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Language Policy in the Context of Indigenization in the Early Soviet Period (Based on the Materials of the State Archives of Pavlodar Region)

Based on an analysis of bibliographic sources as well as factual materials from the State Archives of Pavlodar Region (hereafter SAPR), this article describes the contradictions in language legislation within the framework of indigenization, both in its ideological and practical aspects. The authors examine how the theoretical inconsistencies underlying the policy affected its practical implementation. In particular, the article addresses the discrepancy between the declared principles of equality and respect for the cultural traditions of national minorities and the actual measures aimed at “Sovietization” and integration into a unified Soviet identity. The study of this policy is aimed at comprehending the historical experience of building national statehood under the Soviet system and the interaction of ethnic groups in a multiethnic state. This will help to fill in the “blank spots” of history and assess its significance for modern Kazakhstan, in the context of shaping a multiethnic society into a single political nation. During the research work conducted at GAPO, materials on the topic of language legislation were studied and systematized. Based on the collected materials, the article investigates regional features of the implementation and management of recordkeeping in the Kazakh language, examines the course activities on Kazakh literacy and language training for both Kazakhs and Europeans living in the region, and analyzes issues of personnel recruitment and training.

Keywords: indigenization, indigenization, national identity, sovietization, Soviet Kazakhstan, socio-cultural modernization, regional history, Pavlodar district, language policy, personnel training, historiography.

Introduction

Indigenization was a significant and multifaceted process of the socio-cultural modernization of the country. The policy, as a complex process of deep transformation, altered value orientations, norms of behavior, institutions, and cultural practices of society, purposefully guiding it toward a new Soviet model. The goal of the policy was to smooth out contradictions between the central government and the non-Russian population of the country. The main objectives included the training and involvement of national personnel in the structures of administrative bodies, the development of public education, the use of the Kazakh language in official documentation, and the encouragement of book publishing and media in the Kazakh language. The study of the linguistic aspect within the framework of indigenization contributes to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of Soviet national policy implementation and its impact on the development of Kazakh culture and linguistic context. A regional focus on the policy will make it possible to identify the specific features of its practical implementation on the ground, as well as to understand how socio-economic conditions and local initiatives influenced the effectiveness of language reforms.

The policy required a comprehensive approach, including administrative and personnel measures, as well as cultural and pedagogical initiatives aimed at overcoming the linguistic and social barriers between the indigenous population and representatives of other ethnic groups. As historical analysis shows, the successful manipulation of mass consciousness is achieved through the skillful use of linguistic means and a specific language policy. Modern methods and techniques of influencing mass consciousness (advertising, public relations) are based on the same principles, as well as psychological and linguistic techniques as the ideological work of the Bolshevik Party throughout different stages of its rule. The Bolsheviks sought to shape public opinion, mobilize the population, and instill certain behavior models through a system of propaganda, agitation, and mass communications.

In this regard, the decree of November 22, 1923, by KazCEC (Kazakh Central Executive Committee) on the introduction of Kazakh in official documentation is indicative. Granting the Kazakh language the status of a state language guaranteed the equality of peoples, legally secured the use of Kazakh in various

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spheres of social life, and made it a tool for intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic integration, serving as an attribute of the sovereignty of national republics and regions [1]. However, in practice, the language policy was accompanied by a number of difficulties, ranging from a formal-bureaucratic approach by the authorities to the reluctance of Europeans living in the region to learn the Kazakh language. Moreover, one of the key tasks of indigenization was to address the issue of the underrepresentation of Kazakhs in state and administrative structures, reflecting the challenges of integrating the indigenous population into the political and social life of the country. To address this issue, a system was developed to recruit and train personnel from both the indigenous and European populations who were proficient in the Kazakh language and literacy. Achieving this was not an easy task; the strong position of the Russian language and culture, especially in major industrial centers of the Kazakh SSR, led to limited practical outcomes of the policy.

Indigenization, as a political and cultural campaign, had regional characteristics that depended on the national composition of the population, the level of socio-economic development, and cultural and historical traditions. Local history and regional studies are among the promising areas of Kazakhstani historical science; research into relevant issues of local history influences national self-awareness and shapes value orientations and civic position, fostering a sense of belonging to the small homeland and patriotism [2].

Materials and Methods

The primary source base of the research consists of materials and documents from the State Archives of Pavlodar Region, among which the following administrative materials are of particular interest:

Reporting documentation. Important information on the main stages of the policy is presented in reporting documents on indigenization, data on professional development courses for Kazakh employees, as well as literacy and language courses in Kazakh designed for Europeans residing in the region. GAPO, F.11, D.24 — “Protocols of meetings at the district executive committee dated October 19, 1928, on the organization of interdepartmental courses for the training of Kazakh personnel at the district level, courses for learning the Kazakh language, and the drafting of an indigenization plan. Memoranda of the district executive committee on the state of indigenization in connection with the transition to the district system of governance of the district and of the hunters’ and fishermen’s trade-cooperative society on work for the year 1928. Information from the district executive committee, its departments, district institutions and organizations, the State Political Directorate and its departments, on the staffing of urban institutions and organizations for the year 1928. In 297 pages”, D. 93 “Documents, directive instructions, appeals, etc. Plan for preparations for the celebration of the 10th anniversary of Kazakhstan and report on the indigenization of administrative apparatuses in the district for the year 1930. On page 77”.

Regulatory documents. The minutes of meetings of the Pavlodar District Executive Committee contain information on the procedure for correspondence between district administrations and Kazakh districts, as well as resolutions stipulating liability for non-compliance with language legislation (GAPO, F. 11, D. 93).

Business correspondence. Petitions and informational memos from institutions in the region contain information about the regulations, methods, and financial issues related to Kazakh language courses for European employees (GAPO, F. 11, D. 22 “Information on the staffing of district and regional institutions and organizations as of January 1 and April 1, 1928. Calendar plan for the indigenization of the administrative apparatuses of Pavlodar district for the year 1927, and information on their indigenization as of July 1, 1927, on the number of employees subject to Kazakh language training during the years 1927–1930. In 160 pages”, D. 64 “Plan for the indigenization of district institutions for the year 1929 and documents (protocols, memoranda on Kazakh language courses). Information on the staffing of district institutions (indicating the number of Kazakhs proficient in Kazakh, representatives of other nationalities, etc.) regarding its implementation in 1929. In 376 pages”, D. 93, D. 95 “Documents (protocols, reports, programs, etc.) On organizing and delivering training courses for Soviet workers for the year 1930. In 259 pages”).

The study employed narrative, structural, and typological methods, which made it possible to examine the internal organization of processes as well as the diversity of forms in which indigenization and its components were implemented. Using a sociocultural approach, the research describes the process of transformation and transition in terms of national identity and self-awareness under the influence of state policies aimed at forming a new Soviet community. The principle of objectivity and the dialectical approach form the methodological foundation of the study. The chronological framework covers the 1920s — the period of most active implementation of indigenization.

Methods of systematization and critical analysis of archival materials were applied. Comparative analysis in a diachronic perspective made it possible to identify distinct phases (the quota stage of 1923–1926 and

the functional stage of 1926–1929), the dynamics of its development (departmental and later city-wide Kazakh language courses and implementation of language policy in rural and urban areas), as well as regional specificities of the policy. Discourse analysis of official documents helped to determine how the narratives justified and represented the necessity of implementing indigenization. The combined use of these methods allowed a reconstruction of the actual content of language policy in the Pavlodar district, revealing its internal logic, contradictions, and sociocultural consequences.

Results

The policy of indigenization became part of the Bolshevik strategy to strengthen power in a multiethnic state and prevent separatism. First and foremost, indigenization, as one aspect of the Bolsheviks' national policy, was intended to involve representatives of all nationalities of the former empire in the structures of power and thus make Soviet power, so to speak, "their own." In this way, the Bolsheviks hoped to consolidate and reinforce the victory of October on the national peripheries of Russia. At the same time, indigenization was closely linked to efforts to address the national question [3]. The creation of autonomous regions for indigenous ethnic groups implied the formation of a new national elite and the inclusion of national cadres in the system of governance. Otherwise, the idea of a Soviet federation based on the national-territorial principle would be rendered meaningless, and indigenous peoples would perceive the new government as illegitimate.

Despite the Stalinist leadership's efforts to regulate indigenization and demonstrate to the emerging Soviet elite that the country's interests required a strict vertical of power and loyal executors, the policy's objectives were effectively implemented only at the republican level. In individual counties and districts, a mechanical approach dominated in the early stages (focusing on fulfilling quotas), later shifting to a formal-bureaucratic attitude. In this regard, the study of the regional aspect of the policy gains research priority, as each area had its specific characteristics due to objective reasons. The indigenization process in Northeastern Kazakhstan, particularly in the Pavlodar district, also had unique features conditioned by the region's ethnocultural, geographical, and economic factors.

The starting point of indigenization is usually considered November 22, 1923, when the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the Kirghiz ASSR (now Kazakhstan) adopted a decree "On the introduction of clerical work in the Kirghiz (Kazakh) language." The decree stipulated the transfer of all official clerical work in Kazakh volosts to the Kazakh language between January and July 1924. Since that period, Kazakh, along with Russian, was to attain the status of a state language, mandatory in all institutions and organizations not only in spoken but also written form. A special body — the Commission under the KazCEC on indigenization — was responsible for overseeing the implementation of these goals and tasks. The activities of provincial and district commission branches began at the end of 1923 [1].

The first changes in language policy in the young Soviet state occurred from the moment of its formation. A decree "On the use of the Kirghiz (Kazakh) and Russian languages," adopted two years earlier in 1921, regulated the equal use of Kazakh and Russian. However, clerical communication between central, provincial, and district institutions continued in Russian, while correspondence with lower administrative units was conducted either in Russian or in the language of the majority population.

The introduction of the Kazakh language into clerical work in the institutions of Pavlodar district began on May 1, 1924. By the early 20th century, Northeastern Kazakhstan was a multiethnic region with a high density of Russian-speaking and other ethnic groups. By the end of 1924, 90 % of the state and Soviet, cooperative, and public apparatus in Pavlodar district consisted of European workers, and institutions operated primarily in Russian. Discrimination and the neglect of the linguistic and cultural characteristics of the indigenous population undermined the authority of local power, which, in turn, affected the Party's objectives. "In every institution and organization of the district, a pattern emerged: a Kazakh arriving from the aul (village) was unable to accomplish anything. Not only were documents in the native language rejected, but even the simplest questions in Kazakh went unanswered, and the individual would leave with nothing. Furthermore, even in exclusively Kazakh volosts, districts, and councils, state administrative bodies, cooperatives, and other institutions remained unresponsive to the needs of the indigenous population" [4; 9]. The problem required a systemic solution to ensure equality and meet the needs of all citizens of the newly formed state, regardless of their ethnic background.

At the grassroots level of the region, measures for language implementation were carried out rather quickly. According to archival data from GAPO, the successful introduction of the Kazakh language into clerical work became evident in Kazakh volost executive committees and aul councils just a few months af-

ter the decree's adoption. In five districts — Pavlodar, Terenkul, Seyten (now Akkuly), and Kyzylagash (now Irtysh) clerical work was conducted primarily in Kazakh, while in Bayanaul, it was bilingual [4: 11].

Regional leadership encouraged positive changes and took measures in cases of language law violations. According to the resolution of the Pavlodar district executive committee presidium dated January 4, 1929, the heads of district institutions were held accountable for violating the rules of correspondence with Kazakh districts, whether correspondence was conducted exclusively in Russian or bilingually [5: 338]. However, specific legal consequences for violations were absent, demonstrating a focus on political influence rather than a fully developed legal framework with clear repercussions.

During this period, nearly all clerical work in urban institutions was conducted in Russian. Initially, the issue was viewed in the context of limited Kazakh participation in administrative personnel and reflected the authorities' desire to increase indigenous representation in local governance. In doing so, they encountered a number of difficulties, including the insufficient training of local cadres, their limited administrative experience, and education challenges. To address these issues, local bodies (Soviet, professional, etc.) followed two main strategies: raising the qualifications of the indigenous population and teaching Europeans the Kazakh language. The first set of measures included sending Kazakhs to educational institutions across the country (Semipalatinsk, Kyzylorda, Alma-Ata) and organizing local courses. By the late 1920s, eight-month training courses were held in Semipalatinsk to prepare clerical workers, accountants, and typists. By 1930, approximately 500 Kazakh youths from the Pavlodar district were sent to various schools, courses, and technical institutions. The professional advancement of the indigenous population, on the one hand, supported the ideas of equality and justice, and on the other hand, served as a tool of political manipulation to create loyal and controllable elites devoted to the Party's ideology.

In 1928, an alphabet reform was conducted across the national republics of Central Asia to simplify and standardize writing systems, transitioning from Arabic script to the Latin alphabet. From the perspective of identity, the Latin script — unlike Arabic or Cyrillic — was seen as ideologically and culturally neutral [6]. The introduction of the Latin alphabet necessitated regular training courses, which were hampered by a lack of materials, poorly trained teachers, financial constraints, and simple unwillingness to participate. Initially, courses teaching Kazakh language and script to Europeans were conducted within city institutions. According to 1927 records, the plan was to teach Kazakh to employees of 58 institutions in Pavlodar district: 82 people in 1927, 203 in 1928, 121 in 1929, and 114 in 1930. Institutions determined the courses' content and methods independently, without central oversight. For example, the 1928 courses organized by the Pavlodar Butter Union had 36 registered participants, with only 24 regularly attending. Classes were held twice a week, each session lasting 1 hour and 30 minutes, divided into speaking, writing, reading, and letter writing (30 minutes each). Similar information was provided by the Pavlodar post and telegraph office [5: 334-335].

Errors and shortcomings in departmental courses became one of the primary reasons for the ineffective implementation of language laws. Poor attendance and formal attitudes led to a revision of course organization. In 1928, the KazCEC presidium decided to establish unified city courses with standardized curricula and guidelines. A citywide school was created in Pavlodar to teach Kazakh to Europeans. Courses were divided into two groups: one for complete beginners and one for those with conversational skills. Course duration was also increased [5: 239]. However, the curricula focused on ideological content designed for official propaganda and collective socialist values, excluding regional specifics like history, culture, and spiritual traditions.

Equating knowledge of Kazakh language and literacy with higher qualifications did not motivate the region's European population to learn it. Reasons for low effectiveness included overlapping with intensive campaign periods, irregular attendance, lack of materials and reference materials, unstable lecturer salaries, and insufficient institutional and union support. In most cases, the courses disbanded before completing the program. A protocol from the May 25, 1928, meeting of the Pavlodar district executive committee stated, "In most cases, attendance wasn't controlled, and there is limited information on the effectiveness of the courses — specifically, how many students acquired written and spoken Kazakh, and to what extent." [7: 71]. These facts reflect low prioritization of language training, the formal-bureaucratic attitude, and lack of proper oversight. Furthermore, the language policy provoked chauvinistic backlash among the European population, which was losing its dominant status in politics and other spheres. This fostered subconscious resistance to learning the Kazakh language and script.

In addition, economic and cooperative organizations were required to fund the courses from their own budgets, demonstrating the central authorities' negligent attitude. According to the 1930 protocol of the Pavlodar district executive committee presidium, 29,000 rubles were allocated to city economic-cooperative or-

ganizations for course expenses [8; 49]. However, local organizations often lacked funds due to the economic crisis of the 1920s – 1930s. For example, the Pavlodar city consumer society (GORPO) submitted a petition stating that it could only allocate 500 of the required 1,000 rubles; the Pavlodar branch of “Soyuzkhléb” reported that their central organization strictly forbade any loans, including the required 2,000 rubles, as all cadre training was centrally administered [8; 64]. This approach undermined trust in government initiatives and reduced overall efficiency, creating financial strain and logistical difficulties.

The insufficient attention of the local press, the poorly conducted educational and explanatory work of trade unions, and a general lack of awareness also negatively affected performance. A 1928 extract from the protocol of the Semipalatinsk provincial executive committee noted that many managers misunderstood indigenization, believing it was carried out by a special body and therefore felt no personal responsibility [9; 64].

Agitation and propaganda were proposed as key instruments for the successful implementation of indigenization. With the strengthening of the totalitarian regime, their importance was expected to grow [10]. Despite its official significance, this aspect was not supported by sufficient organizational preparation or follow-up control by institutional leadership. As a result, many activities remained formalities and failed to achieve their intended goals.

Discussion

Indigenization has been studied by both foreign and domestic historians at various stages of historical development. Soviet historiography (M. Ryadnin, I. Lazovsky, I. Bibin) portrayed indigenization as an entirely successful project aimed at the “liberation and development of national cultures”. However, in practice, indigenization and aspects of the policy were not employed for the genuine liberation and development of national cultures but rather served as tools for constructing a new Soviet type of identity. National and Soviet identities existed in a state of tension, as official policy on one hand encouraged the development of national languages and cultures, while on the other sought to form a unified Soviet identity. This led to contradictions between the proclaimed principles of national diversity and the actual ideological standardization.

Foreign researchers often focused on the contradictions of the policy, such as tensions between Soviet authorities and local elites, as well as the impact of indigenization measures on ethnic and cultural dynamics in the republics. “In non-Russian regions, the Bolsheviks, relying almost exclusively on the Russian proletariat and settler peasants who were in the minority there, often took an openly chauvinistic position toward the local population,” writes Terry Martin [11]. Interethnic dissonance, caused by historical factors, was reflected in the practical implementation of the policy in the regions. According to M. Palat, the forced Soviet modernization often appeared as colonization [12]. Discourse regarding the necessity to overcome the colonial legacy ceased in the 1920s and was not revived until the period of perestroika. The official ideological framework maintained that interethnic contradictions, alongside other problematic aspects of the past, had been resolved for a long time, thereby establishing the principle of “complete equality of all peoples,” wherein “all representatives live, work, and successfully develop their own cultures together.” However, in practice, even the relatively brief policy of indigenization exposed latent conflicts among ethnic groups. This was partially evidenced in the language policy, notably through the reluctance of the European population in the region to acquire proficiency in the Kazakh language. Furthermore, indigenization, conducted under strict ideological supervision, vividly illustrated the discrepancies between the declared ideals of national equality and the realities of interethnic relations.

Domestic historiography, in its historical context, significantly expanded the scope of research on the policy and its components, highlighting linguistic, interethnic, ideological, and other aspects (S.Sh. Kaziev, E.Sh. Burdina, Zh.U. Kydyralina, etc.). S.Sh. Kaziev [13] argues that indigenization was part of an integrative strategy of nation-building aimed at reducing disparities the social and cultural development of Soviet peoples and forming a community of socialist nations based on class solidarity. Zh. Kydyralina [14] notes that in practice, the implementation of indigenization revealed key features of the Soviet system: the ambivalence of power, its declarative and slogan-driven nature, and the clear discrepancy between proclaimed goals and actual achievements. Measures to support national languages and cultures were predominantly formal in nature, lacking sufficient resources and genuine political will, especially at the regional level. A detailed analysis of archival materials clearly reveals these discrepancies.

Conclusions

The declared goals of indigenization, aimed at the development of national languages and national cultures within various levels of national territorial formations, did not receive proper support at the local level. A formal-bureaucratic attitude toward the policy's objectives, the absence of legal accountability for violations of language legislation, and insufficient attention to agitation and propaganda efforts were compounded by the low level of personal motivation among Party and Soviet officials in implementing language policies.

Forced Soviet modernization frequently appeared as colonization, as the Bolsheviks' policy of Sovietization through national forms was essentially directed towards denationalization of ethnic groups. Language policy was used as an intermediate tool to facilitate governance, economic exploitation, and cultural assimilation of various peoples. The denationalization of ethnic groups within the context of indigenization had long-term and profound consequences, leading to the gradual loss of cultural and historical heritage and ongoing issues of national identity.

The ideas of the policy were based on a "civic" identity, comprising national definition existing solely in Soviet form. The civic aspect implied a value-cognitive dimension, realized through patriotic feelings and adherence to the values of the state. Soviet power actively influenced the formation of ethnic stereotypes and the interpretation of national identity through the lens of socialism and proletarian solidarity, which often hindered the genuine development of national cultures and uniqueness.

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Ерте кеңестік кезеңде жергіліктендіру контексіндегі тіл саясаты (Павлодар облысының Мемлекеттік архиві материалдары бойынша)

Мақалада библиографиялық материалдар, сондай-ақ Павлодар облысының Мемлекеттік мұрағатының (бұдан әрі — ПОММ) деректерін талдау негізінде, жергіліктендіру саясаты аясындағы, тіл заңнамасының идеологиялық және қолданбалы аспектілеріндегі қайшылықтары сипатталған. Авторлар саясаттың негізінде орын алған теориялық үйлеспеушілік, оның практикалық тұрғыдан жүзеге асырылуына тигізген әсерін сипаттаған. Атап айтқанда, өзара теңдік пен ұлттық

азшылықтардың мәдени дәстүрлерін құрметтеуге жарияланымған принциптермен этностарды «кеңестендіруге» және біртұтас кеңестік сәйкестікке интеграциялауға бағытталған нақты әрекеттер арасындағы сәйкессіздіктер қарастырылған. Саясатты зерделеу кеңестік жүйе жағдайында ұлттық мемлекеттілікті құрудың тарихи тәжірибесін және көпұлтты мемлекеттегі этностардың өзара әрекеттесуін ұғынуға бағытталған. Бұл тарихтың «ақтандақ беттерін» толтыруға және оның қазіргі Қазақстан үшін полиэтникалық қоғамды біртұтас саяси ұлтқа біріктіру идеясы шеңберінде маңыздылығын бағалауға мүмкіндік береді. ПОММ-дағы ғылыми-зерттеу жұмысы барысында тіл заңнамасы тақырыбы бойынша ерте кеңестік деректер зерделеніп, құрылымдалды. Анықталған материалдар негізінде іс жүргізуді қазақ тілінде енгізу мен жүргізудің аймақтық ерекшеліктері зерттелді, өңірде тұратын қазақтар мен өзге ұлт өкілдерін қазақ тіліндегі сауаттылығы мен грамматикасына үйрету курстарының қызметі қарастырылды, кадрларды іріктеу мен оқыту мәселелері талданды.

Кілт сөздер: жергіліктендіру, ұлттық бірегейлік, кеңестік Қазақстан, әлеуметтік-мәдени жаңғыру, кеңестендіру, өңірлік тарих, Павлодар округі, тіл саясаты, кадрларды даярлау, тарихнама.

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Языковая политика в контексте коренизации в ранний советский период (по материалам Государственного архива Павлодарской области)

В статье описаны противоречия языкового законодательства в рамках коренизации, как в её идеологическом, так и прикладном аспектах на основе анализа библиографического материала, а также фактического материала Государственного архива Павлодарской области (далее ГАПО). Авторы описали как теоретическая инконсистентность, заложенная в основе политики, отразилась на её практической реализации. В частности, рассматривается несоответствие между декларируемыми принципами равенства и уважения к культурным традициям национальных меньшинств и реальными действиями, направленными на «советизацию» и интеграцию в единую советскую идентичность. Изучение политики направлено на осмысление исторического опыта строительства национальной государственности в условиях советской системы и взаимодействия этносов в многонациональном государстве. Это позволит заполнить «белые пятна» истории и оценить его значение для современного Казахстана, в рамках идеи формирования полиэтнического общества в единую политическую нацию. В ходе научно-исследовательской работы в ГАПО были изучены и структурированы материалы по теме языкового законодательства. На основе выявленного материала были исследованы региональные особенности внедрения и ведения делопроизводства на казахском языке, изучена деятельность курсов по обучению казахской грамоте и языку для казахов и европейцев, проживающих в регионе, проанализированы вопросы подбора и обучения работников.

Ключевые слова: коренизация, национальная идентичность, советизация, Советский Казахстан, социально-культурная модернизация, региональная история, Павлодарский округ, языковая политика, подготовка кадров, историография.

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