

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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THE CAUCASUS HISTORY – Language

Overview

Over the centuries, the Caucasus has been invaded by the Persians, Arabs, Romans, Ottomans and Russians. This area harbours more than 50 separate peoples and 50 different spoken languages, therefore it was referred as a *Jabal al-Asun* (mountain of languages) by Arab geographers and travellers. The Caucasus is one of the most linguistically diverse place in the world, with languages that are mutually unintelligible.

The Caucasus comprised of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and parts of Russian Federation (Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan).

All the Caucasian languages belong to Ibero-Caucasian language group. It is subdivided into three indigenous language families: Kartvelian (South Caucasian - Georgian), Northwest Caucasian (West Caucasian - the Adyghe-Abkhaz group), North Central Caucasian (Nakh group – Chechen and Ingush), Northeast Caucasian (Dagestanians).

Kartvelian group includes four languages: Georgian is spoken in Georgia. Svan is spoken in the northwest of Georgia and Upper Kodori valley in Abkhazia. Mingrelian is spoken along the coast of the Black Sea, in western Georgia and southeastern Abkhazia. Laz is spoken along the coast of the Black Sea and one part of the village of Sarpi, in the state borders of Turkey. Svan, Mingrelian, and Laz are claimed to be Georgian dialects. Kartvelian languages use their own unique alphabet.

Armenian language is the only language that belongs to Indo-European language family, and uses its own unique script.

In the *Nakh* group, Chechen and Ingush languages belong to the Vainakh branch. Both languages are still written in Cyrillic.

Turkic group of languages are spoken in Azerbaijan and in Dagestan. Language of the Azerbaijanis belongs to the southwestern or the Oguz group of Turkic languages. Azerbaijani language is written in Latin alphabet since 1991.

Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani languages are well-established written languages.

ANCIENT PERIOD

In the 1st century BCE, Strabo stated that 300 languages were spoken on the Black Sea coast of Georgia, Pliny the Elder made a similar comment on the languages spoken in the Caucasus.

SOUTH CAUCASUS

GEORGIA: Proto-Georgian language developed as a separate branch 4,000 years ago and evolved separately from Svan (Svanuri), Mingrelian (Megruli), and Laz (Chanuri) languages. It has been claimed that the proto-Georgian language.

ARMENIA: The earliest stage of the Armenian language is still subject to debate and it is reconstructed based on a comparative method with Proto-Indo-European languages. The linguists Tamaz Gamkrelidze

and Vyacheslav Ivanov proposed an Armenian hypothesis in the 1980s and claimed that the origin of the language dated back to 3rd millennium BCE.

POST-CLASSICAL PERIOD

SOUTH CAUCASUS:

Prior to the invention of their alphabet, Greek and Syriac were liturgical languages in Armenia and Georgia. With the expansion of Christianity, there was a need for a script for the native languages to write, translate liturgical texts and biblical texts, and conduct their liturgical practices in their own language. As a result, they created their own scripts at the end of the 4th century to access liturgical and biblical texts in their own language.

GEORGIA: Georgian is an Kartvelian language. Two periods were distinguished within Old Georgian: Early Old Georgian (5th to 8th centuries) and Classical Old Georgian (5th to 11th centuries). Two different dialects existed in Early Old Georgian, known as Khanmet'i (5th to 7th centuries) and Haemet'i (7th and 8th centuries). Literary material produced during the Old Georgian period were mainly religious works.



The Georgian oldest inscription was found in Georgian Church by Peter the Iberian in Bethlehem 430. In Georgia, the oldest inscription was discovered at Bolnisi Sion in 494.

Iakob Tsurtaveli's *Martyrdom of Shushanik* was the first literary work written between 476 and 483. The oldest dated Georgian manuscript *the Sinai Polycephalon* of 864.

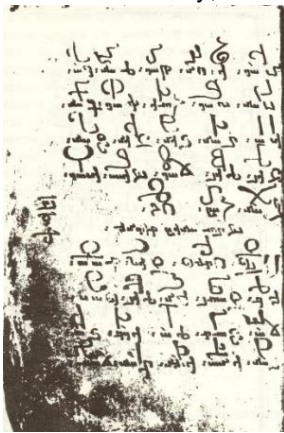
Georgian had three scripts: from the 5th to 9th century – *mrglovani* (rounded), from the 9th to 11th century - *k'utxovani* (angular) and from the 11th century the modern script *mxedruli* (military; secular).

ARMENIA: Armenian belongs to the satem group of Indo-European languages. After the adoption of Christianity in the 4th century, the Armenian alphabet was invented by Mesrob Mashtots to translate religious texts and Bible. The alphabet is of Greek and Persian origin.

The earliest written records of the Armenian language dated from the 5th century. The language spoken in this century called classical Armenian (or Krapar) and its lexicon consisted many loan-words from Parthian (Middle Iranian language).



In the 12th century, *Middle Armenian* (Mijin hayerên) spoken in Cilicia, in Turkey became a literary language used till the 18th century. Middle Armenian was divided into two periods: Cilician period (12th - 14th centuries) and East Armenian period (15th -16th centuries).



AZERBAIJAN: With the spread of Christianity in Caucasus Albania in the 4th century, the Caucasian Albanian script was created by the monk Mesrop Mashtots and the translation of church books into Albanian began. Between the 5th - 7th centuries, there were schools opened inside churches in Albania, where only the children of aristocracy and clergy could study.

After the conquest of the territory by Arabs, Arabic became the language of instruction in schools opened as part of mesjids in big cities at the end of the 7th century, where only the children of rich families could study in Arabic and Persian. This period was which Albania's political and cultural revival.

The origin of Azerbaijani Turkic language goes back to the Oghuz Turkic of the Seljuks, who immigrated to the area in the 10th and 11th centuries.

Questions:

- 1- With the spread of Christianity, why did the language scripts develop in the South Caucasus?
- 2- Why is the appearance of written texts in the writing manuscripts a significant development?

Readings:

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- 2- Payaslian, S., *The History of Armenia, From the Origins to the Present*, Palgrave McMillan, 2007.
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EARLY MODERN PERIOD

Russian Empire, like other empires in the world, was not organized on the basis of political equality among societies or individuals. In the Empire inequitable treatment involved forms of cultural or linguistic discrimination. Empire's main concerns were the loyalty of all subjects to the ruler and their social status.

Russian Empire was not an ethnically Russian empire, rather it was multinational. Although the ruling institution were primarily Russian, they ruled over Russian and non-Russian subjects.

Religion (Pravoslavie – Orthodoxy) played a far more central role in defining what was foreign rather than language or ethnicity.

The Russian Empire did not accept diversity; such a concept did not exist for the tsars. For the tsars, Russian culture, Russian language and the Russian Orthodox religion were the predominant characteristics of the Empire. After the conquest of the Caucasus, the Russian Empire did not carry out consistent and active assimilation through education or violent methods.

SOUTH CAUCASUS:

GEORGIA: Many epic works were produced during the Medieval Georgian period which lasted till the 18th century. The Modern Georgian period started in the 18th century and it was a renaissance period of Georgian culture.

After the incorporation of Georgia into the Russian Empire in the 18th century, multilingualism began in Georgia. Georgian nobles were encouraged to learn Russian language to serve in the Empire.



ARMENIA: The earliest written language *Classical Armenian* (Grabar) developed in the 17th century and used in translations. It became a literary language of Armenia until the 19th century.

After the 18th century, Armenian developed its modern form and split into two dialects: East Armenian (Arewelahayerên) and West Armenian (Arewmtahayerên). East Armenian, spoken in Armenia,

and West Armenian spoken in Turkey.

AZERBAIJAN: Azerbaijani language belongs to the southwest group of the Turkic division of the Ural- Altaic language family. The written literary language of Azerbaijan recorded in the 13th century. The

History of Azerbaijani language can be divided into two periods: early period (13th to 18th centuries) and modern period (18th to present). Early period was characterized by the dominance of large number of Arabic and Persian loanwords. The early language called Azari (Âdarî) was an extinct language. Azari was a Northwestern Iranian language that was spoken till the 17th century. It began to decrease since the 11th century after the territory was invaded by the Seljuks.

The Azerbaijani language modern period began in the 18th century with the transitions from being a language of epic poetry and prose to the language of literature, journalism and scientific research. The Baku dialect forms the basis of the modern Azerbaijani literary language.

NORTH CAUCASUS

CHECHNYA: Under the influence of Islam, an alphabet was created in Chechnya in the 18th century based on Arabic characters. Literacy was very low in Chechnya. The manuscripts produced were religious in nature. Sufism and muslim clerics played a significant role in the development of literacy.

Questions:

- 1-Why did Azerbaijanis have very low literacy level till the 18th century?
- 2-Why did Georgia and Armenia have high literacy level in the 18th century?

Readings:

- 1- <https://azerbaijan.az/en/information/107>
- 2- https://www.azerbaijans.com/content_936_en.html

19TH CENTURY

In the South Caucasus, in 1801 Georgia was annexed to the Empire and later Armenia joined in the Imperial territory. In both cases, the local Christian elites welcomed Russian rule.

In the North Caucasus, Muslim nationalities, Chechens and Daghestanis came under Russian rule by the mid-18th century. The Avar leader Sheikh Shamil established a mountain imamate to fight against the Russians.

In the 19th century, the Russians began to see themselves culturally superior and think that annexed lands were backward and in need to be civilized. Inhabitants of the Caucasus were generally considered as uncivilized Asiatic people under the name the *gortsy* (mountain man).

During the annexation of Transcaucasia, Alexander I and Alexander II brutally put down non-Russian resistance. Russian expansion into Central Asia and the Far East increased.

Because the Empire lacked a consistent, mandatory language policy, the process of Russification progressed only gradually or not at all. Communication with local peoples was conducted through translators.

In predominantly Muslim regions, the use of Russian was restricted to administrative functions, and the local languages experienced an unprecedented revival.

This revival spread to other languages when a more tolerant language policy was introduced after the revolution of 1905.

Russian language management was neither means nor desire to destroy all other languages.

Consistent Russification began only in the second half of the 19th century and stopped with the elites. Peasants and members of other social strata maintained their linguistic, religious and ethnic identities.

Russification, instead of increasing the loyalty of the subjects, inspired nationalist movements.

Russification had been implemented through a number of strategies, which can be divided into two groups: The first was the use of mechanisms to affect demography, economy and physical environment. The second was the use of measures affecting language, language technology, language status and education.

The demographic aspect could be seen in the increased immigration of the Russian population to non-Russian areas. This was done to reduce the number of non-Russians to use their own language and made everyday use of the their language more difficult.

There were three types of Russification:

Unplanned Russification referred to the adoption of the Russian language, culture and religion by non-Russians through a natural process of assimilation.

Administrative Russification referred to the efforts of the central government to enforce centralization and the use of Russian language throughout the empire.

Cultural Russification referred to the deliberate policy to assimilate non-Russians culturally, assimilate non-Russian ethnic groups through government measures such as Russian-language schools, the army, prohibitions on speaking or publishing in their native languages.

Cultural Russification was an effort to assimilate entire populations, replacing non-Russian ethnic groups' original culture with Russian.

The *Russification* became stricter in the late 19th – early 20th century, and as a result of this nationalist movements in the Caucasus.

Russian language management was neither means nor desire to destroy all other languages. Consistent Russification began only in the second half of the 19th century and stopped with the elites. Peasants and members of other social strata maintained their linguistic, religious and ethnic identities. In Transcaucasia, it was never effective beyond the main urban centers. Russification, instead of increasing the loyalty of the subjects, inspired nationalist movements.



High level of ethnic and religious diversity made Russian rule difficult. The region was incorporated into the empire by the first decade of the 19th century.

With the establishment of Russian rule, there were the mass forced emigration of Muslims from the Caucasus to the Ottoman Empire (1860-1870).

The Southern Caucasus was split administratively into a half-dozen provinces and ruled by the governor-general in Tbilisi.

Forced conversions to Orthodoxy were attempted in Armenia. In 1896 all schools that were under the control of the Armenian church were closed and they were replaced by Russian schools and put under the supervision of the Tsar's Ministry of Education. In 1903 the funds of the Armenian Church were confiscated.

GEORGIA: In Svaneti and Mingrelia regions, Georgian language was used as lingua franca and literary language. Georgian language has its own unique alphabet with 33 letters. Old Georgian had 38 letters. Old Georgian five letters were eliminated from the alphabet in the late 19th century.

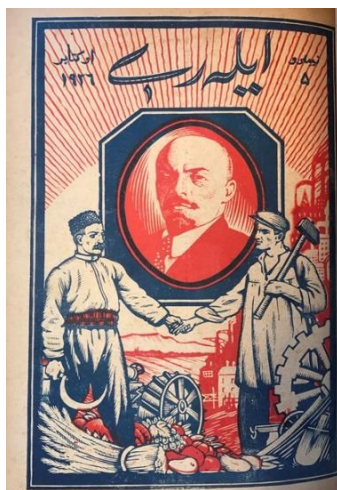
In 1840, under the Russian rule, Georgian language lost its status of being a state language.

In 1870s, the Russian language was a required subject in all schools, while the classes in Georgian were not obligatory. Georgian became an elective class and replaced with Latin and Greek. Due to the Russian imperial policies, the status of Georgian language reduced to a minimum.

The national liberation movement helped to revive the language with the efforts of leading people like Iliia Chavchavadze, Akaki Tsereteli, and the others. These people made great contribution to preserve the Georgian language and created for their program of national awakening a special motto *Fatherland, Language, Faith* (mamuli, ena, sartsmunoeba).

Two groups of intellectuals appeared in the second half of the 19th century: *Mtkvardaleulni* and *Tergdaleulni*. These groups began to discuss a language reform and they used spoken language in their works to reach the common people.

ARMENIA: The modernization of the Armenian language and the rise of Armenian literati began in the 19th century. While the Modern Armenian language (Ashkharhabar) became a standart language used in Armenian schools, the old Armenian literary language Grabar remained the language of formal high style in the middle of the 19th century.



When Armenia was divided between the Russian and Ottoman Empires, two different types of dialects emerged: Eastern and Western Armenian. Western Armenian was a dialect of Armenians who lived in Istanbul, while Eastern Armenian was a dialect of Armenians living in the Caucasus. Literary Eastern Armenian was based on the dialect of the Yerevan region, and Western Armenian on the speech of Istanbul.

AZERBAIJAN: Azerbaijani language became a literary language in the late 19th century. In the mid-19th century, Azerbaijani intellectuals who studied in Russian schools and universities like the writer Mirza Fatali Akhundov and the linguist Mammad agha Shahtakhtinski, advocated a language reform to replace the Arabic script with a Latin-based alphabet.

The first textbooks were appeared in 1830s. M. Kazimbayov's *Turkish-Tatar Languages' Grammar* was published in 1839. *Turkish-Tatar Language's Alphabet* textbooks were published in 1844. M.S. Vazeh's and Grigoryev's *Kitabi-turki* (Turkish textbook) was published in 1850.

Azerbaijani intellectuals tried to open schools to provide education in Azerbaijani as an alternative to *maktab* and *madrassas*. S.A. Shirvani opened school in Samakhi, Mir Movhsun Nawab in Susha and Mohammad Taghi Sidqi established *Terbiye* and *Akhtar* schools in Nakhchivan and Ordubad.

NORTH CAUCASUS

Чеченская азбука.

а, б, в, г, д, е, ж, з, и, к,
 л, м, н, о, п, р, с, т, у, ф,
 х, ц, ч, ш, щ, э, ю, я,
 ъ, ы, ь, џ.

* а, б, в, г, д, е, ж, з, и, к, л, м, н, о, п, р, с, т, у, ф, х, ц, ч, ш, щ, э, ю, я, ъ, ы, ь, џ.

CHECHNYA: The first Cyrillic-based Chechen alphabet was developed in 1862 by Baron Peter Karlovich Uslar. Uslar who studied the Caucasian languages, created an alphabet for Chechen language. He also opened the first ethnic Chechen school in Grozny in the 1860s.

Uslar's Alphabet for Chechen Language

In the late 19th century, the main objective of the official language policy was to suppress local languages by enforcing the use of the Russian language in education. Russian language became the only official language and the language of instruction in secular schools. Arabic still was a language used in religious schools. Only a small number of Chechens was bilingual in Russian.

Questions:

1- Despite the large number of schools that were opened for education, why did literacy remained low in the Caucasus? Did men and women have equal opportunities in education?

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- 2- Practice of "Russification" in the Late Imperial Russia: The Case of the Central Caucasus http://www.academia.edu/28176405/Practice_of_Russification_in_the_Late_Imperial_Russia_The_Case_of_the_Central_Caucasus
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20TH CENTURY

The Caucasus, for the most part of the 19th century, was occupied by three major powers: the Russians, the Persians and the Ottomans. This dispute between three powers ended when the Soviets came to power. It was the Soviets penetrated deep into the Caucasus through annexation of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in the south.

Prior to the Bolshevik rule, during the Imperial period the languages in the South Caucasus, in Azerbaijan, were using Arabic script. The Arabic alphabet had both symbolic and practical importance for the maintenance of religious and cultural ties with the other Moslem peoples in the Empire.

Latinization

Before the Revolution, there were already seven alphabets: Arabic, Latin Cyrillic, Old Mongolian, Georgian, Armenian and Hebrew and many languages did not have scripts at all.

The creation of new alphabets for the languages that had no scripts was the work of Russian Turkologist, Nikolay Ivanovich Ilminsky and these alphabets were all Cyrillic.

The first Latin script had been created in 1917 by Semen Andreevich Novgorodov for Yakut. In 1920s, in the North Caucasus, Ingushetia, Ossetia and Kabarda utilized this Latin script. A conference was held in

Pyatigorsk approving a decree on issue of Latin base writing of the North Caucasus people in April 1923. New alphabets based on the Latin script were planned also for Chechnya and Adygea. In Azerbaijan alphabet reform had already been a topic of discussion during the 19th century.

In 1919, the People's Commissariat for Education, Narkompros proposed to switch all the national alphabets from the Arabic and the Cyrillic scripts to the Latin. In 1920s, there were debates on switching the alphabet which would result in the loss of the older literature, would increase illiteracy and it would be costly. The opponents argued that liquidation of illiteracy with the new alphabet would be much faster and would cost much less.

On 21 July 1922, the Central Executive Committee of the Azerbaijan Republic approved a project of the new alphabet based upon the Latin script proposed by the head of the Committee, Samed Agamalyogly.

The Latin alphabet in Azerbaijan was made compulsory for newspapers and official use in 1925. In 1926 the First Turcological Congress was held in Baku. During eight days of debate, the reasons of retaining the Arabic script, the benefits and costs of converting to the Latin alphabet were discussed.

The Latinization of all the Turkic languages of the Soviet Union was proclaimed official policy. Lenin also proposed the Latin alphabet for all languages in the Soviet Union, because he believed that the Cyrillic alphabet was a symbol of isolation and backwardness. During the 1920s, there was a debate over whether the Latin alphabet could replace Cyrillic in the Russian language. The Soviets set up a Commission to promote the Latinization of Russian language under the leadership of the first People's Commissar of Education, A. Lunacharsky.

Lenin pointed out that the Latin alphabet was becoming the uniform world alphabet, the alphabet of the victorious proletariat and to unite revolutionaries in the world it was necessary to switch to Latin alphabet.

Cyrillization

Close relationships between the various Turkic-speaking groups and Turkey itself raised suspicion in Moscow. The authorities changed the alphabet policy in favour of Cyrillization.

In the late 1930s, most minority languages of the Soviet Union had a new writing system based on a modified version of the Cyrillic alphabet.

Switch from Latin to Cyrillic was in the 1940s. From 1938 on, the Soviets decided to universalize the knowledge of Russian. In 1939 - 1940 abandoning the Unified Turkic Alphabet the Soviets decided create variations of the Cyrillic script.

The Unified Turkic Alphabet was replaced with individual Cyrillic scripts for each Turkic language in the Soviet Union in order to linguistically unify the Soviet Union.

Changing the writing system was not restricted to the orthography alone. It affected the inner structure, that is grammatical and lexical. For languages which had minimal contact with western culture and technology, the loan words enriched their lexicon.

With these structural changes which took in every languages of minorities in the Soviet Union, the related languages were distanced from one another and their mutual intelligibility began to disappear.

The imposition of a Cyrillic alphabet injured the pride of the many nationalities in the Caucasus and reminded them their humiliating past and their status in the Russian Empire. It was supposed to unite people, and eliminate ethnic tensions. On the contrary, it increased ethnic tensions.

In the 1940s through to 1980s the written languages of nearly all nations and ethnic groups were based on the Cyrillic alphabet. The Georgian and Armenian languages, and Yiddish were using their traditional scripts.

Stalin's Reaction - Compulsory Russian Abandoned

During World War II, Stalin decided to freeze the compulsory introduction of Russian and let other languages alone, because he did not wish to awaken opposition in the Republics. However, after World War II, Stalin returned to his compulsory introduction of Russian which continued until his death in 1953.

Sovietization

The Soviets' policies during Stalin were designed to create a culturally uniform Soviet population through a universal knowledge of the Russian language.

A government decree of March 13, 1938, made Russian language and literature obligatory subjects in all schools in the Caucasus.

Russian language instruction in schools remained poor as local party officials and bureaucrats delayed the changes.

To require Russian language for minority groups implied that the Soviet Union was becoming more like a unitary nation-state, demanding a common culture for its population.

The Soviets were planning to draft non-Russian soldiers into the Soviet Army and this army required a common language.

In late 1935, the decision to make Russian obligatory appeared to indicate that the Stalin had decided on a policy of Sovietization non-Russian schools.

This decision angered the nationalities in the Caucasus.

In those schools in which Russian was taught, the level of instruction was extremely unsatisfactory.

Narkompros had failed to supervise the training of non-Russian school teachers and had only begun to manage textbook publishing for non-Russian schools in 1933.

Narkompros representatives had to speak to teachers of Russian in the republics through an interpreter. They did not provide any kind of methodological help.

Teachers did not know how or what to study. There were no schedules and no textbooks.

Another factor that complicated the instruction in non-Russian schools was the switch from the Latin to the Cyrillic alphabet between 1939 and 1941.

In the 1939-1940 school year, 37 such alphabets were being created. This required the reprinting of all textbooks that had only just been rewritten the year before.

The textbooks were delayed and many schools were forced to continue to use the Latin-based books.

Khrushchev Period

After 1958, native-language education in the republics was reduced, and a new type of school introduced with Russian as the language of instruction, in which native language and literature remained only a subject.

Nikita Khrushchev introduced a policy which made Russian the language of the Soviet Union. He believed that the Soviet Union should be united both politically and linguistically.

The state encouraged native-language education and made Russian the second national language of all republics.

The Education Reforms of 1958-1959 stated that education in the mother tongue was no longer compulsory and Russian was a required course of study where instruction in the native language was not abandoned.

The consequence of this was that instruction in the national languages suffered in favor of increased Russian instruction.

Brezhnev Period

During Brezhnev and the 1970s Sovietization further accelerated; goal was the establishment of Soviet people (Sovetskiy narod) with a common language.

Russian became compulsory for all children, but still there were problems with qualified teachers and centralized textbooks even for Russian.

Gorbachev Period

The Soviet Union was in reality a *pseudo-federal* state where power came from the center.

Glasnost changed everything. After Gorbachev's support for greater openness, national movements in the republics of the Caucasus sprang up with one goal on their agenda: independence.

As central authority eroded during late perestroika, conflicts erupted over the rights to these territories and their groups' national self-determination.

SOVIET LANGUAGE POLICY IN THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

Soviet language policy in the region was introduced in the region to facilitate the use of Russian as a general lingua franca. But, the linguistic complexity of the languages in the area made it impossible for the language planners to establish Russian as the sole major language of communication.

SOUTH CAUCASUS

GEORGIA: Georgian language is an Ibero-Caucasian language, that is part of the Southern Caucasian languages, known as Kartvelian. Georgians developed their literary language in the 5th century.

In the late 19th century, Georgian writers and intellectuals raised their voices against the decline of their language and culture.

After the revolution of 1917, Georgia went under control of the Mensheviks.

In 1921, the Bolsheviks invaded Georgia, and Stalin was appointed as the Commissar for the Nationalities in charge of issues related to non-Russian minorities.

By 1921, Stalin urged Georgians to give up ideas of independence. After Lenin, many writers who led the nationalist movements in Georgia were arrested or executed.

In 1922, Georgia entered the Transcaucasian Soviet Republic along with Armenia and Azerbaijan. It only became a republic of the Soviet Union in 1936.

At the time of the Revolution, Georgia had very high literacy. During Korenizatsia (nativization, indigenization), Georgian language was recognized as the official language of the state.

However, the Soviet authorities attempted to abolish its status of being the state language. This frequently resulted in massive protests led by Georgian dissidents Zviad Gamsakhurdia and Merab Kostava against the Soviet administration with the slogan *Ena, Mamuli, Sartsmunoeba* (Language, Fatherland, Faith) emphasizing the importance of the Georgian language. *The Society for Advancement of Literacy Among Georgians* played an active role to increase literacy among Georgians, and Jacob Gogebashvili's *Dedaena* (Mother language textbook) served as an important textbook in this process.

During Stalin, the Georgian authorities imposed Georgian script for Abkhaz language and all the Abkhazian schools were closed. After Stalin's death, Georgia banned Abkhazian and massive influx of Georgians into Abkhazia began.

During Khrushchev, the Soviets led anti-Georgian campaign and imposed Cyrillic alphabet for Abkhaz and Ossetia. Schools reopened. Violent protests erupted in Tbilisi in 1956.

In the mid-1970s, there was an attempt to make Russian the language of communication and education, promoted by Eduard Shevardnadze, all higher education was to be only in Russian. However, the 1970 census indicated that the Russian language was not dominant: 91.4% in rural and 63% urban areas.

The 1970 census indicated that the Russian language was not as dominant during the Soviets: 91.4% rural Georgians and 63% urban population were not fluent in Russian.

Till 1978, Georgian language was able to maintain its status, and there was an attempt to change part of the constitution to remove Georgian as the official state language of the republic. After a protest held in Tbilisi where thousands of Georgians took the streets to protest the government's decision which proved to be effective, Georgian was retained.

The official *Georgian Language Program* in the 1980s reaffirmed the role of Georgian in education, political life, mass media, and print.

As of 1989, 94% of Georgian children were enrolled in Georgian-language schools.

Georgians, in comparison with Armenians and Azerbaijanis, were more conservative. According to the 1979 census, the percentage of fluency in Russian was the lowest among the union republics: 26.7% of ethnic Georgians were fluent in Russian.

Georgia adopted a language law in 1995 which recognized two official languages - Georgian in Georgia, and Abkhazian and Georgian in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia. Regardless of ethnic background, language or religion, state ensured that all citizens were equal, and minorities could use their languages in private and public life without restriction.

The Russian language in Georgia remained as lingua franca among the minorities. However, the government made Russian an elective class like French or German. In general, English was a mandatory foreign language class.

ARMENIA: After the break up of Transcaucasia in 1918, the Armenian Republic struggled for several years on its own. The leading nationalist and socialist Dashnak party surrendered to the Bolsheviks in 1920.

Armenia was mostly ethnically homogeneous society. The official language of the republic was Armenian used in the government and education.

Creation of Armenian literary language goes back to the 5th century. It is the only Indo-European language in the Caucasus.

During Alexander III Russian government ordered that Russian language, history and culture be compulsory subjects in all the empire's schools. Armenian clergy resisted, but the tsar responded by closing all schools in Armenia.

From 1896 to 1905 not only were Armenian schools closed, Armenians were removed from the civil service, and Russians were encouraged to colonize the region. Armenia joined with Georgia and Azerbaijan in the Transcaucasian Soviet Republic in 1922.

In 1936, the Armenian Soviet Republic was proclaimed and Armenian became the state language.

During Korenizatsia, in education Armenian was the language of instruction.

Russian language was stressed as the lingua franca in 1938 and Russian language study was made compulsory for all students in the Soviet Union.

The Russification spread to literature and arts. Intellectuals and writers were arrested.

After Stalin, during Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras, the literacy level was increased, and the fluency of Russian.

In 1978, the Soviets tried to cancel the official status of Armenian. In 1978, a protests held in Yerevan reversed attempt to remove guarantee of Armenian as official language, and Armenian protected its status.

The knowledge of Russian was a requirement for government jobs, and therefore some parents preferred to send their children to Russian-language schools. Russian language was a marker of "social prestige".



The 1979 census indicated that 99.4 % of Armenians considered Armenian as their first language. At the time of independence in 1991, almost half of the population were fluent in Russian.

Until the early 1990's, schools in Armenia conducted their classes in either Russian or Armenian. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the number of Russian schools declined due to a legislative ban on education in foreign languages initiated in the early 1990s.

The Armenian language law was adopted in 1993. Armenian was the official language of Armenia. State institutions, organizations and officials were required to use Armenian, and broadcasting in Armenia was conducted in Armenian.

The state law guaranteed minorities to gain free access to the mass media, and granted the right to establish their own mass media.

Publishing and study in minority languages was permitted. Yet, the government allocated minimal resources to maintaining minority-language schools. It resulted in decreased number of Russian language schools.

In Armenia, Russian had no official status. But, Russian was still the first language for many Armenians.

The language of instruction in schools was Armenian, and Russian was a required language at schools as a second language in the first grade. A third foreign language was compulsory in second or third grades.

AZERBAIJAN: Towards the late 19th century, all Turkic periodicals were banned by the Empire until 1904.

Azerbaijani's were forced to get their education in Christian Russo-Tatar schools. They showed resistance and wanted to increase native language instruction.

In 1905, in Azerbaijan many Moslems were attracted to the socialist in opposition to the Russian Empire. One important leftist organization the Himmat was established in 1904 and dedicated to awakening Azerbaijani culture and language, and opposing Russian influence. In 1907 the Himmat was suppressed by the Russian forces.

In 1910, the Musuvat was established. It was attracted to revolutionary ideals on behalf of the proletariat, and regard the Bolsheviks as the enemy of Azerbaijanis. The question of language was a central part of their activity.

In 1918, Azerbaijan declared itself independent. The status of Azerbaijani fluctuated rapidly.



In 1920, the Soviets invaded and retook control over Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1922 with Armenia and Georgia as part of the Transcaucasian Socialist Soviet Republic.

Azerbaijan benefited from the liberal policies of Korenizatsia by which local culture and language were encouraged.

An order issued by the Education Commissariat made Azerbaijani the language of instruction in universities.

In 1924, the old Arabic alphabet used for the Azerbaijani language was officially replaced with a Latin script. In 1940, Latin alphabet was replaced by the Cyrillic. The effects of the alphabet change in Azerbaijan was an increase of literacy.

Russian officially designated as the language of interethnic communication in Azerbaijan, and also remained the language of government administration.

In 1938, the study of Russian was made mandatory from the fifth grade on.

In 1958, abolished a law within the Soviet Union that had mandated the study of titular languages in the Russian schools of the republics.

In 1970s, teaching Russian began in the first grade.

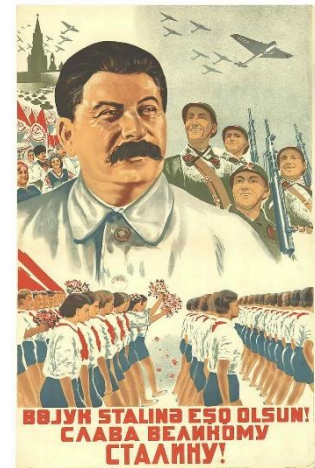
During glasnost, many topics not previously open for discussion were raised, including language. Several articles began to appear in Azerbaijani press criticizing the Cyrillic alphabet as part of Russian colonialism.

In 1978, the Constitution stipulated that Azerbaijani was the state language. Russian and other languages would also be used without any discrimination.

In 1989, a Resolution on Language was passed supporting the development of the titular language.

In Azerbaijan 99.1% of the Azerbaijanis claimed that Azerbaijani as their native tongue, and 37% claimed fluency in Russian.

In 1991, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Republic of Azerbaijan adopted a modified Latin alphabet with few new special letters. The transition to Latin script has been completed in 2001.



In Azerbaijan the state language law was adopted in 1995. Since 1 August 2001, the official alphabet has been the Latin alphabet in Azerbaijan.

NORTH CAUCASUS

CHECHNYA:

Many North Caucasian languages, although in close physical proximity, are not mutually intelligible.

In order to interact for economic, political, and social reasons, some kind of lingua franca was needed for society to function; and it was Russian.



In 1920's, the result of Korenizatsiya was a general flowering in local languages in the North Caucasus.

Chechen-Soviet newspaper "Serlo" written in the Latin script during Korenizatsiya

Until the late 1930's, Russian language teaching continued to be rare in many areas, including Dagestan and Checheno-Ingushetia.

In the 1920's there was a development of writing systems for many small languages which had not had written forms before the

Revolution.

Under the development of writing systems and education many written languages were created (over 50 groups) and national schools were established.

In 1929, the Latin script was made compulsory for all nationalities that had previously used Arabic.

The Soviet government first chose Latin script rather than Cyrillic, because such a perception might provoke a violent, anti-Russian reaction.

By 1934, the Soviet government was printing textbooks in 104 languages.

By 1939, all languages in the North Caucasus were printed in the Cyrillic alphabet.

In the 1958-1959 educational reforms removed the requirement that non-Russian children study Russian, but also removed the requirement that Russian children study local languages.

In spite of everything, native language retention rates among the North Caucasian peoples were high, and very few people consider Russian their native language.

The development of Russian-native language bilingualism was a success.

Of the 120 linguistic groups which existed in 1934, by the 1980's only 18 national languages were being taught in Russian schools at all.

During 1989-1990 school year, no indigenous North Caucasian people had instruction available in its native language beyond the second grade, and the Chechens had no native language instruction at all.

The republics declared both titular and Russian as their co-official state languages. But, sometimes other languages were also given official status.

Questions:

1- Why was the transition from Arabic to Latin and then to Cyrillic considered necessary?

- 2- Why didn't the Soviets change the Georgian and Armenian alphabet to Cyrillic?
- 3- How many North Caucasian languages survived even after the imposition of compulsory Russian language?

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