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### LANGUAGE POLICY EXPERIMENTS: CREATION OF A KOLA SAAMI WRITING SYSTEM IN THE 1930s

**Abstract.** The article presents archive materials related to the creation of the first, Latin-script Kola Saami writing system between 1933 and 1935. The article describes how the authorities created both the system and the linguistic situation on the Kola Peninsula at that time. It demonstrates how the introduction of the Latin-script Saami alphabet, and the variety of Kola Saami selected as its basis, resulted from language policy. There is also a discussion of the teaching challenges that arise as a result of problems that are both external (lack of teachers) and internal (the varieties of Kola Saami).

**Keywords:** Kola Saami language, Kola Saami writing system, language construction.

#### Introduction

The development of a written form of a language is a process that allows language users to control, and quite often to define, its development and functioning. A. A. Burykin specifies two such types of control: active and passive. Active control by the community includes, *inter alia*, graphic and orthographic innovations, while passive control includes a poorly developed or inactive language policy (Бурькин 2004 : 21—22). Often these two types of control act together.

In this respect the linguistic situation of the Kola Saami people who live in the Russian Federation is somewhat unique: the language, which belongs to the Finno-Ugric language family, has no graphic or orthographic standards commonly accepted by the Kola Saami community despite a long history of writing, dating back to 1933. And there is as yet no solution for this problem. This is why it is extremely important to analyze the language policy experiments that have been going on throughout the more than 80 years of Saami writing history, albeit with a 45-year break.

Revealing the gaps in and achievements of the language policy with regard to the Kola Saami is also of great interest as the practice of state control over the revitalization and preservation of the indigenous minorities of the North is back. The Council of the Representatives of the Indigenous Minorities of the North, established by Resolution No. 147-III of the Murmansk Regional Government, dated 4 April 2013, has discussed the preservation of the Kola Saami language in the region and created a task force to work on the issue. The task force has met, but no results have been seen so far. Therefore the Murmansk Region Ministry for Education and Science returned to the issue in 2015. The discussion becomes even more important in the light of the executive order on the Federal Agency for Nationalities Affairs issued by the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on 13 March 2015, as the Ministry for Education and Science is to make new teaching aids for the Kola Saami language. (The team to produce these includes the author of this paper).

The principal novelty of this paper lies in offering the scientific community a number of previously unpublished materials and documents that allow reconsideration of some sociolinguistic and linguistic issues that will impact the languages of the indigenous minorities of the North in the near future, such as, for instance, bilingualism, diglossia and standard writing.

### Structure and organization of the paper

The paper is arranged in two parts: a description of the activities of state authorities, which were intended to establish a writing system for Kola Saami in the 1930s, based on archive materials; and a description of the linguistic situation on the Kola Peninsula at that time, which was the framework on which the language resulting from the state language policy had a functional and structural impact. The description of the linguistic situation includes a discussion of the dispersion and language competences of the Saami population of the Kola Peninsula in the 1930s. The description of the results of the language policy addresses the introduction of the Latin-script Saami alphabet and the challenges, including lack of appropriate teachers, that resulted from the selection of a particular Saami dialect from several Kola Saami varieties as the basis for the alphabet.

### Overview

The language construction policy implemented by the Soviet government in the 1920s–1930s that required creation of alphabets and standards (Алпатов 2015 : 10) is well-described in literature and has been subject of recent research (see, e.g., Алпатов 2013; 2015; Биккулова 2012; Волошина 2011; Мамышева 2011; Тимирханов 2015; Темирболатова 2012, Siegl, Rießler 2015, etc.). The issue has been attracting interest due to the ongoing discussions of the development of literary languages, including Uralic, as well as ethnic self-consciousness (see, e.g., Борина 2015; Кондрашкина 2007; Мосин 2014).

There are also quite a few publications on the Kola Saami writing system. These mention the difficulties with both the Russian and foreign writing systems for Saami (Хелимский 2002 : 158); briefly outline the history of the Russian Saami writing system (Волков 1996 : 4; Керт 1966 : 156; 1975 : 209–210; 1993 : 135; 1994 : 102; 2005 : 1; 2007 : 10–11; 2009 : 13–14; Киселев, Киселева 1987 : 92–94; Костина 2012 : 155; Черняков 1998 : 69–70; Sergejeva 2002 : 107–108); include a thorough discussion of the Kola Saami writing system and orthography connected with the introduction of a Russian-based writing system (Клаус 1984; Лехтиранта 1986); explain the selection of the language variety for the written Kola Saami language in the 1930s, and reasons for the absence or presence of special letters for certain sounds (Эндюковский 1937 : 129–130); present the principles suggested for the creation of a new Kola Saami alphabet in the 1980s and related issues of phonology (Куруч 1985 : 529; Афанасьева, Куруч, Мечкина, Антонова, Яковлев, Глухов 1985 : 529; Керт 2007 : 12; Кузьменко, Рисслер 2012; Rießler 2007). More details on the establishment of a Kola Saami writing system are given in G. M. Kert's article on the Saami writing system (Керт 1967).

No analysis has heretofore been made of archive documents (either federal or regional) addressing the issues of the Kola Saami writing system in the 1930s. Kert's article (Керт 1967) uses data from three documents of the Murmansk Regional Archive (МОА, ф. 194, оп. 1. ед. хран. 3, 8, 15). In the work of A. A. Kiselev and T. A. Kiseleva (Киселев, Киселева 1987 : 92–94) there is only one reference to a document from the State Archive of the Murmansk Region in the chapter addressing the Saami writing system using the Latin-script alphabet (ГАМО, Ф. Р-194. Оп. 1. Д. 7. Л. 86).

The account of an event as important for the further development of the Kola Saami language and culture as the establishment of a writing system is not complete without a description and analysis of archive documents. There has been no sufficient description or analysis of the very processes of the establishment and introduction of Kola Saami writing systems (either Latin-script or Cyrillic-script) in the literature. It is probable that the history of the Kola Saami writing system still awaits its researcher (see Бурькин 2000 : 157).

### **Research subject and approaches**

The purpose of this paper is to shed light on one of the most important stages of language construction for the Kola Saami — the period 1933–1935, during which a Latin-based writing system was established — showing the role of related unpublished regional materials. When analyzing the archive, we were primarily interested in using those unique materials to confirm or disprove some well-known facts about language construction on the Kola Peninsula. The archive materials showed the system used by the state authorities to successfully implement the policy of the ruling Communist party between 1933 and 1935, as well as some measures of impact affecting the functional — and sometimes structural — aspects of the Kola Saami language. The analysis revealed how a number of key questions were resolved during the language construction period: the correlation between a written language and a literary language, the issue of standardization of a written language for the indigenous minority of the North, and how to regard different varieties of the Kola Saami language.

### **Resources and techniques**

The process of establishing the Kola Saami alphabet presented here is based on data from the State Archive of the Murmansk Region (ГАМО). In all, 1105 pages of archive documents were studied and this material included more official documents (resolutions, decisions, notes by officials, programs and reports) than private correspondence. The tone of those documents is positive. It should be noted that records of both the setbacks and achievements of the language construction policy were maintained. The documents of the Joint State Political Directorate (ОГПИУ), created to fight political and economical counter-revolution, espionage and racketeering from 1923 to 1934, contain the greatest number of negative facts and characteristics. It seems that the archive documents describe the situation in the region in a more unbiased and often less ideology-driven way than, for instance, the newspapers, in particular “Полярная правда”, which is the oldest regional newspaper, and agent of the Communist party ruling at the time. Of course, when using materials from periodicals one should take into account the subjectivity of assessment of the events described and be aware that the facts are fragmented. However, work with the archive materials revealed that even the documented facts quite often contradict one another. For instance, the date of the establishment of the New Alphabet Committee under the Presidium of the District Executive Committee differs between documents: according to The New Alphabet Committee it is 2 November 1933 (ГАМО, Ф. Р-194. Оп. 1. Д. 2. Л. 93), but the report of the New Alphabet Committee under the Murmansk District Executive Committee for the year 1935 says that the Committee was established by a resolution of the Presidium of the District Executive Committee dated 16 October 1933 (ГАМО, Ф. Р-194. Оп. 1. Д. 45. Л. 1). And this discrepancy is not the only one reflected in our analysis of the material.

Our analysis of the archive materials was based on a definition of language policy as a “conscientious and purposeful impact on language as a functional and structural unit by means of activities implemented by state management bodies or/and social agents on a national scale and in a particular linguistic situation”

(Швейцер 1976 : 146—147). This classical approach allows us to study the process of the establishment of the first Kola Saami writing system and to identify the difficulties and problems that occurred on the way, problems determined by the specifics of the language policy and the linguistic situation of the Kola Saami in the 1930s.

## Research

### 1. Peculiarities of the implementation of the State Language Policy in the north of Kola in the 1930s

The language policy of the USSR in the 1920s—1930s promoted the idea of language equality and negated that of a compulsory national language. Measures were taken to convert paperwork, etc. into minority languages and create Latin-script writing systems for languages without one. In order to do this New Alphabet Committees were established including the New Alphabet Committee for the Peoples of the North under the All-Russian Central New Alphabet Committee in 1933.

The statute of the New Alphabet Committee for the Peoples of the North laid down the purpose, objectives and functions of the Committee. The first priority of the New (Romanized) Alphabet Committee was to give a quick boost to the cultural level of the working population of the North, and to successfully develop a culture that was ethnic in form and socialist in substance by means of the creation and development of writing systems for their languages. In order to achieve these aims, the Committee was to plan and manage the creation of writing systems for the languages of the peoples of the North; supervise the development of the newly created literary languages, ensuring they followed distinct scientific principles; prevent unacceptable discrepancies in alphabet, orthography, terminological issues, etc.; have relevant scientific and research institutions carry out scientific studies of the issues related to the creation and development of the writing systems for the peoples of the North; facilitate the publishing of academic, educational and popular literature and periodicals using the new alphabet; coordinate the publishing schedule for northern languages (in part); facilitate the establishment of printing centers at ethnic schools and in ethnic areas within districts; address issues related to the introduction of the new alphabet in different kinds of educational institutions; organize courses for trainers for the new alphabet and retraining courses for teachers, typesetters, typists, etc.; facilitate the development of linguistic culture (orthography, terminology, literary language formation) at the local level; call conferences and meetings for the creation and development of writing systems for the peoples of the North; approve typical statutes for Committees for the New Alphabet for the Peoples of the North at *okrug*, *inter-raion* and *raion* levels; debrief and approve work plans for the New Alphabet for the Peoples of the North at *krai*, *oblast*, republic, *okrug*, and *inter-raion* levels. The Committee for the New Alphabet for the Peoples of the North was headquartered in the city of Leningrad (ГАМО, Ф. Р-194. Оп. 1. Д. 3. Л. 17—18).

The New Alphabet committees were established under the national Okrug Executive Committees and regional executive committees of the Extreme North. Their statutes set out the tasks for such committees which, in general, corresponded to the tasks of the Committee for the New Alphabet for the Peoples of the North, but with the addition of one special task — facilitation of the indigenization of Soviet institutions by means of organization of relevant courses for active workers in ethnic administrative divisions (*okrugs* and *raions*). Apart from that, their statutes had a strong ideological component: It was noted that those committees were on the warpath against any distortion of class lines during the activities addressing the introduction of a new alphabet and writing system — especially against the influence of chauvinists, kulaks, shamans and other community members that would interfere in the work of creating a socialist culture (ГАМО, Ф. Р-194. Оп. 1. Д. 3. Л. 16). Indige-

nization was a political and cultural campaign of the Soviet government in the 1920—1930s, intended to “organize local institutions in the areas inhabited by different ethnic groups in such a way that the work would be carried out by representatives of the local indigenous community” (Толковый словарь русского языка 2000 : 1466). The objectives of the indigenization were grand in scale. With regard to the Kola Saami language the aim was to indigenize primary schools for the first two years of study and introduce Russian as a subject in the second year of study; preschools would only use the native language, but, although literacy centers for those who had a command of Russian would use Russian, the native language of the students would be used in the work in order to ease the mastering of reading and writing in the native language (ГАМО, Ф. Р-194. Оп. 1. Д. 3. Л. 14). The New Alphabet committees brought up the necessity to improve the training and retraining of lower technical and clerical staff in the Kola Saami language, to convert paperwork into the native language and to publish Kola Saami pages in local newspapers (ГАМО, Ф. Р-194. Оп. 1. Д. 3. Л. 22).

Among the tasks of the Murmansk Committee laid down in the Statute of the Committee for Facilitation of Development of Languages and Writing Systems for the Peoples of the North under the Presidium of the Murmansk Okrug Executive Committee (the New Alphabet Committee of the Okrug) was the management and planning of the establishment of a local ethnic periodical (newspaper), non-periodical press (brochures, newssheets) and ethnic pages in newspapers of *okrug* and *raion* levels. In this regard it was specified that the Committee should keep strict control over following the principles of the common literary language rather than allowing periodicals to be published in local dialects. The Committee should also enhance the scientific study of issues related to the creation and development of a writing system for the peoples of the North by relevant scientific and research institutions, guided by the Academic and Research Association of the Institute of the Peoples of the North (ГАМО, Ф. Р-194. Оп. 1. Д. 2. Л. 5). The 1935 report of the New Alphabet Committee of the Murmansk Okrug Executive Committee says that their work primarily addresses local natives — the Saami ethnos (the Lapps) having no earlier written language (ГАМО, Ф. Р-194. Оп. 1. Д. 45. Л. 1). The resolution “О практических мероприятиях по внедрению письменности на родном языке народов Севера” (On Practical Activities for the Introduction of Writing in the Native Language of the Peoples of the North), dated 22 September 1933, lays down the following tasks set by the New Alphabet Committee for the Murmansk Okrug for the near future: verification of the Saami alphabet book and brochure in different dialects; creation of necessary conditions for the conversion of primary schooling into the native language; organization of courses for retraining teachers and literacy specialists in the Kola Saami language; facilitation of the procurement of the necessary printing facilities, contribution to the publishing of posters, newssheets, brochures and a national page in a newspaper; creation of conditions for scientific research into different dialects of the Saami language (ГАМО, Ф. Р-194. Оп. 1. Д. 12. Л. 10).

The regional executive committees in the Koł'sko-Loparskij, Lovozero, Poljarnyj and Ponoj raions established committees to facilitate the dissemination of the new-alphabet based writings on the *raion* level. Their primary objectives were to mobilize all powers in order to boost the cultural level of the Saami community; to teach the Saami people to read and write in their native language; to explain to them the meaning of the Saami literary language and its importance (ГАМО, Ф. Р-194. Оп. 1. Д. 1. Л. 79; Ф. Р-194. Оп. 1. Д. 57. Л. 59).

The Murmansk Permanent Academic and Research Centre for Studying the Peoples of the North was established and its purpose can be seen in its subject schedule for the year 1934/1935, which included the following sections and tasks: Economy section — gathering materials related to the development of reindeer husbandry and trades in Murmansk Okrug; Pedagogy section — study of the peda-

gological process at Saami school; Anthropology section — filling in individual anthropological cards with respect to *pogosts* (settlements); the Linguistics section had several related tasks: to make scientific Saami dialect dictionaries of Tuloma, Kildin, Ter (USSR), Inari (Finland), Luleå (Sweden) and Kautokeino (Norway); to make dialect and ethnographic maps of the Kola Peninsula; to make phonograph recordings of texts in Saami (ГАМО, Ф. P-194. Оп. 1. Д. 1. Л. 77).

The writing system for the Saami (and all other ethnic minorities of the North) was created by the Academic and Research Association of the Institute of the Peoples of the North, which had a linguistics department. The Committee on the New Alphabet under the Murmansk Okrug Executive Committee established a scientific and research centre within this association headed by P. Antonov. As a result it was not only specialists from Leningrad, but also local people including the growing Saami intelligentsia who were engaged in further language development (ГАМО, Ф. P-194. Оп. 1. Д. 29. Л. 12).

The creation of the writing system was not the task of the Committee on the New Alphabet, but that of the executive secretary of the Institute of the Peoples of the North Z. Černjakov and researcher A. Endjukovskij, who were directly involved: Černjakov's Kola Saami alphabet book was published in 1933 and Endjukovskij's alphabet book was published in 1937. Researchers also collected texts in Kola Saami dialects and the language of the Filmans (Lapps of Norwegian origin, Lutherans, who inhabited Western Murman (Ушаков 2003 : 289)). The linguistic department of the Academic and Research Association decided to carry out a deeper study of the Filmans dialect in order to find out if the Filmans could use the Kola Saami literary language (see e.g., ГАМО, Ф. P-194. Оп. 1. Д. 1. Л. 46; ГАМО, Ф. P-194. Оп. 1. Д. 2. Л. 11). The achievements of the Academic and Research Association in the study and development of a Kola Saami writing system were repeatedly noted at the plenary sessions of the New Alphabet Committee under the Presidium of the Murmansk Okrug Executive Committee. For instance, the following publications were recorded in the minutes of the meeting of 21 January 1934: an alphabet book in Kola Saami, two political brochures, translations of established textbooks, in particular a first reader and a first book of arithmetic, and a children's book. The plans of the New Alphabet Committee included only verification of the alphabet book and a political brochure in Kildin and Motka (Tuloma) dialects (ГАМО, Ф. P-194. Оп. 1. Д. 1. Л. 30).

In addition, the Academic and Research Association developed programs for Kola Saami language courses. One such program was a short course for retraining teachers of the northern school, which was developed by Z. Černjakov and is described below.

Introduction (4 hours). The tasks of the national policy with respect to language construction among the ethnic minorities of the North. Creation of literary languages and the principles used for different dialects. Meaning of the native language. General information about the Kola Saami language and its structure: vocabulary, peculiarities of the Kola Saami vocabulary in comparison with Russian; development — belonging to the Finno-Ugric family; the Kola Saami language area; Kola Saami dialects — their boundaries and peculiarities; peoples' self-designation and general information; alphabet; correct pronunciation of particular sounds. Part One (40 hours). Study of the structure of the principal types of a simple sentence with the principal forms of syntactic inflection for certain parts of speech, including: Predicate — 1. Finite verb forms in connection with the tenses available in the language (for all numbers of person); 2. Finite verbs in the imperative mood; 3. Predicate forms of a noun. Subject — 4. Nominative case of a noun in the singular and plural; 5. Nominative case of a pronoun (all numbers of person); 6. Nominative case of a cardinal numeral; 7. Non-finite verb form functioning as a subject. Object — 8. Case forms. Attribute — 9. Nominal syntactic forms and nominal inflected forms which

function as an attribute to a certain verb form; 10. Denominal adverb forms and deverbative adverb forms that function as an attribute to a particular verb form. Part Two (40 hours). The material given in Part Two is layered on the basis given in Part One using selected materials from the Kola Saami alphabet book and the political brochure. The primary structure of simple and complex sentences is studied. Final Part. Information about certain dialects of the Kola Saami language; orthographic rules (in connection with the primary sound changes set for the literary language); basic paradigms for the creation of new terminology; addressing methodology for teaching the native language in a Saami school; addressing methodology for academic study and research of the language (how and from whom a text should be recorded, how to study it, how to collect and record material for a dictionary). Skills (to be acquired throughout the course). Skill in parsing a sentence (in its principal types) based on its central parts (predicate and subject) and translating the whole sentence. Skill in sentence formation. Mastering the minimum vocabulary of 300–500 words used in the training process. Using a dictionary (skill in finding the dictionary form of an unknown word – infinitive, nominative case, finding the correct meaning for a certain context). Fluent use of the alphabet (reading and writing skills). Elementary speaking skills (simple questions) (ГАМО, Ф. Р-194. Оп. 1. Д. 3. Л. 1-1 об.).

## 2. Peculiarities of the Kola Saami linguistic situation in the 1930s

The archive documents allow us to describe the peculiarities of the Kola Saami linguistic situation in the 1930s, in which the state policy of the language construction was implemented.

### 2.1. Kola Saami speakers and their geography

According to the archive documents, in 1935 there were about 1700 Saami people inhabiting the Kola Peninsula. They lived in twelve Saami *pogosts* (settlements) and several Finnish and Russian settlements. There was a thirteenth *pogost*, Ekoostrov, but it had practically disintegrated by 1935 (ГАМО, Ф. Р-194. Оп. 1. Д. 45. Л. 1-1 об.).

The report for the Committee on the North under the Presidium of All-Russian Central Executive Committee dated 4 February 1934 addressing the organization of the "Red Boat" points out: "the Kola Saami are dispersed across the Kola Peninsula in clusters of 35, 50, 120 people with no connection between them (for example, the Saami from Motka and Sosnovka never meet each other), the Nivkhs of the Sakhalin island and the Amur estuary have more in common than, for instance, the Saami of Tuloma and Lumbovka. The "Red Boat" in the Murmansk Okrug would contribute to the dispersed dialects coming close together" (ГАМО, Ф. Р-194. Оп. 1. Д. 3. Л. 84).

The report of the New Alphabet Committee of the Murmansk Okrug Executive Committee for 1935 states that the Saami community was the most culturally and economically backward in the *okrug* and boosting cultural growth by means of writing in the native language would be a lever to lift both the economy and culture. The main difficulty was the lack of a common Kola Saami language. According to the report, three different Saami dialects were spoken on the Kola Peninsula, so it was only possible to introduce a literary language by means of a book in the Kildin Saami area, while in areas where Tuloma and Jokanga dialects were spoken this work would require well-trained teachers with a command of Russian and of the literary Kola Saami language as well as of local dialects (ГАМО, Ф. Р-194. Оп. 1. Д. 45. Л. 1-1 об.).

The archive documents of the 1930s, especially the notes of the Joint State Political Directorate repeatedly note the backwardness and illiteracy of the Kola Saami

population. For example, a note from the head of the Murmansk Okrug Department of the Joint State Political Directorate about the population of the Jokanga station states: "The cultural services [i.e. cultural political and educational services — O.I.] provided for the Lapps are far from being sufficient, the Lapps are absolutely illiterate, engage in brewing distiller's beer, drinking and going to church, where there is one priest. The people themselves are weak and according to a medical report are becoming extinct due to their abnormal lifestyle and lack of fat and milk food" (ГАМО, РФ. П-2. Оп. 1. Д. 489. Л. 101). The level of literacy is confirmed by the 1926/1927 census: "the Lapps — there are 40.5% literate men and 12.9% literate women among the settled population; among the nomadic population the rates are 18.9% and 2.4%, respectively" (Герлецкий 1932 : 28).

## 2.2. Language competence of the ethnic minorities of the Kola Peninsula

As the first cultural staff trained were those who had a command of the Kola Saami language it is important to determine how competent the general Saami population were in Saami dialects and other languages. The archive documents revealed the following.

There was considerable language attachment between the Komi and the Saami. In some areas, for example, in Lovozero, most of the Saami population knew the Komi language and willingly used it (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 30. Л. 30). In his report on the Kola Saami language work at the Institute of the Peoples of the North for the academic year 1933—1934, A. Endjukovskij reported the willingness of the Izhma-Komi students to study Kola Saami at the regional Soviet construction courses that trained staff for municipal and *raion* authorities and accepted people from the indigenous population (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 21. Л. 11). The archive documents also show the willingness of Russian students to study Kola Saami (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 57. Л. 37).

The data about the Russian language skills of Saami primary school students is contradictory: On the one hand, according to a letter from P. Antonov to Z. Černjakov dated 1 December 1934, children in the Saami school did not speak Russian, but knew Russian political and Finnish songs (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 5. Л. 44); on the other hand, a note from the same year says that there is no teaching in Saami, except in the settlement of Lovozero, (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 30. Л. 30), which means that in the rest of the area Russian must have been used as teaching language. It is interesting that a survey of 1785 showed that all Lappish men and 70% of Lappish women could speak Russian (Ушаков 1998 : 272).

The use of the Latin script, according to the archive documents, was assessed positively. Cde Popova, headmistress of the Kildin school, reported that Saami children learnt faster and better in Kola Saami than in Russian (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 57. Л. 37). Z. Černjakov notes the Kola Saami's positive attitude to the Romanized alphabet: "I can remember how proud the young Saami were to show me their sample notes using the Latin alphabet. [---] they took the Roman characters as their own, our, native script" (Черняков 1998 : 70).

Finnish language skills also helped children to master Kola Saami using the Romanized alphabet book. Children of different nationalities studied Kola Saami at schools: in the 1933—1934 academic year there were 50 students at Babino school — 11 Saamis, 5 Finns, 3 Karelians, 29 Russians (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 1. Л. 31) — and in Padun school, out of 74 children, there were 38 Saamis, 18 Finns and 13 Russians. Bystrov, the headmaster of the school, reported that Finnish children had a command of the Saami language and were willing to study it using the alphabet book (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 1. Л. 31). In his Report on the Kola Saami Language Work at the Institute of the Peoples of the North during the academic year 1933—1934, A. Endjukovskij noted that a good command of the Finnish language helped



a trainee in the Kola Saami group of the regional Soviet construction course, Cde A. Dmitrijev who was a speaker of the literary dialect of the Kola Saami language (Kildin), to master the skill of reading the Romanized alphabet (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 1. Л. 21).

### **2.3. Dialectal division of Kola Saami**

The wide dispersion of the dialects of Kola Saami (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 3. Л. 84) raised difficulties both in the creation of a writing system and in teaching the language (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 57. Л. 36). It was noted that the Kola Saami literary language was under construction, given markedly different dialects (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 2. Л. 3).

In the 1936 report on the Saami language in the schools of the Murmansk Okrug by A. Endjukovsky we read: "Unfortunately, Cde Gerasimov, the teacher, had not yet mastered literary Kola Saami by that time and thus he had to resort to his native dialect of Tuloma, which was significantly different from the Kildin dialect taken as basis for the literary language. In some cases the children understood or rather guessed what the teacher wanted to tell them, but started to correct him at once in their own dialects of Lovozero and Kildin" (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 55. Л. 10). "According to Cde M. Anvelt, who was also present at teacher Gerasimov's classes, the teacher had to resort to explanations in Russian as the pupils seemed not to understand him at all (as he used the Tuloma dialect)" (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 55. Л. 11). The differences between the dialects of the Kola Saami language have repeatedly been pointed out by A. Endjukovskij in his reports (see, e.g., *Материалы по развитию языков и письменности народов Севера 1934* : 11–12).

## **3. Introduction of the Romanized Kola Saami writing system**

### **3.1. Selection of a dialect for the Kola Saami alphabet**

The teaching aid of 1933 says that the Romanized Saami alphabet is based on the alphabet for the peoples of the North (the Unified Northern Alphabet), developed by the the Academic and Research Association of the Institute of the Peoples of the North and approved by the First All-Russian Conference for the Development of Languages and Writing Systems for the Peoples of the North in January 1932 (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 7. Л. 4). Z. Černjakov's Latin-script alphabet book ("Saam̄ Bukvar̄") was published in 1933.

The Kildin dialect (Kildin Saami language) was chosen as the basis for the Kola Saami writing system from the moment the Romanized Kola Saami writing system was created in the 1930s. According to the archive documents, the Kildin dialect was picked in preference to Tuloma and Jokanga dialects because in Kildin Saami areas there were well-trained teachers who could speak both Russian and Saami. Since the 1930s the Kildin dialect has been called the literary Saami language (see, e.g., ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 45. Л. 1). However, there are other points of view in the literature regarding the selection of the basic dialect. G. Kert makes reference to V. Alymov, who wrote: "The literary language shall be based on a dialect that primarily belongs to the largest and at the same time the tightest and strongest, in the economic respect, geographic group; secondly, this dialect must be understandable to speakers of other geographically adjacent dialects" (Керт 1967 : 113). This opinion is actually based on the key principles for creation of literary (written) languages presented in the documents of the First All-Russian Conference for the Development of Languages and Writing Systems for the Peoples of the North (*Материалы по развитию языков и письменности народов Севера 1934* : 55). During the development of the USSR, Soviet linguistics developed the following criteria

for the selection of a dialect base for a literary language: number of speakers; role of dialect speakers in economic, political and cultural life; and how the dialect reflects the primary characteristics (phonetics, grammar and vocabulary) of the language in general (Баранникова 1973 : 354; see also, e.g., Кондрашкина 2007 : 106). The Kildin dialect, in the opinion of G. Kert, is the central dialect of the Kola Peninsula and is more understandable to Skolt and Ter Saami speakers, who hardly understand each other (Керт 1967 : 113—114). The notions of written and literary language were identical at the beginning of the 1930s, and this is reflected, for instance, in textbooks for other languages of the peoples of the North from the same period (Василевич 1934 : 5).

An inquiry made by the Committee for the New Alphabet for the Peoples of the North in October 1935, approved by the steering organizations of the Murmansk Okrug, was answered with a decision to preserve the existing Romanized alphabet. The publication of an alphabet book containing inaccurate orthography and heterogeneous language (due to a strong admixture of the Tuloma dialect) was delayed. Particular words were found to have wrong meanings in the literary language (ГАМО, Ф. Р-194. Оп. 1. Д. 45. Л. 4).

G. Kert's article says that "as the makers of "Bukvar" (the alphabet book) and other teaching aids sought to incorporate features of all the dialects into the literary language, the systematic nature of the language was lost and the result turned out mangled for all Saami speakers. This raised objections both among the people and among the specialists involved in the writing system development" (Керт 1967 : 113). The archive documents we investigated, however, contain more positive responses to the alphabet book than critical ones. This might be connected with a partial loss of the archive or its destruction in connection, for instance, with the "Saami Conspiracy" case of 1938, when 34 people, including V. Alymov, were charged with detrimental activities and executed.

Z. Černjakov, the maker of the dictionary, and the New Alphabet Committee revised it to verify that the material could be understood by speakers of different dialects — Kildin, Voronja and Motka. The revision proved that the alphabet book as it was, despite some discrepancies in the dialects, could cater for the speakers of those sub-dialects (ГАМО, Ф. Р-194. Оп. 1. Д. 6. Л. 5).

The overall assessment of the alphabet book expressed at *kolkhoz* (collective farm) meetings was usually positive: "the alphabet book is good" (P. Čaporov — Tundra *kolkhoz*), "good, not bad" (O. Antonov — Saam *kolkhoz*), "I understand everything in this dictionary", etc. A lesson with the alphabet book at the Malaja Litsa school showed that it was quite suitable for the Motka subdialect. Finally, the verification of the alphabet book for the Pulozero dialect by A. Endjukovskij showed that it was suitable for use in this area as well (ГАМО, Ф. Р-194. Оп. 1. Д. 6. Л. 6; see also Материалы по развитию языков и письменности народов Севера 1934 : 18). It was noted that the alphabet book did not contain words, collocations, grammar forms, etc. that get in the way of understanding the literary dialect (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 1. Л. 46; Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 3. Л. 42).

### 3.2. Lack of teachers

The 1935 report of the New Alphabet Committee of the Murmansk Okrug Executive Committee showed that the introduction of Saami literacy through Russian (and Finnish) teachers who had no command of the Saami language was already very difficult in 1934. The main problem was a high turnover among the teachers (ГАМО, Ф. Р-194. Оп. 1. Д. 45. Л. 2).

It was noted that the Centre for Studying Peoples of the North did not have enough staff who were competent in the Saami literary language. There were some educated Saami people who spoke dialects other than Kildin and so had an incom-

plete knowledge of the literary language. The only qualified expert in the literary Saami language, A. Endjukovskij, a teacher of the Institute of the Peoples of the North, worked in Leningrad (ГАМО, Ф. Р-194. Оп. 1. Д. 45. Л. 4 об.).

### **3.3. Script and orthographic issues**

Verification of the Romanized alphabet book revealed issues to do with mastering the literary (written) Saami language. We did not find any comments from Kola Saami speakers or teachers in the archive, but certain issues of script and orthography were mentioned. Thus, for instance, at the meeting of the Presidium of the New Alphabet Committee of 10 March 1934 (Minutes No. 9) it was decided to replace the letter *X* with the letter *H* upon the initiative of Z. Černjakov (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 2. Л. 53). From a letter from K. Popova, headmistress of the Kildin national school (Kola settlement), we find that a serious challenge is posed by the letter *h*, which is silent in her students' dialect. Popova is concerned about "what to do when they have to use words that are not to be found in the alphabet book and yet they have to write them? Should they be written the way children pronounce them or should they be avoided? [---] Can these words be recorded in the dictionary and be used and written on the blackboard? Won't it be necessary to teach them all over again to spell the word differently? And there are lots of such words" (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 57. Л. 16a). Difficulties in spelling new words are also mentioned in a report by Cde Tarasevič, headmaster of the Pulozero school: "I haven't run into any difficulties in teaching the Kola Saami language, except for the dialectal difference between the Pulozero colloquial language and the alphabet book. The teacher finds it difficult to teach and write the new Saami words appearing in the colloquial speech of the local Saami and in practice they write them by ear" (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 57. Л. 36). Later, Z. Černjakov has noted: "Let the language speakers write the way they speak" (Черняков 1998 : 76–77).

Language researchers have spoken many times to resist interference with scholars by dispensing recommendations for standards of writing, asserting that such recommendations were just not justified, especially at the initial stage of the development of the Kola Saami written language (see, e.g., Черняков 1998 : 37; 88). Under these circumstances we should highlight the difference between a written and a literary language that has repeatedly been noted by researchers, and adopt the sound position that "a literary language is made not by decrees of the scientists, but by the people, whose spokespersons are poets and writers — language speakers" and, "instead of scholastic disputes over the alphabet structure, etc., the green light should be given to Saami poets and writers" (Черняков 1998 : 88; see also Агранат 2014 for more about the written systems of minority languages).

In parallel with the verification of the Romanized alphabet book, language researchers worked on the creation and improvement of Kola Saami terminology. For example, it is noted that Z. Černjakov experienced difficulties with the translation of Eichfeld's article on growing potatoes and vegetables because of the lack of agricultural terminology in Kola Saami (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 29. Л. 35). At the same time, A. Endjukovskij collected terms and names of animals, plants and tools (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 3. Л. 42 об.).

### **4. A "perfect" solution to the linguistic problems**

The archive documents allowed us to see the language construction policy in action, although, as we saw, "policy and life ran counter to each other as often as not" (Алпатов 2014 : 17). The decision to introduce the Latin script for Kola Saami came from "above", together with a list of reasons for a Romanization of the whole country (see, e.g., Алпатов 1997; 2013; 2015; Биккулова 2012). However, there were still other

reasons for using the Latin script for the Kola Saami language: Despite their command of colloquial Russian and the introduction of Russian writing by missionaries (Азбука 1895) the Kola Saami were not strangers to Latin writings.

In the archives we found documents in which the authors bemoaned the insufficient coverage of the Kola Saami by language studies. Z. Černjakov, for instance, in a letter to the Central Committee for the New Alphabet for the Peoples of the North, reports that before the Revolution the Saami language in Russia was studied mostly by Swedish and Finnish researchers such as Genetz, and that now (i.e. in the 1930s) these are of a great academic interest. The Saami language has a uniformity in grammar, no matter whether we speak of the Kola Saami, the Swedish Saami or the Norwegian Saami language. Grammars of the latter by Wiklund and Nielsen must therefore, in the opinion of Z. Černjakov, be studied by those who want to study the Kola Saami language and so he advocates reprinting them and other works, for example, Itkonen's Kola Saami texts — or at least excerpts of them (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 3. Л. 3; for how the proposal was supported, see ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 2. Л. 12). In 1934 there were plans to publish materials not only about the Kola Saami language, but also about Scandinavian Saami (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 1. Л. 30).

Apart from that, the indigenization policy covered not only the Saami, the Tatars and the Chinese living on the Kola Peninsula, but the Norwegians as well (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 2. Л. 25-25 об.). Such a widespread indigenization policy along with other linguistic factors (the dispersion of the Kola Saami dialects, the affinity between all Saami languages in terms of grammatical structure) gave rise to an idea — albeit among foreign researchers — of creating a kind of a common Saami language. Hence the archive has a Russian version of J. Rosberg's paper of 1928, whose title has been translated "Is it possible to communicate in Saami?", although a more correct version would be "Is linguistic unification of the Saami Possible?". Discussing the differences in the Saami dialects and dispersal of the Saami, Rosberg points out that: "in Russia it is quite tough for the Saami, but, generally speaking, they can console themselves with the thought that the tundra is large and the power is far away" (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 39. Л. 5). The author gives a peculiar answer to the question posed in the title of the paper: "[---] we should create a Saami Esperanto based on one of the most central and widespread dialects and by dictator's hand make it the common language for the writing system" (ГАМО, Ф. Р.-194. Оп. 1. Д. 39. Л. 5-6).

Nor do contemporary researchers deny the possibility that modern Kola Saami could return to the Latin script (Керт 2009 : 16; Клаус 1984 : 274), perhaps even adopting the North Saami written literary language, which — despite being based on a different dialect — has solid cultural positions (Хелимский 2002 : 159).

### **Conclusions: Lessons of the past**

As we can see from the archive documents, the main obstacle to a successful implementation of the language construction policy in the creation of the Kola Saami writing system was the disparity of the Kola Saami dialects. Introduction of Latin characters did not present a problem in general, although it disturbed the existing linguistic situation to a certain extent, as most Saami, though illiterate, spoke Russian. Apart from that, the first written texts had been Cyrillic-based, although, in the opinion of G. Kert, they did not have a significant meaning (Керт 1967 : 111). Already in the 1930s the Kola Saami system faced the perpetual problem of writing in many languages of the indigenous minorities of the North, which involved "a description of the correlation between the sounds of the language and letters of the alphabet, when the phonemic system was insufficiently identified or there were mistakes in the phonemic structure of some words" (Бурькин 2004 : 259).

This background enables a different view of the present-day challenges of teaching the Kola Saami language. Disputes over Kola Saami orthography that began in the 1980s have not been settled. They hinder both teaching and the making of new Kola Saami textbooks. Perhaps the time has come to make a deep study of the phonological systems of modern Kola Saami languages in order to identify their real situation and make "an orthography that would be simple to learn, not awkward for publishing, and based on a common writing system" (Керт 2009 : 15; Клаус 1984; Лехтиранта 1986, etc.). I believe that multimedia dictionaries of Uralic languages, being created as part of a project headed by J. V. Normanskaja and providing for the presentation of "a unique program that would allow all the researchers who have recordings from expedition trips, to make multimedia dictionaries combining sound, dialect and etymological aspects" (<http://lingvodoc.ispras.ru/>), will address some of these issues.

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## ЭКСПЕРИМЕНТЫ ЯЗЫКОВОЙ ПОЛИТИКИ СОЗДАНИЕ КОЛЬСКО-СААМСКОЙ ПИСЬМЕННОСТИ В 1930-Х ГОДАХ

В статье представлены архивные материалы периода создания первой саамской письменности на латинице (1933—1935 гг.). Цель статьи — представить один из важнейших этапов языкового строительства в области саамского языка, показать роль неопубликованных региональных материалов по внедрению саамской письменности на латинизированной основе. Процесс создания алфавита кольско-саамского языка описан по данным Государственного архива Мурманской области (1105 листов архивных документов). Описаны мероприятия государственных органов по созданию письменности для кольских саамов в 1930-е годы и языковая ситуация на Кольском полуострове в тот период. Как результат языковой политики представлен процесс внедрения латинизированного саамского алфавита и показано, какие проблемы преподавания обнаружились с учетом выбранного для создания алфавита диалекта саамского языка: внешние (нехватка учительских кадров) и внутренние (диалектное членение саамского языка). При анализе архивного материала выяснилось, как в период языкового строительства решался ряд принципиальных вопросов: соотношение понятий «письменный язык» и «литературный язык», вопрос о нормативности письменного языка коренных малочисленных народов Севера, учет особенностей диалектного членения кольско-саамского языка.