



## **LANGUAGE POLICY IN THE REPUBLIC OF KALMYKIA: THE STATE AND PERSPECTIVES**

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Language, as it is known is a social phenomenon, mother tongue is the main factor of nation's vital activity. Almost every nation comes across language problems in its history. The world linguistic practice knows successful experiences of restoration and expansion of social functions of languages. That is an effective language policy towards Irish in Ireland, Catalan in Spain, Hebrew in Israel. Language experience of these countries shows how important are the principles of language policy being one of the main components of national state policy. These examples of language revitalization, broadening of their social functions have a lot of in common. The specialists in language regulation recommend to follow principles that are universal, can be applied almost to all languages. But it is necessary to take into account such factors as originality of nations, uniqueness of their languages, history, culture, mentality that must be assumed as a basis of language policy. Correct language regulation is one of the fundamental factors of stability in international relations in the region, because functional interaction of languages it is for the first instance an interaction of ethnicities speaking these languages.

There is an opinion that linguistic process passes more quietly in the countries based on territory principle, more critical in the countries based on national-administrative division. Among such countries is Russian Federation. Russia is a multinational country, there live a lot of nations and function a lot of languages, each language has its own history of formation and development. It's quite natural that languages are on the different levels of development. In Russia there exist old-written, new-written languages, languages without written tradition. Language reform can influence on both aspects of the language: functional and structural. The reform of functional aspect of the language means the broadening of the spheres of its functioning. For this purpose the most favourable conditions are created, that leads to gradual increasing of prestige of the language among language community.

The second half of 80th of XX century is characterized by socio-economic, political, ideological changes in Russia. There started language reforms in republics of Russian Federation, the major tendency was proclaiming the state status for title languages of national republics. From this time there started the revision of language policy of previous years. It led to the acceptance of language laws. First the wave of language reform went through the allied republics. Soon the autonomous republics declared their sovereignty adopting language laws. Among these republics was the Republic of Kalmykia.

Kalmykia is a unique region in the south of Russia. There lives the only Mongolian ethnic group of Buddhist religion in Europe. The population is 321,4 thousand people. There are about 90 nations in Kalmyk Republic. Kalmyks (ancestors known as "oirats") are 47 % of the whole population of the Republic. Kalmyk language belongs to Mongolian group of languages, it is one of the minor languages of Russia. It has a continuous literary tradition since XVII century.



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Being a compound part of the all-national policy of Russian Federation language policy of Kalmyk Republic reflects political, economic, cultural processes of Russia.

Before the beginning of the XXth century Kalmyks mainly were monolingual, Russian was not so widespread among them. With the beginning of XXth century there started the fight with illiteracy in Russia. The learning at school for Kalmyks was carried out in Russian, national language was taught as a separate subject. Gradually Kalmyks learnt Russian. In 1943 Kalmyk people was exiled in Siberia. 13 years of dispersal living in quite another climate, religion, customs are a fact of breach of civil and human rights. It led to the decline of economic, cultural ties but what is more important it led to the loss of national traditions and mother tongue. In 1956 Kalmyks were exonerated and they returned to Kalmyk republic. All those factors led to mass Kalmyk-Russian bilingualism, knowledge of Russian started to predominate. Young generation started to know it's mother tongue much more worse than Russian or do not know at all. On the contemporary stage the language situation of Kalmykia is characterized by the national-Russian bilingualism, but the leading role has Kalmyk-Russian bilingualism. According to the Soviet census of 1979 there were 122 thousand Kalmyks, 2,9 % of them named Russian as their native language, Soviet census of 1989 showed that from 146,6 thousand Kalmyks - 3,9 % named Russian their native language. The sociolinguistic survey carried out in 1999-2000 by the author of the report showed that nowadays Kalmyk community consists of 1) those who know mother tongue well (mainly old people), 2) those who know mother tongue badly, 3) those who do not know native language at all. The 2 and the 3 groups predominate. It turned out that even among those who know mother tongue badly or do not know at all, Kalmyk language as an ethnic selfidentification has stable position, inspite of the fact that it lost part of it's social functions. So in the course of socio-historical changes Kalmyk language started to yield functionally to the language of dominant culture - Russian language not because of insufficiency of inner linguistic structure, but because of fixed negative attitude towards Kalmyk language as to non prestigious one among most part of language community. Kalmyks faced the real threat of native language assimilation and as mother tongue is one of the main ethnic signs of the nation there was a threat of disappearance of national culture and later even disappearance of the nation itself.

Since tthe 90th of XX century there have started an aimed Kalmyk language revitalisation. The adoption in 1991 of "The Language Law of Kalmyk Republic" proclaimed the state status for Russian and Kalmyk languages. The prerequisite for this linguistic legislation regulating language situation in Kalmyk Republic was the state of Kalmyk language. In 1993 presidential form of government has been initiated. The work towards enhancing of social role of Kalmyk language, raising it's functional strength has been continued. Another document that regulates language situation in Kalmyk Republic has been adopted in 1994. It is the "Main Law of the Republic of Kalmykia" (Constitution of Kalmykia). It guarantees national equal right, assistance to cultural and language development of nations living in Kalmyk Republic, preservation of their ethnic originality. The status of Kalmyk and Russian languages as state languages of Kalmykia doesn't limit right and interest of other ethnic groups of the Republic. It is natural that languages of other nations function in less number of social spheres, but "The Law on languages of the Republic of Kalmykia" guarantees and provides social economic, juridical support and assistance to all ethnic groups and their languages living in Kalmyk Republic. The main points of the Kalmyk language revival were worked out at the series of international, regional scientific conferences, seminars on the problems of language regulation. They have been represented in "The Language Law on thW-ÉP  
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At the present time the first priority of language policy in Kalmykia is given to harmonization of social functions of two state languages of the Republic, moreover in the first instance enhancing of social functions of "the weak component of state bilingualism" - Kalmyk language. Being juridically equal state languages of Kalmykia are not equal functionally in fact. Russian language is used in all spheres of social activity of Kalmyks , it has information, business, educational and scientific functions. Kalmyk language functions in the spheres connected with national culture that are education, mass-media (TV, radio, periodicals), theatre, belleslettres, folklore. It is partially used in the sphere of state administration, socio-political activity of the Republic of Kalmykia. One of the factors of language vitality is the use of mother tongue by the young generation. One of the priority of language policy in Kalmykia is to pass mother tongue on to younger generations. It is necessary to start the revival of the functions of the language with the sphere of school education. The Ministry of Education of Kalmykia makes every effort to act in accordance with the constitutional right of every child to learn the mother tongue. From the beginning of 90th of XX century there started the process of restoration of national educational system. Last national (Kalmyk) classes were closed at the beginning of 60 th of XX century. In 1993 after 30 years pause 67 new Kalmyk classes and 83 kindergarten groups were opened, where teaching process is carried out in Kalmyk. In 2001 there were 153 Kalmyk classes and 84 kindergarden groups.Schools with an ethnocultural component in the curriculum provide conditions for children to study their mother tongue and grow up in the culture of their nation. In the process of ethnically oriented teaching moral values are formed. Such schools form respect for other cultures and their representatives, tolerance, friendless. In technical and vocational colleges there are 2 classes of Kalmyk a week. In this sphere of education there is a shortage of teaching materials on Kalmyk language. Pedagogical cadres for national schools are trained at the Kalmyk State University along the following spheres: pedagogy and methodology of teaching, philology (the Kalmyk language and literature). In this line also works the Kalmyk pedagogical college that trains teachers for elementary school, specialists in pre-school pedagogy and psychology. The problems of scientific research of Kalmyk language have been immensely broadened. Research work in Kalmyk republic is carried out mainly in the fields of history, economics, Kalmyk folklore, linguistics, literature. The language of the research is Russian while Kalmyk is used primarily for writing works, articles devoted to the problems of Kalmyk philology and addressed to school teachers. Kalmyk studies are the concern of the Kalmyk Research Institute of Humanitarian Studies, the department of Kalmyk philology and culture of the Kalmyk State University and outside the Republic they are carried out in the sector of Turkic and Mongolian languages of the Institute of Linguistics of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow. Nowadays the Kalmyk standard language has developed clearly defined norms that ensure its comprehensibility and accessibility to all its native speakers. The standard features have been elaborated and established in the rules of orthography and orthoepy, in bilingual and terminological dictionaries, in the research works of scholars of Kalmyk studies.

By the Government of the Republic there has been organized the Kalmyk terminology Committee, the main activity of which is formation, discussion, approval of new terms in the fields of politics, economics, science and etc. The Committee works in cooperation with the native speakers, taking into consideration their comments. List of terms approved by the Committee are published in the local press. Thus there have been already compiled and published bilingual terminological dictionaries in different spheres of national economy of Kalmyk Republic, academic grammar of Kalmyk is being prepared at the moment.

As it was mentioned above Kalmyk is an old-written language (since XVII century). There were written original and translated works in Kalmyk before the XX century. Nowadays Kalmyk language has developed all kinds of genres, some works have been translated into other languages, as well as translations from other languages are made into Kalmyk. The number of books of bellettres and religious literature in Kalmyk increases each year.



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In the cultural sphere Kalmyk language is also very actively promoted among the population. Kalmyk language is widely used in the performances of the Kalmyk national drama theatre, philharmony, amateur art, folklore ensembles and groups. Traditional holidays and customs are revived. According to the "Law on languages..." Kalmyk and Russian are used in the spheres of Government Administration and Legislation. Both languages are used in the process of preparing laws. All governmental degrees, laws, resolutions are published on the pages of local periodicals in Kalmyk and Russian. The Constitution of Kalmyk Republic is also published in Kalmyk and Russian. Both state languages of Kalmykia are used in official documents, such as passports, certificates of birth, marriage, general certificate of education. In the regional court system state languages are used depending on the nationality of the persons employed in the process. But as a rule in these spheres the use of Russian is predominant, the use of Kalmyk language is partial.

Mass-media also contributes to language revitalization by popularization of Kalmyk language on TV, radio, in periodicals. The following periodicals are issued in Kalmyk language: a newspaper "Khalmg yunn" (Kalmyk truth), a literary magazine "Teegin gerl" (Light in the steppe), a magazine for children "Bair" (Happyness), an educational magazine "Gegyarlt" (Education). On TV and radio official languages of Kalmyk republic are used in this proportion 50 % of the local broadcasting time in Russian, 50 % in Kalmyk. President, Government of Kalmyk republic encourages the popularization of mother tongue, thus there has been founded the presidential scholarship awarded to those families, where parents, children love and know their mother tongue.

For the last decade of the XX century there can be noted a growing interest of the indigenous population in its native language and national culture and under the influence of a growing national awareness, a revival of the national culture, traditions supported by the official status Kalmyk language is expanding its spheres of functioning. The dynamics of functional development of Kalmyk language indicates positive results of language policy in the Republic of Kalmykia. This fact gives chance to hope for the nearest successful revitalisation of Kalmyk language in all spheres of social life of Kalmyk commu