indigenous Population?*, ECMI blog <https://www.ecmi.de/infochannel/detail/ecmi-minorities-blog/native-others-what-implications-does-the-law-on-indigenous-peoples-have-for-ukraines-indigenous-population> (last accessed 13 July 2022).

Suksi, M. (2015), "Non-Territorial Autonomy: The Meaning of Non-Territoriality", in Malloy, T., Palermo, F. (Eds.), *Minority Accommodation through Territorial and Non-Territorial Autonomy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 83-118.

Ulasiuk, I., Hadîrcă, L., Romans, W. (Eds.), *Language Policy and Conflict Prevention*, Brill/Nijhoff, Leiden/Boston.

The “Constitutional War” with the USSR and the Restoration of Sovereignty in the Baltic Republics

Lino Panzeri

The Soviet incorporation of the Baltic Republics and its consequences

The process that led, in 1991, to the restoration of sovereignty for the Baltic Republics is extremely interesting from multiple perspectives. In this paper, attention will focus on the stages of the constitutional process that accompanied this delicate historical phase, highlighting not only the difficulties and limits of an institutional model - the Soviet one - which was close to implosion, but also the implications deriving from uncertainties in the qualification of newfound independence.

At first, in order to reconstruct the most relevant dynamics, a few historical considerations should be made.

On the 23rd of August 1939, the division of Eastern European zones of influence between Germany and the USSR was sanctioned and the former recognized full freedom of action for the latter with respect to the Baltic Republics (see Kirby, 1996, pp. 69 ff.) by way of the secret protocols attached to the non-aggression pact signed by von Ribbentrop and Molotov. Thus, already at the end of that year, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, despite having constantly reaffirmed their neutrality, began to suffer so much pressure from the Soviet side that they were pushed into signing bilateral agree-

ments of mutual assistance, including military assistance. Subsequently, in response to specific resolutions by the Baltic Foreign Ministers expressing their intention to maintain their position of neutrality regardless, between the 14th and 16th of June 1940 the Soviet counterpart issued an ultimatum to each of the three Republics, forcing them to form new Governments and to accept in their territory an indefinite number of soldiers. Realizing they had no alternative, the Republics acquiesced. As soon as they took office, the new Governments ordered new elections for the 15th and 16th of July 1940, which took place in a climate strongly conditioned by Soviet pressure and concluded with an overwhelming victory for the communist forces. The newly established bodies immediately proclaimed the establishment of Soviet Socialist Republics; they immediately requested incorporation into the USSR, and between the 3rd and 6th of August 1940, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR formally accepted their requests for annexation (see Misiunas, Taagepera, 1993, pp. 15 ff.).

In terms of demographics and national composition, radical changes began with the restoration of Soviet sovereignty over the area at the end of World War II.

At first, tens of thousands of members of the Baltic “national” majorities opted to flee abroad (Dundovich, 2013, pp. 113-114) in order to escape occupation or, sometimes, deportation to Siberia, starting an emigration process which, despite being quickly deterred by the Soviet Authorities, continued for some years, especially involving the cultural, political and economic élites. Subsequently, commencing from the beginning of the Fifties, intense policies for the “sovietisation” of the Baltic societies began, involving subjection to control by the Central Authorities of the USSR and forced adherence to the relative political, economic and cultural models (see Zamascikov, 1990, pp. 87 ff.). The most effective tool for this purpose, together with other methods of maintaining control and the elimination of traditional meeting places and social structures, was identified in the promotion of massive immigration flows from the other Republics, primarily from Russia. Immigrants to Estonia and Latvia (see Plasseraud, 2003, pp. 185, 190) in particular were strongly attracted by rapid industrialization (Parming, 1980, p. 401).

This demographic upheaval had a profound effect on Baltic societies, reorganized both so as to contrast any resistance against this new direction and, in the medium term, to ensure the integration of the Baltic peoples into the Soviet model, based on the

ideological assumption of the creation of cosmopolitan societies. The most immediate effect was the rapid russification of the area, promoted through the diffusion and consequent officialization of Russian as a non-exclusive but dominant language in all the Republics. Given the use of the Russian language in public and for State business, it became necessary for members of the Baltic "Nations" to learn that language and, at the same time, it became a symbol of the new Soviet direction (see Grenoble, 2003, pp. 99 ff.).

The overall attitude of the Central Authorities towards the various national components of the Union has been subject to different interpretations. Although the need to exert strong political control over the Baltic area was unquestionable and the russification of that area had ensured that Russian-speaking immigrants were often favoured, the Soviet Authorities recognized, at least after the end of Stalinism, some scope for the languages and cultures of the "titular" Nations (*titul'nye*), particularly in school, publications and folklore, inspired by an attitude defined as anti-nationalist but not anti-national (Smith D.J., 2001, p. XXII). Therefore, despite profound russification, the Baltic identities survived, co-existing with the immigrant ones in a relationship destined, however, to become precarious. In contrast to the idea according to which the communist system would make the formation of a «supranational Soviet people» possible, in the final phase of the Soviet experience it was in fact evident that a clear "ethno-federal" hierarchy and rigid ethnic barriers had been consolidated (Codagnone, 1997, p. 12).

Over the decades the effects of these policies altered the original national composition of the three Countries, weakening the "dominant" ethno-national components until they became numerically much smaller majorities, and this occurred to a far greater extent where the intensity of the migratory flows from other Republics of the USSR was greater: in fact, in 1989 the Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian "national" components were equal, respectively, to 52%, 61.5% and 79.6% of the whole population of each Republic (see Schmidt, 1993, pp. 18, 57, 100).

The crisis of Soviet federalism and the emergence of nationalist tendencies

Since the early Seventies of the last century, there were already growing demands for autonomy by many Republics of the USSR, which were at first systematically repressed and, also during this

decade, failed to find any significant response in the organization of the Federation.

In particular, the Soviet Constitution of 1977 offered no innovative contribution. On the one hand, it defined the USSR as a «unitary federal multinational State», founded on the «free self-determination of nations» and on the «voluntary union» of the Soviet Socialist Republics (art. 70, paragraph 1), it guaranteed each Republic the right to free secession (art. 72) and, again, the right of each of them to maintain their own international relations (art. 80); on the other hand, however, it provided that «the USSR embodied the State unity of the Soviet people and drew all its nations and nationalities together for the purpose of jointly building communism» (art. 70, paragraph 2), «thereby demonstrating that even the federal structure [had] been accepted as it was temporarily considered the most suitable - given the environmental conditions of the USSR - to achieve the essential objectives of the October Revolution» (Biscaretti di Ruffia, Crespi Reghizzi, 1979, p. 185; see also Meissner, 1982, pp. 11 ff.).

From the mid-1980s, the desire for independence began to grow considerably, favoured by reforming policies launched with *perestroika* and, above all, by *glasnost*. The new direction, inspired by the aim of ensuring greater transparency in the management of political power, highlighted the limits of Soviet federalism (see Goldman, 1990, pp. 75 ff.) and led, as an unexpected effect, to the emergence of latent ethnic conflicts. Aggravated by the serious economic crisis, this conflict fuelled the desire for independence by some federated entities, which were increasingly critical of the concept of “double sovereignty”. Although, in fact, the 1977 Constitution recognized both the Federation and each Republic as having their own sovereignty (see articles 75, 76 and 81), in practice that of the constituent entities remained merely formal and, in any case, systematically constricted, and according to some even denied (see Lesage, 1990, pp. 11-12). On an international level, the right to maintain relations with other States was in fact sterilized by art. 73, point 10, which included among the competences of the USSR «the definition of general procedure for and the coordination of the relations of Union Republics with other States and with international organizations» (see Antonowicz, 1991-1992, pp. 11-12). Domestically, however, any autonomy formally recognized to the federated entities was subject to federal influence (see Uibopuu, 1979, pp. 175 ff.) and this was also due to the further strengthening, with respect to matters previously established by

the Constitution of 1936, of the guiding role of the single party.

This tension soon manifested itself also in the Baltic Republics and was further inflamed, in the summer of 1988, by the publication of the secret protocols attached to the Ribbentrop-Molotov Agreement of August 23, 1939, which unleashed a strong reaction against the Central Authorities. The latter found themselves in a position of increasing uncertainty regarding the way in which to deal with the Baltic question, given that both a concessional and a restrictive attitude could have had unpredictable effects.

In the three Republics, having disregarded the hopes initially placed in *perestroika* (Radžvilas, 1991, pp. 77 ff.), the ambition for independence was supported by intense popular participation and by strong activism by groups and associations. On a programmatic level, it was fuelled by the awareness that this objective had to be achieved quickly, to avoid the further russification of Baltic societies causing the relative autochthonous components to become minorities, and perhaps even determining their extinction, as claimed by the more radical forces (see Zaslavsky, 1992, p. 73; see also, *amplius*, G. Smith, 1996, pp. 121 ff.).

The independence process discovered a cornerstone in nationalistic rhetoric, nourished by the "national" élites through the promotion of the collective memory of the ethno-cultural roots of their communities and of affiliation of the Baltic area to the cultural and social tradition of the West (Danjoux, 2002, p. 168). In truth, these élites did not emerge with the onset of the crisis of the Soviet experience. In fact, since the 1960s, with the progressive weakening of the central nomenklatures in favour of "national" ones, they had carved out an ever greater opportunity for themselves in the individual Republics, in accordance with the theory, which had developed at a federal level, according to which local interests could only be effectively pursued through economic decentralization. However, their role was clearly defined in the last three years of life for the USSR (1988-1991), marked by repeated attempts to democratize the political regime, carried out, among other things, through a robust transfer of power from the structures of the Soviet Communist Party to the various Soviet-type Parliaments. The relative tendentially democratic election, in fact, ensured them the legitimacy necessary to overcome the residual resistance of the single-party hierarchies and paved the way for a real "constitutional war", during which they adopted a series of legislative measures, which were often provocative, destined to clash with Soviet constitutional legality.

The stages of the “constitutional war” between the USSR and the Baltic Republics

The first break was achieved through the attempt to assert the prevalence of Republican laws over those of the Union. In particular, on the 16th of November 1988, together with a Declaration on the sovereignty of Estonia - in which it was established that the effectiveness in the Republic of any amendment to the Federal Constitution required approval by the Estonian Supreme Soviet and its adoption in the Estonian Constitution -, the Supreme Soviet of Estonia approved the «Law on modifications and amendments to the Constitution of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Estonia», containing many relevant innovations: primarily, the text established the precedence of the laws of the Republic over federal laws, subordinating the effectiveness of the latter in the Estonian territory to a prior assessment by the relevant Soviet; in art. 2, the commitment to protect fundamental human rights was formalized; in art. 3, private property was recognized as a guaranteed right in the Estonian economic system; finally, art. 4 sanctioned exclusive ownership by the Republic of the land and subsoil, water, forests and other natural resources, as well as the main means of production in the industrial, construction and agricultural sectors, means of transportation and communication, State banks, the assets of commercial enterprises, municipal enterprises and publicly managed enterprises, urban buildable land and other assets essential for the exercise of duties to be performed by the Socialist Republic of Estonia (see Taagepera, 1993, pp. 145-147).

On the following 26th of November, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR declared the illegitimacy of the aforementioned Declaration - on the basis of art. 74 of the Soviet Constitution of 1977, according to which, in case of conflict between a law of a Republic and a federal law, the latter should prevail -, but the Estonian Authorities reaffirmed their position, inflaming relations with the Central Authorities.

The same thing happened in the following months, following the approval of similar Declarations on sovereignty by Lithuania (May 18, 1989) and Latvia (July 28, 1989), which affirmed the prevalence of the rights of each Republic over those of the Union. Despite censure by the Soviet side, again the declaring parties remained firm in their stance, making it even more evident, even at a central level, that it was impossible to settle the Baltic question through the instruments offered by Soviet constitutionalism.

A second bone of contention was the legislation on language, which has historically proven to be an essential factor for the definition of national consciousness, and which became, during this phase, a powerful instrument for the polarization of political power and, at the same time, for the exclusion of the "other".

During 1988, the three Republics adopted specific amendments to their Constitutions, whereby their "national" languages were declared as State languages (see Misiunas, 1990, pp. 206 ff.). They were then followed up, by way of ordinary law, through specific regulatory measures approved during that same year and in the following year.

Already on the 18th of January 1989, the «Law on the language of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic» was approved in Estonia, which sanctioned the recognition of Estonian as an official language, imposing, among other things, the use of this language in toponymy and an obligation for all civil servants and salespeople to acquire, in the following four years, adequate mastery of the Estonian and Russian languages (Järve, 2003, pp. 78-79). A few days later, on the 25th of January, a special ordinance was adopted in Lithuania, which set a two-year deadline within which all public officials had to demonstrate adequate proficiency in the national language (Kionka, 1992, p 166). Similarly, on the 5th of May 1989, in Latvia, the «Law on the languages of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic» was approved: it enshrined freedom for individuals to choose their language of interaction with public officials, requiring the latter to know both the Russian and Latvian languages with a level of proficiency sufficient to fulfil their service obligations, and set a deadline of three years within which to achieve the required level (Antane, Tsilevich, 1999, pp. 111-113).

The epilogue to the "constitutional war" was reached with the declarations of independence made by the Supreme Soviets of each Baltic Republic. If the Estonian Soviet had already revealed its hand, as mentioned, at the end of 1988, with the aforementioned Declaration on the sovereignty of Estonia, at the beginning of 1990, through specific resolutions, the Baltic Supreme Soviets solemnly proclaimed the independence of the three Republics (Lithuania on March the 11th, Estonia on March the 30th, Latvia on May the 4th), formalizing the restoration of their statehood, illegitimately interrupted following the Soviet incorporation of 1940.

The very delicate issue of incorporation into the USSR was dealt with by way of a specific intervention by the Congress of People's

Deputies, which, on the 24th of December 1989, adopted the Resolution on the political and legal assessment of the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact. In the document, contrary to that which had systematically occurred up to that moment, the existence of the secret Agreements of 23 August 1939, which had been disclosed the previous year, was recognized, and its invalidity was declared, effective from the moment of signing. However, according to the Soviet Authorities, this was of no relevance with respect to international law nor did it invalidate the incorporation of the three Republics, since the ineffectiveness of the aforementioned agreements - constituting a violation of Baltic sovereignty - had to be separated from entry into the Union, which took place on the basis of a choice made by the relative populations and formalized through specific applications for membership (Cassese, 1995, 258). Consequently, from a legal standpoint, the eventual restoration of independence for the three Republics should have been qualified, to all intents and purposes, as a "secession", destined exclusively to be of internal constitutional consequence and, therefore, to be "managed" in accordance with the provisions of art. 72 of the 1977 Soviet Constitution (see Van Elsuwege, 2008, pp. 63 ff.).

To this end, on the 3rd of April 1990, the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union adopted a special law implementing the constitutional rule whereby the secession of a federated Republic from the USSR was subject to very stringent conditions. In particular, it formalized the need for independence to be approved by the inhabitants of the seceding Republic with a majority of at least two thirds of the electors, which was then to be followed, in the event of a positive vote, by a transition period of up to five years for the settlement of succession issues and, then, final approval by the Congress of People's Deputies (on this «Law», Lesage, 1990, pp. 113 ff.). The text was strongly contested by the Baltic Republics, not only due to the extreme complexity of the obligations envisaged, but also due to the consequences that its acceptance would have entailed with respect to the legitimization of the Soviet occupation (Henderson, 1991, p. 50). They thus reaffirmed the illegitimacy of this incorporation, the continuity of their original statehood and, therefore, the possibility of re-establishing the *status quo ante* without navigating through the Soviet constitutional bottlenecks.

The Central Authorities' attempt therefore produced the opposite effect to the one desired. In fact, instead of containing divergent forces, it further fuelled their intensity, confirming the

assumption that the best way to satisfy territorial demands, rather than contrasting them, would have been the offer of effective responses to the rooted expectation of change (Karklins, 1994, p. 28). The latter option, which was hoped for by the international community - initially cautious on providing solidarity to the claims of sovereignty expressed by the Baltic Countries - was however no longer feasible in this historical phase, characterized by the now imminent implosion of the Soviet giant.

The qualification of the regained independence of the Baltic Republics and its current effects

Despite the Soviet attempt to oppose the divergent force of the Baltic Republics and the caution initially displayed by the international community in solidarizing with sovereigntist claims (see Kherad, 1992, 859-860), the legitimacy necessary for the refinement of the ongoing process was ensured by the outcome of the referendums on independence, which were held on the 9th of February in Lithuania and on the 3rd of March in Estonia and Latvia. They decreed the existence of overwhelming majorities in favour of the cause - equal, to 90.47% of voters in Lithuania, to 77.83% in Estonia, and to 73.68% in Latvia (Panzeri, 2021, pp. 63, 66, 67) -, generating a political-institutional impasse which was definitively overcome only a few months later, when, following the attempted coup d'état in Moscow on the 19th-21st August, the independence process was perfected. Following recognition of the three Baltic Republics by many Western Countries, the Central Authorities proceeded in a similar direction on the following 6th of September, putting an end to a "constitutional war" which had for some time now confirmed the inevitability of the end of the USSR. It officially occurred a little more than three months later, on the 26th of December 1991, the day after Gorbachev's resignation as President of the Union.

Once independence was regained, qualification of incorporation into the USSR, dating back to over fifty years earlier, acquired absolute centrality at an institutional and legal level, given - as will be seen - its considerable implications for international obligations.

The difficulty of resolving such a decisive interpretative knot arose both from the ambiguity of the positions taken by the international community towards the Soviet occupation and, more generally, from the plurality of stances developed on the theme of

succession between States.

With regard to the first aspect, it is important to note how the occupation of 1940, swiftly recognized only by Nazi Germany, was considered in different ways by individual States, which, over the following years, developed an attitude often influenced by the geopolitical oppositions of the post-war period or, in any case, by strategic interests. Thus, if some Countries recognized the annexation, either legally (among them, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland) or, at least, *de facto* (among them, the United Kingdom), others failed to take any stance (among them, France), while others, including the USA, affirmed its forced nature, refusing to recognize that it was in any way legitimate (see Hough, 1985, pp. 391 ff.).

Also within the international community, repeated stances were submitted over time. In particular, in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, which reaffirmed the principle of the inviolability of borders, no implicit recognition of the annexation was assumed. Subsequently, in the Resolution on the situation of the Baltic Countries, adopted on the 28th of January 1987, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe expressly qualified the annexation as a flagrant violation of the right of each Country to self-determination, noting that it remained unrecognized by both the majority of European States and by many other members of the international community.

With regard to the second aspect, however, within internationalist legal theory the uncertain legal qualification of what had happened favoured the polarization of scientific debate on the differing positions.

According to some, who even admitted that the entry of the Baltic Republics into the USSR had taken place following an illegitimate occupation, the passage of time had in any case healed this wound. The legitimacy of the so-called "acquisitive" prescription of a certain territory absolutely did not require that, initially, the relative possession by the acquiring State took place *bona fide*, and, after a certain period of time, the consolidated situation could no longer, at least in principle, be contested. In the specific case, the long elapsed interval of time had allegedly interrupted the statehood of the Baltic Republics (see Yakemtchouk, 1991, pp. 259-260) and, in deference to the principle accepted by international law according to which *ex factis ius oritur* (Marek, 1968, p. 580), the situation that had arisen had to some extent healed (Skolnick, 1996, p. 401), hence the qualification of the independence of Estonia,

Latvia and Lithuania as "secession" from the USSR. This had, as claimed by the Soviet and then the Russian side, for the first time, generated precise international obligations, also in terms of citizenship and the protection of recently immigrated Russian-speaking minorities.

According to others, however, the newfound independence of the Baltic Republics could not be qualified as secession. The passage of time had not in itself legitimized *ex post* an act of occupation illegitimate under international law (Kherad, 1992, pp. 856-857). Given the principle of general international law *ex iniuria ius non oritur*, State sovereignty, albeit limited *de facto*, never disappeared and, therefore, the Baltic States never ceased to exist (Endziņš, 1998, p. 163), hence, in application of the principle of continuity (Fiedler, 1978), the absence of any obligation for the Baltic Republics towards immigrants of the Soviet era (on the initial debate concerning their future condition, L. Mälksoo, 2003, pp. 223-225).

The coexistence of such different approaches - which originate in the "constitutional war" of the last years of existence of the USSR - profoundly influenced the political choices made in the years immediately following the newfound independence, often inspired by an exclusionary approach. In fact, the Baltic Republics started an exclusionary legislative season, denying Soviet-era immigrants not only adequate protection of minority rights, but, precisely because of the principle of continuity, even precluding access to citizenship, which was made conditional upon meeting stringent linguistic requirements (see Panzeri, 2021, pp. 62 ss.).

Although this approach has been gradually overcome in recent years, allowing the adoption of more inclusive normative measures in terms of citizenship and the protection of minorities, the full internalization of the irreversibility of what happened during the twentieth century and of the social transformations that resulted from it still constitutes an indispensable goal. Achievement of that goal will in fact favour the defeat of the aforementioned conflicting positions on the Soviet incorporation, creating the conditions necessary for consolidation of full social cohesion, in line with the expectations that animate the process of European integration.

References

- Antane A., Tsilevich B. (1999), *Nation-Building and Ethnic Integration in Latvia*, in Kolstø P. (Ed.), *Nation-Building and Ethnic Integration in Post-Soviet Societies. An Investigation of Latvia and Kazakstan*, Westview, Boulder, pp. 63 ss.
- Antonowicz L. (1991-1992), *The Disintegration of the USSR from the Point of View of International Law*, in *Polish Yearbook of International Law*, vol. 19, pp. 7 ss.
- Biscaretti di Ruffia P., Crespi Reghizzi G. (1979), *La Costituzione sovietica del 1977. Un sessantennio di evoluzione costituzionale nell'URSS*, Giuffrè, Milano.
- Cassese A. (1995), *Self-determination of Peoples. A legal Reappraisal*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Codagnone C. (1997), *Questione nazionale e migrazioni etniche: la Russia e lo spazio post-sovietico*, FrancoAngeli, Milano.
- Danjoux O. (2002), *L'État, c'est pas moi. Reframing citizenship(s) in the Baltic Republics*, Department of Political Science, Lund University, Lund.
- Dundovich E. (2013), *I Paesi baltici e l'Unione Sovietica (1939-1989)*, in Motta G. (a cura di), *Il Baltico. Un mare interno nella storia di lungo periodo*, Edizioni Nuova Cultura, Roma, pp. 107 ss.
- Endziņš A. (1998), *The special case of the Baltic States: State succession, State continuity and issues of citizenship*, in AA.VV., *Citizenship and State succession. Proceedings of the UniDem seminar organised in Vilnius (Lithuania) on 16 and 17 May 1997*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, pp. 160 ss.
- Fiedler W. (1978), *Das Kontinuitätsproblem im Völkerrecht. Zum funktionalen Zusammenhang zwischen Völkerrecht, Staatsrecht und Politik*, Karl Alber, Freiburg-München.
- Goldman P. (1990), *Perestroika: End or Beginning of Soviet Federalism?*, in *Telos*, issue 84, pp. 69 ss.
- Grenoble L.A. (2003), *Language Policy in the Soviet Union*, Kluwer, Dordrecht-Boston-London.
- Henderson J. (1991), *Legal aspects of the Soviet federal structure*, in McAuley A. (Ed.), *Soviet federalism, nationalism and economic decentralisation*, Leicester University Press, Leicester-London, pp. 33 ss.
- Hough III W.J.H. (1985), *The Annexation of the Baltic States and Its Effect on the Development of Law Prohibiting forcible Seizure of Territory*, in *New York Law School Journal of International and Comparative Law*, vol. 6, n. 2, pp. 301 ss.
- Järve P. (2003), *Language Battles in the Baltic States: 1989 to 2002*, in Daftary F., Grin F. (Eds.), *Nation-Building, Ethnicity and Language*

- Politics in Transition Countries*, Open Society Institute, Budapest, pp. 75 ss.
- Karklins R. (1994), *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy. The Collapse of the USSR and Latvia*, The Woodrow Wilson Center Press-The Johns Hopkins University Press, Washington, D.C.-Baltimore-London.
- Kherad R. (1992), *La reconnaissance internationale des Etats baltes*, in *Revue générale de droit international public*, vol. 96, pp. 843 ss.
- Kionka R. (1992), *Language and Baltic legislation: a note*, in *Review of Central and East European Law*, n. 2, pp. 165 ss.
- Kirby D. (1996), *Incorporation: The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact*, in Smith G. (Ed.), *The Baltic States. The National Self-Determination of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*, MacMillan, Basingstoke, pp. 69 ss.
- Lesage M. (1990), *La crise du fédéralisme soviétique*, n. monografico di *La documentation française (Notes ed etudes documentaires)*, n. 4905.
- Mälksoo L. (2003), *Illegal Annexion and State Continuity: The Case of the Incorporation of the Baltic States by the USSR*, Nijhoff, Leiden-Boston.
- Marek K. (1968), *Identity and Continuity of States in Public International Law*, Droz, Genève.
- Meissner B. (1982), *Nationalitätenfrage und Sowjetideologie*, in Brunner G., Meissner B. (Herausgeber), *Nationalitäten-Probleme in der Sowjetunion und Osteuropa*, Markus, Köln, pp. 11 ss.
- Misiunas R. (1990), *Baltic Nationalism and Soviet Language Policy: From Russification to Constitutional Amendment*, in Huttenbach H.R. (Ed.), *Soviet Nationality Policies. Ruling Ethnic Groups in the USSR*, Mansell, London, pp. 206 ss.
- Misiunas R., Taagepera R. (1993), *The Baltic States. Years of Dependence 1940-1990*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles.
- Panzeri L. (2021), *Nazione e cittadinanza nelle Repubbliche baltiche. Profili costituzionali e sovranazionali*, Editoriale Scientifica, Napoli.
- Parming T. (1980), *Population Processes and the Nationality Issue in the Soviet Baltic*, in *Soviet Studies*, vol. 32, n. 3, pp. 398 ss.
- Plasseraud Y. (2003), *Les États Baltiques. Les sociétés gigognes*, Armeline, Crozon.
- Radžvilas V. (1991), *Enttäuschte Hoffnungen. Die Bedeutung der Perestroika für die Zukunft des Baltikums*, in Urdze A. (herausgegeben von), *Das Ende des Sowjetkolonialismus*, Rowohlt, Hamburg, pp. 77 ss.
- Schmidt C. (1993), *Der Minderheitenschutz in den baltischen Staaten*, Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen, Bonn.
- Skolnick J. (1996), *Grappling with the Legacy of Soviet Rule: Citizenship and Human Rights in the Baltic States*, in *University of Toronto Faculty of Law Review*, n. 54, pp. 387 ss.
- Smith D.J. (2001), *Estonia. Independence and European Integration*, Routledge, London-New York.

- Smith G. (1996), *The Resurgence of Nationalism*, in Smith G. (Ed.), *The Baltic States. The National Self-Determination of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*, MacMillan, Basingstoke, pp. 121 ss.
- Taagepera R. (1993), *Estonia. Return to Independence*, Westview Press, Boulder-San Francisco-Oxford.
- Uibopuu H.-J. (1979), *Soviet Federalism under the New Soviet Constitution*, in *Review of Socialist Law*, vol. 5, pp. 171 ss.
- Van Elsuwege P. (2008), *From Soviet Republics to EU Member States. A Legal and Political Assessment of the Baltic States' Accession to the EU*, vol. I, Nijhoff, Leiden-Boston.
- Yakemtchouk R. (1991), *Les Républiques baltes en droit international. Echec d'une annexion opérée en violation du droit des gens*, in *Annuaire français de droit international*, vol. 37, pp. 259 ss.
- Zamascikov S. (1990), *Soviet Methods and Instrumentalities of Maintaining Control over the Balts*, in Loeber D.A., Vardys V.S., Kitching L.P.A. (Eds.), *Regional Identity under Soviet Rule: The Case of the Baltic States*, University of Kiel, Hackettstown, N.J., pp. 87 ss.
- Zaslavsky V. (1992), *The evolution of separatism in Soviet society under Gorbachev*, in Lapidus G.W., Zaslavsky V. with Goldman P. (Eds.), *From Union to Commonwealth: Nationalism and Separatism in the Soviet Republics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 71 ss.

The Linguistic Landscape of the Post-Soviet Republic of Moldova: Chişinău, Tiraspol and Comrat

Feodora Punga

Introduction

The aim of this study is to analyse the relationship between language and power in the process of national identity building in the post-Soviet space. To this end, the research on the linguistic landscapes of three important cities of the former Soviet Republic of Moldova, Chişinău, Tiraspol and Comrat, respectively representative of the main national ethnic minorities of the region, namely Moldovan, Russian, and Găgăuzian, was used in order to analyse the visibility and vitality of the languages displayed in the public space in relation to the language policies implemented. In particular, in light of the historical and political events that have affected this specific geographical area, the analysis focuses on the complex relationship between the state language, Moldovan¹, the language of interethnic communication, Russian, and other minority languages of the territory. In this sense, the study on the choice of languages to include or exclude in the public space will clarify the dynamics of power between different languages and

1 The term Moldovan language will be used in this survey only to identify the state language, as it is indicated by Article 13 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova. It should also be emphasized that Moldovan represents a regional dialect of the standard Romanian language.

the phenomenon of national identity building.

Theoretical framework

Linguistic landscape emerged as a fertile ground for the study of language and society in the late 1970s, but it was thanks to the important contribution of Landry and Bourhis (1997) that the phenomenon came to represent a branch of sociolinguistics. These authors were the first to provide a clear definition of the field of study:

“The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings” (Landry & Bourhis 1997: 25).

Research on linguistic landscapes therefore focuses on the study of any visual expression of the language in the public space (the ‘sign’) and of people’s interactions with these signs. Landry and Bourhis (1997: 26) identify the distinction between government and private signs. The first ones are issued by public authorities, including the government, municipalities or public institutions, while the latter are issued by individuals, associations or companies operating relatively independently within the limits authorized by official regulation. Similarly, Ben-Rafael et al. (2006), in their survey of the linguistic landscape of Israel, apply the distinction between top-down signs, used by institutional agents operating under the control of state institutions and agencies, and bottom-up signs, used by private agents operating within the limits of current legislation. The main difference between these two categories of linguistic signs lies in the fact that the first ones reflect the linguistic and social composition of the dominant community, while the latter are designed more freely according to individual strategies.

In this context, Landry and Bourhis (1997) distinguish between informational function and symbolic function of the linguistic landscape. The informational function indicates the boundaries of the territory inhabited by a given linguistic group. In this sense, the linguistic landscape informs the members inside or outside the group about the characteristics and linguistic boundaries of a given geographical area. The symbolic function, on the other hand, refers to the relative status and power enjoyed by languages as perceived by members of a linguistic community compared to other languages. In particular, the prevalence or absence of a language in a given territory is interesting for research on linguis-

tic landscapes as it can bring to light manifestations of linguistic conflict, especially in politically and socially contested areas, as it is the post-Soviet space.

Research on linguistic landscapes provides an important contribution in understanding the dynamics affecting the linguistic minorities of a given territory for various reasons. First, it adopts a complete view of the written language in the public space, analysing all the signs present in a given landscape. Furthermore, research on the linguistic landscape of a given area not only studies the signs, but also investigates the actors of the sign, its recipients and the social context of reference. In addition, it examines the ways of manipulating the linguistic landscape, in order to identify the existing patterns and hierarchies of linguistic prestige. In this sense, research on linguistic landscapes is particularly suitable for the study of minority communities (Marten, Van Mensel, & Gortler 2012).

Subject of the survey: Chişinău, Tiraspol and Comrat

The research areas selected for this survey are the main streets of the cities of Chişinău, Tiraspol and Comrat, capitals of the main ethno-linguistic groups of the Republic of Moldova and headquarters of most political and cultural institutions, government offices, higher education institutions, as well as numerous professional and commercial activities of the country. These are places where different languages, cultures and identities coexist, and where manifestations of conflict between languages that compete for visibility and power often emerge.

Chişinău is the capital of the Republic of Moldova, as well as the main administrative, political, economic and cultural centre of the country. Composed of 638,800 inhabitants, it is the most populous city in the country with an ethnic structure made up mostly of Moldovans (67.17%), followed by ethnic Romanians (14.45%), Russians (9.29%), Ukrainians (5.94%), Bulgarians (1.06%), Găgăuzians (0.68%) and others (1.41%) (Recensământul populaţiei şi al locuinţelor 2014).

Tiraspol is the capital of the *de facto* state of Transnistria and the third largest city by number of inhabitants of Moldova (after Chişinău and Bălţi). According to the State National Statistical Service of Transnistria, the population of Tiraspol in 2014 amounted to about 133,800 inhabitants (Ėtničeskij sklad Pridnestrov'ja 2004).

According to data of the 2004 census the population is composed of ethnic Moldovans (15.21%), Russians (41.64%), Ukrainians (32.97%), Bulgarians (1.55%), Găgăuzians (1.25%) and others (7.38%) (Gosudarstvennaja administracija g. Tiraspol' i g. Dnestrovsk). Despite the fact that the population is equally composed of ethnic Moldovans, Russians and Ukrainians, and that the *de facto* state has officially recognized Moldovan in Cyrillic characters, Russian and Ukrainian, it is actually Russian that dominates the public space (Pavlenko 2008).

Comrat is the capital of the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Găgăuzia (ATU of Găgăuzia), a region located in the south of the Republic of Moldova. With a population of 30,000 inhabitants, the ethnic structure of the city, according to the latest census data, is made up of Moldovans (4.68%), Romanians (0.04%), Russians (2.46%), Ukrainians (2.23%), Găgăuzians (83.54%), Bulgarians (4.88%) and others (2.17%) (Recensământul populației și al locuitorilor 2014). Although Găgăuzia is located within the borders of the Republic of Moldova as an integral part of the state, this autonomous region has the right of self-governance within its borders. The declaration of autonomy of Găgăuzia was supported by the maintenance of a national identity and awareness, resulted in the implementation of language policies based on plurilingualism, which establish that the languages officially recognized in the ATU of Găgăuzia are Găgăuzian, Russian and Moldovan. In this context, it is necessary to emphasize that, given the importance of the historical-political traces of the Soviet Union, Russian is widely used on several levels in social life (Eren 2021) and, especially, as a language of interethnic communication.

Considering the multiethnic and multilingual composition of the population of the Republic of Moldova, the State guarantees the protection of the languages spoken on the territory. Art. 13 of the Constitution establishes that the state language is Moldovan in Latin characters, and, at the same time, recognizes the right to the conservation, development and functioning of Russian and other languages spoken in the territory (Registrul de stat al actelor juridice).

Objectives of the study

The purpose of this study is to define the role of the languages represented in the public space of the Republic of Moldova in the formation of one or more national identities, through the comparison of data on the degree of visibility, prestige and functional

domains of the different languages that form the linguistic landscape of the selected research areas.

To this end, the work aims to answer three main questions:

1. Which languages are visible in the public space of Chişinău, Tiraspol and Comrat?
2. Do the languages displayed in the three research areas reflect the ethnic composition of each city? If not, can the exclusion of the language of some ethnic groups in the three cities be defined as a sign of ethnic discrimination?
3. Does Russian in the public space of Chişinău, Tiraspol and Comrat continue to maintain the status of *lingua franca* of interethnic communication, or does it represent the language of an ethnic minority equal to the others in the area?

Methodology

The methodology chosen for this study reflects, in general terms, the one used by Cenoz and Gorter (2006) for their research on the linguistic landscape of the Basque Country and Friesland; by Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) for their study on the influence of the choices of institutional and private actors in the formation of the linguistic landscape in Israel; by Coluzzi (2009) for his survey on the linguistic landscape of Milan and Udine, and by Muth (2012) for his comparative survey on multilingualism in Chişinău and Vilnius. In particular, three streets in three important cities of the Republic of Moldova were selected for the work, namely *Bulevardul Ştefan cel Mare şi Sfint* in Chişinău, *Ulica 25 Oktjabrja* in Tiraspol and *Ulica Lenina* in Comrat. All the linguistic signs displayed on both sides of the streets were collected following the methodology applied by Cenoz and Gorter (2006) and by Coluzzi (2009). This choice finds its justification in the fact that the city is a place of linguistic contact, where public institutions, commercial activities, and offices are concentrated, and where people of different ethnic groups and social classes meet. This makes cities favourable environments for the study of phenomena of multilingualism.

The streets selected for the study are located in the centres of their respective cities, widely frequented by the public, and offer a wide range of top-down and bottom-up linguistic signs that can be analysed as research data. The data was collected on the basis of the definition of the unit of analysis developed by Cenoz and Gorter (2006), that is as a set of linguistic signs of a business. In this sense, if, for example, all the linguistic signs of a shop were writ-

ten in Moldovan, that shop was considered as a Moldovan monolingual unit of analysis. If, on the other hand, one or more shop signs had one or more languages other than Moldovan, that unit of analysis was considered to be bilingual or multilingual.

The following elements were included in the corpus:

- Any sign placed on the sides of the three selected streets, including writings or signs on shop doors or gates of institutional, educational, and cultural buildings, commercial activities, and offices.
- Any sign placed in the open corridors of buildings housing multiple businesses, widely used to attach handwritten notes or advertising signs.
- Any sign placed on shop windows, as long as they were easily readable from the outside.
- Road signs, which were counted only once if repeated.
- Signs containing proper names of commercial activities, as long as they did not belong to chains.
- Posters, flyers and stickers, as long as they were intact and easily readable.
- Graffiti, as long as they were complete and easily readable.

The following elements were not included in the corpus:

- Small writings on shop windows that were not easily readable from the outside, such as price tags or other informative writings.
- Torn or deformed posters, flyers, stickers.
- Partially or completely erased graffiti.
- Proper names of commercial activities belonging to a chain.

The survey was conducted in October 2021. Overall, 336 units of analysis were collected in Chişinău, 189 in Tiraspol and 124 in Comrat. The data were analysed in quantitative terms based on the languages used in the signs. Considering the historical events and linguistic policies that have affected this particular post-Soviet area, it was planned to analyse the following combinations: monolingual signs in Moldovan and Russian, bilingual signs in Moldovan and Russian or in Moldovan and English, trilingual signs in Moldovan, Russian and English in Chişinău; monolingual signs in Russian, bilingual signs in Russian and Moldovan and in Russian and English in Tiraspol; monolingual signs in Găgăuzian and Russian, bilingual signs in Găgăuzian and Russian and multilingual signs in Găgăuzian, Russian and Moldovan in Comrat. In addition, it was planned to examine linguistic signs containing other minority languages of the Republic of Moldova, in particu-

lar Ukrainian and Bulgarian. Subsequently, on the basis of the research on the linguistic landscape of Israel (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006), the data collected has been classified according to the distinction between top-down and bottom-up signs, with the aim to analyse the choices made by institutional and private actors in the formation of the linguistic landscape, and the complex relationship between the Moldovan and Russian ethnic communities and other minorities, especially the Găgăuzian one. The top-down signs included in the study were those produced by institutional actors and the public administration, such as signs displayed on public buildings, public announcements, notices and road signs. The bottom-up signs analysed in the research, by contrast, were those made by private actors and included shop signs, signs displayed on businesses or offices, and personal notices or posters.

Results

The quantitative analysis of the distribution of languages on the signs in the cities of Chişinău, Tiraspol and Comrat clearly highlights the multilingual nature that distinguishes this specific post-Soviet geographical area (Table 1).

Language on signs	Survey areas		
	Chişinău	Tiraspol	Comrat
Moldovan	189 (56,3%)	2 (1,1%)	10 (8,1%)
Russian	21 (6,3%)	144 (76,2%)	59 (47,6%)
Găgăuzian	-	-	4 (3,2%)
English	14 (4,2%)	-	1 (0,8%)
Moldavan/Russian	47 (13,9%)	2 (1,1%)	18 (14,5%)
Moldavan/English	41 (12,2%)	-	-
Russian/English	-	29 (15,3%)	6 (4,8%)
Russian/Găgăuzian	-	-	3 (2,4%)
Moldovan/Russian/Găgăuzian	-	-	17 (13,7%)
Moldovan/Russian/English	10 (2,9%)	1 (0,5%)	4 (3,2%)
Moldovan/Russian/Ukrainian	-	2 (1,1%)	-
Moldovan/Russian/ Găgăuzian/English	-	-	1 (0,8%)
Others	14 (4,2%)	9 (4,7%)	1 (0,8%)
Total	336 (100%)	189 (100%)	124 (100%)

TABLE 1 LINGUISTIC SIGNS CLASSIFIED BY LANGUAGE IN THE THREE CITIES (IN NUMBERS AND %)

In total, 336 units of analysis were collected in *Bulevardul Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt* in Chișinău. The overall results of the data (Table 1) on the languages present in the linguistic landscape highlight the dominance of Moldovan, which was present on over 85% of linguistic signs as the only language displayed (56.3%), in combination with Russian (13.9%) and English (12.2%), on trilingual signs alongside Russian and English (2.9%), on multilingual signs together with English and Ukrainian, German or Yiddish (4.2%).

At the same time, Russian continues to be widely present in the linguistic landscape of the area, with a percentage that reaches about 26% on the total of signs. In 6.3% of the occurrences, Russian was used on monolingual signs; in 13.9% it appeared on bilingual signs next to Moldovan, and in 2.9% it was displayed on trilingual signs together with Moldovan and English. The data presented in Table 1 indicate, moreover, that the third most used language in the linguistic landscape of Chișinău city centre was English, which in 4.2% of occurrences appeared on monolingual signs, in 12.2% on bilingual signs next to Moldovan, in 2.9% on trilingual signs together with Moldovan and Russian, and in 4.2% on trilingual signs with Moldovan and another minority language. Other languages belonging to different ethnolinguistic groups, such as Găgăuzian and Bulgarian, were almost absent from the linguistic landscape of the city, reflecting the demographic composition of the population of Chișinău.



IMAGE 1: BILINGUAL BOTTOM-UP SIGN IN MOLDOVAN AND RUSSIAN OF A BEAUTY SALON IN BD. ȘTEFAN CEL MARE ȘI SFÂNT, CHIȘINĂU (© FEODORA PUNGA)

With regards to the dichotomy between top-down and bottom-up signs in *Bulevardul Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt* in Chișinău, the analysis confirmed that Moldovan was the most used language in the research area considered, being displayed on more than 85% of the signs. In particular, Moldovan was used on all top-down signs, both as the only language displayed, and in combination with Russian, English or both. In this context, however, the language used in bottom-up signs, produced by individuals, freelancers or small entrepreneurs, with the purpose of selling goods or services, is probably the most illustrative indicator of language preference among the public. Unlike top-down signs, bottom-up signs are not influenced by strict regulations and can easily be changed, removed or replaced. In the main street of Chișinău, the percentage of linguistic signs that showed other languages together or without Moldovan exceeded 43%. Among these, Russian was the one most displayed in the linguistic landscape of the street (approx. 25%), followed by English (approx. 19%). In this context, a closer look at the use of Moldovan and Russian in bilingual signs is necessary. Institutional actors exhibited information in both languages symmetrically, while in most bottom-up signs Moldovan and Russian conveyed different information and did not share the same space and visibility. Private actors exhibited their signs with the belief that Moldovan and Russian were mutually understandable by the public, in a context with a widespread bilingualism. Although shop owners and large companies preferred to include Moldovan, English or both languages on their signs, Russian was firmly rooted in the landscape of the city, especially on small writings made by individuals, whose language choice was often conditioned by limited space availability. As the majority of the ethnic Moldovans are bilingual, producers often chose to display their signs in Russian in order to reach the higher number of passers-by. At the same time, it is important to analyse the functions of the third language most present in the linguistic landscape of the main street of Chișinău, English. If in the top-down signs it conveyed the same information as Moldovan and Russian, in the bottom-up signs it was used in slogans or store names as a means of attracting customers rather than to convey information.

On *Ulica 25 Oktjabrja* in Tiraspol, 189 units of analysis were collected. The street was characterized by a rather different linguistic repertoire than that of Chișinău, as Russian dominated the linguistic landscape of the city centre. According to the data collected (Table 1), monolingual signs in Russian represent 76.2% of the

total, bilingual signs in Russian and Moldovan only 1.1%, while bilingual signs in Russian and English made 15.3% of the occurrences. English was the second most used language in the linguistic landscape of *Ulica 25 Oktjabrja*, usually in slogans on shop windows, advertising banners or posters to attract young customers and tourists.

With regards to the distinction between top-down and bottom-up signs, it emerged that Russian was displayed in 79.4% of monolingual signs issued by public authorities, and in 75% of monolingual signs issued by private actors. The choice to include only Russian on certain signs indicates that this language represents the preferred code of the population of Tiraspol. Unlike the Moldovan capital Chişinău, where private signs displayed also languages other than Moldovan and Russian, such as English, in Tiraspol Russian fulfils an informational function as an integral part of the linguistic landscape of the city, as well as a symbolic value of affiliation with Russia, and Transnistrian patriotism. In this context, the second language officially recognized, Moldovan, was present only on one governmental monolingual sign, written in Cyrillic characters and dating back to the years before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and on one private monolingual sign. Likewise, only two bilingual top-down signs included Moldovan next to Russian and one trilingual top-down sign included Moldovan together with Russian and English. The third language officially recognized, Ukrainian, on the other hand, was present only in two trilingual top-down signs next to Moldovan and Russian. The exclusion of the languages of the other two majority ethnic communities of the area could be explained by two main reasons. First, ethnic Moldovans and Ukrainians have a strong competence in Russian, which allows them to understand the messages conveyed by signs. But most importantly, the predominance of Russian in the linguistic landscape of Tiraspol pursues the objective of consolidating a Transnistrian political and cultural identity, at the expense of Moldovan and Ukrainian communities of the territory.



IMAGE 2: RUSSIAN MONOLINGUAL BOTTOM-UP SIGN ON ULICA 25 OKTJABRJA, TIRASPOL
(© FEODORA PUNGA)

On *Ulica Lenina* in Comrat, 124 units of analysis were collected. The linguistic landscape of the city centre presented a picture that differs from both Chişinău and Tiraspol. In particular, although the mother tongue of the majority ethnic community is Găgăuzian, it is Russian that dominates the public space of the city, despite the fact that Russian ethnic community constitutes only 2.46% of the population. Russian was, in fact, displayed in 47.6% of the monolingual signs, in 14.5% of bilingual signs together with Moldovan, in 4.8% of bilingual signs with English, in 2.4% of bilingual signs next to Găgăuzian, in 13.7% of trilingual signs together with Moldovan and Găgăuzian and in one case on a multilingual sign next to Moldovan, Găgăuzian and English. Moldovan was present in only 8.1% of monolingual signs, being, on the contrary, displayed in most cases in combination with Russian, and on trilingual signs with Russian and Găgăuzian. It was surprising that the mother tongue of the region was present in four monolingual signs only, in three bilingual signs alongside Russian, and in 17 trilingual signs with Moldovan and Russian.



IMAGE 3: TRILINGUAL TOP-DOWN SIGN IN MOLDOVAN, GĂGĂUZIAN AND RUSSIAN ON ULICA LENINA, COMRAT (© FEODORA PUNGA)

Considering the distinction between top-down and bottom-up signs, Găgăuzian was mainly used on top-down signs in combination with other languages, especially in 38.6% of occurrences on trilingual signs with Moldovan and Russian. This situation is an indication of the policies based on multilingualism adopted by the autonomous region, in particular the official recognition of the Găgăuzian, Moldovan and Russian languages at the territorial level. In this context, bottom-up signs, designed more freely by the actors, are able to show the patterns of use and functions of languages, as well as to reveal the power relations between potentially competing languages. In bottom-up signs, Găgăuzian was almost completely absent in the context in which actors chose to display their signs in Russian (61.2%), Moldovan (8.7%), Russian and Moldovan (16.2%), or in Russian and English (6.3%). In that respect, Russian continues to maintain its status as an interethnic language of communication, acquired during the Soviet period.

Conclusions

The study of the linguistic landscape of the Republic of Moldova reveals how much the use of a given language in the public place is connected to the historical and political events that have

affected the country. The political and cultural change, following the dissolution of the USSR, has led to the redefinition of both the national identity of the country, and the identities of the ethnic minorities of the territory. The representation of languages in the public space is related not only to language policies and power structures in society, but also to individual perceptions about the status of the different languages displayed in the linguistic landscape of the region.

Overall, the analysis of quantitative data on the visibility of the languages that make up the linguistic landscape of the three areas considered revealed different frameworks.

In *Bulevardul Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt* in Chișinău the state language represents the language most displayed and the preferred code of the actors. The second most used language in the main street of the city centre is Russian, displayed in 23% of the signs, reflecting a higher percentage of use than the percentage of the ethnic Russian population of Chișinău. The deep-rooted presence of Russian in the linguistic landscape of the city is justified by the historical legacy of Russian as the *lingua franca* of the USSR and the language of interethnic communication throughout the country (Cisnel 2007). Russian continues to be an integral part of the capital's linguistic landscape, in particular in bottom-up signs. The choice of private actors to include Russian in over 26% of cases could be explained by the assumption that their audience was able to understand the meanings of the texts in that language. The third most displayed language in *Bulevardul Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt* was English, used in a symbolic function as a sign of modernity, internationality and attractiveness to young people.

The research on the linguistic landscape of Tiraspol reveals a completely opposite framework compared to that of Chișinău. The capital of Transnistria is, as a matter of fact, a mostly monolingual territory where language and cultural identity are used as tools of political influence. On one hand, it clearly emerges that Russian dominates the linguistic landscape of the main street of the city, being present in more than 95% of the signs. On the other hand, the other languages officially recognized by the *de facto* state, Moldovan and Ukrainian, are almost completely absent, despite the fact that each of these ethnic groups represents almost a third of the city's population. In particular, the preference of institutional and private actors to use Russian as a language of communication is not only an expression of local linguistic policies, but could be considered as a reaction to the ongoing efforts of derus-

sification taking place in various countries of the former Soviet Union, including Moldova and Ukraine (Pavlenko 2008).

Lastly, the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the linguistic signs in Comrat shows the relationship between the language of a national minority group, Găgăuzian, the state language, Moldovan, and Russian. Although the vast majority of the population is made up of ethnic Găgăuzians, the linguistic landscape of the main street of the city was dominated by Russian, which appeared in more than 86% of signs. If, on one hand, most of the governmental signs were trilingual in Moldovan, Russian and Găgăuzian, on the other hand, private actors preferred to use Russian in their billboards, flyers and small writings. In this particular region Russian assumes the status of language of interethnic communication in the condition in which Găgăuzians, as well as other ethnic minorities in the country, prefer to identify with Russian language and culture, rejecting the idea of a common Moldovan national identity.

One of the objectives of this work was the analysis of the functions of Russian in the post-Soviet area of the Republic of Moldova. In particular, the aim was to define whether this language played the role of minority language, language of interethnic communication, or *lingua franca* with the same functions and prestige as the state language. The overall analysis of the linguistic landscape of the cities included in the study excludes the function of Russian as a mere minority language. On the contrary, Russian continues to maintain the status of regional *lingua franca* equal to the state language. While Russian is officially recognized by the separatist government of Transnistria and the autonomous region of Găgăuzia, in Chişinău it has emerged as a universally accepted language of “hidden prestige” (Muth 2012: 36). This aspect could be explained by the fact that private actors act in the formation of the linguistic landscape driven by individual interests, ignoring ethnic issues or political debates on the status of Russian in the country. In this sense, they use the language that can be understood by the greatest number of recipients.

In conclusion, it is possible to affirm that the linguistic landscape of the Republic of Moldova shows a predominantly bilingual environment, within which the Moldovan community possesses competences in Moldovan and Russian, and ethnic minorities possess competences in their mother tongue and in Russian. In this context, Russian continues to maintain the status of *lingua franca* in the area.

References

- Ben-Rafael, E., Shohamy, E., Amara, M. A. & Trumper-Hecht N. 2006. "Linguistic Landscape as Symbolic Construction of the Public Space: The Case of Israel". In *Linguistic Landscape: A New Approach to Multilingualism*, edited by D. Gorter, 7-30. Clevedon, Buffalo, Toronto: Multilingual Matters.
- Biroul Național de Statistică al Republicii Moldova 2014 <http://www.statistica.md>
- Cenoz, J. & Gorter, D. 2006. "Linguistic Landscape and Minority Languages". In *Linguistic Landscape: A New Approach to Multilingualism*, edited by D. Gorter, 67-80. Clevedon, Buffalo, Toronto: Multilingual Matters.
- Coluzzi, P. 2009. "The Italian linguistic landscape: the cases of Milan and Udine". *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 6(3):298-312.
- Eren, E. 2021. "Language and Education Policies Based on National/Plurilingual Identity in Autonomous Republics: A Case Study of the Gagauzia Autonomous Region". *Education Quarterly Reviews*, 4(3): 192-199.
- Landry, R., & Bourhis, R.Y. 1997. "Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality: An Empirical Study", *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 16(1): 23-49.
- Marten, H.F., Van Mensel, L., & Gorter, D. 2012. "Studying Minority Languages in the Linguistic Landscape". In *Minority Languages in the Linguistic Landscape*, edited by D. Gorter, H. F. Marten & L. Van Mensel, 1-15. Basingstroke: Palgrave-MacMillan.
- Muth, S. 2012. *Language, Power and Representation in Contested Urban Spaces: The Linguistic Landscapes of Chisinau and Vilnius*. Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-Universität Greifswald.
- Pavlenko, A. 2008. "Russian in post-soviet countries". *Russian Linguistics*, 32: 59-80.
- Recensământul populației și al locuințelor 2014 <https://recensamint.statistica.md>
- Registrul de stat al actelor juridice, Ministerul Justiției, Republica Moldova <https://www.legis.md>
- Gosudarstvennaja administracija g. Tiraspol' i g. Dnestrovsk <http://www.tirasadmin.org>
- Ètničeskij sklad Pridnestrov'ja 2004 <http://pop-stat.mashke.org>

Sayan Turkic Minorities in the Post-Soviet Linguistic Space

Elisabetta Ragagnin

Introduction

Sayan Turkic forms a small and compact but, at the same time, highly diversified Turkic linguistic group of South Siberia. Its components are scattered across the borders of three countries: Russia, Mongolia and China. They are highlighted in the map below:



IMAGE 1: GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF SAYAN VARIETIES (© DAVIDE RIZZI)

Within Russia, Sayan Turkic includes the titular languages Tuvan and Tofan, and Soyot. Both Tofan and Soyot are listed in the *Red Book of the Endangered Language of Russia* (2002). Mongolia is presently home of three Sayan varieties, referred to in Turcological studies as Dukhan, Tuhan and Altai Tuvan. As for China, a small Sayan Turkic linguistic island is found in the Altai Jungar territories of the Xinjiang region.

The term Sayan Turkic is used to refer to all varieties whose speakers identify as *tiva*, and related forms such as *tofa* and *tuha*, going back to the ethnonym *Du-bo~Tu-po*,¹ which was first registered in the Chinese annal Sui-Shu, covering the years 581-618, at the turn of the 7th century. In the Chinese T'ang-Shu annal (618-906), the same people were recorded as a component of the T'ieh-le tribal confederation, of which the Uyghurs and other Oghuz peoples also formed part. According to these Chinese sources, the *Du-bo~Tu-po* lived in the present day's territories of Tuva and North Khövsgöl region. It is generally assumed that some non-Turkic groups, such as Samoyeds and Yeniseians, and possibly others, started to be assimilated to Turkic at this time. In the Mongolian epic chronicle "The Secret History of the Mongols" (13th c.), mention is made of the *Tubas* and *Tuqas* among the so-called forest-people in the North who were subjugated by Činggis Qa'an's son Joči.

During the Manchu period (1757-1911), the territories of present day Tuva and Outer Mongolia were under the same administration. This large territory was called Uriangqai, and used to encompass, among others, the territories of modern Tuva and Mongolia's Khövsgöl region. In 1921, with the establishment of political borders between Mongolia and Russia, northern Uriangqai was taken over by the Soviets and renamed Tannu-Tuva, whereas Southern Uriangqai remained in Mongolia (on Tuvan history, see, a.o., Potapov 1964a, 1964b; Alatulu 1992). In this contribution, I will touch upon some relevant sociolinguistic aspects of Sayan Turkic varieties with special focus on the varieties spoken in Mongolia, on the basis of my own fieldwork activities covering more than two decades.

Tuvan and its dialects

Tuvan (*Tiva dil*) is the titular language of the Tuvan republic within the Russian Federation. It is one of the three Turkic speaking republics of South Siberia, along with Khakassia and the Altai

1 See Schönig (2006).

republic. According to the Russian census, the population of the Republic of Tyva as of 1 January 2021 was 330,368. Grammars of standard Tuvan include Isxakov & Pal'mbax (1961), Krueger (1977), Anderson & Harrison (1999) and Koçoğlu-Gündoğdu (2018). As for writing systems, since 1943 Tuvan has been written with a modified Cyrillic alphabet. Previously, in the 1930s, Tuvan had been written using a Latin-based alphabet. Besides, the traditional Mongolian script had also been in use to some extent.

The most divergent varieties spoken within the borders of the Tuvan republic are the Toju and Tere-Khöl dialects; on the former see Čadamba (1974) and Bayyr-ool (forthcoming); on the latter Sat (1987) and Seren (2006a).

The Toju variety is listed in the Red Book of the endangered languages of Russia (Bičeldej, Nasilov 2002).

Beyond the Tuvan borders, an additional Tuvan dialect is spoken in the province of Krasnoyarsk, in the Ermakovskij rayon in Usinskaya dolina, approximately 153 km to the northern Tuvan border. This variety is referred to as Usinsk Tuvan in the Turcological literature (see Koçoğlu-Gündoğdu 2017).

Tofan

The Tofans (*toʔfa*) live in three remote villages, Alygdzher, Nerha and Verkhnyaya Gutara, located on the North-Eastern slopes of the Eastern Sayan mountainous range.² The Tofan language is listed in the Red Book of the languages of Russia (see Rassadin, 2002: 182-190). Primary sources on Tofan are the extensive works of Rassadin (1971, 1978, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2006a).

² This territory is sometimes referred to as “Tofalaria”, a term formed from the (simplified) ethnonym *tofa* augmented with the Turkic plural suffix *-lar*; In this respect, also cf. the Russian adjective *tofalarskij*, literally, ‘tofalarian’.

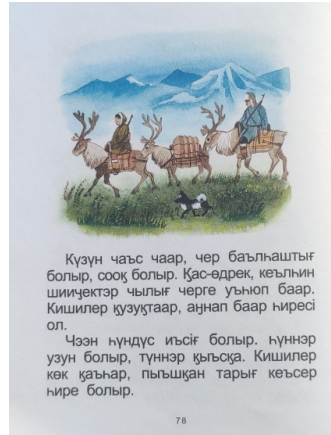


IMAGE 2: RASSADIN'S TOFAN TEACHING MATERIALS

Moreover, a large Tofan language collection was deposited in the Endangered Languages Archive (ELAR) by Arzhaana Syuryun in 2017 and it is viewable at: <http://hdl.handle.net/2196/00-0000-0000-0010-798D-A>.

The Tofan language is presently critically endangered (see Syuryun forthcoming; Harrison & Anderson 2008).

Soyot

Approximately 2,000 Soyots reside in the Oka County located in the south-eastern part of the Buryat republic. This area borders to the North with the Irkutsk Oblast, to the East with the Tunka County and to the South with the Khövsgöl region of Mongolia. In the past, the lifestyle of the Soyots was characterized by reindeer and yak breeding and hunting. However, by the end of the 19th century, the Soyot language had been replaced by Buryat and reindeer breeding was gradually replaced by low land cattle breeding (Pavlinkaya, 2003). Since 2000, when the Soyot people were recognized as one of the Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of the North in Russia, some initiatives for the revitalization of the Soyot language and culture have been launched. The primary sources on the Soyot variety are the works of Rassadin (2002, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2016), who had the opportunity to work with Soyot speakers.



IMAGE 3: RASSADIN'S SOYOT TEACHING MATERIALS

On Soyot, see also the following webpages: <https://lingsib.iea.ras.ru/en/languages/soiot.shtml> and <https://www.nordgold.com/soy-ots/>.

Sayan Turkic varieties in western Mongolia

In Mongolia, the largest community of Sayan Turkic speakers is settled in the western regions of Bayan Ölgii and Khovd Aymags. Their endonym is *tiva* and in the literature they are known as Altay-Tuvan or simply as Uriankhay, an ancient and still rather obscure and puzzling term (see Žamcarano, 1991; Ragagnin, 2011: 20). Altay Tuvans follow the Mongolian style of nomadic pastoralism. Particularly concentrated groups are found in the Tsengel sum of Bayan-Ölgii Aimag, as well as in Buyant sum of Khovd Aimag. According to the Mongolian census (2020) «Tiva» peoples number 2354 individuals. Further small groups are scattered in other provinces of the country, as well as in the capital Ulaanbaatar.

In the schools of Tsengel, Tuvan has officially been taught since 1991 some hours per week. Taube (1998) observed that already in the 1990s the local Tuvan variety was under the growing influence of standard Tuvan, which was considered to be more prestigious. See below the old table of Tsengel's Tuvan school:



IMAGE 4: OLD TABLE IN THE SCHOOL OF TSENDEL (© ELISABETTA RAGAGNIN)

The old table was bilingual in Mongolian (left) and Tuvan (right): (Mongolian) *Bayan-Ölgiy aymagiyn Tsengel sumin* “Tiva” *baga surguul*; (Tuvan) *Bayan-Ölegey aymaktiñ Sengel sumusunıñ* “Tiva” *ege surguulu* “The “Tuvan” elementary school of Bayan Ölgii region’s Tsengel county.

On the other hand, the new table is written mainly in Mongolian:



IMAGE 5: NEW TABLE IN THE SCHOOL OF TSENDEL (PHOTO PROVIDED BY RAIMA AUYESKHAN)

The Mongolian phrase *Bayan-Ölgiy aymagiyn Tsengel Sumin yerönxiy bolovsrolin 2 dugaar surguul* ‘Secondary school n. 2 of the Tsengel Sum of Bayan-Ölgii region’ is written in both Cyrillic and the commonly named Mongolian Old script, which is gaining increasing visibility in the Mongolian linguistic landscape and cer-

tainly represents a nation building element. Inside the logo there is a sentence in Tuvan, written with smaller characters: *Tiva surguulu: 20 čil* 'Tuvan school: 20 years'. The name of the region and the county, Bayan Ölgii and Tsengel Sum, respectively, are written in Cyrillic Mongolian.

It should also be noted that Altai Tuvans inhabit areas densely populated by Kazakhs, who constitute the local majority, especially in the Bayan-Ölgii region.³ As a result of this, Altai Tuvans are generally trilingual. Besides Tuvan, they master Kazakh – a different Turkic language belonging to the Kipchak subgroup – and Mongolian. When I visited Tsengel in 2008, the Tuvans I spoke with told me that without Kazakh knowledge it was, at that time, impossible to get a decent job. Finally, it should be mentioned that Kazakhs are Sunni Muslims and intermarriages with Tuvans, who are Buddhist and believe also in animism, are extremely rare.

Publications on various ethnographical and linguistic aspects of Altai Tuvan include Aydemir (2005, 2017), Taube (1978, 1996, 1998, 2008) and Seren (2006), as well as Akıncı (2017) and Akıncı & Dok (2013).

In the last years several initiatives have been promoted for Altai Tuvan (see Aydemir, Erdem, 2017; Ragagnin forthcoming).



IMAGE 6: BOOK COVERS FOR TUVAN IN MONGOLIA (GANSUX, X. ET AL. (ED.) (2013)

3 On Mongolian Kazakhs, see, a.o. Finke 1999 and 2013, Auyeskhani 2021 and 2021a, as well as Enwall 2005 and 2010.

Sayan Turkic varieties in northern Mongolia

The Khövsgöl region is home of two other Sayan Turkic varieties: Dukhan and Tuhun.

Dukhan is a Taiga Sayan Turkic language spoken in the northernmost areas of Mongolia's Khövsgöl region. Dukhans identify themselves as *dukha* [tu^hha]. In Mongolia, however, Dukhans are generally called *tsaatan*, a Mongolian term meaning 'those who have reindeer', that focusses on their traditional type of animal husbandry. In recent years, however, the endonym *dukha* has increasingly started to be used, besides the denomination *Khövsgölyin Tuvačuud* 'Tuvans of Khövsgöl'.

Further denominations documented in 20th century Mongolian sources include *Uriankhay*, *Tayga Uriankhay*, *Taigīn Irged* 'Peoples of the taiga', *Oin Irged* 'Peoples of the forest', and *Soyot*.

Dukhans live in the Tsagaan Nuur village and in surrounding areas, Khogrog and Kharmay. Some households still follow a lifestyle based on reindeer herding in the taiga areas, namely in the East Taiga and West Taiga (see map). The number of households living in the taiga increases in the summertime.



IMAGE 7: VIEWS FROM THE TAIGA (© ELISABETTA RAGAGNIN)

According to the 2020 official census, Tsaatan number 208 persons. However, friends in Tsagaan Nuur told me that of the 2040 inhabitants of the county, 704 are registered as ethnically Dukhan. The number of active Dukhan speakers, however, seems not to exceed 40.

Dukhan is an unwritten language and has no official status. It is used for oral communication by people over 40, and is not consistently transmitted to younger generation any more. Even though some younger speakers possess varying degrees of Dukhan knowledge, the local communication language, besides the official language, is Darkhat-Mongolian.⁴

Tuvan had been taught on a non consistent basis in the past in the boarding school of Tsagaan Nuur. Last September (2022) Tuvan teaching was officially reintroduced (see Ragagnin, forthcoming).

Historically, the Dukhan people started moving to Mongolia in the 1940s from adjacent regions of the Tuvan republic. The Dukhans of the East Taiga mostly came from Toju, whereas those of the West Taiga migrated from Kungurtug of the Tere-Khöl area. During the Manchu period (1757-1911), when the territories of present-day Tuva and Outer Mongolia were under the same administration, the Dukhans used to nomadize across a much larger area. Dukhan beliefs are animistic, and shamans play an important role in their lives. Publications on Dukhan language and culture include Badamkhatan (1962, 1987), Kristensen (2015), Ragagnin (2011, 2012, 2016, 2016a, [forthcoming] and [forthcoming a]) and Wheeler (2000).

The numerically smallest Sayan Turkic variety is spoken by a handful of old speakers in the county of Tsagaan Üür to the East of Khövsgöl lake. Their ethnonym phonetically coincides with that of the Dukhan people.⁵ In the Tsagaan Üür county they are also referred to as *Uygar* 'Uyghur' and as *Urianxay*. Tuvan lifestyle is based predominantly on the herding of low-land cattle. As for the spiritual world, Tuvan people believe in Buddhism and animism. Tuvan has no official status in the Tsagaan Üür county and there has never been any Sayan Turkic teaching in the local boarding school. For a preliminary Tuvan corpus, see Ragagnin (2019).

4 The general view among scholars is that the people who identify themselves with the name Darkhat are of Turkic origin. Their language and customs are supposed to have undergone a Mongolization process in the past few centuries (Ragagnin 2012; 2012a). On the Darkhat variety of Mongolic, see Gáspár 2006; on Darkhat shamanism, see, a.o. Diószegi 1963.

5 In order to disambiguate these two varieties, in English the forms Dukhan and Tuvan are used, respectively.



IMAGE 8: TSAGAAN UUR VILLAGE (© ELISABETTA RAGAGNIN)

For Tuvan unique linguistic features, see Ragagnin (2009) and (2018) and (forthcoming b). Other publications include Bold (1982 and 2013) and Eriksonas (2013).

Sayan varieties in China

Within the borders of China, Sayan Turkic speakers (*diba*) are located in the villages of Kom Kanas and Aq Qaba (around lake Kanas in the Altay Jungar region) in the Altay area of the Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region. This area is close to the borders of Kazakhstan, Mongolia and the Russian Federation. They refer to themselves as *diba* and number approximately 2,000 individuals (Rind-Pawłowski, 2014). In the literature, they are generally known as Jungar Tuvans. In China, however, Jungar Tuvans are not acknowledged as a nationality of their own. For historical reasons, they are usually recorded as Mongols.

Jungar Tuvans live in Han Chinese environment and their language is also under strong influence of both Kazakh and Mongolian. Jungar Tuvan has been the subject of various publications: Mawkanuli (1999, 2001 and 2005), Mongush (1996), Rind-Pawłowski (2014) and Yuša (2019).

Ecosystems and language diversification

Sayan Turkic can best be classified according to the steppe/taiga axis that combines linguistic criteria with common features of lifestyle and ecosystem. To the Steppe Sayan group belong standard Tuvan and its dialects (with the exception of the Toju dialect

and some varieties of the Tere-Khöl area), as well as Altay-Sayan varieties in China and Mongolia, and Tuvan of East Khövsgöl. On the other hand, to the Taiga Sayan group of Sayan Turkic belong those varieties spoken by people whose lifestyle is, or was until not too long ago, characterized by reindeer breeding and hunting.⁶ Thus, this group includes Dukhan, Tofan, the Toju variety of Tuvan and some varieties of the Tere-Khöl area, as well as Soyot of the Buryat Republic. Since reindeer breeding is not a typical kind of animal husbandry among Turkic peoples, it may be assumed that many, if not all, groups forming Taiga Sayan Turkic might represent clans of Samoyed or other origin that shifted to Turkic.

Broadly speaking, South Siberia has always been a melting pot of languages and cultures. Long-lasting contacts have formed isoglosses between Turkic varieties and between Turkic and other varieties, whether genealogically related or not. Sayan Turkic is no exception in this regard.

As it is well known in Turcological studies, the South Siberian Turkic languages share many features, but at the same time have their own specific traits. Siberian Turkic varieties have clearly developed on the basis of heterogeneous substrates. Several grammatical features typical of this area can be explained as a) cases of imposition due to non-Turkic substrates, or b) as cases of adoption of new features due to non-Turkic adstrates. The contact languages of this area include Russian, Mongolic, Chinese, Tungusic, Samoyedic, Ob-Ugric, and Paleosiberian varieties.

As for the present situation of Sayan Turkic, several varieties are severely endangered, like Tofan and Tuvan; Dukhan still has (more) active speakers, however, it is not transmitted to the next generation. One variety, namely Soyot, has died some decades ago and is now being revitalized. Other “healthier” varieties, like Altai and Jungar Tuvan are under strong influence of both Kazakh and the official language of the respective countries. Even Standard Tuvan, the absolutely “healthiest” Sayan Turkic variety is not properly “safe” in its own republic. As pointed out by Syuryun, Grudzeva, Janhunen and Peemot in an highly inspiring lecture delivered in 2019,⁷ Tuvan is very scarcely present in the linguistic

6 On the Sayan Turkic type of reindeer-herding, see, a.o. Vainshtein 1980.

7 I am referring hereby to the paper “Observations on the linguistic situation in Tuva”, presented by the above-mentioned colleagues at the international symposium “Endangered languages in Northern Asia” on the occasion of the Unesco Year of Indigenous Languages organized by Elis-

landscape of the Tuvan republic. Public writing in Tuvan is often confined to Tuvan cultural elements, Tuvan food menus etc.



IMAGE 9: TUVAN MENU IN KYZYL (© ELISABETTA RAGAGNIN)



IMAGE 10: "FORBIDDEN TO SWIM" SIGN IN KYZYL (© ELISABETTA RAGAGNIN)

abetta Ragagnin & Bayarma Khabtagaeva, November 29-30, 2019 (<https://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/turkologie/Veranstaltungen/Vortraege/Symposium.html>).

References

- Alatulu, T. (1992), "Tuva. A state reawakens", *Soviet Studies* 44, 4: 881-895.
- Akıncı, E. (2017), "Tsengel Tuvalarının Dünya Görüşünde gelenek, uyum ve süreklilik" [Tradition, harmony and continuity in the world view of Tsengel Tuvans], in Aydemir, İ. A., Erdem, M. Ed., *Tuva Araştırmaları. Tuvaca Varyantların Belgelenmesi ve Tanımlanması / Tuvan Studies. Documentation and Description of Tuvan Varieties*, Grafiker, Ankara, 5-18.
- Akıncı, E., Dok, B. (2013), "Tsengel Tuvalarının Türkiye deneyimi: kültür ve dil varlığının canlandırılmasında kültür aşırı girişimler [The Turkish experience among Tsengel Tuvans: transcultural initiatives in reviving cultural and linguistic existence]", in Erdal, M., Koç, Y., Cengiz, M. Ed., *Dilleri ve Kültürleri Yok Olma Tehlikesine Maruz Türk Topulukları konulu 4. Uluslararası Türkiyat Araştırmaları Bildirileri* [Proceedings of the 4th international conference of Turkic studies on endangered Turkic languages and cultures], Hacettepe Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Yayınları, Ankara: 73-84.
- Anderson, G. D., Harrison, D. K. (1999), *Tyvan*, Lincom, Munich.
- Auyeskan, R. 2021. *Moğolistan Kazaklarının Dili - Sosyo-linguistik bir inceleme* [Language of Mongolian Kazakhs -A Sociolinguistic Analysis] Ph.D. Dissertation, Hacettepe University, Ankara.
- Auyeskan, R. 2021. "Moğolistan Kazaklarının Kazakistan'a Göç Etmesi Sonucu Uyum Sağlama Sürecinde Karşılaşılan Dilsel Sorunlar [Linguistic problems arose during the adaptation process following to the migration of Kazakhs from Mongolia to Kazakhstan]", *Turkbilig*, 41: 181-192.
- Aydemir, A. İ. (2017), "Tsengel Tuvaları Arasında bir Alan araştırması: MOTUV-DER projesi ve ilk dilbilimsel sonuçları" [The MOTUV-DER project and its preliminary linguistic results], in Aydemir, İ. A., Erdem, M., Ed., *Tuva Araştırmaları: Tuvaca Varyantların Belgelenmesi ve Tanımlanması / Tuvan Studies: Documentation and Description of Tuvan Varieties*, Grafiker, Ankara: 19-32.
- Aydemir A. İ. (2009), *Konverbien im Tuwinischen. Eine Untersuchung unter Berücksichtigung des Altai-Dialekts* (Turcologica 80.), Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden.
- Aydemir, İ. A., Erdem, M. (Ed.) (2017), *Tuva Araştırmaları: Tuvaca Varyantların Belgelenmesi ve Tanımlanması / Tuvan Studies: Documentation and Description of Tuvan Varieties*, Grafiker, Ankara.
- Badamkhatan, S. (1960), "Xövsgöl aymağın Tsaatan (Urianxay) ardın garlın asuudal", *Şinjelex Uxaan Setgüül* 1, 30-35.
- Badamkhatan, S. (1962), "Khövsgöliyn Tsaatan ardın aǰ baydlin toym,

- Studia Ethnographica*, 2, 1: 1-66.
- Badamkhatan, S. (1987), "Le mode de vie des Caatan, éleveurs de rennes du Xövsgöl", *Études mongoles et sibériennes*, 18: 99-127. [Translation and adaptation of Badamkhatan, S. 1962, *Khövsgöliyn Tsaatan ardin aj baydlin toym* by Hamayon, R. & Beffa, M-L.]
- Bayyr-Ool, A. (forthcoming), "Some features of the Tozhu dialect of the Tuvan language (based on oral text materials)", in Ragagnin, E., Khabtagaeva, B. Ed., *Endangered languages of Northeast Asia* (Languages of Asia 28). Brill, Leiden.
- Bičeldey, K.-o. A., D. M. Nasilov (2002), "Tuvincev-Todžincev jazyk", in Neroznak, V. P., Ed., *Jazyki Narodov Rossii: Krasnaja Kniga / The Red Book of the Languages of Russia*, Academia, Moscow, 193-196.
- Bold, L. (2013), "Uygar Uriankhay khelend orson mongol üg [Mongolic loanwords in the Uighur-Uriankhay language]", in Sükhbaatar, Na. (ed.), *Tuva: Tüükh, Khel, Soyol* [Tuva: History, Language, culture] (Bibliotheca Oiratica 29.) Ulaanbaatar: Soyombo, 157-164.
- Bold, L. (1982), "Uygar-urianskay khelniy khöömiişsen egşgiyn asuudal" [The problem of pharyngealized vowels in the Uygar-Uriankhay language], *Khel Zokhiol Sudlal* [Language and Literature Studies] 15: 54-61.
- Čadamba, Z. (1974), *Todžinskij dialekt tuvinskogo jazyka* [The Toju Dialect of the Tuvan Language], Tuvinskoe knižnoe izdatel'stvo, Kyzyl.
- Census Russia <http://www.statdata.ru/> (last accessed on 30.06.2022)
- Diószegi, V. (1963), "Ethnogenic Aspects of Darkhad shamanism", *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae* 16, 55-81.
- Enwall, J. (2010), "Inter-ethnic relations in Mongolia and Inner Mongolia", *Asian Ethnicity*, 11, 2: 239-257.
- Enwall, J. (2005), "Tuvan or Mongol: A Study of Inter-ethnic Relations and Ethnic Definition Strategies among Tuvans and Kazakhs in Western Mongolia", *Turkic Languages*, 9, 1: 93-115.
- Finke, P. (1999), "The Kazaks of Western Mongolia", in Svanberg I. Ed., *Contemporary Kazaks: Cultural and Social Perspectives*, Curzon Press, Richmond, UK, 103-139.
- Finke, P. (2013), "Historical Homelands and Transnational Ties: the case of the Mongolian Kazaks", *Journal of Social and Cultural Anthropology* 138 (Special Issue: Mobility and Identity in Central Asia): 175-193.
- Gansux, X. et al. (ed.) (2013), *Tiva dil 1* [Tuvan language 1], Ulaanbaatar, Bolovsrol, Soyol, Šinjlex Uxaani Yam.
- Gáspár, Cs. (2006), *Darkhat* (Languages of the World/Materials 419), Lincom Europa, München.
- Koçoğlu-Gündoğdu, V. (2018), *Tuva Türkçesi Grameri* [Tuvan grammar], Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara.

- Koçoğlu-Gündoğdu, V. (2017), "Sınırdaki kalanlar: Usinsk Tuvaları (Sosyolinguistik Durum)" [Those who remained at the border: The Usinsk Tuvans (Sociolinguistic situation)], in Aydemir, İ. A., Erdem, M., Ed., *Tuva Araştırmaları: Tuvaca Varyantların Belgeleme ve Tanımlanması / Tuvan Studies: Documentation and Description of Tuvan Varieties*, Grafiker, Ankara, 99-108.
- Krueger, J. R. (1977), *Tuvan Manual. Area handbook, grammar, reader, glossary, bibliography* (Uralic and Altaic Series 126), Indiana University Publications, Bloomington.
- Harrison, D. K., Anderson, G. D. (2008), "Tofa language change and terminal generation speakers", in Harrison, D. K., Rood, D. S., Dwyer, A. Ed., *Lessons from documented endangered languages*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, 243-270.
- Kristensen, B. M. (2015), *Returning to the Forest: Shamanism, Landscape and History among the Duha of Northern Mongolia*, PhD dissertation, University of Copenhagen. Available online at: https://tors.ku.dk/ansatte/?pure=files%2F141450501%2FPh.d._2015_Benedikte_Kristensen.pdf (last accessed on 15.12.2021)
- Isxakov, F. G., Pal'mbax, A. A. (1961), *Grammatika tuvinskogo jazyka. Fonetika i morfologija* [Grammar of the Tuvan language. Phonetics and Morphology]. Izdatel'stvo vostočnoj literatury, Moskva.
- Mawkanuli, T. (2005), *Jungar Tuvan texts*, Indiana University Publications, Indiana.
- Mawkanuli, T. (2001), "The Jungar Tuvas: language and national identity in the PRC", *Central Asian Survey*, 20, 4: 497-517.
- Mawkanuli, T. (1999), *Phonology and morphology of Jungar Tuva* (unpublished PhD dissertation), Indiana University.
- Mongush, M. V. (2014), "Tuvans Outside of Tuva: The Problem of Ethnic Self-conservation", *Senri Ethnological Studies* 86, 197-213.
- Mongush, M. V. (2003), "The Tuvans of Mongolia: peculiarities of contemporary ethnic development", *Inner Asia*, 5: 163-176.
- Mongush, M. V. (1996), "Tuvans of Mongolia and China", *International Journal of Central Asian Studies*, 1: 225-243.
- Pavlinkaya, L. R. (2003) "Reindeer herding in the Easter Sayan - The story of the Soyot", *Cultural Survival Quarterly* (Spring 2003), 27,1: 45-47.
- Population and housing census of Mongolia 2020
https://1212.mn/BookLibraryDownload.ashx?url=Census2020_Mongolia_Eng.pdf&ln=En (last accessed on 30.06.2022)
- Potapov, L. P. (1964a), "The Tuvans", in Levin, M. G., Potapov, L. P. Ed., *The peoples of Siberia*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 380-422.
- Potapov, L. (1964b), *Istorija Tuvy*, Nauka, Moskva.
- Ragagnin, E. (forthcoming), "Sayan language islands in Mongolia: present state and future challenges", in Ragagnin, E., Khabtagaeva, B. Ed., *Endangered languages of Northeast Asia* (Languages of Asia 28).

Brill, Leiden.

- Ragagnin, E. (forthcoming a), “Dukhan”, in Johanson, L. et al. Ed., *Encyclopedia of Turkic Language and Linguistics*.
- Ragagnin, E. (forthcoming b), “Tuhan”, in Johanson, L. et al. Ed., *Encyclopedia of Turkic Language and Linguistics*.
- Ragagnin, E. (2019), “A preliminary archive of language and cultural material from the Tuhan people of northern Mongolia”, *Endangered Languages Archive*. Handle: <http://hdl.handle.net/2196/00-0000-0000-0013-E445-C>.
- Ragagnin, E. (2018), “A Turcological gem: The Tuhan language of Northern Mongolia”, *Turkic Languages* 22(2), 217-229.
- Ragagnin, E. (2018a), “Badəkšaan”, in Apatóczky, À. B., Atwood, C. P., Kempf, B. Ed., *Philology of the Grassland: Essays in Mongolic, Turkic, and Tungusic Studies*, Brill, Leiden, 258-265.
- Ragagnin, E. (2017) “Sayan Turkic reindeer terminology”, in Szeverényi, S., Khabtagaeva, B. Ed., *Uralic and Siberian Lexicology and Lexicography*. University of Szeged, Szeged, 39-50.
- Ragagnin, E. (2016) “Dukhan”, in Eker, S., Çelik Şavk, Ü. Ed., *Tehlikedeki Türk Dilleri. 2 A: Örnek Çalışmalar /Endangered Turkic Languages. 2 A: Case Studies*, International Turkish Academy, Hodja Akhmet Yassawi International Turkish-Kazakh University, Ankara, Astana: 165-180.
- Ragagnin, E. (2016a) “Diversity in Dukhan reindeer terminology”, in Korkmaz, R., Doğan, G. Ed., *Endangered Languages of the Caucasus and Beyond*, Brill, Leiden: 166-186.
- Ragagnin, E. (2012), “Turco-Mongolic relations: The case of particles”, in Erdal, M., Menz, A., Nevskaya, I., Ed., *Areal, Typological and Historical Aspects of Siberian Turkic*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 105-117.
- Ragagnin, Elisabetta (2012a), “Turkic substrates in Darkhat-Mongolian”, in Tumortogoo, D. Ed., *Proceedings of the 10th International Congress of Mongolists, Volume I: Prehistoric and historical periods of Mongolia's relations with various civilizations*, Ulaanbaatar: 291-295.
- Ragagnin, E. (2011), *Dukhan, a Turkic variety of northern Mongolia: description and analysis* (Turcologica 76), Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden.
- Ragagnin, E. (2009) “How to make a tasty kiyma”, in Csató, É. Á. et al. Ed., *Turcological Letters to Bernt Brendemoen*, Novus Press. Oslo, 259-266.
- Ragagnin, Elisabetta (2009a), “A rediscovered low-land Tofan variety”, *Turkic Languages* 13, 2: 225-245.
- Ragagnin, E., Khabtagaeva, B. Ed., (forthcoming), *Endangered languages in Northeast Asia* (Languages of Asia 28), Brill, Leiden.
- Ragagnin, E., Č. Oyuunbadam, G. Dalaybayar (forthcoming), *Mongol uls dax' Duxa xumuusiin xel ayalguu, tüüx, soyol* [Language variety, history and culture of the Dukhan people of Mongolia], Ulaanbaatar.
- Rassadin, V. I. (2016), “The Soyots and their language” in Eker, S., Çelik

- Şavk, Ü. Ed., *Tehlikedeki Türk Dilleri II B. 3 A: Örnek Çalışmalar / Endangered Turkic Languages II B. Case Studies*, International Turkic Academy & Hodja Akhmet Yassawi International Turkish-Kazakh University, Ankara & Astana: 174-187.
- Rassadin, V. I. (2010). "O jazyke sojotov Burjatii" in *Turkic Languages* 14, 1: 127-138.
- Rassadin, V. I. (2010a), *Soyotica* (Studia Uralo-Altica 48) Szeged University, Szeged [Edited by Béla Kempf]
- Rassadin, V. I. (2006), *Tofalarskij jazyk i ego mesto v sisteme tjutkskix jazykov* [The Tofan language and its place within the system of the Turkic languages], Kalmyckij gosudarstvennyj universitet, Elista.
- Rassadin, V. I. (2006a), *Slovar'. Sojotsko-russkij*, Drofa, Sankt-Peterburg.
- Rassadin, V. I. (2009), *Bukvar'. Učebnoe posobie po sojotskomu jazyku dlja uča čixsja 1 klassa*, Drofa, Sankt-Peterburg.
- Rassadin, V. I. (2002), "Sojotskij jazyk", in Neroznak, V. P., Ed., *Jazyki Narodov Rossii: Krasnaja Kniga / The Red Book of the Languages of Russia*, Academia, Moscow, 164-170.
- Rassadin, V. I. (2005), *Bukvar'. Učebnik dlja 1 klassa tofalarskix škol*, Drofa, Sankt-Peterburg.
- Rassadin, V. I. (2002a), "Tofalarskij jazyk", in Neroznak, V. P., Ed., *Jazyki Narodov Rossii: Krasnaja Kniga / The Red Book of the Languages of Russia*, Academia, Moscow: 182-190.
- Rassadin, V. I. (1995), *Tofalarsko-russkij i russko-tofalarskij slovar'*, Vostočno-Sibirskoe knižnoe izdatel'stvo, Irkutsk.
- Rassadin, V. I. (1978), *Morfologija tofalarskogo jazyka v sravnitel'nom osve čenii*, Nauka, Moskva.
- Rassadin, V. I. (1971), *Fonetika i leksika tofalarskogo jazyka*, Burjatskoe knižnoe izdatel'stvo, Ulan-Ude.
- Rind-Pawłowski, M. (2014), "Text types and evidentiality in Dzungar Tuvan", *Turkic Languages* 18, 1: 159-188.
- Sat, Š. (1987), *Tyva dialektologija*, Tivanin nom ündürer čeri, Kyzyl.
- Schönig, C. (2006), "Südsibirisch-türkische Entsprechungen von Völker und Stammesnamen aus der Geheimen Geschichte der Mongolen", in Erdal, M., Nevskaya, I. Ed., *Exploring the eastern frontiers of Turkic* (Turcologica 60), Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 211-242.
- Seren, P. (2006), *Moolda Sengel tivalarinin čaŋčildari (dilinin, kul'turazinin materialdari) / Obyčaj cengél'skix tuvincev v Mongolii* (Materiali jazyka, kul'tury), Tivanin Gumanitarlīg Šinčilelder Institutu, Kizil.
- Seren, P. (2006a), *Tere-xol'skij dialekt tuvinskogo jazyka*, Izd-vo xakasskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, Abakan.
- Syuryun, A. (2017), "Documentation and revitalization of Tofa: fieldwork with the last speakers", *Endangered Languages Archive*. Handle: <http://hdl.handle.net/2196/00-0000-0000-0010-798D-A>

- Syuryun, A. (forthcoming), "Documentation of Tofan: problems and possibilities", in Ragagnin, E., Khabtagaeva, B. Ed., *Endangered languages of Northeast Asia* (Languages of Asia 28). Brill, Leiden.
- Taube, E. (2008), *Tuwinische Folkloretexte aus dem Altai (Cengel/Westmongolei). Kleine Formen* (Turcologica 71), Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden.
- Taube, E. (1998) "Observations of a non-linguist concerning the Tuvinian language in Tuva and Western Mongolia", in Johanson, L. et al. Ed., *The Mainz Meeting. Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on Turkish Linguistics* (Turcologica 32), Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 647-655.
- Taube, E. (1996), "Zur gegenwärtigen Situation der Tuwiner im westmongolischen Altai", in Berta, Á., Schönig, C. Ed., *Symbolae Turcologicae: Studies in Honour of Lars Johanson on his sixtieth birthday*, Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, Istanbul, 213-225.
- Taube, E. (1978), *Tuwinische Volksmärchen*, Akademie, Berlin.
- Vainshtein, S. (1980), *Nomads of South Siberia. The pastoral economies of Tuva*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge [Translation of Vajnštejn, S. 1972, *Istoričeskaja etnografija tuvincev* by Colenso, Michael)
- Wheeler, A. (2000), *Lords of the Mongolian taiga: An ethnohistory of the Dukhareindeer herders* [M.A. thesis, Indiana University, Bloomington.] Available online at: <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2022/18631/Wheeler%202000--Lords%20of%20the%20Mongolian%20Taiga-Dukha%20Ethnohistory.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (last accessed on 10.12.2021)
- Yuša, M. Ž. (2019), "Tuvincy Kitaja. Problem Soxranenija rodnogo jazyka", in *Tehlikedeki Diller Dergisi*, 9, 14: 77-89. <https://dergipark.org.tr/pub/tdd/issue/44863/553545>
- Žamcarano, C. Ž. (1991), "The Darqad and the Uriangqai of lake Köbsögöl", *East Asian History*, 1, 55-80.

Aspects of the Development of Yiddish as the Language of the National Minorities in the Republic of Belarus

Veronika Rabzevich, Inna Petrashevich

The Republic of Belarus is a multinational state where representatives of different ethnicities and national communities live together with the Belarusians. Since ancient times, the people of Belarus have represented a confessional community of various ethnic associations.

At the end of the XXth century, the Republic of Belarus was inhabited by Belarusians, Russians, Poles, Ukrainian Jews, Tatars, Karaites and Gypsies. Belarus is a common home for representatives of more than 130 nationalities living on its territory. The main ethnic group are the Belarusians, who make up 81.2% of the population, at the second place we find the Russians (11.4%), followed by the Poles (3.9%), the Ukrainians (2.4%), the Armenians (0.1%), the Jews, the Tatars, the Gypsies, the Azerbaijanis, and the Germans.

Christians, mainly Orthodox, Catholics and Greek Catholics, have traditionally been numerically predominant in Belarus. Other represented religions include Judaism (Jews and Karaites) and Islam (Tatars).

Each of the national groups (minorities) has a rich history, distinctive features and cultural traditions, and ties with the historical homeland. In describing the situation of the national minorities in the Republic of Belarus at present, it is necessary to note its stability and uniqueness, expressed by the absence of serious

ethnic and confessional clashes and conflicts.

The history of the Western Belarusian lands is inextricably linked with the history of the Jews. The exact date of their appearance in the region is unknown, but given the fact that these areas have always been at the crossroads of trade routes, and that the Jews were actively involved in trade, we can assume they arrived in the X-XIII centuries. N. Sonnenberg¹ believes that the Jews came to the Slavic lands from two sides (the south-east and the west), and subsequently remained during the governance of the Russian rulers. Political factors played a decisive role in the emergence of the Jewish community in the region. At the end of the XIII-beginning of the XIV century there was an intensive immigration of Jews to Belarusian lands from Western and Central Europe out of fear of persecution and of the plague.

This process was facilitated by the tolerant policy pursued by Grand Duke Vytautas. In 1388, he gave the Jews the first "Forgiven testimony" known in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, at a place called "Berestye". The document granted the Jews broad autonomy in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, turning them into a separate class of free people under the jurisdiction of the Grand Duke and his special representatives at the place of residence (Abramova 1997; Zonenberg' 1907; Rozenblat 1993). "The Forgiven testimony" guaranteed Jewish believers protection by the prince and the voivodes, personal and property security, freedom of religion, inviolability of cemeteries, establishment of houses of worship, and so on (Bjadulja 1918; Špilevskij 1858/2016).

Since that time, the official history of Jewish presence in Belarus began, filled, from one side, with periods of tolerance and flourishing of Jewish communities, but, from another, with the outbreaks of anti-Semitism.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Jews made up a significant part of the population of the West Belarusian region, living side by side with the Belarusians. In the cities of Western Belarus, the Jewish population was a significant and often dominant demographic group. In 56 cities in Western Belarus (within the borders of the modern Republic of Belarus), Jews accounted for more than 75% of the total number of local residents in seven cities, and for 60-75% in nineteen other. The total number of people belonging to the Jewish religion was 283300 people, or 8.8% of the total number of the residents of Western Belarus (Eberkhardt 1997).

The centuries-old coexistence of the Jews and the Belarusians

1 Personal communication.

created mutual tolerance. On Saturdays and Jewish holidays, as well as on Christian holidays, life literally stopped. Domestic and economic relations were very close. In everyday life, the Jews spoke Yiddish, but they prayed in Hebrew.

The generation of the Jews of the interwar period knew the Belarusian language well. Without such knowledge, it would have been impossible to trade with peasants at fairs, and at other venues. In the years 1921-1939, the Jews spoke Yiddish, Belarusian and Polish (Bykhovcev 2009). The Belarusians, for their part, often perfectly understood and spoke Yiddish.

Belarusian-Jewish bilingualism formed in places where Jews and Belarusians lived together. As a result of close language contact, words and expressions borrowed from Hebrew, mainly from the Bible, appeared in the Belarusian language: "Amin" (Hebrew "authentic, true and strong"), "Satan" (Hebrew "enemy"), "cheruvim" (the highest angelic rank accepted by the church), "Shamash" (guardian of synagogue property, chief) and others. The Belarusian language was infused with borrowings from Yiddish, and some of them lost their ethnographic colouring in the process of use: "gallah" (a priest), "hipesh" (a deception), "hines" (a robbery with the help of a beautiful woman), "hipesnik" (a thief working with a woman), "malakholny" (a stupid, blessed), "khevra" (a thieves' hat), "eld" (someone belonging to the thieves' world), "gesheft" (percent), "geld" (money), "ahaham" (a bribe), "shaher-maher" (a deception), "balabos" (an owner), "hala" (a twisted bun), "gugel" (a cake), "hertz" (a deception), "chametz" (bread), "kosher" (cleaning), "pais" (a long hair), "havrus" (an union), "tsymus" (a boiled carrot or parsnip), "laserdak" (a long-haired jacket).

In Belarus, Yiddish also had the status of an official language in the court and the main bodies of local administration. The interwar coat of arms of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic bears the inscription "Proletarians of all countries, unite!". It is written in all four official languages of the Republic: Belarusian, Russian, Polish and Yiddish "Prolëtarier fun ale lëndèr, farèjnikt zikh!"

Before World War II, Yiddish was the mother tongue of eleven million Jews, most of whom lived in Europe. Six million perished during the Holocaust. Many survivors emigrated after the war to Israel, where their official language became Hebrew.

Now Yiddish is considered an endangered language, no more than 600 thousand people speak it all over the world. About half million native speakers live in Israel and the USA. In Russia, according to the 2010 census, only about 500 people speak Yiddish

fluently - it is 1% of the Russian Jews. In the Republic of Belarus, according to the 1999 census, only 1979 people speak Yiddish at home (7.19% of the total number of the Jews living in the Republic of Belarus).

A sign of the complete revival of Yiddish at the turn of the XX-XXI centuries is the genuine interest in it from a younger generation of the Jews, including secular people. The Internet plays an invaluable role in uniting the Jewish youth around the world through Yiddish. To check this, simply enter a Yiddish keyword in any search engine. In accordance with the trend of our times, at the beginning of 2004 the Google search engine received a Yiddish version.

In April 2008, at the initiative of the Public Jewish Charity Organization "Hased-Rahamim" (Minsk), the development of the new programme "Mir Harn Yiddish" ("Let's listen to Yiddish") began. The aim of the initiative was to continue the revival of Ashkenazi culture, which was widely represented in the Republic of Belarus in the pre-war period (before the outbreak of World War II). At that time, teaching of all academic subjects in Jewish secondary schools was conducted in Yiddish.

The programme was implemented under the guidance of M. J. Ackerman, a volunteer who speaks Yiddish perfectly. The first lesson included the study of the work of Sholom Aleichem, a classic of Jewish literature. It was planned to hold monthly classes "Pace harn yiddish".

In September 2007, the Minsk Public Association of Jewish Culture "Izi Harik" (MOOK) started a club for the study of Yiddish. A didactic textbook for the beginners consisted of twenty lessons, developed by Svetlana Trifisik. Currently, the club is not working.

Minsk is home to "Bais-Aharon", the only Jewish college in the whole Republic of Belarus. General education subjects, Hebrew and Jewish traditions are taught here. But children don't study Yiddish.

Schools with Jewish classes exist in the Republic of Belarus, including, for example, Minsk school No. 132 named after Chaim Nachman Bialik. In 1996, classes were opened there to study the culture, the history, and the traditions of Jewish people, and Hebrew. But not Yiddish.

Conclusions

Yiddish is disappearing today not only from Minsk and the Republic of Belarus, but also from the world as a whole. Some Jewish people still remember Yiddish, which they learned in childhood, in their parents' house. But they are critically too few, at least in the Republic of Belarus, to ensure the revival and further development of the language.

References

- Abramova, E. (1997), "Gebraizmy i idišizmy v beloruskom jazyke", in Abramova, E. (Ed.), *Evrei Belarusi*, Minsk: Bestprint.
- Bjadulja, Z. (1918), *Žydy na Belarusi. Bytavyja štrykhi*, Minsk: Drukarnja Ja.A. Grynbljata.
- Bykhovcev, N. (2009), "Evrei v mežvoennyj period", *Vaukavyščyna: kajazn. časopis*, 4(14), 5-12.
- Eberkhardt, P. (1997), *Demahrafičnaja situacyja na Belarusi: 1898-1989*, Minsk: Belaruski Fond Sorasa.
- Rozenblat, E.S. (1993), *Žizn' i sud'ba Brestskoj evrejskoj obščiny XVI-XX vv*, Brest: Belorusskij Fond Kul'tury.
- Špilevskij, P.M. (1858/2016), *Putešestvie po Poles'ju i belorusskomu kraju*, Minsk: Belarus'.
- Zonenberg', Kh. (1907), *Istorija goroda Brest-Litovska 1016-1907. Po dostovernym istočnikan i pravdopodobnym umozaključenijam*, Brest-Litovsk: Tipografija I. Kobrinca.

Minorities in an Independent Ukraine: Issues of Language and Identity (1991-2013)

Oleg Rumyantsev

In Ukraine, the issue of minority rights emerges as the country gains independence and takes on responsibility for minorities existing on its territory. The Ukrainian language, though being the only state language, needs to fully restore its state language functions. Ukrainian-speakers feel ill at ease with their language because Russian dominates the media and everyday communication (Pachlovska 2001; Dzjuba 2021).

From the point of view of politics and identity, in this period two political nations coexist in the country: the Ukrainian and the Russian Soviet ones. In the post-Soviet space, the latter does not perceive itself as a minority, but as a majority. In this context, the Russian minority is referred to as an “overwhelming minority” (rus. *podavljajuščee men’sinstvo*) (Radevyvc-Vynnyč’kyj 2013: 52-639).

The number of minorities in Ukraine is currently under debate: some studies list 15 minority groups, as recorded in the 2001 census (Armenians, Azeris, Belarusians, Bulgarians, Jews, Gaguzes, Greeks, Moldovans, Poles, Roma, Romanians, Russians, Crimean Tatars, Germans, Hungarians), other - 134 (Borysenko 2017). Numbers greatly varied in the years immediately following independence: for example, the number of members of the Polish, Czech and Jew minorities decreased, while the number of Tatars, who returned to Crimea after being exiled to Central Asia during WWII, increased from 50 to 250 thousand. In the 90s, a quite substantial influx of immigrants arrived from the Caucasian and Asian republics of the

former Soviet Union. Since the language of social mobility in the post-soviet space is Russian, such influx further expands the Russian-speaking context (Jevtuch, Troščyns'kyj 2004: 7-8; Masenko 2008: 186-188; Orlov 2001: 93).

The identity revival fosters an increase in the number of some minorities, including the Romanian, Hungarian, Greek, and Gaugaz. However, this does not always coincide with an actual increase in language identity: with the exception of the Russians, the level of knowledge of the ethnic language is higher among Slovaks and Romanians (not more than 25%, in any case), less so among Hungarians and Tatars, and very low among Jews, Poles, Greeks, and Germans (Orlov 2001: 93-95).

Most minorities claim as their mother tongue either Ukrainian or Russian, depending on the region they live in: for 67% of Poles, resident in the Western part of Ukraine, their mother tongue is Ukrainian, while 88,5% of Greeks, 83% of Jews, 65% of Germans, 59% of Tatars, living in the South-East, claim their mother tongue to be Russian (Masenko 2008: 101).

The European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages was ratified by Ukraine in 2003 (coming into effect in 2006), and was exploited by the pro-Russian Party of the Regions, who opposed the Juščenko-Tymošenko government, to formalize the status of the Russian language at regional level. The Venice Commission expressed criticism towards the application of the European Charter in Ukraine on the grounds that it hinders the development of the state language (Besters-Dilger 2013). During the political and judicial confrontation with pro-Russia forces, the Government realized that the question of the Russian language had to be tackled differently than that concerning other minorities, which needed to be protected, and whose rights, in fact, remained in the shadow of the Russian speakers' issues. The propaganda of the Party of the Regions, which ruled the country in the years 2010-2014, made a large use of slogans about "the defence of Russian and other minority languages", which in fact favoured Russian (Radevyc-Vynnyc'kyj 2013: 64-65).

Minorities in Ukraine generally consider language and identity issues less important than socio-economic problems (Orlov 2001:91). The political representatives of some minorities support the official status of the Russian language, promoted by the Party of the Regions, because they perceive it as a way to satisfy the political ambitions of the Russian-speakers, while, at the same time, favouring the linguistic rights of other minorities (Kulyk 2008: 42-

43). This circumstance adds weight to the fact that in Ukraine minority rights in the years 1991-2013 were held hostage of the issue of the status of the Russian language.

References

- Besters-Dilger, J. (2013), "Efektyvnist' Jevropejs'koji chartiji rehional'nych abo minorityarnych mov jak znarjaddja zachystu movnych prav u slov'jans'kych krajinach", *Movoznavstvo*, 5: 12-18.
- Borysenko, V. (2017), "Skil'ky "narodiv" žyve v Ukraïni", *Urjadovyj Kurjer* 09.06.2017, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/skilki-narodiv-zhivie-v-ukrayini/p/> (last accessed 25.03.2022).
- Dzjuba, I. (2021), *La russificazione in Ucraina*. Roma: Aracne.
- Jevtuch, V., Troščyns'kyj, V. (2004), *Etnonacional'na struktura sučasnoho ukrajins'koho suspilstva*, Kyiv: Naukova dumka.
- Kulyk, V. (2010), "Movna polityka ta suspil'ni nastanovy ščodo neji pislja Pomarančevoji revoljuciji", in Besters-Dilger, J. (Ed.), *Movna polityka ta movna sytuacija v Ukraïni*, Kyiv: KMA, 11-54.
- Masenko, L. (2010), "Movna sytuacija Ukraïny: sociolinhvistyčnyj analiz", in Besters-Dilger, J. (Ed.), *Movna polityka ta movna sytuacija v Ukraïni*, Kyiv: KMA, 96-131.
- Orlov, A. (2001), "Etnomovna sytuacija v Ukraïni: 1990-ti roky", in Naulka, V.I. (Ed.), *Etnonacional'ni procesy v Ukraïni: istorija ta sučasnist'*, Kyiv: Golov. specializ. red. lit. movami nac. menšin Ukraïny, 90-120.
- Pachlovska, O. (2001), "Ucraini come minoranza in patria", *Letterature di Frontiera*, XI (1): 117-141.
- Radevyč-Vynnyč'kyj, Ja. (2013), "Aktual'nyj istoryzm i problema movnych prav v Ukraïni", *Movoznavstvo*, 5: 61-67.

Kazakhstan's Unintended Minority: The Oralmans

Tommaso Trevisani

Kazakhstan today is home to a myriad of minorities and a multi-ethnic state that prides itself of its ethnic diversity, tolerance and inclusiveness, essentially carrying on the Soviet rhetoric of “Friendship of Peoples” under the aegis of the Kazakh nation-state. Since the onset of its national independence in 1992, Kazakhstan has been on a vigorously nationalising path, aiming at advancing the role of Kazakh nationality and language in all aspects of society. The national leadership, however, has also been taking care in promoting the image of a civic, multi-ethnic statehood by protecting the rights and claims of Russian speaking groups and other non-Kazakh nationalities. Eager to preserve a balance between the multi-ethnic makeup inherited from the Soviet Union and a strengthening of the role of the titular (Kazakh) nationality (Dave 2007: 157), Kazakhstan’s dilemma re-echoes that of other “nationalizing states” (Brubaker 2011), that is, post-Soviet states concerned about redressing the outcome of Soviet nationality policies by specific interventions aimed at “strengthening the demographic, cultural, economic or political position of the core nation” (Brubaker 2011: 1807).

While the concept of nationalising state provides a framework for addressing the status of minorities and the politics governing them in the post-Soviet space, Kazakhstan is an example for how migratory movements and policies have played an eminent role in shaping post-Soviet nation-building. Particularly important is the case of the *Oralmans* (Kazakh *oralman*, in plural *oralmandar*),

ethnic Kazakhs residing abroad that have been recipients of a government support policy, introduced at the inception of independence and still ongoing, with the declared aim of incentivizing their “repatriation” to Kazakhstan. With nearly one million ethnic Kazakhs¹ estimated to have benefited from the programme since its introduction (Werner et al. 2017: 1566), the *Oralman* program has played a significant role in the demographic reshaping of a country in which the titular nationality amounted to less than 40% of a population of 16.5 million according to the last Soviet census (1989) and 69% percent of a population estimated 18.8 million in 2021 (Kazstat 2021). This demographic rebalancing towards a strengthened Kazakh presence in the country was reinforced by the outmigration of ethnic Russians, Germans and other nationalities, and indicates the importance of migratory flows for nation-building processes in Kazakhstan.² In this context, the case of the *Oralmans* in Kazakhstan is instructive for problematizing post-Soviet nationality politics, as it represents a case that complicates conventional understandings of majority and minority politics in post-Soviet countries.

This contribution aims at discussing the extant literature on the topic, relating it to ongoing research conducted in Kazakhstan’s Karaganda region (Trevisani 2015; 2016; 2018; 2019; 2021). The first part of the paper will introduce the beginnings of the *Oralman* policy. Subsequently, *Oralmans’* problematic integration will be discussed through an example taken from the Karaganda region, where recently migrated Kazakhs experience ethnic competition and discrimination for jobs, both at the workplace and in their ordinary lives.

The *Oralman* policy: background and beginnings

It is a well-known circumstance that Soviet policies in Kazakhstan have resulted in a strong cultural and linguistic Russification. Concerted Soviet policies of forced migration, repressive measures, centralized policies, cultural campaigns and economic and demographic developments taken together had the effect of a Russification of language and society all over Soviet Central Asian repub-

1 Out of more than five million ethnic Kazakhs estimated to be living outside the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Kudrenok 2020).

2 The percentage of the ethnic Russians in Kazakhstan dropped from 37,8% to 18,4%, those of the Germans from 5,8% to 0,9 %, over the same period according to Kazstat (2021).

lics. Furthermore, as a consequence of the forced sedentarization of the nomads in the 1930s (Pianciola 2009; Ohayon 2006), of the large-scale immigration of Russian speaking groups during the Virgin Lands Campaign in the 1950s (after which the Kazakhs became a minority in Kazakhstan),³ and because Russian domination of the Kazakh steppe had occurred earlier and lasted longer than in southern Central Asia, Russification advanced more markedly in Kazakhstan than in other neighbouring Soviet Turkic Muslim republics (Olcott 1995).

However, the intensity of Russification was not uniform in the different areas of the country. In the major urban centres, industrial regions and the northern *oblasts* more generally, where the foundations of all major cities and the settlement of Slavic settlers date back to the tsarist period, the Russian presence was stronger than in the south and in the thinly inhabited rural areas, where Kazakh language and traditional social roles and beliefs had been better preserved in ethnically more homogenous communities. As a consequence of the Soviet nationalities policy, Kazakh nationals had preferential treatment and employment quotas in certain occupations and enjoyed some privileges and autonomy in the education system of their Soviet Republic (Hirsch 2005; Martin 2001). However, in practice, education was better in Russian-language schools and knowledge of Russian so crucial for social mobility in Soviet Kazakhstan that many Kazakhs sent their children to Russian schools, especially in urban settings. At the same time, knowledge of the Kazakh language was (and continues to be) scarcely diffused among the Russian speaking groups (Dave 2007; Werner et al. 2017). By Independence, 40% of Kazakhstani Kazakhs were no longer fluent in Kazakh at a time when Kazakhs comprised barely 40% of population in a state of 2.7 million km and about 16 million residents (Bremmer 1994). As a result, Kazakh culture and language weakened and Kazakh intellectuals lamented “mankurtizatsiia”⁴ (Dave 2007) or cultural loss of memory, identity and language, a process triggered by Russification among all Central Asian peoples, but especially lamented in Kazakhstan. At the time of the Soviet collapse, by virtue of the crucial linkages between the two countries and their peoples, and in the face of a perceived

3 See Zadyrkhan (2004: 65).

4 The term “Mankurt” takes inspiration from Aitmatov’s novel *Idol’she veka dlit’sia den’* (Engl. Transl., *The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years*) (Aitmatov 1980) and refers to those Kazakhs that had lost track of their own language and identity.

weakness and evanescence of the newly independent Kazakhstani state, the very viability of an independent Kazakh nation-state separated from Russia had appeared doubtful to many (Bremmer 1994). This was especially felt in the more Russianized northern regions, where non-Kazakh speaking Slavic communities were preponderant since several generations as a result of tsarist- and Soviet-era resettlements and to labour migration related to Soviet industrialization.

Kazakhstan's *Oralman* policy from the onset must be seen against the background of the challenges posed by the frailty of the Kazakh national project in its initial phase (Olcott 1993: 326), and of the deep identity crisis underwent by the last Soviet generation of Kazakhs lamenting "mankurtizatsiia". In an attempt initiated by the independent Kazakh government to redress what was perceived to be a demographic and cultural imbalance caused by a "colonial" Soviet legacy (Olcott 1995), the *Oralman* policy aimed at tapping into the human reservoir of the Kazakhs abroad, believed to have retained more traits of the steppe culture of traditional Kazakh pastoral nomadism as compared to their compatriots in Kazakhstan, and to speak the Kazakh language.

By attracting less Russianized Kazakh communities from abroad, the main goal of the policy was to make Kazakhstan "more Kazakh". Different from Kazakhstani Kazakhs, who had been exposed to strong Russification over the Soviet years, the vast majority of Kazakhs living in Mongolia (mostly in the Bayan-Ölgiy province) and in China (mostly in the Xingjiang region) and in Uzbekistan (Navoy region; Karakalpakistan Autonomous Republic) remained fluent in Kazakh and closer to the traditional cultural legacies linked to Kazakhs' nomadic past, which they were able to preserve to a higher degree also over the socialist period, given their concentration in regions where they could use their language in everyday life since they were the dominant ethnic group, and also thanks to their occupation in sectors which were less susceptible of Russification, such as agriculture and livestock breeding. The idea was that by repopulating the areas left behind by out-migrating groups, especially in the more Russophone areas of the countries, with "true" Kazakhs, the *Oralmans* would create a counterweight to the influence of Russian language and culture in Kazakhstan (Diener 2003; Werner et al. 2017).

Supporting the “repatriation” of a diverse diaspora

In 1992, the *Oralman* policy was launched with the creation of the World Association of Kazakhs, an organization headed by the President of Kazakhstan with the aim of addressing diasporic Kazakhs and uniting all Kazakhs under one nation and one territory on the assumption that Kazakhs everywhere possessed common cultural characteristics by virtue of their supposedly shared patrilineal kin ties (Kuşçu Bonenfant 2012; Diener 2003).

The programme aimed at motivating Kazakh “diasporas” to re-settle to Kazakhstan, even if many Kazakh ethnic communities outside the territory of Kazakhstan were not diasporas in the strict sense, never having left their supposed “ancestral” Kazakh homeland and permanently residing in territories outside Kazakhstan since well before than the foundation of the Kazakh Socialist Soviet Republic. The term “Oralman” was introduced by the government policy in 1992 as a legal term meaning “returnee” or repatriated person. The root of the term *oralman* is in the Kazakh verb “oralu” - to return. The term implicitly suggests that the Kazakhs from abroad were “returning” to their ancestral homeland (Kuşçu 2014; Diener 2005a), while, in fact, the situation of the Kazakhs abroad is complex and specific to each community. While the history of the Kazakhs from Mongolia⁵ goes back to the late 19th century (Diener 2005b: 467), most Kazakhs from Uzbekistan had occupied their territories well before this time and had never left their homelands (see Diener et al. 2017). The imposition of new political boundaries on the central Eurasian steppe over the 20th century had separated them from their co-ethnics on the other side of the administrative border of their Soviet socialist republic. When the fall of the Soviet Union turned administrative borders into national ones, communities formerly straddling the borders were split up and their members became citizens of different countries. By contrast, earliest Kazakhs communities in Xingjiang date back to the Dzungar wars in the 18th century, while later on Kazakhs migrated as a consequence of the 1916 upheavals, and in the 1930s to find shelter from Stalinism, as they were leaving their home country to escape violence and famine (Pianciola 2009: 98-111, 401).

Although the ideological message of the *Oralman* policy resonated well among many of the Kazakhs living abroad, the appeal of the government program was particularly strong among

5 On the case of the Kazakhs from western Mongolia see Finke (2005); Genina (2015); Diener (2003); Alff (2012).

members of impoverished communities, who were hoping to improve their lot by relocating to Kazakhstan. Especially in its early years, economic motivations for reaching out to the *Oralman* programme were predominant among the programme's beneficiaries. *Oralmans* benefitted from financial support and assistance programmes for employment, education and housing and had a facilitated treatment when applying for Kazakhstani citizenship. These generous welfare and subsidising measures caused the envy of other, non-Kazakh minorities and also of other Kazakhstani Kazakhs, who did not receive comparable welfare support or property.⁶ As a consequence, in the media, critical reporting on widespread cases of welfare cheaters, re-migrated repatriates, or "opportunistic" repatriates living in between two countries, became more frequent (Kuşçu -Bonnenfant 2012; Kuşçu 2014). The circumstance that the programme was introduced while the economy was in turmoil and the government was slashing subsidies for existing citizens as part of its market reforms programme exacerbated the issue. Although immigration quotas, welfare and financing changed over time, the programme remained always very attractive for impoverished diasporic Kazakhs. For instance, by the mid-2000s, the 'quota' payment for repatriates was roughly US\$850 per person, and US\$1,700 for the household head. Typically, resettling families would be larger than average Kazakh families and comprise many individuals. They often would relocate in larger kin groups, that allowed to put together considerable sums by Kazakhstani standards when pooling together welfare benefits. Registered ethnic migrants could receive additional services and benefits, including employment quotas, access to Russian language courses, and university scholarships. Taken together, ethnic return migrants have been in a legally privileged status vis-à-vis both non-Kazakh immigrants as well as current Kazakhstani citizens (Werner et al. 2017: 1569).

The term *Oralman* in itself was not helpful for the integration of the repatriates, because its etymology suggested that the Kazakhs from abroad were "returning" to their ancestral homeland, a land that in the view of some critics *Oralmans* had supposedly turned their back against during hard times only to come back as welfare

6 According to official reports there are between 700,000 to two million foreign workers in Kazakhstan, most of them undocumented and from southern Central Asian countries: Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan. Compared to these migrants, Kazakh repatriates have 'privileged' status within Kazakhstan. On this see: Werner et al. (2017: 1570).

opportunists. Such and similar types of accusations and grievances in the public debate about the *Oralmans* has given the term a negative connotation. In recent years it has been substituted in official language with the term *kandas*, *yeldas* (bloodbrother, compatriot)⁷ to confer a more positive image of the policy, but with little avail for the repatriated Kazakhs who often continue to be referred to as *Oralmans* in common parlance.

At the inception of Kazakhstan's independence, especially among Kazakhs from Mongolia, the *Oralman* policy had strong appeal, as it promised a better life in Kazakhstan at a time of utmost economic difficulty in their home region in Mongolia (Finke 2005; 2013). By contrast, among Kazakhs living in Uzbekistan, the propensity to resettle to Kazakhstan was not high at the beginning; mass migration from this region set in only later. According to several interviews conducted with Kazakhs from Uzbekistan's Navoiy region, who had resettled to Kazakhstan's Karaganda region in the early 2000s,⁸ many felt motivated to leave by changes in Uzbekistan's education system. When, from the late 1990s onwards, Uzbek became mandatory in schools in classes that had been until then taught in Russian, many decided to leave their homes for Kazakhstan in order to allow their children to study in Kazakh schools.

We see that the social background of those deciding to resettle to Kazakhstan since 1992, their motivations for relocating, and their success in integrating into the new host-society differed widely among the different communities of diasporic Kazakhs. The majority arrived from western Mongolia, Uzbekistan and China (Xingjiang region) (Werner et al. 2017: 1566). Significant numbers of ethnic Kazakhs applied from all countries of the former Soviet Union and, in less significant numbers, from Turkey, Afghanistan and Iran. While this diversity of backgrounds and experience of resettlement makes it difficult to generalize about the outcome of the *Oralmans* policy, some scholarship has argued that the integration of *Oralmans* in Kazakh society has been by and large successful (Sadyrova and Amitov 2014). Most scholarship, however, has emphasized the problems and shortcomings of the governmental policy, stressing how integration problems have led to disappoint-

7 On this see 'Status and rights of kandas' (last retrieved from egov.kz on 07.09.2021).

8 Source: unpublished fieldwork data, based on interviews with Kazakh steel workers from Uzbekistan in Temirtau in 2013-16. For fieldwork conditions, data sample and research methods see Trevisani (2016).

ment and criticism among the *Oralmans* communities against their new homeland (Oka 2013; Diener 2003; Cerny 2010), also leading some to migrate back to their countries of origin (Finke 2013; Alff 2010).

Problematic integration

Scholarly attention for the *Oralmans* as a topic of social, political and anthropological interest began to rise from the beginning of the late 1990s as a consequence of the growing migratory flows and of the frequent reports of *Oralmans'* problematic integration into their host society (Alff 2012; Diener 2003; Finke 2005; Oka 2013; Genina 2015). Despite the fact that the government has invested considerable resources in the policy, many repatriated Kazakhs were having a hard time accommodating to the new conditions of their host society. As a result of their difficult integration, many repatriated Kazakhs did not develop a full sense of belonging to Kazakhstan (Werner et al. 2017). Some communities integrated more successfully than others -especially those from other FSU (Former Soviet Union) countries who shared the cultural and language codes of the Kazakhstani Kazakhs to a higher degree, and who knew Russian or grew up in the Soviet Union. Others, especially from Xingjang and Mongolia, had a much harder time in adapting to the new home. Among the main difficulties there were housing problems, economic and labour problems, language difficulties and social barriers to integration (Cerny 2010, Diener 2005a, Kuşçu 2013: 186-190). Cases of misuse of welfare also caused tensions and accusations against Kazakh immigrants. Oka (2013: 8) reports how, in a typical pattern, "an immigrant acquires a Kazakhstani passport, receives government funds, and then returns to a previous country of residence." Such episodes fuelled widespread prejudice against *Oralmans* communities.

In the predominantly Russian-speaking "rustbelt" area of Kazakhstan's soviet-built heavy industry communities, many *Oralmans* of Mongolian background ended up taking the homes of Russians and Germans that had left the country, only to end up impoverished and marginalised and becoming a social underclass (Finke 2013; Genina 2015; Oka 2013). In such and in similar cases, *Oralmans* found themselves stuck in the paradoxical situation of being officially privileged for being at the receiving end of state welfare and support programmes, but *de facto* caught in low-skill and low-income jobs, relegated in marginal areas of Kazakhstan

that were particularly hit hard by the economic crisis.

These findings resonate with fieldwork conducted in 2013-14 in the Karaganda region in central Kazakhstan (Trevisani 2016), where Kazakhs from Mongolia were a minority within a still dominant, but shrinking majority of Russian speaking groups. In the setting of the mono-industrial steel town Temirtau, I observed how *Oralmans* maintained their distinct identities of their places of origin. Instead of being seen as “fully” Kazakhs, they were seen as “Uzbeks”, “Chinese” or “Mongolians” (that is Kazakhs from Uzbekistan, China, Mongolia) by their fellow countrymen. In this context, especially those *Oralmans* from Mongolia who do not speak Russian in a context in which Russian has retained its status as the workplace language, are confined to remain an underprivileged community, with close community ties (strong intermarriage and residential proximity), poor education, bad jobs, and meagre perspectives of social mobility.

After arriving in the 1990s to fill the demographic vacuum in rural areas left by the out-migrating Germans and Russians, the *Oralmans* from Mongolia made the houses left empty their own homes and were integrated into the reformed agricultural joint stock companies (formerly collectively owned agricultural farms: sovkhozes and kolkhozes). But with market-oriented land reforms (Diener 2005b: 338), the former collective lands were divided up among a few large family landholdings. Typically, the new owners were local Kazakhs with no connections to the *Oralmans* communities. Since then, for the vast rural majority, there were no jobs available and many resettled *Oralmans*, once welfare support ended, had to move again in order to sustain their livelihoods. Many of them ended up in precarious, poorly paid, unskilled and dangerous jobs in construction or in heavy industry places, such as the Temirtau steel plant near Karaganda, as temporarily and precariously employed unskilled contract workers (Trevisani 2015; 2018).

In such kind of industrial workplaces, tensions between *Oralmans* and Soviet-educated Russians were widespread and had to be seen against the background of the growing role of ethnicity in labour inequality in Kazakhstan. After the early years of economic hardship, sustained economic growth, mainly driven by rising oil prices and production, eventually lifted the country from the economic hardship of the early years of independence. Over this period, the ruling elite amassed power and economic privilege at the expense of ordinary people thanks to connections and patronage networks (Schatz 2004). This process also coincided with

intense growth of socio-economic disparities, that triggered sustained pressure on inter-ethnic relations by engendering processes of ethnic competition in a context in which a person's ethnic affiliation became meaningful resource for accessing jobs, particularly in the public sector and in powerful positions (Dave 2007: 155-160; Nazpary 2002; Keskuela 2018). A less regarded aspect of this dynamic is the fact that ethnic competition was also present in lowly regarded and remunerated jobs, such as those available to migrant labourers in the steel industry. Confronted with strong out-migration of non-Kazakhs to Russia and Germany, and with the growing presence of *Oralmans* who do not know Russian, Russian speaking groups in Kazakhstan's industrial communities feel threatened by what they perceive as a foreign infiltration. In their perception, they were the ones who came first to the Soviet town and deservedly "own" it. However, their cultural and demographic majority position is now eroding and many Russian speaking groups feel alarmed by the growing presence of the Kazakh language, which they do not know.

In recurring narratives collected among industrial workers in Temirtau, stereotypical views of the *Oralmans* abound. In such narratives, *Oralman* workers are portrayed as lacking skills, with a proclivity to theft and poor work morale. *Oralmans* are also resented by other workers since they are putting pressure on the more protected jobs and wages of the regular factory workers. On the other side, Kazakh migrants tend to feel betrayed by what, by virtue of the president's call, they see as their just place in the country. They are resenting "Russian workers" for their more protected and better paid jobs, their haughtiness, and supposed wealth and privileges vis-à-vis their own endured poverty and hardship. In Kazakhstan, such tensions are common among all those industrial communities in which an idealized memory of the Soviet hey-days is being kept by workers. But on the lower rung of the labour hierarchy, the situation of economic uncertainty and difficulty clearly amplifies tensions among workers of different nationalities. As workers of different nationalities increasingly compete for their jobs, competition between workers becomes ethnically connoted and triggers a "race to the bottom" that contributes generating and perpetuating labour precarity and fragmentation (Hann and Parry 2018), ultimately also ending up strengthening ethnic difference and diffidence.

Conclusion

Oralmans benefit from a government program that supports their “repatriation” to what in government parlance is called their “ancestral homeland” (Diener 2005a), but in practice, their interests and well-being are ignored. Despite subsidies and relocation support, many *Oralmans* in depressed rural areas find no adequate jobs or means to stay – and simply relocate to larger towns or industrial sites in search for employment. In large numbers *Oralmans* are feeding into a “new” working class (Trevisani 2018) made of younger and poorer workers, who are more precarious, more poorly paid and less skilled than the workers with a long-term (Soviet era) background in Kazakhstan’s industrial cities. Although they have relevance in political rhetoric, in places such as the Temirtau steel plant *Oralmans* are becoming a stigmatized underclass at society’s margins.

In the broader framework of the situation of minorities across the post-Soviet space, the *Oralmans* complicate conventional notions of the roles of minority and majority populations in nationalising states (Brubaker 2011), as they stand for a case in which nation-building and pro-titular nationality politics create an unintended minority: that of the repatriated diasporic Kazakhs or *Oralmans*. In this regard, *Oralmans* make an interesting case for addressing how in post-Soviet nation-building, migratory politics and labour politics intertwine with issues of class, ethnicity and national belonging. On the one hand, the *Oralman* policy has been successful from the point of view of the government in that it contributed to shifting the country’s demographic balance and language in favour of the Kazakh component. On the other hand, as a result of their problematic integration, *Oralmans* ended up forming a new peculiar minority that struggles to be fully integrated into the society of their new homeland. This situation gives rise to particular sets of animosities, grievances and expectations within the communities that have been beneficiaries of the *Oralmans* programme, but also among the Kazakh majority and Kazakhstan’s other nationalities in their perception and dealing with the *Oralmans*. In turn, these tensions are casting shadows on the governmental nationalities policy and on relations between different nationalities in the country.

References

- Alff, H. (2012), *Zwischen Geburtsort und Land der Vorfäter: Die Rolle sozialer Netzwerke von Kasachen aus der Mongolei im postsowjetischen Migrations- und Inkorporationsprozess*, LIT Verlag, Münster.
- Aitmatov, Ch. (1980), *The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- Bremmer, I. (1994), "Nazarbayev and the north: state-building and ethnic relations in Kazakhstan", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17(4): 619-635.
- Brubaker, R. (2011), "Nationalizing states revisited: projects and processes of nationalization in post-Soviet states", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 34 (11): 1785-1814.
- Cerny, A. (2010), "Going where the grass is greener: China Kazaks and the Oralman immigration policy in Kazakhstan", *Pastoralism* 1(1), doi: 10.3362/2041-7136.2010.013
- Dave, B. (2007), *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power*, Routledge, New York.
- Diener, A. (2003), One Homeland Or Two?: Territorialization of Identity and the Migration Decision of the Mongolian-Kazakh Diaspora, PhD Dissertation, University of Wisconsin—Madison.
- (2005a), "Kazakhstan's Kin State Diaspora: Settlement Planning and the Oralman Dilemma", *Europe-Asia Studies* 57: 327-348.
- (2005b), "Problematic Integration of Mongolian-Kazakh Return Migrants in Kazakhstan", *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 46 (6): 465-478.
- Diener, A. C., A, Shalginbaeva, S. A., Beysegulova A. (2017), "Ethno-demographic characteristics, resettlement and clan composition of Kazakhs of Uzbekistan and Karakalpakstan (second half of the XIX century - the 20s of the XX century)", *Farabi Journal of Social Sciences*, [S.l.], 3(4): 50-57. <https://jhumansoc-sc.kaznu.kz/index.php/1-eurasian/article/view/294> (date accessed: 04 june 2022).
- Finke, P (2005), *Nomaden im Transformationsprozess. Kasachen in der post-sozialistischen Mongolei*, LIT Verlag, Münster.
- Finke, P. (2013), 'Historical Homelands and Transnational Ties: the Case of the Mongolian Kazaks', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 138: 175-194.
- Genina, A. (2015), *Claiming Ancestral Homelands: Mongolian Kazakh migration in Inner Asia*, PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
- Hann, Ch. and Parry, J., eds. (2018), *Industrial Labor on the Margins of Capitalism: Precarity, Class and the Neoliberal Subject*, Berghahn, New York.
- Hirsch, F. (2005), *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca-London.

- Kazstat (2021), <https://www.stat.gov.kz/> (last accessed: 4 June 2022).
- Keskuela, E. (2018), "Miners and Their Children: The Remaking of the Soviet Working Class in Kazakhstan", in Hann, Ch. and Parry, J. (eds.), *Industrial Labor on the Margins of Capitalism: Precarity, Class and the Neoliberal Subject*, Berghahn, New York, 61-84.
- Kudrenok, T. (2020), "How many ethnic Kazakhs reside abroad?", Kazinform International News Agency, 30th April 2020. https://www.inform.kz/en/how-many-ethnic-kazakhs-reside-abroad_a3644874 (last accessed 4 June 2022).
- Kuşçu Bonnenfant, I. (2012), "Constructing the homeland: Kazakhstan's discourse and policies surrounding its ethnic return-migration policy", *Central Asian Survey* 31(1): 31-44.
- Kuşçu, I. (2013), "Ethnic Return Migration and Public Debate: The Case of Kazakhstan", *International Migration* 52 (2): 178-197.
- Martin, T. (2001), *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nation and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca (NY).
- Nazpary, J. (2002), *Post-Soviet Chaos. Violence and Dispossession in Kazakhstan*, Pluto Press, London.
- Ohayon, I. (2006), *La Sédentarisation des Kazakhs dans l'URSS de Staline: Collectivisation et changement social (1928-1945)*, Maisonneuve et Larose, Paris.
- Oka, N. (2013), "A Note on Ethnic Return Migration Policy in Kazakhstan: Changing Priorities and a Growing Dilemma", *Institute of Developing Economies Discussion Paper No. 394*, Area Studies Center, IDE, Japan.
- Olcott, M. (1993), "Kazakhstan: A republic of minorities", in Bremmer, I. and Taras, R. (Eds.), *Nations and Politics in the Soviet successor states*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 313-360.
- Olcott, M. (1995), *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edn., Hoover Institution Press, Stanford.
- Pianciola, N. (2009), *Stalinismo di Frontiera: Colonizzazione agricola, sterminio dei nomadi e costruzione statale in Asia centrale (1905-1936)*, Viella, Rome.
- Sadyrova, M. and Amitov, S. (2014), *Migracionnyye Processy v Kazakhstane i social'naja adaptacija oralmanov. Sociologičeskij analiz*, Palamarium Academic Publishing, Saarbruecken.
- Schatz, E. (2004), *Modern Clan Politics. The Power of "Blood" in Kazakhstan and Beyond*, Washington University Press, Seattle.
- Trevisani, T. (2015), "Transformacija industrial'nogo rabočego klassa: metallurgi goroda Temirtau (Transformation of the industrial working class: steel workers of Temirtau)", in: *Materials of International scientific-practical conference devoted to the 90th anniversary of E.A. Buketov*, Karaganda State University, Karaganda, 590-595.

- (2016), “Under Suspicious Eyes: Work and Fieldwork in a Steel Plant in Kazakhstan”, *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 141(2): 281-298.
 - (2018), “Work, Precarity and Resistance: Company and Contract Labor in Kazakhstan’s Former Soviet Steel Town”, in: Hann, Ch. and Parry, J. (Eds.), *Industrial Labor on the Margins of Capitalism: Precarity, Class and the Neoliberal Subject*, Berghahn, New York.
 - (2019), “The veterans’ gala: the use of tradition in an industrial labour conflict in contemporary Kazakhstan”, *Central Asian Survey*, 38(3): 381-399, DOI: 10.1080/02634937.2019.1609905
 - (2021), “Restructuring marriage and family in industrial Kazakhstan: Axes of inequality and conjugality in a former Soviet steel plant”, *Oriente Moderno* 100:2: 200-224.
- Werner, C.A., Emmelhainz, C., and Barcus, H. (2017), “Privileged Exclusion in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan: Ethnic Return Migration, Citizenship, and the Politics of (Not) Belonging”, *Europe-Asia Studies* 69(10): 1557-1583, DOI: 10.1080/09668136.2017.1401042
- Zadyrkhan, Z. (2004), “Russians in Kazakhstan and demographic change: imperial legacy and the Kazakh way of nation building”, *Asian Ethnicity*, 5(1): 61-79.

Cultural Hybridization and Postcolonial Identity

Elina Usovskaya

Introduction

Cultural hybridization is a process that has always been inherent in human existence. However, in the second half of the 20th - the first third of the 21st centuries, it has grown significantly. Several factors have contributed to its increase, including the intensification of migration processes, globalization, democratization, post-industrialization and the digitalization of various spheres of society. The formation of a new type of postmodern culture initiated a revision of the modernist concepts of world order. War, aggression, ideological confrontation were no longer considered acceptable for resolving conflicts. Such a universal paradigm, unfortunately, could not completely exclude regional conflicts and wars in reality, but managed to prevent a global war.

If in 1970 there were approximately 35 electoral democracies, by the beginning of the 21st century their number reached almost 120 (Fukuyama 2019). A special place in this process was taken by the collapse of the socialist system and the formation of new states. Over the past two decades, however, there has been a return to autocratic forms of government and a totalitarianization of culture and public consciousness. This is linked to challenges and threats posed by migration and neo-colonization, and to the problem of civilizational and cultural choice in a number of countries.

At the present time, with the pandemics, Russian aggressive foreign policy, and the invasion of Ukraine, problems of global securi-

ty have stopped to be considered the most urgent. It is turning out that the ideologization of mass and individual consciousness, imperial ambitions, the confrontation of different civilizations with their absolutely short-sighted division-opposition into “West and East”, are more than realistic.

Hybridization, cultural diffusion, transculturation, the emergence of new types of communication and new forms of identity have not eradicated all possible typologies of chauvinistic doctrines, phenomena of discrimination, genocide and racism. In our opinion, this situation can be partly explained by the phenomenon of postcolonial consciousness.

Attention to postcoloniality in the discourse of cultural and other studies has grown steadily in the last decades. Of particular interest are the works of Said (1994), Spivak (1999), Spivak, Butler (2007), Bhabha (1994), Ashcroft (2001), Young (2004), Tlostanova (2020), Oushakine (2017), and Bakhman-Medik (2017). Among Belarusian studies, one should note Akudovič (2008), Černjavska-ja (2006), and Taras (2008), whose focus is on issues of Belarusian identity and culture.

Post-coloniality

Studies of cultural hybridization and transculturation are closely related to the study of post-coloniality. Despite the efforts of scholars, the question of its definition as a concept remains unresolved. At this regard, Canclini (2005) rightly noted the complexity of defining and explaining the concept of cultural hybridization through categories such as identity, cultural difference, multiculturalism, inequality, global, and local.

Despite the vast number of studies on the phenomena of hybridization and postcoloniality, there are quite a lot of gaps in research on postcolonial consciousness, as well as on postcoloniality in general.

On the one hand, postcoloniality is seen as overcoming the colonial past as a negative phenomenon (but not its memory). It is associated with liberation, gaining independence and finding one’s own path of development. The Second World War, and the events of the post-war period, opened up new worlds and cultures, which were previously considered primitive, and are now seen as having their own unique ways of existence and development.

First of all, this concerns the cultures of Southeast and Central Asia, and Africa. At the end of the 20th century, some of these de-

colonized countries were former states of the socialist bloc and the USSR.

Post-colonialism meant a change in socio-political and economic development strategies, and most importantly, in worldview and ethos, actualizing the problem of choosing a cultural and civilizational path. In a way, post-colonialism continued the discourse of decolonization, interpreting and filling it with new meanings. Being a multifaceted process, it also raised a number of complex issues regarding relations between former colonialists and local populations, leading to the necessity to find compromise solutions, including the need to view the actions of the former as occupational.

The transition from decolonization to postcolonialism has not cancelled the relevance of the problem of attributing decolonization. What should be considered its end: the formal transfer of power and all institutions into the hands of national governments? The inclusion of new independent countries in international organizations, primarily in the UN? The mental and socio-economic independence of the new independent countries? This last question, in particular, remains open to this day (Jansen, Osterhammel 2017).

Therefore, political freedom from colonial dependence, although extremely important, does not solve the problem of the 'dependent' thinking syndrome. It is especially difficult to overcome it in conditions of low levels of national self-consciousness, which involve blurred identity, the irrelevance of the use of the national language in everyday life and official communication, an authoritarian type of political culture, multi-ethnicity and multi-confessionalism.

Another essential circumstance is the desire and aspiration of the peoples to be sovereign and independent. Therefore, postcoloniality focuses on the change "in the self-consciousness of societies that have gained freedom, which have been shaped in a new way in the process of processing the experience of not only colonization, but also the violence inherent in colonial relations" (Bachmann-Medic 2017).

Another, third, aspect of postcoloniality is the formation of new colonial dependencies. All empires - the Russian, Ottoman or Austro-Hungarian ones - possessed internal colonies, that is territories and ethnic groups that were forcibly included in the empires' composition and were subject to discrimination, and often genocide.

Currently, the process of re-colonization is gaining momentum,

although it does not look as obvious as before. The colonization of territories of an independent state is quite clearly declared. Examples are the annexation or the creation of satellites, such as the People's Republics of Donetsk and Lugansk (DPR and LPR). It is imperative not to simplify patterns of re-colonization, because they are linked to complex issues and phenomena characteristic of the post-capitalist world, with its features of digitalization, integration and globalization.

As noted above, post-colonization processes are inseparable from cultural hybridization. The essence of cultural hybridization is revealed through the correlation of fundamental processes of convergence and divergence that permeate postmodern countries. Convergence aims at finding common ground between cultural complexes that may belong to similar or different cultures. Divergence is defined by difference of features and characteristics at the level of both close and different cultures and societies.

The balance of similarity and difference, 'native' and 'foreign', influences the nature of cultural hybridization and points to the boundary that separates hybridization from assimilation. Cultural hybridization is a process and result, a multi-component phenomenon in which others join the 'body' of one cultural complex: a configuration is born that preserves the original cultural complex in conjunction with others. Therefore, in a hybrid culture, it is quite possible to complicate identity, and identify several levels in it, as well as a system of values.

Another important issue is the identification of the relationship between cultural hybridization and integration. Discussion of the boundaries between hybridization and integration leads to understanding that they can be relatively independent phenomena: "In principle, hybridization and integration can develop independently of each other without any necessary connection; in practice, they sometimes develop simultaneously, acting as complementary modes, even if they are not functionally related" (Dear, Burrige 2005).

Integration involves the practice and reality of interaction between national-ethnic groups, especially at the borders, 'on the edges', between regions and states. It is a contact that is mutually acceptable for cultures, and which can serve as mutual enrichment through reciprocal borrowing, without changes in borrowers' identities despite geographical proximity.

De-Belarusization

Let's return to the question of post-coloniality and the problem of hybridization in the development of the Belarusian nation.

It should be noted that the decolonial narrative often considers nation building as getting rid of an inferiority complex, as a stage of a 'mirror', as finding one's cultural 'selfhood'. At the same time, it is emphasized that the national idea is only a transitional step towards a more global freedom, an exit to a 'supranational' level. Starting from the 1980s and 1990s, the nation began to be seen as an artificially created phenomenon.

With regard to many former republics of the USSR and, in particular, to Belarus, the categories of nation, nationalism, post-coloniality have acquired different interpretations. The substitution of concepts is explained by the fact that the desire for independence of countries and peoples is regarded as national chauvinism or even Nazism.

This is clearly seen in the example of Belarus and Ukraine. De-Belarusization as an unofficial but real state policy currently leads to the destruction of markers of Belarusian identity and authenticity - language, education, civil society and its institutions. 'Denazification' and 'defashization' are actually means of chauvinism and genocide, which have nothing to do with the fight against Nazism.

The Belarusian nation is an example of a paradoxical combination of cultural hybridization, transculturation and postcoloniality. Ethnicity, like in many other nations and states, is not a priority: for Belarusians, territorial and civic affiliation is more significant.

This means that Belarusians are those who live on the territory of Belarus that have a national affiliation with this country. At the same time, the question of what makes Belarusians Belarusians remains open. The criterion of the national language 'does not work', Belarusian is practically not spoken today.

The values that unite the Belarusians are not clearly formulated. However, as the events of August-December 2020 have showed, democratic, civic values can become a priority for Belarusians because they unite different segments of the population. This has really turned out to be a surprising and exceptional phenomenon in conditions of long-lived authoritarianism.

Deep authentic national-ethnic traditions, assimilated unconsciously and represented in ritualized practices, such as commem-

oration days, holidays of the agrarian-calendar cycle, the hybrid nature of wedding rituals, and the celebration of religious events have been pivotal in creating a strong national identity.

The hybrid nature of the Belarusian culture is due to various factors - historical, linguistic and mental. The Belarusian ethnos formed with characteristics of original multi-ethnicity and intensive cultural diffusion. This concerns primarily the period of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Interaction with Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Jewish, Polish, and Tatar cultures promoted cultural enrichment.

At the same time, the uniqueness of Belarusian language, traditions, and mental cultural field was preserved. Of great importance were the democratic traditions formed in the period of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, in the form of Magdeburg law, self-government, limitation to the power of the Grand Duke, the emergence of a 'constitution' (the Statute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania), and relative religious tolerance. The life of Belarusians side by side with other ethnic groups, the phenomenon of multi-confessionalism (Orthodox Christians, Catholics, Greek Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, Jews) brought about a mentality of tolerance, and the ability to find a common language and avoid violence.

In the second half of the 17th century, and throughout the 18th century, intercultural communication became more affected by Polonization. By the beginning of the 18th century, the Belarusian language ceased to be the state language (the language of official office work and state communication), the magnatery and the middle gentry adopted Polish language and culture. The place of survival of Belarusian became the petty gentry and the peasantry.

The 19th century was a period of Russification, which especially intensified after the suppression of the uprising of Kastus Kalinovsky in 1863-1964. The formation of Belarusian national identity in the form of a National Cultural Revival started at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries. The national renaissance manifested itself in the creation of a new literary language, the appearance of periodicals in Belarusian, the formation of national parties and of a huge number of scientific and educational circles, that supported the independence of the Belarusian ethnic group and the idea of creating an independent state.

After the October Revolution of 1917, a number of national organizations decided to proclaim their own Belarusian state. However, this claim was rejected by the new Soviet government.

Nevertheless, in 1918 the Belarusian People's Republic was created, which was soon liquidated by the Bolsheviks who returned to power.

The Soviet period in the development of Belarusian culture and Belarusians was controversial, and combined periods of renewal and strengthening of national identity, and total Russification and Sovietization. The policy and practice of Belarusianization in the 1920s assured the introduction of the Belarusian language into office work, education, state institutions, periodicals, and so on.

At the same time, in addition to Belarusian and Russian, also Polish and Yiddish were proclaimed state languages of the BSSR, which recognized the poly-confessional, multi-ethnic nature of the republic, thus reflecting a relatively high level of tolerance in everyday communication between different communities. The process of switching educational institutions to Belarusian proceeded at a rapid pace: by the beginning of the 1930s, 89.8% of schools had Belarusian as language of instruction (Taras 2008). Belarusianization ended in mass terror, known in history as counter-Belarusization.

The so-called strategy of decolonization, freedom (from tsarism, imperialism, oppression), supposedly emanating from the Soviet government in the form of Belarusianization, was replaced by Stalinist totalitarianism and Sovietization or, rather, Russification. The state elites were destroyed. Repressions touched different segments of the population, and were the most significant in the USSR in terms of their scale. The 1930s became the time of genocide.

The basis of the new strategy of relations between so called 'fraternal' republics was the cultivation of an imperial Soviet ideology as the successor of the Russian one. At the same time, formally all the republics and peoples of the Soviet Union were declared equal; a festive culture actively demonstrated the uniqueness of Ukrainians, Kazakhs, Belarusians through fairs, exhibitions of achievements of national economies, and film production.

National-Bolshevism, as a specific type of mass culture and consciousness (Brandenberger 2009), showed the features of double-think characteristic of totalitarianism - the formal equality of peoples with the obvious dominance of Russians, who were deemed the elder brother who paid attention and care for Little Russians, Belarusians and other ethnic communities.

A typical colonial, more precisely neo-colonial, doctrine created a fairly stable dependence of Belarusians on Russia, a fear of inde-

pendent development (or, perhaps, an inferiority complex), and a dread of returning to the European space of civilization and culture. This is often expressed today in mass consciousness in the form of statements such as ‘where we would be without Russia?’, ‘Russia is an older brother (... why not a sister?)’.

After World War II, the situation did not improve. The leadership of the republic was subject to repressions: 96% of the heads of city and regional councils were replaced. Belarusians and Jews were dismissed from managerial positions, and replaced by Russians (Stadub 2018).

Russification became even more obvious due to the terrible consequences of the war in the country. The BSSR was the republic in which the resistance (partisan and underground movement) movement was the largest in the USSR, and possibly in the world. Every third inhabitant of Belarus died, thousands of towns and villages were destroyed. Specialists and workers from different territories of the Soviet Union were sent to restore the republic.

The Russian language became the language of interethnic communication. This accelerated the process of displacement of the Belarusian language and culture. Moreover, national features were often equated with peasant, “kolkhoz” people, whose status was socially low in comparison with “Russians”, perceived as the bearers of high culture.

Despite the relative ideological, social and economic liberalization of the “thaw” and de-Stalinization processes promoted by Nikita Khrushchev, there were no significant changes in the Russification of Belarus. This echoed Khrushchev’s ideas about Soviet socialism and communism “the sooner everyone speaks Russian, the sooner socialism will come”. Russification intensified on the background of theses about the merging of different nations into one.

At the same time, the period of the “thaw” became the heyday of art, literature, creating the foundation for future national movements, the democratization of national consciousness, and a post-colonial turn. In 1968 in Minsk there were spontaneous actions of students against switching teaching of social and humanitarian disciplines into Russian. And in 1974, part of the scientists of the Academy of Sciences opposed the Russification of the Belarusian population, the falsification of history, calling for the revival of national culture (Golubev 2017).

The development of post-colonial thinking in the second half of the 1980s until mid-1990s was carried out within the framework of the National Revival and the creation of an independent state

- the Republic of Belarus. Even before the collapse of the USSR, its sovereignty was proclaimed, and a huge work was carried out to decolonize the nation, its history, culture and language.

At the legislative level, this was expressed in the adoption of the "Law of Languages in the Republic of Belarus" (January 26, 1990), in which the Belarusian language was given the status of the only state language of independent Belarus, as well as by the promotion of the "State Programme for the Development of the Belarusian Language and Other National Languages in the Republic of Belarus" (September 1990). The adoption of these legislative measures, as noted by M. S. Evnevič, one of the members of the Commission for the preparation of proposals on the legislative settlement of the status of the Belarusian, Russian and other languages, was "a significant step in the history of Belarus and in the development of the Belarusian national culture (Evnevič 2000).

The process of switching most state and educational institutions to Belarusian was planned for ten years. Financial motivation was provided for teachers who switched to Belarusian as language of instruction (wages increased by 10%). In four years of intensive work, many positive results were achieved.

The number of periodicals in Belarusian significantly increased, most schools switched to Belarusian or bilingual education. In Minsk alone in 1994 the number of pupils with Belarusian as language of primary education was 58% (Antonava 1999).

We deem that strategic tasks for the development of the Republic of Belarus in the context of post-colonialism are: freedom from a complex of inferiority; choice of own national development path; return to democratic traditions and European identity; resuscitation and development of Belarusian language and culture; construction of a national identity based on inter- and transcultural interactions between the different national communities of Belarus.

Akudovič notes that "the foundation on which we relied, rising above the humiliating past, stood on the cornerstones of anti-communism, anti-colonialism and nationalism. Without these two "anti", the third term [nation] was then impossible" (Akudovič 2008).

Unfortunately, the implementation of these tasks to full extent turned out to be impossible. On the one hand, nation building required much more time, on the other, the creation of Belarus on the basis of 'Belarusianness' met to a certain extent resistance from a part of the population that was deeply Russified and Sovietized,

and thought in socialist clichés. The switching of educational and institutional work to Belarusian was often seen as an infringement of the rights of the Russian-speaking population.

In addition, the time of nation building coincided with economic crisis and the collapse of social ties. Most Belarusians were pre-occupied with socio-economic problems: how to survive, how to earn a living. The formation of the nation state was by no means always associated with economic development, democracy, and the European cultural narrative. Motivation took the form of stability, strong power, and order.

Few wanted to endure hardships, lack of gas, heat, food for the sake of future prosperity. Perhaps the Belarusian mental discourse gravitated toward a form of cultural hybridization that did not attach exceptional importance to the Belarusian construct language-nation.

In any case, the election of the president, as well as subsequent referendums, the policy of another counter-Belarusization changed the trajectory of the existence of Belarus, once again placing it in the space between Russia and Europe, the so-called East and West.

Despite Lukashenka's declared support for the development of the Belarusian language, after the 1995 referendum on granting the status of the state language to the Russian language, and, in fact, by the beginning of the 2000s, the language of the titular nation rapidly began to be squeezed out of all spheres of society. If in Minsk in the 1994/1995 academic year, 136 out of 226 schools had Belarusian as language of instruction, in 1997/1998 there were only 15 left (Buraŭkin 1997). By 2017, the number of pupils in schools with Belarusian was only 13.3% (Stadub 2017). Presently there are even less left.

Bilingualism turned out to be in fact Russian monolingualism. A lack of continuity between secondary schools and higher education (in Belarus today there are no universities and institutes with Belarusian as language of education) has plagued the efforts of Belarusization.

Despite constant repressions and waves of Russification, protests have always existed in Belarus. They particularly intensified after the elections of the same president in 2006 and 2010. Alternative, underground culture has achieved impressive success. It should be noted that until 2020, the regime did not pay close attention to modern art practices and the cultural and anthropological work of scientists, which made it possible for an impressive body of social and humanitarian culture to thrive.

The partial liberalization of politics and society, which began around the years 2012-14, linked to attention to national history and protection of cultural heritage, gave hope for a return to the national narrative. The Belarusian language began to be used in everyday life, it seemed that its stage of “under-language”, or language of the opposition, were in the past. In less than ten years, new social communities emerged, that are not associated exclusively with the national context, but are focused on democratic values. This has made it possible, at the height of the pandemic, to cope with its consequences without real state assistance. Solidarity and mutual support have become the main qualities that the nation has shown.

The results of the 2020 presidential election and the subsequent mass protests, which took a variety of forms, once again demonstrated the solidarity and democratic nature of national self-consciousness. Resistance to the regime was of a massive peaceful nature. The behaviour of young and elderly people seemed to echo civil peaceful disobedience in India or the hippies of the 1960s. Its aesthetics corresponded to romantic ideas about the possibility of a peaceful change of power.

Accuracy (before getting on benches, people would take off their shoes, or clean up after protests), respectfulness, mutual assistance, disinterestedness testified to the maturity of society and the nation. At the same time, demonstrations, strikes, concerts, processions, courtyard meetings did not include demands and slogans regarding ‘national’ aspects, language issues or Russification. This was linked to the fact that, from one side, many protesters felt a threat from Russia, which could send troops, on the other, civilian demands were brought to the fore, which once again confirmed the supranational (supra-ethnic Belarusian), transnational nature of the movements against the regime.

The next round of repressions, cruel as never before, mass migration, incessant arrests, violence, *de facto* occupation, the threat of war have now created a state of psychological apathy, depression and perseveration in society, as well as a social group split. There is also a certain return to the syndrome of deficiency and passivity, recoloniality. The ideological machine has already openly demonstrated the country’s readiness to become part of the Russian world. Nevertheless, the pattern and realities of partisan resistance, the sharply negative attitude of Belarusians towards war in general and in relation to Ukraine in particular, prevented the invasion of Belarusian troops, emphasizing radical differences among Belarusians and Russians.

Conclusion

An analysis of the dynamics of the development of Belarusian nation and culture demonstrates phenomena of constant cyclicity, and the unresolved nature of the so-called national question. The latter has given rise to sporadicity, blurring of national identity and consciousness, doubts about the independence of Belarusians as a nation among Belarusians. Apparently, the colonial mental dependence is still surviving, and the economic post-coloniality of the second modernity imposes even more dependencies.

Has the 'project' of independent Belarus succeeded? It is difficult to answer this question definitively and unequivocally. Akudovič once expressed himself rather sceptically about calling the 'Belarusian people' of a country where no one lives, except for historical and literary ghosts and phantoms. And it is quite natural that he did not respond to our call to nowhere. And we disliked him for it and even hated him a little. ... for a while, the 'people' indifferently endured our abuse, and then they took it and moved away from us. And, it seems, forever" (Akudovič 2008: 92).

The building and development of Belarus as a national state based on shared national language and culture has not been implemented. This has been due to a complex of causes, including authoritarianism, the unpreparedness of a part of the Russified and Sovietized population for changes and innovations that require a change of mentality, the irremovability of power, the destruction of the opposition, the hybridity of culture without a system of cultural values.

Cultural hybridization raises many questions in the context of post-colonial processes. Coloniality as a physical and mental recolonization does not lose its significance. Fundamental issues related to discrimination, genocide, the aspiration to live independently and preserve identities, and democratic solidarity have yet to be solved.

References

- Antonava, T. (1999), "Moŭnyja pytaŭni ŭ Bielarusi", *Zvyazda*, 49: 4-5.
 Akudovič, V. (2008), *Kod otsutstviya: Osnovy belorusskoy mental'nosti*, Ministerstvo inostrannykh del, Vil'nyus.
 Ashcroft, B. (2001), *Post-Colonial Transformation*, Routledge, London.
 Bakhman-Medik, D. (2017), *Kul'turnye povoroty. Novye oriyentiry v naukakh o kul'ture*, Novoye literaturnoye obozreniye, Moskva.

- Bhabha, H. K. (1994), *Nation and Narration*, Routledge, London.
- Brandenberger, D. (2009), *Nacional-bolševizm. Stalinskaja massovaja kul'tura i formirovanie ruskogo nacional'nogo samosoznaniya. 1931-1956*, Akademičeskij proekt, Sankt-Peterburg.
- Buraŭkin, H. (1997), "Zmianilasja dzjaržaŭnaja ŭlada. Zmianilasja dzjaržaŭnaja palityka", *Narodnaja volija*, 2 žniŭnia: 2.
- Canclini, N. G. (2005), *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, University Press, Minneapolis-London.
- Černjavskaja, Ju. (2006), *Belorus: štrikhi k avtoportretu* [etničeskij samoobraz belorusa v skazkakh], Četyre četverti, Minsk.
- Dear, M., Burrige, A. (2005), "Cultural Integration and Hybridization at the United States-Mexico Borderlands", *Cahiers de Géographie du Québec*, 49(138): 301-318.
- Evnevič, M.S. (2000), "Da historyi pryniaccia zakona "Ab movach u Respublicy Bielaruš" i jaho realizacyii". *Zbornik Materyjalaŭ II Mižnarodnaha kanhresa 2000*.
- Fukuyama, F. (2019), *Identičnost': Stremlenie k priznaniju i politika neprijatija*, Al'pina Pablišer, Moskva.
- Golubev, V.F. (2017), *Istorija Belarusi zakončilas' adom: ešče odna nastojaščaja vojna i period nezavisimoj Deržavy (1945-2007 gg.)*, Zmiter Kolas, Minsk.
- Jansen, J., Osterhammel, J. (2017), "Decolonization as Moment and Process", in Jansen, J., Osterhammel, J. (Ed.), *Decolonization. A Short History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1-34.
- Oushakine, S. (2017), "How to Grow out of Nothing: The Afterlife of National Rebirth in Postcolonial Belarus", *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences*, 26(2): 423-490.
- Said, E. (1994), *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage, London.
- Spivak, G. (1999), *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA).
- Spivak, G., Butler, J. (2007), *Who Sings the Nation-State? Language, Politics, Belonging*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Stadub, I.D. (2018), "Beloruskij jazyk - serdce belorusskoj gosudarstvennosti", *Sacyjyal'na-ekonomicnyja i pravavyja dasledavanni*, 2(52): 21-31.
- Taras, A., (2008), *Istorija imperskikh otnošenij: belorusy i russkie, 1772-1992*, A.N. Varaksin, Minsk.
- Tlostanova, M. (2020), *Dekolonial'nost' bytija, znaniya i oščuščeniya*, Medlennye knigi, Moskva.
- Young, R. (2004), *White Mythologies. Writing History and West*, Routledge, London-New York.

The Linguistic Landscape of Grodno

Darya Vashkialevich

Introduction

Globalisation and informatization of the society have sparked a vivid interest in the linguistic landscape (LL) as a research subject. Since the situation in the Republic of Belarus has not been well explored yet, it has been decided to examine the linguistic landscape of Grodno, which is an important centre of trade, commerce, and culture, with a rich history and a favourable geopolitical position. For this purpose, the main shopping street of Grodno, Sovetskaja Str., has been taken under examination. The research focuses on the analysis of the urban written language of signs of shops, bars, and restaurants that are located in the main street of the city centre, which offers a rich source of empirical information on the effects of Belarus' changing linguistic policy. The aim of this survey is to explore, via the use of linguistic landscape analysis, the coexistence and the predominance of the languages in this post-Soviet city. Furthermore, this paper examines the different factors that have led to the use of different languages, as well as the impact of the linguistic landscape on social and cultural reality. To do this, the pictures of the signs on Sovetskaja Str. have been collected and used as data, which is analysed in the second part of this paper.

Theoretical Framework

Language is not only spoken and heard but it is displayed in public spaces. It is used in shop signs, food labels, names of buildings, menus, graffiti, public means of transport, ad posters, and billboards. In recent years, a large number of researchers from diverse disciplines have started to consider LL as a wide and rich field for examination, paying particular attention to deeper meanings and messages that are expressed via language in public spaces (Ben-Rafael, et al., 2010: XI).

The term “Linguistic Landscape” was first mentioned in a paper published in 1997 by Landry and Bourhis, in which they defined it as: “The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration” (Landry and Bourhis 1997: 25).

The vivid interest in toponymic markers is due to the fact that besides the informational function that “serves to inform in-group and out-group members of the linguistic characteristics, territorial limits, and language boundaries of the region they have entered” (Landry and Bourhis 1997: 25), they transmit also a symbolic one, which is understood to denote the symbolic power or dominance held by one linguistic community over another. N. Anthony Brown (2007: 4) states that language or languages used on public signs convey a level of ethnolinguistic prestige and status. As confirmation of this statement, the author makes reference to Shohamy (2006): “Shohamy contends that individuals in authority, i.e. governments, municipalities, NGOs, as well as global and local companies alike intentionally convey symbolic messages through signage about “the importance, power, significance and relevance of certain languages or the irrelevance of others”” (Brown 2007: 4). Another compelling observation regarding language policy has been made by Schiffman: “language usage in public spaces can stem from covert policies ostensibly directed at language preservation, but sometimes aimed at expediting the obsolescence of an already endangered language” (Schiffman 1996 as cited in Brown, 2007: 4).

Signs can be placed by public institutions (so-called *top-down* signs), and by private organisations (*bottom-up* signs). Private signs usually show more linguistic diversity than governmental signs (Leere 1989, referred to by Landry and Bourhis), while governmental signs often follow the official language policy. The analysis of

the linguistic landscape can provide us with information about the language used in a specific area, particularly regarding these aspects: whether the official language policy satisfies the needs of the society; whether there are multilingual, monolingual or bilingual readerships in the given area; whether the language on signs outside a shop corresponds to the language used to provide services; whether a foreign language is used to attract people from other countries or give an impression of foreignness, which is very appreciated in this area, and so on.

The concept of linguistic landscapes and their quantitative and qualitative analysis were given by Landry and Bourhis (1997) in their work on ethnolinguistic vitality and the linguistic landscape of Canada, where French and English have been both in contact and conflict for years. In their study, the authors describe the linguistic landscape as consisting of two main functions: informational and symbolic. The representation of language on public signs has become important in the ongoing struggle between the majority and minority languages. In multilingual settings, Landry and Bourhis (1997) investigate the relationship between linguistic landscape and specific aspects of vitality beliefs, ethnolinguistic identity, and language behaviour. Their study includes 2010 Canadian Francophone students. The findings indicate that the linguistic landscape emerges as an independent factor in the individual network of language contacts, and that it is strongly related to the subjective vitality scores. They reckon that the linguistic landscape can be a very important factor in promoting the use of one's own language and, therefore, in the processes of language maintenance and language shift. "The more present a language is on public signs, the more likely it is that this language will be used in certain domains, especially within commercial and public institutions" (Landry and Bourhis 1997: 36).

Ethnic, socio-cultural, religious, and commercial diversity contribute to cultural diversity and also to linguistic diversity. Studies on the linguistic landscape undertaken in different contexts reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity in the usage of different languages when examining the language on signs. For example, Ben Rafael et al. (2006) compare patterns of the linguistic landscape in Jewish, Palestinian Israeli and non-Israeli Palestinian settings in Israel. They report that multilingualism is one of the characteristics of language on signs, either when considering different signs in different languages, or bilingual and multilingual signs. The main languages used in these settings are Hebrew, Arabic, and

English, but other languages such as Russian also contribute to multilingualism. There are important differences in the use of the three main languages in these settings, and the use of Hebrew and Arabic is completely different in Jewish and non-Israeli Palestinian settings.

The use of different languages is also reported in two studies conducted in Asia. Huebner (2006) analysed different areas of Bangkok and reported the use of different languages, including Thai, Roman, and Chinese scripts, but also Arabic, and Japanese. Backhaus (2006) analysed bilingual and multilingual signs in Tokyo, which made up 20% of the total number of signs. The most common languages in these signs were English and Japanese, but in some cases, the signs also included Chinese and Korean and many other languages. Cenoz & Gorter (2006) conducted a comparative study of two cities, Donostia-San Sebastian in the Basque Country (Spain), and Ljouwert-Leeuwarden in Friesland (The Netherlands). They found that 55% of the signs in Donostia-San Sebastian, and 44% of the signs in Ljouwert-Leeuwarden, were bilingual or multilingual.

The linguistic landscape usually includes English as one of the languages used in different contexts in different parts of the world. The spread of English, due to different causes, including the important influence of the US in different fields, or historical reasons such as the spread of the British Empire, is visible in the language on signs. At first sight, the use of English in commercial signs could be interpreted as informational, mainly aimed at foreign visitors, but it is obvious that its increasing presence has a strong symbolic function for the local population. The use of English can denote values such as international orientation, future orientation, success, sophistication, or fun orientation. Nevertheless, the use of English can also raise issues of identity and power and can have consequences regarding the balance between the languages in bilingual and multilingual situations.

The process of globalisation is made visible through the presence of English in the linguistic landscape in all the studies mentioned above. For example, Ben Rafael et al., (2006) reported that between 25% and 75% of the items analysed in their study were in English, depending on the specific area. Backhaus (2006) and Huebner (2006) also reported the extensive use of English in Tokyo and Bangkok. Cenoz & Gorter (2006) found that English was present in 28% of the signs in Donostia-San Sebastian and 37% of the signs in Ljouwert-Leeuwarden. The earlier studies on the lin-

guistic landscape also report the extensive use of English. These data indicate that the spread of English is clearly reflected also in the linguistic landscape.

Historical Context

In the 12th century, the territory of present-day Belarus was part of the region known as Black Ruthenia, which in the 13th century was fully incorporated into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL), a former state that included a significant part of the majority of eastern European nations. “The large presence of native Belarusian speakers subsequently played a significant role in establishing Belarusian as the official language of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania” (Brown 2007: 11). Old Belarusian remained the official language of the GDL until it was substituted by Polish one hundred years after the union of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland in 1596 (Ulasiuk, 2011).

After the dissolution of the Commonwealth in 1795, Belarus became part of the Russian Empire. Shortly afterwards, the first written texts in the modern Belarusian language began to appear. Nonetheless, a number of discriminatory regulations pertaining to the language were enacted. For instance, prohibiting the use of Belarusian in educational institutions and banning the production of literature in Belarusian (Ulasiuk, 2011). “In the 18th and 19th centuries the language (or languages) of instruction in Belarusian schools were Polish, Russian or even Latin, and services in churches were conducted in Latin or Church Slavonic. Until 1905, printing in the Belarusian language was prohibited, and no consensus existed on the question which alphabet was proper for the language: Latin or Cyrillic” (Bekus 2014a as cited in Brel, 2017: 69). According to Bekus (2014a), this problem regarding the alphabet was due to the self-identification issue of Belarusians, who were politically and culturally attached to both the East (Russia) and the West (Poland) (Bekus 2014a as cited in Brel, 2017: 69). Giger & Sloboda (2008) state that Belarusian was regarded as a “peasant” language used by rural dwellers (Giger & Sloboda as cited in Brel, 2017: 69). Based on this version of the language spoken in rural areas, a new standard was created, the so-called *Taraškievica*, established by Taraškievič in 1918.

This language policy remained untouched until the 20th century when Belarus became part of the Union of Soviet State Republic (USSR) in 1920s, the period in which a “literary language and cul-

tural revitalization” had begun (Ulasiuk, 2011). Belarusian became one of the four official languages of the Soviet Union and the primary language used in newspapers and literature in Belarus. One decade later the situation changed once again. With the 1933 reform, a new literary standard (Narkomovka) was adopted, replacing the Taraškievica version. “When the Soviet Union collapsed, the nationally conscious intelligentsia claimed that Narkomovka (standard Belarusian) was an artificial creation of the Soviet regime, having been Russified by making it significantly resemble the Russian language in terms of grammar, syntax and word use, and that it was necessary to return to Taraškievica” (Ioffe as cited in Brel, 2017: 69).

In 1990, BSSR¹ passed a new language law that made Belarusian the sole official language, reserving Russian for use in communications with people from other parts of the Soviet Bloc (Ulasiuk, 2011). The purpose of the Law on Language was to expand its use in an effort to restore its status as a major language and protect it after decades of marginalisation (Ulasiuk, 2011).

Creators of the law understood that the linguistic situation in Belarus would not change overnight, and “adopted an accommodative approach towards language acquisition [the approach stipulated that] Belarusian would become the language of science, culture, and the media within three years; the language of congresses, conferences, and state decrees within three to five years; of business within five years, and for legal matters within a decade” (Ulasiuk as cited in Brel, 2017: 70).

There was a discernible shift towards the Belarusian language in the school system², but there was little or no attempt to implement the legislation elsewhere; firstly, because no institutions had been formed to deal with language issues; and secondly, because there were no sanctions for those who violated the law (Ulasiuk, 2011).

The possibilities of Belarusian recovering its status as a dominant language were further diminished when the new constitution took effect in March 1994. According to the Constitution, Russian might even be used for domestic interethnic communication. It

1 Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. For nearly 70 years, until 1991, it was one of the 15 component republics of the USSR. Belarus became an independent nation on August 25, 1991, after the conclusion of the Belaveža Accords on December 8, 1991.

2 Approximately 67% of schools used Belarusian as their instructional language.

also gave parents the freedom to choose the language in which their children would be raised (Ulasiuk, 2011).

After the referendum of 1995, bilingualism was officially introduced in the state. With 83.3% of the votes, Russian was granted “co-official” language status (Brel 2017: 71). The introduction of Russian as the second state language meant returning Belarus to being a predominantly Russian-speaking nation.

Survey area: the city of Grodno

Fieldwork for the study was conducted in Grodno. Grodno (in Belarusian: Hrodna) is the largest city and administrative centre of the Grodno Region. As a survey area, one of the main streets of the city centre, named ‘Sovetskaja’, was chosen, namely Sovetskaja number 1 to Sovetskaja 31 and the opposite side of the street (numbers 2-18) This is the main centre of commercial activities, as well as the site of governmental offices. In other words, the majority of political and cultural institutions’ main offices, as well as government buildings and professional and cultural venues, are located within the survey area. Moreover, the street chosen for the survey is located in the heart of the city, and therefore heavily frequented by tourists and local people belonging to different ethnic groups and social classes. This is an area where a wide range of signs can be found, which makes it a favourable place for the study of the linguistic landscape.

Grodno is one of the oldest cities in the territory of modern Belarus. The origins of the contemporary city of Grodno lie in a modest fortification and a trading outpost, located at a crossroads of multiple trade routes. It was first mentioned in 1127 in the Hypatian Letopis³ as Goroden, while the name Grodno (alongside Goroden) first appeared in 1562 in documents of Grand Duke August II.⁴

The city of Grodno has a strategic geopolitical position. Moreover, it is set in an ethno-cultural border zone. “Here are borders between the states (Belarus, Poland, and Lithuania), the international unions (the CIS, EU), peoples (Belarusians, Poles, and Lithuanians), religions (Orthodoxy and Catholicism), and civilizations” (Shved 2012: 387). Given Grodno’s location and history, it has a substantial Lithuanian and Polish heritage. Also, being situated between

3 Also known as Hypatian Codex. It is the most significant historical source for southern Rus’.

4 History of Grodno City of Belarus, <https://belarus-travel.com/grodno/>

the West and the East, between Poland and Lithuania, members of the EU, and Russia enables it to maintain economic, political and cultural ties with both Europe and Russia.

The city is multilingual and multi-ethnic. It has 357,098 inhabitants⁵, with representatives of almost 70 nationalities (Shved 2012: 388). The largest number are Belarusians (68.6%), followed by Poles (20.4%). Further on, there are ethnic Russians (7.2%), Ukrainians (1.1%) and smaller ethnic groups: Tatars (0.2%), Lithuanians (0.2%), Jews (0.1%), and others.⁶ As a result of the Soviet past, representatives of different nationalities prefer to speak the Russian language to their own languages. Research shows that Russian is spoken more than any other language in the city of Grodno. It is used on the street, in shops, and on public transportation. It is also used at work and in contact with co-workers, with friends, and at home. “Unfortunately, you will not hear Belarusian language in streets, in buses or in public institutions. It mainly sounds in the academic environment, among representatives of intelligentsia and the democratic youth” (Shved 2012: 389).

Objectives of the survey

The process of naming and renaming of geographical features is a response to the cultural, political, and social changes occurring in the country and satisfies the demands of society and the state in the modern era. Due to the importance of geographical names, particular attention is paid to their standardization. The Toponymic Commission of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus was established in 1998. By 1st January 2021, 85 meetings had been held, the outcomes of which led to the assignment of 54 names of recently formed geographical objects. A further 58 objects were renamed and approximately 1000 names of railway objects were standardised.⁷ Thus, the following questions were raised as a result

5 Численность населения на 1 января 2021 г. и среднегодовая численность населения за 2020 год по Гродненской области в разрезе районов, городов, поселков городского типа - https://grodno.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/publications/public_bulletin/index_28101/

6 Национальный состав населения Гродненской области. Статистический бюллетень. Гродно 2020 - <https://grodno.belstat.gov.by/upload/iblock/711/7113bdae3f39a5f719d4280340219b62.pdf>

7 Группа экспертов Организации Объединенных Наций по географическим названиям, Сессия 2021 года, Республика Беларусь. Доклады правительств о ситуации в их странах и о прогрессе, достигнутом в деле стандартизации

of the need to comprehend potential implications of such legislation in conjunction with Belarus' 1995 dual language policy:

- What are the proportions of governmental and private signs?
- What languages are used on signs?
- What are the proportions of monolingual and multilingual signs?
- What are the proportions of the national languages (Russian and Belarusian) and the international language (English)?

The survey analyses private and governmental signs to understand the language policy of the state; it examines the use of foreign languages on public signs to establish how globalising tendencies operate on post-soviet territories.

Survey items

Pictures of all the signs in the survey area were taken in August 2022. In accordance with Backhouse, a sign was considered to be “any piece of written text within a spatially definable frame” (Landry and Bourhis 1997: 66). The texts had to be clearly visible from the street and more or less permanent. The signs with proper names of brands, associations, companies have not been considered. Daily changing menus, price tags, as well as items such as ‘open’, ‘открыто’, ‘адчынена’ stickers on shop windows or windows of business buildings have also been excluded from this linguistic landscape research. The data collection comprises a total of 105 signs. These signs were coded according to the following variables:

- Government or private signs
- Kind of sign
- Name of the shop
- Number of languages used on the sign
- Presence of translation on the sign
- Languages on the sign

The findings of the survey that answer the questions formulated in the introduction are discussed in the next section.

Results

Four research questions have been formulated. The first question concerns the originator or source of a sign. The majority of the

географических названий.

signs are private signs; government signs are mostly street signs and signs of local authorities. Governmental signs make up 24.8 % of all analysed signs.

	Private Signs	Governmental Signs	Total
Number of Signs	79	26	105
Percentage	75.2	24.8	100

TABLE 1: GOVERNMENT OR PRIVATE SIGNS

Such a percentage is rather high if compared to the number of governmental signs in other European cities. These findings are illustrative rather than representative of the linguistic landscape of Grodno. Many governmental agencies and establishments of local authorities are located on Sovetskaja street. At the same time, one of the main streets of the city centre has been renamed many times throughout history, which explains a large number of street signs on historical buildings of the street. The etymology of toponyms is very interesting from both historical and sociolinguistic points of view. One more factor that can explain the relatively high number of official signs in the street is the developing economy of the country and the role of the government in its regulation.



FIGURE 1: STREET SIGNS ON HISTORICAL BUILDINGS OF GRODNO (© DARYA VASHKIALEVICH)

The second question addresses the languages used on signs in Sovetskaja street. The results show that eight different languages are used: Russian, Belarusian, English, Polish, Italian, French, German, and Lithuanian. The governmental signs are written in the official languages, i.e. Russian and Belarusian. Private signs are more linguistically diverse. The prevailing language on public signs of Grodno is Russian. It can be seen on 55 signs of the sample, both monolingual and multilingual (52.4%). The Belarusian language is less frequent on public signs (38.1%) and is used mostly on governmental signs. The most frequent foreign language is English. It is used alone or with the Russian language on 21 signs of the sample (20%). Other foreign languages are less visible in the linguistic landscape of Grodno, and make up 7.6% of the sample.

Table 2 shows that most of the signs are monolingual, while 20% of the signs contain more than one language. Multilingual signs usually display two languages. Signs with three or four languages are rare and there are no signs in the sample with more than four languages. These findings provide the answer to the third question about the proportions of monolingual and multilingual signs.

	One	Two	Three	Four	Total
Number	84	16	4	1	105
Percentage	80	15.3	3.8	0.9	100

TABLE 2: NUMBER OF LANGUAGES PER SIGN

Multilingual signs rarely provide a translation of the same text. Only seven signs of the sample, mostly Russian-Belarusian governmental signs, give a full translation. In most cases, the names of the organisations are given in a foreign language, most frequently English, while details about goods and services as well as working hours, are provided in the native language.



FIGURE 2: TRANSLATION ON A BILINGUAL SIGN (© DARYA VASHKIALEVICH)

Figure 3 is a particular case of a sign where transliteration is used even though there is a wide-spread translation of the given collocation and the English equivalent of this sign can easily be understood by most citizens of the city. In this case the reason for the use of transliteration of an English collocation is most likely to attract middle-aged or even elderly customers, who although lacking a very good command of English, can nevertheless recognise the phrase when it is pronounced. This case is not unique in the linguistic landscape of Grodno. Three more signs where transliteration is used to lend a cosmopolitan feel to the store have been found in Grodno.

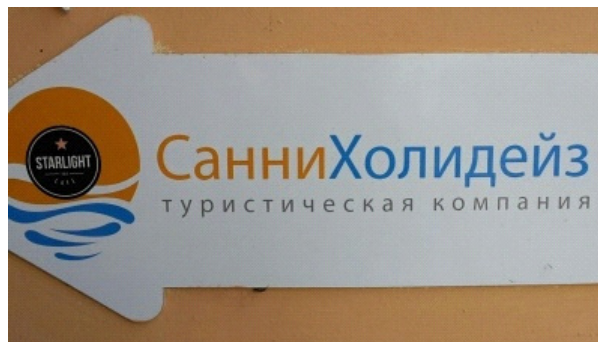


FIGURE 3: TRANSLITERATION ON COMMERCIAL SIGNS OF GRODNO (© DARYA VASHKIALEVICH)

The last question concerns the proportions of the national languages (Russian and Belarusian) and the international language (English) in the linguistic landscape of Grodno. The distribution of languages on monolingual and multilingual signs can be found in tables 3 and 4 respectively.

	Russian	Belarusian	English	Other language	Total
Number	39	33	9	3	84
Percentage	46.4	39.3	10.7	3.6	100

TABLE 3: LANGUAGES ON MONOLINGUAL SIGNS

	Russian and Belarusian	Russian and English	English and other language(s)	Other languages	Total
Number	7	9	3	2	21
Percentage	33.3	42.9	14.3	9.5	100

TABLE 4: LANGUAGES ON MULTILINGUAL SIGNS

The findings show that national languages prevail in the linguistic landscape of Grodno and that the Russian language is more common on both governmental and private signs. The relatively low percentage of foreign languages on public sign of Grodno shows that the country is eastwardly oriented and the majority of tourists come from Russia. However, a growing number of private English language schools, as well as the development of international tourism and commerce, witness a growth of interest of the citizens in the western direction and will probably be reflected in the linguistic landscape of the city in the nearest future.

Conclusions

A linguistic landscape, since it provides people with identity markers, is a useful tool for analysing a linguistic environment and the way people interact as a community. This study shows that, unlike other independent nations, Belarus did not prioritise promoting its national identity and the use of the Belarusian language either in the public or private sectors. The findings point to Russian as the dominant language on both private and public signs. It is evident that Russian is firmly ingrained in the LL of the city of Grodno. Therefore, despite the fact that both Russian and Belarusian are official languages, they are displayed differently on

public signs. This is due not only to the Soviet past, but also to the reinstatement of the Russian language in 1995 as the second state language, which led to the marginalisation of Belarusian in all spheres of life. The usage of the Belarusian language is more frequently found on governmental signs, which are markers of individual and collective identity, and is used by those in power to strengthen the status of Belarusian as one of the two official languages of Belarus. But as Brown (2007) truly observed in his studies regarding the LL on the Minsk metro “yet, the question arises as to whether such outward manifestations reflect genuine commitment to preserving the national language or merely a convenient means of upholding a dual language law in writing” (p. 23).

Monolingual signs predominate in the linguistic landscape of Grodno, but 20% of the cases in the sample display a combination of two or more different languages. While governmental bilingual signs duplicate each other and provide the same information in Russian and Belarusian, the majority of these multilingual signs do not give a translation of the same text but complement the information in different languages. Such signs show instances of code-switching. Apparently, a passer-by is supposed to be able to read all the languages. Nevertheless, the combination of more languages in the same sign does not seem to affect local people, who appear to be perfectly integrated into the diverse linguistic environment.

Governmental signs display only official languages, while private signs are more linguistically diverse. Eight languages of European origin can be observed in the streets of Grodno, with English being the most frequently used on bilingual and multilingual signs. In general, in the linguistic landscape of the survey area, English appears to be the most frequently used foreign language, either alone or combined with other languages on private signs. The presence of English as a global language on signs does not reflect the cultural and linguistic status of the city, where the official and predominant language is Russian. Therefore, it could be said that in many cases English is used exceptionally because it is considered to be fashionable and lends the city an international character. Another reason for the large amount of English on Sovetskaja street is the high number of tourists from the European Union, especially from neighbouring Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia. But it is surprising that preference is given to English and not Polish, Lithuanian, or Latvian, which are very rare or even absent from the sample. This can be explained by the common Soviet past of

some of these countries, which presumes a good command of Russian among their citizens. The large number of English language schools on Sovetskaja street testify to citizens' interest in learning and using English, an objective which would not only improve the tourist industry, but also promote international commerce, foreign investment, scientific progress, and free communication.

References

- Backhaus P. (2007), *Linguistic Landscape: A Comparative Study of Urban Multilingualism in Tokyo*. Clevedon, Multilingual Matters.
- Ben-Rafael, E., Shohamy, E. & Barni, M. (2010), "Introduction: An Approach to an 'Ordered Disorder'". In *Linguistic Landscape in the City*, edited by E. Shohamy, E. Ben-Rafael and M. Barni, pp. XI-XXVII. Bristol, Buffalo, Toronto: Multilingual Matters.
- Brel, Y. (2017), "The Failure of the Language Policy in Belarus". In *New Visions for Public Affairs*. Volume 9, pp. 59-74.
- Brown, N.A. (2007), "Status Language Planning in Belarus: An Examination of Written Discourse in Public Spaces". Brigham Young University. Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages.
- Gorter, D. (2013), "Linguistic Landscapes in a Multilingual World". In *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, n. 33, pp. 190-202. Cambridge University Press.
- Landry, R. & Bourhis R.Y. (1997), *Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality: An Empirical Study*, *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 16:23, pp. 23-49.
- History of Grodno City of Belarus, <https://belarus-travel.com/grodno/> (23.08.2022).
- Shved, V. (2012), "Ethnic Groups, History, and Memory in Grodno". In *Politics, History and Collective Memory in East Central Europe*, edited by Z. Krasnodebski and S. Garsztecki, pp. 387-400. Rüdiger Ritter (Eds.)
- Ulasiuk, I. (2011). Language policies and law in education in post-Soviet Belarus. *ECMI Working Papers* 50.
- Группа экспертов Организации Объединенных Наций по географическим названиям, Сессия 2021 года, Республика Беларусь. Доклады правительств о ситуации в их странах и о прогрессе, достигнутом в деле стандартизации географических названий.
- Национальный Статистический Комитет Республики Беларусь. Главное Статистическое Управление Гродненской Области. Национальный состав населения Гродненской области. Статистический бюллетень. Гродно 2020 <https://grodno.belstat.gov.by/upload/>

iblock/711/7113bdae3f39a5f719d4280340219b62.pdf (last accessed 25.08.2022).

Национальный Статистический Комитет Республики Беларусь. Главное Статистическое Управление Гродненской Области. Численность населения на 1 января 2021 г. и среднегодовая численность населения за 2020 год по Гродненской области в разрезе районов, городов, поселков городского типа https://grodno.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/publications/public_bulletin/index_28101/ (last accessed 25.08.2022).

The Reasons for Ukraine's Independence

Alessandro Vitale

Foreword

Faced with the problems of instability of the new states formed at the end of the bipolar world, in recent years those political independencies - which had forced many scholars of Political Philosophy, Law, Sociology and International Relations to note that the international order made up of states thought to be immovable and unchanging over time was profoundly changing - have again been seen as critical, temporary or even illegitimate. This was particularly evident in the case of Ukraine, even though independence had gained more than 90 percent of the vote on December 1, 1991, voted in by very different ethnicities and regions. The tendency to overlook the reasons for that independence, its historical motivations, the profound causes of the claim of self-rule, of deciding on one's own future, has led to misunderstanding both the complexity of that case and in general the deep dynamics that continue to unfold in a world mistakenly believed to be immobile and composed of rigid and unchangeable political-territorial realities.

Why the Independence?

Beginning in late 2013, after the tragic events of the Maidan Nezaležnosti uprising in Kiev, the escape of President Yanukovich, the annexation of Crimea to Russia, and the beginning of war in

the Donbas, large sectors of international public opinion and the academy were under the impression, also expressed in articles and books, that after all, that political independence, regained in 1991 (the first Ukrainian independence was in 2017), had lost its meaning and therefore could be reconsidered, especially because it was based on politico-territorial features that were the offspring of Soviet administrative subdivisions, retained when the new independent republic was built and transformed into modern, internationally recognized linear state boundaries. Even more so has this belief spread to Russia, where for cultural-historical reasons Ukrainian political independence has never been fully understood, assimilated and accepted.¹ In doing so, however, it was forgotten that that independence had been gained in the course of the struggle and opposition to the Soviet regime, also conducted by the Russian Republic (RSFSR) under Yeltsin's leadership: a political entity that had become the main opponent of centralized Soviet power. Also has been obliterated the reality constituted by the sympathies of Russians - who in 1991, risking in person, had participated in the resistance to the August 19 coup-for the cause of nationalities² and for the reasons of their independence, after

1 In the first half of the 1990s, the leaders of post-Soviet Russia admitted with difficulty that Ukraine could be an independent state (Lepesant 2005, p. 23).

2 Russians had already marched in Moscow in a May 1, 1990, counter-demonstration in favor of Lithuania's independence, proclaimed on March 10 of that year, with Lithuanian flags. As the cover of Gousard's book (2009) shows, with a photograph of that demonstration, now claimed never to have taken place by Kremlin propaganda. Significantly, the Russian Opposition often marched through the streets of Moscow under Ukrainian flags, in continuity with the tradition of the Russian intelligentsia of the 19th century (e.g., Herzen or Černichevsky), which had repeatedly spoken out in favor of the Ukrainian national cause, but also with the positions of early Bolshevism (however interested and tactically used) regarding nationality issues. Cinnella (2017, ch. 20). Until 1935 the *Bol'shaja Sovetskaya Enciklopedija* (*per'voe izdanie*) described Bohdan Chmel'nitskij as a traitor to the Ukrainian national cause and the Act of Perejaslavl, of Ukraine's union with Russia, as "The legal act that began Russia's colonial domination over Ukraine". (quoted by: Avtorchanov 1990, p. 64). In later editions, the Encyclopedia reversed the judgment, describing that Act as "progressive" and the basis of Ukrainian cultural, economic and political development, keeping silent about de-nationalizing policies, the imposition of serfdom, and the ban on cultivating Ukrainian culture and language. Certainly, when the word that Ukraine

nearly a century of totalitarian tyranny.

The political, sociological, legal and philosophical studies devoted for many decades to the preconditions and concrete effects of political independencies (regardless of the reconstruction or building from the ground up of the type of aggregation that became independent), probe not only the political and economic consequences that independences can produce (always a patchwork of exciting achievements and problems, some of them difficult to solve), but, significantly, also the preliminary reasons for those processes that lead peoples aspiring to self-rule, to achieve self-government, succeeding in gaining it and undermining the grip of territorial political unity.

As was the case with other republics that ended up under the Soviet imperial yoke, the Ukrainian case falls into this typology. In other words, the problem is to understand when a group is legitimated to (re)gain independence because this has become indispensable for the protection and defence of its historical, socio-economic and cultural characteristics. When in particular it is a culture threatened by colonizers and dominators of various kinds,³ perhaps for centuries, the self-rule problem has been self-imposed and self-justified by its self-evidence.

Examining even just the history of the twentieth century,

would claim independence spread among the barricades in Moscow between August 19 and 21, as encouragement and incitement to resist came from the Baltic states, there swirled among those Russians not only an exaltation tinged with the giddiness of imminent system collapse, but also with creeping dismay. By the end of the short-lived "Spring of Russia" in the fall of 1993, acceptance of Ukrainian independence had been waning in Russian public opinion, while transversal forms of imperial neo-nationalism were rearing their heads, overwhelming with their activity the voice of that tradition.

3 See A. Buchanan (1994), p. 15. Robert McGee also states, "One of the reasons why a group typically claims secession is to preserve a cultural identity, threatened by the country of which it is currently a part. The suppression of Lithuanian and Ukrainian cultures, perpetrated by the Soviets, is one example among many." See McGee R. (2015, p. 113). Theoretically, even in the Ukrainian case it was not "secession", but regaining an independence suppressed by violence (armed occupation, annexation) and deception by the Bolshevik power in 1919. Independence and liberation from an occupation perpetrated and maintained by violence shift the terms of the issue examined by contemporary secession theorists and make the motivations even stronger.

Ukraine suffered, much more intensely than the other former Soviet republics, an assimilationist onslaught unparalleled in human history and planned phenomena of “deportation-repopulation,” an ethnocultural dilution that transformed it into a new region subjected to the erosion of its original cultures. Ukrainian culture was compressed and marginalized as a result, as well as nationality, which as it is well known, derives from the interaction between subjective elements, perceptions and factually existing elements. The desperate postwar armed resistance against Soviet domination (Rosselli, 2004) succeeded to a very marginal extent in signalling to the world the presence of domination, suffered and rejected, rooted in a long history of immense, incalculable damage to national cultural and linguistic heritage. The attack on Ukrainian identity, as elsewhere, has in fact passed through impressive practices of de-nationalization, devastation and erasure of national historical monuments, forced assimilation, cultural and linguistic, the main instrument of political domination, implemented through compulsory, homogeneous education, aimed at eradicating the memory of what of the historically occurred events it is too dangerous to publicize. Ukraine has possessed its own complex ethnocultural physiognomy for centuries, characterized by pluriethnicity, acceptance and tolerance, and by a formidable coexistence.⁴ The long rejection of compression within an imperial Procrustean bed is also rooted in this historical tradition.

The aspiration for independence and the tenacious struggle to regain and preserve it have always contained within themselves first and foremost manifest motivations of cultural and identity self-defence. What has been done to Ukraine since 1795, in terms of the devastation of culture and language, constitutes a premise of the regaining of political independence as the only possible solution, since it falls fully within the typology of “rectification of past injustices”, contrary to the distinctions made by Allen Buchanan (1994, p. 114).

Today we tend to forget for what reasons Ukraine had claimed and obtained independence, which remain valid today. Those reasons were very clear and consistent with the basic principles of political thought, international law, the Helsinki principles, which the Soviet Union also subscribed to in 1975, Article 72 of the Soviet Constitution concerning the right of *svobodnogo vychoda* (free

4 See Potašenko G. (Ed) (2002). Independence also, in theory, encourages ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural diversity suppressed over centuries of oppression.

exit from the Union) for the Republics⁵ and much more. As then, those reasons today are rooted in the USSR's failed attempts at reform, though pursued for six years. The attempted authoritarian restoration of 1991 had been the last straw in a long history of subjugation, inexhaustible violence, centuries-old ethnocultural annihilation. To not acknowledge the right of men to free themselves from a tyrannical order that cannot otherwise be changed is to be a supporter of a de facto illegitimate regime. The failure to federalize the Union, which had increasingly become a stifling, rigidly verticalized unitary state led by the Party, the failure to rebuild it on a different basis, the difficulty of realizing Solzhenitsyn's project on the federation of the three Union Slavic republics, and the reaction to the Union Treaty, which had provoked the 1991 coup in Moscow, had all been more than sufficient factors and reasons for claiming self-rule and political independence. Moreover, the reasons for independence were rooted and continue to be rooted in the truths about Ukrainian history that have been emerging over the years and have been discovered, even by ordinary people, popularized first thanks to glasnost' and then the collapse of the Soviet Union. Tragic realities, facts of Ukrainian history long consigned to forced oblivion by Soviet censorship, have gradually emerged and revealed themselves in all their terrifying magnitude. Indeed, for years, since 1985, a long history of Ukrainians' subjugation to both foreign domination and continuous prevarications, which occurred for centuries in the Soviet-Russian Empire, has surfaced from the fogs of the past and could be talked about openly: a long story punctuated by real historiographical discoveries, arising from documents and testimonies over the past thirty years, from writings and memories of survivors. In other words, the discovery of shocking truths has also taken place in Ukraine-for example, about the Holodomor of 1932-33, which resulted in 6 million deaths from starvation⁶ - revelations similar to

5 The principle of "free exit", included in the Soviet Constitution of 1924, was later adopted by the Stalinist Constitution of 1936 and later by the Brezhnevian Constitution of 1977. It derived from consistency with the federal principle, also recognized by Lenin, according to which it would not be possible to speak of free and voluntary union if the right to secede was excluded (Nahaylo-Swoboda 1990, pp. 31-35). Tragically and ironically, the accusation of wanting to use that right served in the repressive period of the *ezovšina* as a justification for arrests and deportations (Avtorchanov 1990, p. 154).

6 Ettore Cinnella described it as a vast operation designed to punish

that of the 1939 Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact Secret Protocols for the Baltic States, the disclosure of which was the cornerstone of independence.

The reasons for political independence then extended to the recognition of the full viability of self-government and the possibility of thinking of it as an indispensable source of rebirth, after decades of devastation caused by the Soviet regime and from which the country has not yet recovered. Ukraine is the second largest European country after Russia. It is inhabited by 45 million people and thus is able to meet the widespread preconditions often deemed necessary for the implementation of political independence. It possesses immense economic potential, from agriculture⁷ to industry, despite the de facto secession of the Donbass, a key mining and industrial centre for Ukraine, inhabited for centuries by Ukrainians and other peoples but repopulated with other ethnic groups since the czarist period and now considered lost.

Historical reasons for Independence. Ukraine under the Russian Empire

From the historical point of view, the real belonging of Ukraine to the Russian Empire dates only from 1795, with the partition of Poland and the end of the Polish-Lithuanian Confederation, which lasted, in different organizational forms, as many as four centuries and with the incorporation of the whole of present-day Ukraine into the Russian Empire (except Galicia, then considered, with a stretch, “the Piedmont of the Ukrainians”). The beginning of the

the Ukrainian people, who were rearing their heads and aspiring for independence. (Cinnella 2015, p. 294). Stalin's choice to use famine against Ukrainians resulted in the death of 25 percent of Ukraine's ethnic population and the simultaneous destruction of much of Ukraine's political and intellectual elite in the form of genocide. (Graziosi 2007, p. 361). The casualties of the famines of the period in Ukraine is incomparable to the rest of the USSR, as the government aimed at the destruction of Ukrainian national identity. After all, the famine caused was accompanied by the elimination of all Ukrainian nationalists.

7 It is redundant to describe the immense potential of Ukraine's black lands, the *černožem* (чернозём), among the most fertile and extensive in the world. The economic devastation of Ukraine and particularly those lands in the Soviet period (their productivity never recovered to pre-Revolutionary levels), which forced the Kremlin political class to import grain from abroad, was among the legitimate reasons for independence.

territorial expansion of Muscovite Russia is to be traced back only to 1667, while since the end of Mongol rule only the southern Ukrainian territories belonged to Russia. Under the Tsarist Empire, assimilationist and homogenizing tendencies toward Ukrainians were massive and overwhelming. The mounting Great-Russian chauvinism drastically curtailed the Ukrainian ethnocultural and linguistic space, reducing it to a peripheral, dialectal, folkloric rank and considering it lacking originary and original cultural-historical connotations. During the 19th century there was a genuine imperial disdain for the rebirth of Ukrainian national self-consciousness, well epitomized by Nikolai Kostomarov's masterpiece, *Skotskij bunt* (The Animal Uprising) (Kostomarov 1993).

In the 19th century, the imperial assimilationist strategy of the tsars sought to stifle the development of Ukrainian particularities in the bud: by seducing the local elites, russifying wherever possible, banning the use of the Ukrainian language, suppressing cultural institutes, libraries, independent educational institutions (all of which were considered litmus tests in political thought prior to the French Revolution—for the presence of tyranny, recalling the natural right of resistance), introducing serfdom and suppressing the status of free peasants, taxing them to the point of exhaustion (another element of tyranny, justifying the claim of self-rule). The policies of Peter I and Catherine II suppressed a host of typical (and differentiating) features of Ukrainian culture, starting with the freedoms of the Cossacks, in the course of the colonization of the South. (Boeckh, Völkl, 2009, p. 36). The result to be achieved was *divide et impera*: in fact, they succeeded in dividing Ukrainian society into the opposing camps of the nobility (co-opted into the Great-Russian *dvorjanstvo*) and serfs. The expansion of autocracy also brought with it a rude and primitive conception of absolute sovereignty—as opposed to the “proto-federal” tradition inherited from the Kievan Rus’ past—that would provide the foundations on which, in perfect Tocquevillian continuity, the Soviet state would build (assimilating from the autocratic period “in its pure state” i.e., without Western constitutional exceptions, all imitations of the modern Western state model), in a maximum and coherent evolution (Vitale, 2013), that totalitarian state which was nothing less than an unprecedented concentration of political power, based on an exaggerated and continually looping production of internal political unity and enforced homogeneity, accompanied by disregard for national particularities.

It is well known that in the tsarist period, imperial assimilation-

ism used very specific tools, which proved effective: 1) the seduction of non-Russian elites to make them co-participants in the local government, “by proxy”; 2) tendential Russification, which led to the suppression of the original Ukrainian cultural features, using the suppression of spontaneous schools, the prohibition of the use of the Ukrainian language (Jobst 2010, p. 117), the suppression of Ukrainian national publications, the changing of place names, the transformation of the architectural heritage, assimilating it to that of Muscovite Russia, 3) the interdiction of the local elite from entering schools, academies, and universities; 4) the appointment to key posts in the imperial administration and institutions of elements trusted but mostly belonging to the titular ethnic group in the Empire; 5) a forced demographic change in several regions, with the stimulation of immigration from the East; 6) the use of violence, expulsions, deportations, and summary executions, albeit to an extent not even remotely comparable to those of the Soviet period, but with a kind of ante-litteram Jacobinism, practiced long before the 18th century, homogenizing and penalizing native populations (e.g. to the detriment of the Crimean Tatars and well before Stalin); 7) the introduction of serfdom with the expropriation of land and an overburdening of taxes; 8) the introduction of a multi-decade military service, in imitation of the French model, starting in 1797, extremely burdensome for peasant families.

As early as 1720 the de-culturation that resulted from a decree of Peter I, had provided for the elimination of all Ukrainian linguistic elements from theological literature. The process of Russification then continued under Catherine II, with an uninterrupted policy of cultural assimilation that, in addition to Livonia, Finland and many other lands, fully invested Ukraine. The suppression of the Polish-Ukrainian uprising of 1863 failed to represent, with the heavy cultural bans on Ukrainians and their culture (Valuev circular, 1863), the culmination of ethnocultural discrimination and assimilation under the Empire. In fact, only with Alexander II's famous ukaz of Ems (1876), the culmination of those policies was reached, with a ban on the use of the Ukrainian language, referred to as a “Russian dialect”, a ban on teaching in Ukrainian in schools, the withdrawal of all books in Ukrainian from local schools, and the deportation of recalcitrant Ukrainian teachers, who were sent to the furthest provinces of the Empire and replaced by colleagues seen as “true Russians”. Those who managed to save themselves, taking refuge in Galicia under the Habsburg Empire, helped to fuel a Ukrainian national revanchism capable of spanning the follow-

ing centuries as well as preserving, by revitalizing them, the most salient features of a specific and original culture.

Quite another policy could have been adopted even at that time in the imperial sphere, as the growth of cities and particularly Kiev represented the development of areas in which coexistence between different ethnic groups was the norm. In Kiev, the vast majority of the population was already Russian-speaking, and the Russian language could develop as a lingua franca for the whole country. Even then, after all, being Russian-speaking did not at all mean being on the side of the Moscow imperial government and its impositions.

The Soviet period. The strongest reasons for Independence mature

One of the most emblematic pictures of Ukrainian reality under Soviet rule is represented, among the many existing for decades and of great value, by Abdurachman Avtorchanov's now almost forgotten and no longer cited study, *Imperija Kremlja. Sovetskij tip kolonializma* (Avtorchanov 1990), printed in Russian first in Germany and then in Vilnius, in 1990. In this book the political scientist describes the reality of discrimination suffered by Ukrainians also in the Soviet period, even at the high levels of the local Party leadership (Avtorchanov 1990, pp. 56-81). The cultural policy pursued by the Kremlin appears in all its continuity with that of the tsarist period (although the ideological character and aims of the Soviet period reveal a decisive difference, characterized by systematic planning that exacerbated the Ukrainian question).⁸ The logic of modern state-building in the imperial sphere, with the coherent search for political unity and internal homogeneity, is reflected in the reality of the politics of nationalities, aimed at achieving *slijanije nacii* (fusion of nationalities) (Avtorchanov, 1990, p. 25; Nahaylo, Swoboda 1990), in the fictitious reality of the *sovetskij narod* (Soviet people). In Avtorchanov's work it appears with crystal clarity what the real centralization of power actually entails, the reality of the "apparent federation" that has been consolidating in the Soviet state, in fact dependent on the most extreme anti-federal centralization imaginable, in a hierarchical-vertical system dominated by the Party-State, at the top of the power pyramid and the rigid centre-periphery system. The only exceptions to

8 On the Russification process of the Soviet period, see Kappeler (2009, pp. 236-241).

those policies were those of the 1920s (Boeckh, Völkl, 2009, pp. 87-89), with the policy of ukrainizacija and maintaining the façade of the Soviet federal system. From the 1930s, however, a devastating and de-nationalizing policy began. Ukrainians were nostalgic for the Independence of 1917-1921. They sought to cultivate their own intelligentsia, seen as the cultural guide of the nation, whose historical memory they were caring for. This fact developed in Stalin the idea that the Ukrainian nation would be increasingly difficult to subjugate, and he decided to use the most brutal policies to submit it. A trend, this one, destined to last for many years.

Even in 1972, at the height of neo-Stalinist restauration under Leonid Brežnev, there were frequent arrests of Ukrainian teachers later sentenced to multiple years in prison for teaching Ukrainian in school and other subjects in his native language (Pauwels L., Pauwels T., 2015, p. 158). The Ukrainian language was “purged” of its supposed archaisms and foreign word loan words. The number of magazines and newspapers was drastically reduced. The Ukrainian leadership of the Party was periodically eliminated or reduced to insignificant ranks. In parallel with the attack on churches, the destruction of family, community and ethnocultural ties, the heavy invasion into Ukrainian civil society through atomization, terror⁹ and the systematic use of divide and rule and delation, Soviet power conducted over fifty years a planned and systematic policy of cultural uprooting, of erasing historical memories. Ukraine suffered a tragic cultural humiliation, based on terror (culminating in the extermination of the kulaks, who in countless cases were not rich peasants at all), aimed at producing homogeneity and political integration in the Soviet state, dependence of atomized individuals on the ruler, with a clear project of fusion of nationalities.

Of course, in first place in terms of severity must be placed the physical elimination by stimulating emigration and the forced deportation or murder of all the intellectual strata and the country's most creative elements—a haemorrhage from which Ukraine has not yet recovered.

At the end of World War II, the additional result of the war, with its tens of millions of dead, was to be added to the post-'45 repressions against the anti-Soviet civil war, which resulted

9 It is important to note that terror was not only used in the Stalin period. In 1965 and also later, during the “general pogrom” of 1972, thousands of Ukrainians were imprisoned in the GULag on charges of “anti-Soviet riots” or detained indefinitely in psychiatric hospitals. Some prisoners were released only in 1987.

in shootings, starvation, and, between 1945 and 1953 more than two million Ukrainians deported to Siberian prisons and labour camps, in conditions similar to those of other ethnic minorities, described in immortal masterpieces by writers of the stature of Varlam Shalamov, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Vladimir Bukovsky. The Černobyl disaster, a decisive turning point in the crisis of the Soviet system, definitively highlighted how the Soviet imperial leadership treated the local population.¹⁰ The delays in intervention, the lack of consideration for human lives, the population treated as inhabitants of a colony, ten thousand deaths in the first years after the disaster¹¹ are just some of the causes that would lead Ukrainian ecological movements to converge with the Ruch in their claim to independence (Pauwels L., Pauwels T., 2015, p. 344). To the conditions of generalized immiseration due to an “anti-economic” system, widespread corruption, and internal mafias that stemmed from or thrived in symbiosis with the Party and an irresponsible administration, was added the ecological devastation of a land battered by decades of an untold Tragedy of the commons.¹²

What more was needed to see the claims of independence and self-government recognized?

In the face of all this, it sounds at least as sinister the geopolitical determinism that is still in vogue today, the primary ideological justification for a supposedly “inescapable” imperial recomposition¹³ (and more or less self-conscious variant of the Brezhnevian doctrine of “limited sovereignty”) that also reinglobes Ukraine, going through those interferences that have continued throughout the post-Soviet period, with the extension of the Kremlin’s *longa manus*, feeding parental kleptocracies, electoral manipulations, attacks on the legitimate president, and blackmail capable of exploiting the forced, economic-industrial interdependencies that Stalin designed so that even in the future the right to become

10 On this the pages of Svetlana Aleksievič, contained in the masterpiece *Černobyl'skaya molitva* (Aleksievič 2001), remain illuminating. See in particular the testimony of Vasily B. Nesterenko, (Ital. transl.: 2002, pp. 291-301).

11 Even today, the Putin regime disputes the death figures as a result of the disaster and the wholly inadequate reactions of the Soviet system, which is to blame for the most terrible consequences of the disaster.

12 Hardin G. (1968), *The Tragedy of the Commons*, in: “Science” (1968), vol. 162, issue 3859, pp. 1243-1248.

13 An example of what has been published in Italy along these lines, generally accepted by the public, is Di Rienzo's (2005).

independent would remain a dead letter for the Soviet republics.

Conclusions

What reasons did Ukrainians have for declaring independence in 1991, after the Rada had already voted in 1990 for a “declaration of sovereignty” similar to that announced in the same year by the Soviet Republic of Russia? Basically, the same ones that Yeltsin’s Russian Republic had, for wanting to end with the Soviet Union.¹⁴ These reasons have only strengthened over the years, in the face of a political restoration in Russia, of the obvious continuity with the Soviet period of a successor state like Putin’s Russia, which has long made open apology for that empire, of its abuses and of the autocrats (especially Stalin) who dominated it, and which seeks to erase the past by feeding a nostalgic and *Machtpolitik*-soaked conception, accusing the Bolsheviks of failing to found a sufficiently unified imperial state and of laying the groundwork for Ukrainian independence. Even if there had not been the Ukrainian independence experience of 1917-1921, the motivations for self-government remain today as they had sprung from the overall summarized historical picture and the threads that could be pulled in 1991: a long resistance to an autocratic and tyrannical power. The right to save oneself from a tyrannical regime of imperial rule, from the long series of abuses of power, usurpations, violence, and genocide that have plagued Ukrainian history, cannot be considered a different case than, for example, that which led to the American Colonies’ War of Independence. With the aggravating circumstance that the degree of violence achieved in the twentieth century to maintain totalitarian political rule of the imperial and internal colonial type is incomparable to the methods of colonial rule in previous centuries. The main reason for Ukrainian independence lies in the

14 Even the Russians who were present in Ukraine in 1991 could no longer tolerate the Kremlin’s policies. The Ukrainian declaration of independence on August 24, 1991 was recognized by the RSFSR. Dissident Ukrainians’ relations with Russian human rights activists had lasted since the 1970s. The referendum on maintaining the Union (March 17, 1991), still used today as an example to contend with the legitimacy of the independence of the former Soviet republics, was an absolute farce, according to the testimony of the Russians themselves, who denounced it in many fora, until the August coup (August 19, 1991). All of this contrasts with Kremlin propaganda, which has sought to combat any Ukrainian motivation for political independence.

longstanding anti-autocratic resistance and traditions of struggle against external domination, which prevented its political, civil, cultural, linguistic (Pauwels L., Pauwels T., 2015, p. 160), and economic development. It is no coincidence that precisely these have been strengthening from 2013 to the present. However, the “historical justification” based on the nineteenth-century criteria of ethnocultural and linguistic homogeneity (people, language, etc.), of Herderian heritage (although it is true that Ukrainian nationality has possessed its own identity since the seventeenth century), used to exclusively legitimize political independence, remains historically determined (and dated), collectivist and organicist in its claim to see a people as a subjective entity different from the citizens who are its components. Ukrainians (understood as a much broader people, in the Latin sense¹⁵ than the simple ethnic notion: peoples are formed when the political conditions for their existence are created)¹⁶ took back in 1991 the constituent power that had been taken from them, regaining the power to determine the conditions and forms of their political coexistence and taking

15 As is well known, the Latins separated the notions of *populus* and *natio*. The confusion between these terms emerged instead from the nationalism of the late 17th century, when the idea of people was loaded with ethnocultural connotations placed at the basis of unified (and proclaimed as “national”) territorial states. In the composite and plural societies of Eastern Europe, however, for centuries the national (*natio*) identity alone was considered neither “natural” nor foundational to a polity. Today, however, the “titular majority” in the state tends to regard loyalty to that territorial state as loyalty “to its own nation”. This transformation threatens to blow the loyalty of minorities, who end up viewing rights as pertaining only to the “titular ethnicity”, to look “beyond the borders” to their own ethnic “motherland”, orienting their loyalty toward it, and to conclude, “If the state belongs to Them, it does not belong to Us.” As a backlash, minorities are being accused of being infidels, separatists, irredentists, and the spiral of insecurity is transferred to the interstate level, up to the construction of new borders.

16 For example, consider the participation of Russian-speaking Ukrainians or Ukrainian citizen Russians in the Orange Revolution of 2004. At that time, an aggregate of people with different ethnonational characteristics recognized themselves as a “people”, endowed with constituent power and resulting from an act of breaking an existing constituted political-territorial order, regardless of whether or not they had a common history. The same occurred with the participation of Russian-speakers from the Donbass in street protests in Kiev during the *Maidan Nezaleznosti* in 2013-2014.

it back from the bloody hands of a constituted power that had become tyrannical, bloodthirsty, responsible for the annihilation of millions of lives and the attack on an entire ethnocultural tissue.

It is very difficult to underestimate, no matter how much one tries to domesticate the subject, the relevance of political independence for the preservation of the cultural, linguistic, and artistic richness of a country like Ukraine. The potential of self-government since 1991 has been far-reaching, particularly in terms of culture, recovery of one's identity and preservation of one's historical memory.

The 31 years that followed the second achievement of political independence (1991-2022) now make the arguments used by foreign heads of state and government, politicians and ministers, journalists, historians and economists, who had tried in 1990-91 to theorize the low probability first¹⁷ and the inappropriateness later (including U.S. President J. Bush senior, who travelled to Kiev on August 1, 1991 to prevent this eventuality)¹⁸ of regaining Independence, seem laughable, especially in cultural terms. Instead, one would have to wonder what Ukraine would have been if, like the Baltic countries, it had been able to keep its Independence alive in the interwar post-revolutionary period. Indeed, this country in that period failed to avoid¹⁹ what the Baltic Republics

17 The lack of adequate analytical tools had led, just in 1990, one of the greatest historians of the twentieth century, Eric Hobsbawm, to an embarrassing incident. In his *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, written that year, he regarded with derision the possibility that Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania might become independent countries. See Hobsbawm (1991). It is likely that those considerations depended on the one hand on the lack of knowledge of the history of those peoples and on the other on the totally inconsistent Hegelian myth of the "people without history". That very definition has served to support imperial appetites and continues to be used today, not surprisingly, by the Kremlin towards Ukrainians.

18 President Georg Bush has never been in favor of Ukrainian independence and has always considered it a factor of instability, to be braked by dealing directly with Moscow. (Pauwels L., Pauwels T., 2015, p. 351).

19 Indeed, one must ask oneself what Ukraine would have been, both between the interwar period and in the contemporary times, had it been able to maintain its political independence. The brutal fate of this country-whose independence lasted only two years-was one of subjection to appalling enslavement, permanent civil war, a devastating planned and administered system, which involved the drying up of all sources of production and trade, the destruction of capital (especially agricultural, never reconstituted in Ukraine to this day), the destructive effects of forced

for two decades had instead managed to avoid and is still paying the consequences today, in terms of cultural, civil, economic, and political devastation.

In general, political independence is a possibility to protect discriminated and dominated groups from the homogenizing assault of external domination and/or totalitarian states. Cultures and identities, history and traditions threatened with annihilation, prove to be preservable only through that instrument,²⁰ the only one who can prevent its extinction by remote state powers that demand absolute submission and obedience.²¹

collectivizations, the impossibility of reconstructing property relations, the consequences of the misery and famines of 1921-'22, riots, Soviet repression, artificially created hunger (Holodomor) (Conquest, 2004; Cinnella, 2015), the collapse of civilization under the heel of a violent and parasitic bureaucracy, which has appropriated all wealth and means of production, a police regime, ethnic dilution and alienation, the deportation of millions, and the eradication of an entire culture and its historical and linguistic heritage. Being able to avoid all this in the interwar period probably would have enabled Ukraine to recover its independence in 1991 in a much less traumatic way. The legacy of a devastating seventy-year regime was of course much more destructive in Ukraine than in other later occupied republics (Baltic Republics, Tuva, etc.), and the possibility of recovering the wealth of cultural heritage developed in the interwar period presented quite different characteristics. Consider, for example, the crucial problem of reconstructing property rights to land: an almost impossible task in Ukraine, unlike in the Baltic States.

20 See Buchanan A. (1994). The protection of pluralism had become evident with the recognition of Ukrainian citizenship to all residents in December 1991. The republic did not want to turn into an ethnic state that discriminated against minorities. In addition, all Ukrainian popular movements of the past three decades have been linked to a civic patriotism, citizenship, and not to an ethnic conception of the nation. A patriotism even more stimulated today by the Russian invasion.

21 As is well known, the Soviet period despite the old Stalinist rhetoric on the "national question," had "solved" the problem of nationalities through violence (deportations, forced mass immigration, Russification, etc.) as it aimed to compress them to extinction. See Nahaylo B., Swoboda V. (1990). That historical experience still has much to teach in the current thorny and dramatic Ukrainian issue.

References

- Aleksievič S., (2001), Černobyl'skaya molitva (italian translation: Edizioni e/o, Roma 2002).
- Avtorchanov A. (1990), *Imperija Kremkja. Sovetskij tip kolonializma. Oformlenie Kooperativ "Spauda"*, Vilnius.
- Boeck K., Ekkehard V. (2009), *Ucraina. Dalla rivoluzione rossa alla rivoluzione arancione*. Beit, Trieste.
- Buchanan A. (1991), *Secession. The Morality of Political Divorce from Fort Sumter to Lithuania and Québec*. Routledge, London (Italian transl.: Mondadori, Milano 1994).
- Cinnella E. (2017), *1917. La Russia vero l'abisso*, 2° ed., Della Porta Editori. Pisa.
- Cinnella E., (2015), *Ucraina 1932-33. Il genocidio dimenticato*. Della Porta Editori, Roma.
- Conquest R (2004), *The Harvest of Sorrow. Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*, Oxford University press, 1986 (it. transl.: Fondazione Liberal, Roma).
- Di Rienzo E. (2015), *Il conflitto russo-ucraino*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli.
- Franco A. (2016), *Le due nazionalità della Rus'. Il pensiero di Kostomarov nel dibattito ottocentesco sull'identità ucraina*. Aracne Editrice, Ariccia (RM).
- Goussard A.-M. (2009), *Des murs à abattre. Témoignage d'une militante engagée pour la liberté*. Moscou, Vilnius, Kaliningrad, Jamba, Kiev. L'Harmattan, Paris.
- Graziosi A. (2007), *L'Urss di Lenin e Stalin. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1914-1945*. Il Mulino, Bologna.
- Hobsbawm E., (1990) *Nazioni e nazionalismo dal 1870. Programma, mito e realtà*. Einaudi, Torino.
- Jobst K. S. (2010), *Geschichte der Ukraine*, Philipp Reclam jun. GmbH & Co KG, Stuttgart.
- Kappeler A. (1994), *Kleine Geschichte der Ukraine*, Verlag C. H. Beck, München.
- Kappeler A. (2001), *Rußland als Vielvölkerreich Entstehung. Geschichte, Zerfall*. Verlag C.H. Beck, München (it. transl.: Edizioni Lavoro, Roma 2006).
- Kostomarov M. (1993), *La rivolta degli animali. Lettera di un proprietario terriero piccolo russo al suo amico di Pietroburgo*, Sellerio, Palermo.
- Lepesant G. (2005), *L'Ukraine dans la nouvelle Europe*, CNRS Editions, Paris.
- McGee R., (2015), "Ripensare la secessione", in Lottieri C., Iannello N. (Ed.) *Secessione. Una prospettiva liberale*, Editrice La Scuola, Brescia, 109-135.

- Nahaylo B., Swoboda V., (1990) *Soviet Disunion. A History of the Nationalities Problem in the U.S.S.R.*, The Free Press, New York (it. transl.: Rizzoli, Milano 1991).
- Pauwels L., Pauwels T. (2015), *Histoire d'Ukraine. Le point de vue ukrainien*. Yoran, Fouenant.
- Potašenko G. (Ed.) (2002), *The Peoples of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania*. Aidai, Vilnius.
- Rosselli A. (2004), *La resistenza antisovietica e anticomunista in Europa orientale, 1944-1956*, Edizioni Settimo Sigillo, Roma.
- Vitale A., (2013), "Rossijskaja gosudarstvennost' v sravnitel'noj perspektive: russkaja tradicija i zapadnaja model' stroitel'stva gosudarstva", *Novejšaja Istorija Rossii. Meždisciplinarnyj Naučno-Teoretičeskij Žurnal'*, 3: 20-36.

The Orthodox Church and the Politics of Denationalization in Bessarabia

Alessandro Zuliani

Historical and ethnopolitical background

It is well known that the policy of radical reforms undertaken by Mikhail Gorbachev to modernize the Soviet system did not produce positive results in dealing with the issue of nationalities, to the point that the secessionist movements of the various republics, together with the solicitations of the territorial communities, contributed to the disintegration of the Union. The path to independence of the current Republic of Moldova began in 1989 with the approval of the law that ratified the adoption of the Latin alphabet to replace the Cyrillic one and proclaimed the official status of the Romanian language on the whole territory of the republic (and I emphasize Romanian language and not Moldavian as the latter is a result of the policy, first imperial and later Soviet, of Russification, that pursued the goal of imposing Russian language, culture, religion and economic dominance on non-Russian populations.). The thirty years of independence of the Moldavian state have been marked by serious problems of political order, and consequently also economic, due to the eternal rivalry between the pro-Russian and pro-Western components of society. The fear that the newborn Moldavian state could get too close to Romania triggered, in 1992, a civil war on the left bank of the Dniester that led to the birth of a self-proclaimed independent republic, the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (more commonly known

as Transnistria), not recognized by the international community, but *de facto* not subject to the sovereignty of Chişinău and which is still occupied by a substantial Russian military contingent.

The reasons that led the Russian Empire, in 1812, to annex the eastern part of the centuries-old Principality of Moldavia were essentially commercial and military, as St. Petersburg wanted to secure a port at the mouth of the Danube (Fruntaşu, 2002: 517-518). The initial Russian claim to annex a large part of the Moldavian territory and to reach the Siret River, however, clashed with the firmness of Mahmud II who imposed the border on the Prut River (Țăcu, 2020: 83). The Ottoman sultan, nonetheless, ceded to Russia, assuming a juridical and historical right that was not his, a territory that in area was larger than that which remained under the sovereignty of the mutilated Principality of Moldavia.

By some strange quirk of fate, the treaty sanctioning the partitioning of the Principality of Moldavia and the cession to Russia of the region that was to be named Bessarabia was signed in Bucharest, which would become the capital of the United Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia a few decades later.

Therefore, Moldavia on the left bank of the Prut River came under the Russian Empire, but not because of its intrinsic value, not as an ultimate goal, but rather as a milestone in a series of projects, dreams, and political arrangements that, at times, seemed to regard it as a mere bargaining chip. [...] To declare before the West and, especially, before the Orthodox Christian world in the Balkans the open annexation of a part of Moldavia, the subjugation and transformation into “Russian subjects” of a number of Orthodox Christians - was unpleasant for the liberal spirit of Alexander I at that time. That’s why they only talked about the liberation of a territory from the Ottoman yoke and this territory was given the name Bessarabia, in order not to talk about dismembered Moldavia (Cazacu, 1929: 63)¹.

It is important to clarify that in past Russian historiography, and to some extent in some of the present as well, the idea has been passed around that when Russia occupied the eastern part of the Principality of Moldavia it did, in fact, “liberate” the people there from the Turkish yoke. As if that was not enough, the Russians credited the idea that Bessarabia was an uninhabited no man’s land with no history, thus laying the groundwork for an operation to reset the linguistic and cultural identity of the Romanians who found themselves, after 1812, within the borders of the Russian Empire (Țăcu, 2020: 85-86). This is unequivocally refuted by

1 All translations from the originals in Romanian are mine.

other historical sources documenting that present-day Bessarabia was in fact largely populated by the early 16th century and the presence of Romanian populations occupying those lands is evidenced even before the 12th century. There is documentary evidence of numerous localities with Moldavian place names, and there is no doubt that the Romanian ethnic and linguistic component was by far preponderant. Moreover, the accounts of a French traveller, the writer François de Pavie Forquevaux, who, in 1585, meticulously described the customs and traditions of that region, even pointing out some Romanian words for certain foods, seem to be of great historical value (Boldur, 1943: 28-30).

Historian Alexandru Boldur's words speak volumes when he states that

Bessarabia region represented for Moldavia throughout its history a vital area for the development of the Romanian people. And, of course, in 1812 Russia took Bessarabia not from the Turks, for whom it was of little financial and military interest (tribute and defence of the borders), but from the Moldavians, for whom it was almost half of the whole country and furthermore the most fertile part. [...] The Russian-Turkish treaty of 1812, by which Bessarabia was kidnapped, disregarded the right to life of the Romanian people, reducing their living space, and is a result of Russian egoism, being devoid of any justice (Boldur, 1943: 24-26).

But there is another aspect, of no less importance, concerning the way the Russians pursued the denationalization of the local population:

This land was, *by chance*, populated by some obedient and stateless peasants (with a vague sense of ethnicity), but the population density was not high enough to humanly reinforce that acquisition. Germans, Bulgarians, Gagauz and Russians were invited to Bessarabia and established colonies, especially in the south of the province (which was also colonized by a large number of Moldavians and Wallachians). They were economically privileged in relation to the native population of the province and were grateful to the Empire, remaining loyal to it during the rise of Russian nationalism and later to the USSR during Gorbachev's Perestroika and then to the Russian Federation in the post-Soviet period. It is also important to note that, in addition to the economic and social advantages granted to the immigrant ethnicities, the element that strengthened them had a psychological substrate, which raised the status of the newcomers in relation to the natives: this was the idea of colonization, of "enlightenment" and of "rescue from barbarism" (Fruntașu, 2002: 27).

We should not forget that over the course of just a little more than a century, from 1739 to 1854, Russia's invasions of Moldavia and Wallachia were numerous and all with devastating consequences for the principalities. It should be noted that Russian imperialism, since the XVIII century, aimed at the conquest of Constantinople, behind which should be identified without doubt one of the reasons for the numerous Russian-Turkish wars:

Constantinople has long been the capital for most of the Christian peoples of the East, not just the Russians. Russia could not claim to be the sole possessor of Constantinople. Because of this, annexing new Christian states that sought to share the Byzantine heritage with Russia, the latter became increasingly involved in contradictory and ambiguous ideologies that resulted in the so-called Orthodox inferiority complex. Two principles collided within the Russian imperial consciousness: on the one hand, the religious understanding that the Orthodox peoples within the Empire are equal to the Russians, and on the other hand, the perception that the state is called to be homogeneous, which required systematic and permanent coercion (Fruntașu, 2002: 21-22).

The Moldavian historian Octavian Țăcu has pointed out how the expansion of the empire has fed the instincts of greatness and patriotic feelings of the Russians. The annexations of new territories and new populations, often with languages and cultures very different from the Russian, would have influenced public opinion to such an extent that it became a sort of collective thought that shaped the perspective that the Russians have of the world and of the role that they play in it (Țăcu, 2020: 97-98).

The Orthodox Church in Bessarabia has played the double role of defender of the Romanian ethno-linguistic and cultural identity, but it has also been a far from negligible element of Russification. It is therefore worth recalling the words of the American historian Charles Upson Clark who, back in 1927, wrote:

The preservation of Roumanian as a literary language at all in Bessarabia is due primarily to the Church; and there too the Imperial Government took a hand and endeavored to make the Church an instrument of Russification. That was all the easier, in that Russians and Roumanians both belonged to the Eastern Orthodox Church; where Russia had to struggle with a different Church, as in Poland, the task was far harder. And yet in Bessarabia their efforts with the Church met with similar unsuccess to that in the schools. Their school policy, instead of teaching the Roumanians Russian, landed them perhaps deeper in illiteracy; and the like church policy led to an estrangement between the Roumanian peasant and the Russian priest and church, resulting in a peasantry largely without religion, as elsewhere in Russia - one of the most striking phenomena brought to light by the Russian Revolution

and the Soviet Government (Upson Clark, 1929: 91).

Thus, the annexation of Bessarabia by the Russian Empire takes on the tones of a mission that goes far beyond the mere territorial conquest. In this way, the aim was to realize the dream of a single, great Orthodox kingdom, that of a new Byzantine Empire which is also the “Third and last Rome” (Fruntașu, 2002: 22-23). It is what, very cleverly, Iulian Fruntașu calls the “logic of apology”, behind which is hidden the attempt to justify the subjugation of other ethnic groups and peoples with the mission to unite the different Orthodox communities under the same roof. This does not imply, as is obvious, a passive involvement on the part of the Orthodox Church in this process given that, several times in the past, the Russian Orthodox Church had sided with the political power forcing the conversion of the many non-Christian peoples of the territories conquered by Russia, according to a vicious principle to which the greatness of the state had to correspond to an equally immense church. The Russian Orthodox Church, which for many centuries had been subject to the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, had become autocephalous with the creation of the Moscow Patriarchate and over time acquired increasing prestige and power, to the point where it became a point of reference for many other Orthodox churches. It was Tsar Peter the Great, with the creation of the Holy Synod in 1721, who subjected the Russian Orthodox Church to the state and made it deeply rooted among the masses.

We must here open a short digression on the relationship between state and church in the Byzantine space. This relationship was very close to the point that the Orthodox Church was the state church and this situation continued even after the fall of Constantinople in the states of the Orthodox nations of South-eastern Europe that had inherited the Byzantine tradition. The Romanian Principalities are no exception:

Among these countries, heir to the Byzantine tradition, a particularly important place was occupied by the Romanian states. The territories on which the Romanian states were formed in ancient times have known Eastern Christianity, hence of Greek Rite. The Latin origin and the Orthodox faith have created a people north of the Danube with a special destiny, the Romanian people (Wallachian) (Cemîrtan, 2020: 19).

And it is precisely here that the issue of Bessarabia comes into play, since Russian historiography denies the continuity and the

integrity of the history of that region, thus laying the groundwork for the process that led to the denial of the real national characters of the Bessarabians and to the creation of a Moldavian linguistic and national identity as opposed to the Romanian one. This clashes with the irrefutable historical reality that establishes the loyalty of all Romanians of the ancient Principality of Moldavia, including the region now known as Bessarabia, to both the Romance identity of their language and the Orthodox faith.

The Orthodox Church and the ethnolinguistic issue

Petru Cazacu states that, from the point of view of the ecclesiastical administration, in 1812 the entire territory of Bessarabia belonged to the Metropolis of Moldavia (Cazacu, 1929: 124). Ion Nistor is more accurate by specifying that while the districts of Bălți and Orhei were directly subject to the Metropolis which had its seat in Iași, the districts of Greceni, Codru, Hotărniceni, Lăpușna and Soroca were part of the Diocese of Huși, while the Bugeac territories were subject to the Metropolis of Proilavia (Nistor, 2017: 238). Over and above these details, we must certainly agree with Cazacu when he states that the transfer of these episcopal sees under the jurisdiction of the Holy Synod of St. Petersburg occurred in clear violation of ecclesiastical canons. However, we shall start from the beginning and that is when, in 1806, yet another Russo-Turkish War broke out caused by the dismissal by the Turks of the rulers of the Romanian principalities, Alexandru Moruzi in Moldavia and Constantin Ypsilanti in Wallachia. On November 29, 1806, the capital of the Principality of Moldavia, Iași, was occupied by the Russians (Arnăutu, 2016: 58). The occupation of the Romanian principalities led Tsar Alexander I, in a step beyond his jurisdiction, to appoint as head of the Orthodox Church of Wallachia and Moldavia Metropolitan Gavriil Bănulescu-Bodoni, who, upon the withdrawal of the Russian troops in 1812, elected his residence in Chișinău, the capital of the new Russian province, thus becoming archdeacon of the Russian Orthodox Church of Bessarabia.

A trusted man of the tsar and a figure respected by Russia's highest church authorities, Gavriil Bănulescu-Bodoni had the great task of taking the reins of a religious community that had completely severed all contact with the "mother" church. An undisputed quality of this key figure in Bessarabia in the early years of Russian rule was undoubtedly his foresight. He sensed that the issue of Rus-

sification could not be solved quickly, but on the contrary would take a long time and therefore the first, necessary reforms in order to align the province with the new imperial administration would have to be done while keeping Romanian in use. It was, first and foremost, a matter of supplying churches and monasteries with at least the books needed for divine services and catechism: the only printing press was the one in Iași, which, however, was totally unable to cope with the demand, not to mention the difficulties introduced by the new border on the Prut that prevented the free movement of goods and people (Upton Clark, 1929: 99-100). Gavriil immediately set to work firstly by translating a prayer book, a catechism and two liturgy books by his own hand, secondly by forwarding a request to the Holy Synod to approve the activation of a printing house for the publication of religious texts in Romanian and Russian: "This church publishing house was of the utmost importance to the inarticulate Roumanian peasantry for the preservation of a national consciousness and their mother-tongue" (Upton Clark, 1929: 100). Moreover, the Metropolitan founded in Chișinău, in 1813, a seminary in which all lectures were held in Romanian, and which welcomed not only young men with a spiritual vocation and destined to become priests or monks, but also those who aspired to a good cultural formation in a context in which there was not yet a secular high school in the capital of Bessarabia. Relevant is the fact that this seminar was also attended by students from Transnistria, indicating that there was a Romanian-speaking population in that region as well. The indefatigable Gavriil is also credited with publishing in Romanian the New Testament (1817) and a full translation of the Bible, edited in St. Petersburg by the Russian Bible Society (1819) (Nistor, 2017: 241-243).

Perhaps in view of Bănulescu-Bodoni's well-known close relationship and subservience to the Russian rulers or, maybe, given the metropolitan's past record as head of the Orthodox Church of the Romanian Principalities during the Russian occupation, his appointment as the highest church leader in Bessarabia was greeted with some consternation in the capital of the now rump Principality of Moldavia where the boyars looked with pessimism at the possibility of any future reunification of Bessarabia with the motherland (Nistor, 2017: 241). All that said, Gavriil Bănulescu-Bodoni has gone down in history as a defender of the Romanian language and, more generally, of Bessarabia's Romanianess. His death just precedes the ascent to the imperial throne of Tsar Nicholas I,

which marks the beginning of a new era in Russian politics.

The basic principles of the new policy were Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationalism, the famous triad characterizing the notorious “system of official nationalism” that was inaugurated in Russia by Nicholas I and dominated the great empire for 30 years. For the creators of this system, Russia was the most orthodox country, which had borrowed its doctrine from the pure spring of Byzantium and, therefore, could not have any religious contact with the Western countries. According to these leading ideas, a whole program of measures was created to strengthen Orthodoxy. This program included, first and foremost, the administrative reorganization of all governing bodies in the Church (Popovschi, 1931, 25).

At the express request of Metropolitan Gavriil, in 1818 Alexander I had granted approval of the so-called “Statute for the administration of the region Bessarabia” (*Așezământul obrazovăniei oblaștiei Basarabiei*) which effectively established a regime of autonomy for the province within the Empire. With the coming of his younger brother to the throne, things changed dramatically for Bessarabia: The Statute was abrogated, power was concentrated in the hands of the military governor, and the Romanian language was banned from public acts and replaced by Russian. But that was not all, for numerous attempts were also made to Russify cultural and educational institutions: since 1828, non-denominational provincial schools provided teaching in Russian language only; in 1835 a maximum term of seven years was introduced within which the Romanian language was to be completely banned from all schools of all levels, as well as from courts of justice and from all acts of public administration (Zaborovschi, 1926: 144). On the conditions under which pupils of Moldavian origin were living the school experience there are chilling accounts:

The situation of Romanian students in Russian state schools was very difficult. The teachers were recruited from among the most chauvinistic Russians or the biggest Russophiles. The teaching of Romanian was completely stopped and there were no Romanian books in the libraries. Moldavian pupils were called “Moldavian ram” (*moldovan-baran*) or “Moldavian oxhead”. These pupils were told that the Romanian language is a language for peasants, while the Russian language is the language of educated and cultured men. Nothing was said about Romanians in schoolbooks, and if older pupils asked their teachers, by chance, about the origin of the Romanian nation, they were told that it was of gypsy origin like all Romanians across the Prut. Other teachers would tell them that the Romanians were the descendants of Roman thieves and robbers, exiled here on the edge of the Roman Empire for their thefts and robberies (Popa-Lisseanu, 1924: 22-23).

Upon the death of Gavriil Bănulescu-Bodoni, the leadership of the archdiocese was entrusted to *Archiereus* Dimitrie Sulima, who had been his most faithful collaborator and who pursued many of the works already begun by his predecessor. Educated in the traditions of the Moldavian church and a connoisseur of Romanian culture, Dimitrie Sulima, while Russian, continued the work of publishing and disseminating religious texts in Romanian. He was a conciliatory figure who knew how to lead the diocese with the necessary care and respect for the national and linguistic identity of its faithful.

By enriching and spreading Romanian culture, he sought [...] to bring the Romanians closer to the Russians and to reconcile them, with whom the Romanians had not been at enmity in the past, as they had been with the Poles, but only later on had quarrels and enmity arisen between them, because of the extortions and oppressions that the Moldavians had to endure at the hands of the Tsarist armies, who flooded Romanian countries whenever they waged war against the Turks (Nistor, 2017: 244).

Ion Nistor's opinion is somewhat contradicted by the statements of church historian Mircea Păcurariu, who points out that during Dimitrie Sulima's tenure the Romanian language had been eliminated from the Chişinău seminary and replaced by Russian, a step, moreover, made easier by the elevation of Russian to the official language of the province in 1828 (Păcurariu, 2000: 403).

Sulima remained at the helm of the church of Bessarabia for more than two decades and after his death, in 1843, he was succeeded by Irinarh Popov, also a Russian, and on whose profile there are conflicting opinions. While there are historians such as Ion Nistor who praise his vast culture and broad-mindedness, there are other prominent scholars, such as Petru Cazacu, who speak of a harsh man during whose leadership Russificationist tendencies began to prevail. It is true that a serious issue troubled the Orthodox Church in Bessarabia led by Popov, namely the shortage of priests and especially priests with an adequate education. This was even more problematic considering that seminarians from other dioceses could not be relied upon due to the matter of linguistic incompatibility: indeed, it should be considered that most of the parishes were inhabited by Moldavians and that religious services were held in the Romanian language, which is why any young seminarians from exclusively Russian-speaking parts of the empire would have had been of no help (Cazacu, 1929: 129). During his rule of the diocese, the printing press founded by Bănulescu-Bo-

doni reduced its activity and only few titles were printed, but the publication of the official newspaper of the church of Bessarabia (*Vestitorul eparhiei Chişinăului şi Hotinului*) is certainly worthy of mention, as from 1858 it would come out in a Romanian-Russian bilingual edition, at least until 1871, when Romanian texts were banned.

When Irinarh Popov was appointed archbishop of Kami-anets-Podilskiy in 1855, Anton Shokotov settled in Chişinău. He was a mild-mannered man who was not hostile to Moldavian culture even though he introduced the use of Russian in church services in parishes inhabited exclusively by Moldavians. During his episcopate an important fact occurred that did not see him as a protagonist, except indirectly and in a partially positive sense: in 1867 the programs of the diocesan seminary were changed and the Romanian language was suppressed despite the appeals of numerous teachers and of Shokotov himself who asked, in vain, to maintain the teaching in Romanian at least for the upper classes since “the population does not understand other languages and mass is celebrated in the local language” (Cazacu, 1929: 129).

But new and more difficult days awaited Bessarabia. A turning point in the administration of the Moldavian church and in the policies of denationalization occurred with the appointment, in 1871, of archiereus Pavel Lebedev as archbishop of Chişinău and Hotin. This appointment coincides with another major change for Bessarabia, which ceases to be an *oblastie* and becomes a *gubernie*, thereby losing any glimmer of autonomy. Lebedev is unanimously regarded by historians as the one who unleashed the most violent Russification campaign against the Moldavian population. Russian writer Konstantin Batyushkov witnesses that until 1871 Romanian was still being used for religious services in some monasteries in Bessarabia. After that date the diocesan typography ceased operations, all singers in church choirs were required to take a Russian language exam, and the Romanian language was banned in denominational schools; many parishes were entrusted to Russian or Ukrainian priests who celebrated mass exclusively in Church Slavonic (Păcurariu, 2000: 404). The writer Nikolay Durnovo recounts that all the sacred and liturgical texts written in Romanian were collected from the various churches in Bessarabia and brought to the metropolitan see in Chişinău where archbishop Pavel Lebedev for as many as seven years burned them to heat the palace rooms (Nistor, 2012: 247).

The first decade of the 20th century coincided with a noticeable

revival of national sentiment among members of the clergy and, more generally, the Romanians of Bessarabia; this national awakening was accompanied by the demand in 1905 for the reintroduction of the Romanian language in churches, schools and the Chişinău Seminary (Păcurariu, 2000: 405). Unfortunately, the only concession obtained was the reactivation of the diocesan printing press in 1906. With the appointment of Seraphim Chichagov as archbishop and the sharpening of Russification and denationalization policies, in a climate of deep frustration and alienation of the local population, a phenomenon occurred that profoundly marked the fate of the Orthodox Church in Bessarabia.

The Moldavian language in the church began to be persecuted, and the people, losing this means of understanding the holy scripture and the divine service, became alienated, and it is not at all surprising that in the state of disappointment and great sorrow the people found comfort in a Moldavian monk from the monastery of Balta in the county of Herson, neighboring Bessarabia. In 1909 a large religious movement was born among the Moldavians, the so-called inochentism. This monk conquered the soul of the Moldavian people. He preached the coming of the end of the world and the need to repent sins by organizing a perfect life. Inochentie considered himself the one whose mission was to receive Christ, for whom “the priests trampled him underfoot” (Boldur, 1943: 78).

The pilgrimages of the many believers to Balta soon took on the connotations of a mass phenomenon that could no longer be controlled. This millenaristic movement undermined the Orthodox Church of Bessarabia to the core, thus revealing the latter’s total disconnection with the local population and the Russian government’s own inability to administer the province: “The Romanian nationhood continued to live in the peasantry, where the tradition inherited for centuries was preserved with all its strength and persistence” (Boldur, 1943: 78).

Conclusion

Due to space constraints, this paper focuses exclusively on the first century of Bessarabian church life under Russian rule, mostly because it is particularly significant for an in-depth understanding of how the process of denationalization and Russification of Bessarabia originated and subsequently continued, but also because it is precisely in the 19th century that the clash between the need to keep alive the genuinely domestic character of a church that, inasmuch as Orthodox, is purely national, and the Russian power’s

urge to politically and culturally assimilate the Moldavian population was most severe.

To understand the climate of hostility toward the Romanian language and culture that was experienced in 19th-century Bessarabia, it is enough to recall that two attempts to open a Romanian-language newspaper, respectively in 1833 and 1863, were rejected by the tsarist authorities. It was not until 1867 that permission was granted to print a Bulletin of the Eparchy of Chişinău in a bilingual Russian-Romanian edition, a publication that was, however, discontinued by Pavel Lebedev as early as 1871 (Haneş, 1942: 19). Another, incredible, occurrence is what literary historian Petre V. Haneş calls “cultural smuggling”. There were those who, succeeding in circumventing the control of tsarist censorship, managed to bring Romanian-language publications into Bessarabia from Romania. This was the case of Nicolae Zubcu-Codreanu, a doctor originally from Bessarabia, educated in St. Petersburg and Bucharest, who, wanted by the tsarist authorities for his activities in socialist circles, managed to clandestinely import numerous volumes with the works of Vasile Alecsandri, Dimitrie Bolintineanu, Mihail Kogălniceanu, Nicolae Bălcescu, as well as books on arithmetic, geography, and sacred texts that were distributed among the population. Despite the undeniable difficulties, Haneş asserts that neither the language nor the Romanian cultural tradition was ever really abandoned, and it was in that context of struggle and hostility that the literature of Bessarabia developed between 1850 and 1905 (Haneş, 1942: 19-20).

Faith played a most important role in the lives of the Romanian peasants of Bessarabia, and the church was undoubtedly a bulwark of defence of their language and secular traditions. As we have seen, after the death of Gavriil Bănulescu-Bodoni, the representatives of the Orthodox Church, who succeeded each other in the leadership of the diocese of Chişinău and Hotin, were all Russians appointed directly by the Holy Synod in St. Petersburg. These were, in some cases, prelates who, being more or less familiar with the language and traditions of the Moldavians, did not blatantly propagandize their linguistic and cultural assimilation toward Russian. Nevertheless, they too were tools in the hands of the Russian authorities in the Russification of Bessarabia. More generally, there is a basic contradiction in the governance of the Bessarabian Orthodox Church under tsarist rule: if, on the one hand, a Romanian diocesan typography was established in order to publish and distribute in the province books in the local native language, and

the tendencies toward a religious culture, that couldn't but have national and therefore Moldavian character, remained marked, on the other hand, it cannot but be noted the state Russification policy of transferring Russian priests to Bessarabia, imposing the use of the Russian language in the seminary, and marginalizing the vernacular language to the status of basilect (Cazacu, 1929: 127-128).

In ending this work, we cannot conclude without quoting the words of the aforementioned writer and journalist Nikolay Durnovo who in 1908 wrote:

The Moldavian people of Bessarabia have been transformed by forced Russification into a horde of dumb and ignorant slaves. Such people were forbidden to learn their mother tongue in schools, they were forbidden to pray to God in the language of their fathers. Hundreds of thousands of *desjatin*y of their lands were given to Russian, Bulgarian, German settlers in an attempt to force Moldavians to leave their country. In 1908 more than 855 Moldavian peasant families were forced to go to Siberia to colonize it. These poor people abandoned their fertile fields because they could no longer live in their own country (Durnovo *apud* Alzati, 1978: 590).

References

- Alzati, C. (1978), "A proposito di un'opera sovietica sulla Bessarabia", *Aevum* 52(3): 588-592.
- Arnăutu, N.I. (2016²), *Invazii și stăpâniri rusești/sovietice în România*, Vestala, București.
- Boldur, A.V. (1940), *Contribuții la studiul Istoriei Românilor. Istoria Basarabiei*, Vol. III, Tiparul Moldovenesc, Chișinău.
- Boldur, A.V. (1943), *Basarabia românească*, Tipografia „Carpați”, București.
- Cazacu, P. (1929), *Moldova dintre Prut și Nistru 1812-1918*, Viața Românească, Iași.
- Cemîrtan, R. (2020), *Relația Biserica ortodoxă-stat în Republica Moldova: aspecte istorice, politice și misionare*, Chișinău.
- Ciobanu, Ș. (1923), *Cultura românească în Basarabia sub stăpânirea rusă*, Chișinău.
- Enea, N.M. (1926), "Culte", in Ciobanu, Ș. (Ed.), *Basarabia. Monografie*, Imprimeria Statului, Chișinău, 296-339.
- Fruntașu, I. (2002), *O istorie etnopolitică a Basarabiei*, Cartier, Chișinău.
- Iorga, N. (1918), *Continuitatea Spiritului românesc în Basarabia*, Tipografia ziarului „Neamul Românesc”, Iași.
- Haneș, P.V. (1942), *Scriitori basarabeni (1859-1940)*, Editura Casei

- Școalelor, București.
- Nistor, I. (2017), *Istoria Basarabiei*, Humanitas, București.
- Păcurariu, M. (2000), *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, Editura Sophia, București.
- Popa-Lisseanu, G. (1924), *Basarabia. Privire istorică*, București.
- Popovschi, N. (1931), *Istoria Bisericii din Basarabia în veacul al XIX-lea subț ruși*, Tipografia Eparhială „Cartea Românească”, Chișinău.
- Sînzianu, I. (2009), „*Poporul moldovenesc și limba moldovenească*”. De la anexarea țaristă la aniversarea a „650 de ani de la întemeierea Țării Moldovei”, Editura PIM, Iași.
- Țăcu, O.D. (2020), *O istorie ilustrată a românilor de la est de Prut*, Litera, București-Chișinău.
- Upson Clark, C. (1927), *Bessarabia. Russia and Roumania on the Black Sea*, Dodd, Mead & Company, New York.
- Zaborovschi, I. (1926), “Istoria”, in Ciobanu, Ș. (Ed.), *Basarabia. Monografie*, Imprimeria Statului, Chișinău, 101-153.

