

ახალი ანბანის
საკავშირო ცენტრალური კომიტეტის ეგიდით
განხორციელებული ენობრივი პოლიტიკა
XX საუკუნის 20–30-იანი წლების აფხაზეთში
LANGUAGE POLICY IMPLEMENTED
IN ABKHAZIA IN THE 1920S AND 1930S
UNDER THE AUSPICES
OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE'S
NEW ALPHABET INITIATIVE

თეიმურაზ გვანცელაძე
სოხუმის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი
თბილისი, საქართველო

Teimuraz Gvantseladze
Sokhumi State University
Tbilisi, Georgia

ABSTRACT

The language policy was meticulously planned, strictly enforced, and overseen by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its affiliated structures (departments, organizing bureau, and political bureau) from the establishment of the Soviet regime in Georgia in 1921 until 1940 and beyond. In 1925, the All-Union Central Committee of the New Alphabet (AUCCNA), which had branches in all republics, autonomous republics, and major regions, began operating under the National Council of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union.

The branches of the All-Union Central Committee of the New Alphabet were located in the Georgian SSR. There were Committees of the New Alphabet for the Transcaucasian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic and for the Georgian SSR, both based in Tbilisi. Besides, separate committees worked in Sokhumi, Batumi, and Tskhinvali. The Moscow committee maintained direct contact with each of them.

Many documents that demonstrate how the AUCCNA effectively elaborated and implemented language policy in Abkhazia are preserved in the National Archives of Georgia, the archive of Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, and the archive of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences. This institution planned and funded various specific initiatives, including seemingly insignificant ones, while consistently monitoring the ongoing language processes in the autonomous republic. It paid particular attention to the language of the people who named the republic, aiming to develop and expand its usage. Furthermore, it rigorously evaluated any mistakes and deviations from Soviet language policy.

The proposed paper, based on archive materials, presents the following projects that were under the control of the AUCCNA:

- In 1925, N. Marr created the Analytical Alphabet for the Abkhazian Literary Language, which was legalized in 1926. It was primarily based on the Latin script, although some Greek letters were also included. This alphabet proved to be particularly difficult for pupils;

- In 1928, N. Marr's alphabet was replaced by the Latinized Alphabet, created by N. Yakovlev, E. Polivanov, S. Chanba, and M. Hashba;

- The Latinized Alphabet designed by Yakovlev's group was complex and contradictory, so immediately after its implementation, the process of further improvement and reduction of the number of letters began. Georgian and Russian colleagues, as well as experts from AUCCNA, provided consultations to their Abkhaz counterparts;

- At the 15th conference of the Regional Committee of the Abkhazian communist party in May 1937, it was decided to adopt the Georgian script as the basis for the Abkhazian Literary Language. Subsequently, Abkhazian and Georgian linguists began working on developing the relevant projects, which was then published and discussed in newspapers and various gatherings;

- In Sokhumi, on December 4-5, 1937, during a special session, the new Abkhazian script based on the Georgian alphabet was adopted; the authors of the project were Dmitri Gulia, Simon Janashia, and Akaki Shanidze. Professor Alexander Gren led the delegation of AUCCNA, which participated in the session along with Abkhazian and Georgian scientists.

- Specialists from Sokhumi, Tbilisi, Moscow, and Leningrad (including linguists, psychologists, graphic artists, typographers, and others) as well as nearly twenty different institutions from these cities actively participated in the second stage. This stage involved the implementation of the new script, which was designed based on the Georgian alphabet.

- AUCCNA elaborated the scheme of the arrangement of the Abkhazian letters for linotypes and typewriters; they decided their positioning in the left- and right-hand areas;

- AUCCNA determined the production limits for Abkhazian linotypes at the Leningrad State Plant, which was named after Max Geltz, and for typewriters with the Abkhazian script at the Kazan Plant for the Production of Typewriters. Additionally, AUCCNA set the limits for selling these linotypes and typewriters to Abkhazian institutions. Without AUCCNA's permission, these plants were not authorized to produce or deliver their products to customers;

- AUCCNA financed folklore and dialectological expeditions conducted by Abkhaz scientists, as well as the publication of the gathered folklore and dialect materials. This included the publication of N. Yakovlev's "Grammar of the Abkhazian Language," A. Genko's "Abkhazian-Russian Dictionary," and a collection of Abkhaz Fairy Tales in both Abkhazian and Russian languages;

- AUCCNA also determined the plans for publishing the Abkhazian Dictionary of Terminology, Orthographic Dictionary, bilingual dictionaries (Abkhazian-Russian and Abkhazian-Georgian), and for translating the works of Marxism-Leninism 'classics' into Abkhazian, and allocated the relevant funds.

- AUCNA systematically requested, reviewed, and approved financial and operational reports from the Abkhazian Committee of the New Alphabet, as well as approved action plans and other activities.

Such a centralized management system for planning, implementation, and detailed control of language policy completely refuted the claims of separatists and their supporters. For example, the implementation of a new Abkhazian alphabet in 1938, which was based on the Georgian script, was often falsely portrayed as adopted without the consent of the Abkhazian side and as aimed at their Georgianization. However, it is crucial to note that the totalitarian system did not allow for unilateral decision-making in such matters.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: ენობრივი პოლიტიკა აფხაზეთში XX საუკუნის 20-30-იან წლებში, ახალი ანბანის საკავშირო ცენტრალური კომიტეტის საქმიანობა, აფხაზური დამწერლობის ვარიანტები.

Keywords: The Russian language policy in Abkhazia during the 1920s and 1930s, activities of the All-Union Central Committee of the New Alphabet, variants of the Abkhazian script.