研究論文

How to Deal with the Elements of Russian Origin:

Developments of Orthographic Reforms for the Kyrgyz Language[1]

ロシア語的要素をどのように扱うか
—— キルギス語正書法改革の展開 ——

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　本研究は、ロシア語的要素（ロシア語起源の借用語、キリル文字、ロシア語起源の音）に着目し、ソ連時代およびソ連崩壊以降のキルギス語の正書法改革において、このロシア語的要素が「外来要素」として認識され排除されてきたのか、それとも何らかの形で受容されてきたのかという問題を検討するものである。本研究によって、特に独立以降のキルギス語の正書法は、単純にロシア語的要素を排除するわけでも積極的に受け入れるわけでもなく、非常に複雑に入り組んだものであり、かつ曖昧さを包含するものであったことが明らかになった。

キーワード
キルギス語、ロシア語、正書法改革、旧ソ連地域

1．Introduction

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the titular languages of each ex-Soviet state were promoted as the "state language"[2] and positioned as symbols of national integration. On the basis of the results from previous studies regarding this topic（e.g., Landau and Kellner-Heinkele 2001; Pavlenko 2008）, the author emphasizes the general tendency of each states' language influence to grow, while the role of the Russian language, which enjoyed the highest prestige during the Soviet era, is shrinking, although its influence has not been completely excluded[3].

However, many previous studies are general or comparative involving two or more states of the ex-Soviet region, and details of the relational dynamics between the state and Russian language in each state have not yet been entirely explored. Moreover, as previous studies were

mainly concerned with the legal and social status of language, such linguistic issues as orthographic and alphabet reforms in the post-Soviet era have not been entirely discussed[4].

This study, therefore, focuses on the elements of Russian origin in the Kyrgyz language（e.g., the Cyrillic alphabet, loanwords, and sounds of Russian origin）. Additionally, it addresses issues concerning orthographic reforms for the Kyrgyz language. Specifically, this study explores the following questions: 1）How are the elements of Russian origin included in the Kyrgyz language? 2）In the post-Soviet era, were the elements of Russian origin recognized as something to be excluded or included in orthographic reforms for the Kyrgyz language?

Kyrgyzstan is one of the few ex-Soviet states that accords a certain legal status to the Russian language[5]. In this state, Russian was designated as the "official language"（as opposed to a state language）through a language law in 2000（Zakon Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki 2000.5.25）, and its status was further confirmed by the Constitution in 2001（Zakon Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki 2001.12.4）. However, Kyrgyzstani people are highly concerned about this issue, and even after the law and the constitution confirmed Russian as the official language, continuous discussions ensued in the political arena and in mass media whether to maintain Russian's official status. Therefore, this article reveals the dynamics of the linguistic aspects of language policy in Kyrgyzstan, where Russian language enjoys a relatively high legal status. Through this research, the present study contributes to clarification of aspects of various national and/or state languages in the modern world.

In the next section, the author describes developments of orthographic reforms for the Kyrgyz language during the Soviet era. Additionally, the author reveals how elements of Russian origin emerged in the Kyrgyz language through Cyrillic alphabet and how spellings based on standard Russian were introduced. In section 3, the author discusses how Russianized orthography in the Kyrgyz language was amended and elements of Russian origin were treated during orthographic reforms for the Kyrgyz language after Perestroika, referring to development of language policies on the legal and social status of language.

This study is based on analysis of primary documents written in Kyrgyz and Russian languages, including published orthographies for the Kyrgyz language, dictionaries, articles in newspapers, academic works by local linguists, and so on.

2 . Orthographic reforms during the Soviet era and the rise of elements of Russian origin

2 . 1 How to spell loanwords? — Latinization and gradual emergence of elements of Russian origin —

Phonetically and lexically based on the dialect of northern Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyz as a written, standard language was established after the Russian Revolution in 1917（Oruzbaeva 1997: 287）. Although at first the Arabic alphabet was adopted for the Kyrgyz language, it was changed to the Latin alphabet as a result of the Union-wide campaign for Latinization[6].

How were the loanwords from Russian spelled at the time? In the draft of orthography by Tynystanov[7] in 1934, it was stipulated that such international vocabulary as "Soviet" or "Bolshevik"（and general vocabulary to be used from then on）be spelled in accordance with Russian pronunciation and orthography（Tynystanov 1934: 39）. However, this stipulation was somehow loosely applied, and spelling loanwords in accordance with the phonetic characteristics of the Kyrgyz language was allowed, as shown below:

（**English translation**）

Leninism	leninizm	→	leninizim （insertion of a vowel）
Marxist	markisist	→	markisis （missing of "t" at the end of the word）
tractor	traktor	→	traktьr （pronounced as [traktir]; spelling in accordance with the vowel harmony[8] of the Kyrgyz language.）
kolkhoz	kolxoz	→	qalqoz （the letter "q" better reflects the phonetic characteristics of the Kyrgyz language.）

However, a significant change was seen in the orthography published in 1938, regarding spelling loanwords. The 1938 orthography's preface emphasizes that "until now there were a lot of distortions in spelling the international-Soviet vocabulary." Then the spelling "qalqoz" for the word "kolkhoz" was taken as an example of such distortion and replaced with: "kolxoz"（Bakeev et al. 1938: 3–4）.

In addition, spellings of other words were also brought closer to Russian spellings. For example, the insertion of vowels, the omission of "t" at the end of a word, and spellings in accordance with the phonetic characteristics of the Kyrgyz language—all accepted practices in the 1934 orthography — were abandoned, as shown below:

（English translation）

Omsk	Omski	→	Omsk
communist	kommunis	→	kommunist
doctor	doqtur	→	doktor
committee	qomitet	→	komitet

In other words, loanwords began to be spelled in accordance with Russian orthography even when the new spelling violated the Kyrgyz language's phonetic characteristics. As the local linguist Musaev[9] emphasized, "Generally, orthographies adopted after 1938 violated linguistic rules and rhythm, which were adopted by some scholars under the influence of the political situation at that time（Agym 2008.9.5）." The 1930s was an epoch when Korenizatsiya was abandoned and the Great Purge by Stalin resulted in the loss of many lives of elites and intellectuals. In addition, the Russian language became a compulsory subject in all schools since 1938.

Thus, through the 1930s, significant changes were made to the orthography for the Kyrgyz language in terms of how elements of Russian origin were treated.

2.2 Cyrillization ― Introduction of an alphabet shared with Russian ―

The Union-wide campaign for Cyrillization resulted in the Kyrgyz language adopting the Cyrillic alphabet in 1940. At the time three letters（ң [ŋ], ү [y], ө [ø]）were introduced for sounds that do not exist in Russian.

The introduction of an alphabet shared with the Russian language eliminated the need to transcribe loanwords and made it easy to borrow words from Russian. Yet, the 1940 orthography accepted spellings aligned with characteristics of the Kyrgyz language for words borrowed before the Russian revolution, as shown below（Ilim izildöö institutu 1940: 10）:

（English translation）	**As in Russian**			**In accordance with the phonetic characteristics of Kyrgyz**	
samovar	самовар	(samovar)	→	самоор	(samoor)
table	стол	(stol)	→	үстөл	(üstöl)
white bread	булка	(bulka)	→	бөлкө	(bölkö)

However, the orthography of 1953, not accepting the spellings shown above, stipulated that all loanwords were to be spelled in accordance with Russian orthography, as shown below （Kyrgyz tilinin orfografiiasy 1954: 14）:

(English translation)	In accordance with the phonetic characteristics of Kyrgyz			As in Russian	
bed	керебет	（kerebet）	→	кровать	（krovat'）
samovar	самоор	（samoor）	→	самовар	（samovar）

That is, all loanwords were to be spelled in accordance with Russian orthography without considering characteristics of the Kyrgyz language. The previous spellings that did consider the phonetic characteristics of the Kyrgyz language were generated through a process in which standard Russian spellings were regarded as "foreign" to Kyrgyz; thus the loanwords from Russian were transcribed in accordance with the Kyrgyz language's phonetic characteristics.

For example, in borrowing the word "кровать（krovat'）" （bed）, the vowel "e" was inserted because the sequence of consonants "к-р（k-r）" was regarded as foreign. In addition, all vowels were changed to "e" in accordance with the vowel harmony of the Kyrgyz language. However, if all words were to be strictly spelled in accordance with Russian orthography, they were no longer transcribed in accordance with the characteristics of the Kyrgyz language, even if the spelling violated the phonetic characteristics of Kyrgyz. In addition, since the two languages then shared the same alphabet, the word "кровать（krovat'）" was directly transferred to Kyrgyz and exactly spelled as in Russian. Therefore, borrowing became easier, and the border between two languages became ambiguous in terms of vocabulary.

In addition to these amendments to orthography, social acceptance of the Russian language and progress in the bilingualization of ethnic Kyrgyz people facilitated direct borrowings of words from Russian. By the 1970s, loanwords of Russian origin increased, especially in academic and technological fields. According to a 1980 estimate by Orusbaev （1980: 29）, 70–80% of the technical terms in the modern Kyrgyz language consisted of loanwords borrowed from or through Russian.

3．Orthographic reforms after Perestroika

3．1 Kyrgyz as the state language and search for "Kyrgyzness"

The elements of Russian origin emerged in the Kyrgyz language through the adoption of the Cyrillic alphabet and the introduction of spellings based on standard Russian. After Perestroika in the late 1980s, the existence of elements of Russian origin in the Kyrgyz language was recognized as a problem, one to be solved along with the problem of the Russian language's high social prestige.

A language law that accorded the status of state language （as opposed to official language）

to the Kyrgyz language in September 1989 represented a starting point for dealing with these two problems.[10] After this law's adoption during the promotion of Kyrgyz as the state language, various measures were taken to exclude elements of Russian origin while emphasizing "Kyrgyzness." For example, in December 1990, the previous spellings of the country name "Киргиз, Kirg(h)iz" in Russian and English were replaced with "Кыргыз, Kyrgyz," which better reflect the phonetic characteristics of the Kyrgyz language.

3.2 Orthography in 2002: The revival of Kyrgyzness

Further, how were the elements of Russian origin treated in the process of orthographic reforms? The amendment of orthography for the Kyrgyz language became a point of discussion during the late 1980s that continued even after Kyrgyzstan's independence.

Here, let us take a look at the orthography published in 2002. As emphasized in the preface, "in representing sounds by alphabet, appropriate letters should be used which correctly reflect each sound of a word (The National Commission of State Language 2002: 29–30)," the principle of "phoneticism," which values spellings aligned with the phonetic characteristics of Kyrgyz, ran through this orthography. Therefore, the 2002 orthography carried significance concerning treatment of the elements of Russian origin as in the following two points:

Firstly, there were modifications to spellings of loanwords that did not consider the phonetic characteristics of the Kyrgyz language and completely followed Russian orthography. The 2002 orthography, while stipulating that spelling of loanwords follow the Russian orthography in principle, it accepted spellings in accordance with the phonetic characteristics of Kyrgyz as shown below (The National Commission of State Language 2002: 29–30):

(English translation)	In accordance with the phonetic characteristics of Kyrgyz		As in Russian	
number	номур	(nomur)	номер	(nomer)
minute	мүнөт	(münöt)	минута	(minuta)
actor	артис	(artis)	артист	(artist)

The 2002 orthography did not differ from Soviet orthography in that loanwords were in principle spelled in accordance with Russian orthography. However, given that the process by which orthographies for the Kyrgyz language were gradually brought closer to Russian orthography during the Soviet era, the new orthography was of great significance in that the principle of phoneticism, which valued spellings in accordance with the phonetic characteristics of Kyrgyz, ran through it.

The second significance is the declaration that "there are 14 vowels and 20 consonants（34 sounds in total）in the Kyrgyz standard language." This significance is associated with the question whether to include sounds used only in loanwords from Russian in the list of sounds of the Kyrgyz language. In this orthography, such sounds as ц（ts）or щ（ʃ'ʃ'）, used only in loanwords from Russian, were excluded from the list of sounds of the Kyrgyz language. However, letters corresponding to these sounds were maintained in the following way:

The sounds of the Kyrgyz language are represented by 36 letters. Out of 36, ц, щ, ъ（hard sign）, ь（soft sign）are used in spelling loanwords from Russian, which is the official language of Kyrgyzstan, and other languages.

As mentioned previously, the debates on orthographic reforms for the Kyrgyz language developed during the promotion of Kyrgyz as the state language of Kyrgyzstan. Although this orthography did not aim for complete exclusion of elements of Russian origin, it was of great significance in promoting Kyrgyz because it consistently emphasized phoneticism and Kyrgyzness.

Nonetheless, this orthography received criticism. One reason was the "phoneticistic" spellings of geographical names. Based on phoneticism, geographical names came to be spelled without a hyphen in the following way:

Orthography in 1953			Orthography in 2002	
Кара-Алма	（Kara-Alma）	→	Каралма	（Karalma）
Ала-Арча	（Ala-Archa）	→	Аларча	（Alarcha）
Жалал-Абад	（Jalal-Abad）	→	Жалалабат	（Jalalabat）
Ысык-Көл	（Ysyk-Köl）	→	Ысыккөл	（Ysykköl）

At the time, the local linguist Oruzbaeva（2004: 187–188）insisted that such phoneticistic spellings would contribute to the improvement of children's literacy skills. Others, opposed to these phoneticistic spellings, emphasized the possibility that the geographic names' etymologies would be unclear（Osmonov 2007）. In addition, yet others, opposed to the declaration that "there are 14 vowels and 20 consonants（34 sounds in total）in the Kyrgyz standard language," emphasized the problem of cost for orthographic reforms（Ferghana.ru 2003.1.9）.

3.3 Orthography in 2008: Search for stability rather than the exclusion of elements of Russian origin

The situation described above led to another orthographic reform in 2008. This reform reverted the spellings of geographic names to the previous spellings using hyphens. In addition, the reform declared that "there are 39 sounds in standard Kyrgyz, 14 vowels and 25 consonants." That is, those sounds that had been excluded from the 2002 list of sounds in the Kyrgyz language were included. On the other hand, rules concerning the spellings of loanwords that reflected the Kyrgyz language's phonetic characteristics were taken over almost verbatim. Therefore, the symbolic significance of such spellings was re-evaluated.

In spite of this, it should be noted that "return to Soviet orthography" was emphasized during the 2008 orthographic reform. For example, Zhumagulov, the then chair of the National Commission of State Language, argued that while the orthography in 2002 was adopted without sufficient discussion, the orthographic reform in 2008 resulted in a "return to the orthography of 1953, which was convenient to everyone（BPC 2008.6.27）."

Thus, the 2008 orthography was highly valued for its contribution to the achievement of orthographic stability [11]. "Return to the orthography of 1953" was emphasized, even though the spelling of loanwords of Russian origin showed a crucial difference between the orthographies of 2008 and 1953. This constitutes evidence that issues concerning elements of Russian origin were somehow jostled into the background, since the Soviet orthography that contained various elements of Russian origin was accepted almost without resistance.

Based on the 2008 orthography, an orthographic dictionary was published in September 2009. It was positioned as the main event for a celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the state language of Kyrgyzstan. For the moment at least, it is expected that the present "ambiguous" orthography, in which the Kyrgyz language is spelled with the Cyrillic alphabet and loanwords are, in principle, spelled based on Russian orthography despite some words being spelled in accordance with the Kyrgyz language's phonetic characteristics, will be sustained.

4. Conclusion: Is Russian "foreign" for the Kyrgyz language?

In this study, the author focused on elements of Russian origin in the Kyrgyz language and addressed issues concerning orthographic reforms for the Kyrgyz language. Specifically, this study explored the following questions: 1) How were the elements of Russian origin included in the Kyrgyz language? 2) In the post-Soviet era, were the elements of Russian origin recognized as something to be excluded or included in orthographic reforms for the Kyrgyz language?

Historically, we have witnessed various cases in which scripts and orthographies carried political meanings and were positioned as symbols of national and/or state integration. Orthographies, with their distinctive sets of sound-letter correspondences, are easily distinguishable for their users and quickly become associated with particular groups. If particular orthographic practices can be iconic of nations and ideologies, then getting rid of those orthographic practices may be seen as a part of rejecting colonialism and unwanted or imposed ideologies（Sebba 2007: 82–83）.

Therefore, although the titular languages of each ex-Soviet state were promoted as a "state language" and positioned as a symbol of national integration, there have been endeavors to exclude elements of Russian origin through language policies, including Latinization. Also in Kyrgyzstan, various measures have been taken to exclude elements of Russian origin while emphasizing Kyrgyzness, through certain implementations, including amendments to the spelling of the country's name.

The orthography established during the Soviet era became a "Soviet legacy" in that loanwords were spelled in accordance with Russian orthography using Cyrillic alphabet. Accordingly, it was anticipated that these elements of Russian origin would be excluded as a Soviet legacy after Kyrgyzstan's independence. However, this study revealed the complexity of the issues concerning orthography for the Kyrgyz language.

Therefore, the 2002 orthography was oriented toward Kyrgyzness. However, orthographic reforms after independence were not necessarily headed toward total exclusion of elements of Russian origin. Finally, the Cyrillic alphabet was retained and the fact remains that loanwords are spelled in accordance with Russian orthography although the characteristics of the Kyrgyz language are certainly reflected in new orthographies.

In addition, during the orthographic reform in 2008, some sounds used only in loanwords were included in the list of sounds of the Kyrgyz language, and a return to the orthography of 1953 was emphasized although there were significant differences in the spellings of loanwords. On the other hand, the 2002 orthography, which seemed to carry symbolic meanings, was referred to as a barrier preventing orthographic stability.

Then, why were such results brought about? Firstly, as Sebba（2007: 155）argues, successful reforms of orthographies, whether marginal modifications or total replacements, are rare; conservatism is almost always the most attractive option for the majority of language users, who are literate adults. Therefore, during the 2008 orthographic reform, a total change in orthography was avoided, and stability and a return to Soviet orthography were emphasized, while only the symbolic meanings of orthographic reforms were emphasized.

In addition, the results suggest that the Russian language is gradually losing its foreign label in relation to the Kyrgyz language. Kyrgyz and Russian languages have been in continuous contact from the pre-Soviet time, even though the two languages are linguistically far from each other. Especially standard Kyrgyz, established under the influence of Soviet language policy, contained various elements of Russian origin from its birth onward. Therefore, even when limiting the discussion to "the orthography of the Kyrgyz language," elements of Russian origin are already deeply embedded in that orthography. In that sense, elements of Russian origin are no longer foreign to the Kyrgyz language. As a result, orthographies for the Kyrgyz language after independence become inevitably complicated and ambiguous, neither simply excluding the elements of Russian origin, nor eagerly accepting them.

Notes

1）This study is a shortened and revised version of a longer article written in Japanese by the same author（see Odagiri（2011）), originally prepared for an oral presentation at the Fifth East Asian Conference on Slavic-Eurasian Studies, Osaka University of Economics and Law, August 2013.

2）Generally, the language positioned as the symbol of national integration is referred to as "national language" in English literature. However, in the context of the ex-Soviet region, the language in Russian is called "*gosudarstvennyi iazyk*", which translates literallyas "state language." If we literally translate "national language" into Russian, it becomes "*natsional'nyi iazyk*," which implies "ethnic language." Therefore, in this article the author exclusively uses the term "state language," but juxta-poses the two terms when referring to other contexts.

3）Pavlenko（2008）treats Belarus as an exception and emphasizes that Russian is still used as a dominant language there.

4）There are many studies on the Union-wide Latinization campaign during the 1920s and the Cyrillization in the 1940s. For example, see Isaev（1979）and Martin（2001）(Chapter 5 "The Latinization Campaign and the Symbolic Politics of National Identity").

5）Among fourteen ex-Soviet Republics, excluding Russia, only three states（Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan）accord a certain legal status to Russian（Usuyama 2005: 199). Belarus accords the status of state language to Russian along with Belarusian（Constitution of 1996). Kazakhstan stipulates that "Russian is officially used along with Kazakh"（Constitution of 1995). Kyrgyzstan designates Russian as the official language. For comparison, in its constitution Tajikistan stipulates Russian as "the language for inter-ethnic communication"（Oka 2004: 87–88).

6）For detailed discussion on the Latinization process, see Martin（2001）, Koklianova（1959）, Toki（2008）, and Arai（2006).

7）Kyrgyz poet, linguist, and politician who played the central role in the establishment of the Arabic alphabet for the Kyrgyz language and the Latinization of Kyrgyz（Uyama 2005: 377).

8）A phonological phenomenon in which only specific vowels appear after a certain preceding vowel （Iinuma 1994: 10).

9）Then head of the Institute of Linguistics of Arabaev Kyrgyz State University.

10）Designation of titular languages as the state language through the adoption of language laws was a Union-wide movement also observed in other countries.

11）It should be noted that some who wished to add modifications to the Soviet orthography were naturally against the "return to the Soviet orthography"（Agym 2008.9.5）.

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