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THE HISTORICAL SOURCES OF BELARUSIAN CULTURE BILINGUALISM

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The article considers conditions for the beginning of Belarusian culture bilingualism. It describes historical events contributed to the emergence of this phenomenon, the factors which led to bilingualism. The author also notes the most important aspects of the language development of the Belarusian people.

The long history of existence of two languages in the same geographic, social and political space has created a linguistic situation, which is defined as a bilingualism. Bilingualism is a collective ownership and use of two languages by people. Belarusian as the native language and the other one are used for communication and transmission of information. [1] This phenomenon of ambiguously determined status of the Belarusian language in the modern Belarusian society has been studied by scientists for a long period of time and now does not lose its relevance. This article is based on the work of researchers such as Abetsedarskaya, Brigadin, Strukova, Bulakhov, etc.

Sociolinguistic researches are interesting not only for linguists but also for philosophers, sociologists, ethnographers. Throughout the centuries on the territory of our country the Belarusian and Russian languages do not just "get along" with each other, but also develop, expand boundaries of their influence, enrich the culture of the population.

Belarusian is considered to be the native language of Belarusians. However, over the long history the territory of Belarus has been inhabited by carriers of a wide variety of languages of the locals as well as the invaders. All of them have contributed to the development and culture changes. Bilingualism of Belarusian culture originates in the antiquity. The Belarusian culture development of the Belarusian and Russian languages are an important part of the national portrait.

The uniqueness of the Belarusian culture is largely determined by the fact that it combines western and eastern features. In 988 Slavs under the leadership of Prince Vladimir adopted Christianity. Along with Christianity Slavs adopted features of the economic and spiritual life of the Byzantine and Roman empires. The western Slavs took a sample from Latin culture. At the same time Eastern Slavs were guided by the Byzantine canons. Belarus is right between them. Both of them influenced the development of Belarusian culture greatly.

There are many examples of this phenomenon. For example, it is currently unknown which religion was professed by Francis Skorina. He could be Orthodox or Catholic. This great historical figure began publishing books in the Old Slavonic language in Prague and founded a printing house in Wilno. Thus, in the XVI century the foundations of the Belarusian book printing were laid at the European level. At the same time in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania for the old Slavonic language was assigned the status of a state language (in the statutes of 1566 and 1588). [2]

The territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was inhabited by different peoples. Every nation has left a particular mark on the culture. A unique phenomenon in the history of Belarusian writing is worth noticing. Kitabs are texts written in the Belarusian language with use of Arabic alphabet. They were created by Tatars, who lived on the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the XIV-XVI centuries. Usually they contain texts explaining the Koran, describing religious rituals and basic Islamic duties, quotations from the Koran and prophetic sayings of Muhammad, fairy tales, adventure novels. This unusual phenomenon reveals the Belarusian language culture in a different way.

In 1553, the Chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania Nicholas Radziwill Black opened a printing house for making books in Belarus. These books were aimed at coverage of main ideas of the Reformation. Printing houses were opened in Brest and Nesvizh. Nikolay Radziwill Black supported Symon Budny financially. Belarusian humanists Kovechinsky and Lawrence Kryshkovsky with Symon Budny initiated the printing of books in the Old Slavonic language in the Nesvizh printing house. Moreover, the Belarusian language remained the language of the peasants. It was used as a mean of everyday communication. The Belarusian language was just forming in those years. During this period, on the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, people could hear Russian, Polish, Ukrainian, Jewish speech. At that time the Belarusian language was not officially recognized. Also, the Belarusian language did not have a scientific status of a literary language. The Belarusian language was formed in stages, gradually absorbing the new elements and discarding obsolete. Grammar of the Belarusian language in the XVIII-XIX centuries was very different from today.

The development of Belarusian Culture in XVII-XVIII centuries took place in difficult conditions. Being a member of the Commonwealth, Belarusians, together with Lithuanians, Poles and other nations have experienced a deep crisis. In the second half of the XVII century ideas of the Enlightenment began to spread in the

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Belarusian lands. Their supporters called for reforms, freedom of thoughts as required conditions for the development of science. Simeon Polotsky, Andrew Belobotsky, Ilya Kopievich are the most striking early Enlighteners [4].

Expansion of the Enlightenment contributed to the development of the printing and publishing. Eleven printing houses worked in Belarus in the second half of the XVIIth century. At this time secular literature began to prevail. Due to the influence of Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth the Polish language dominated in the literature. The Belarusian language at this time was only in oral use. However, the developing of Belarusian folklore also took place. It is not recorded folk art, passed down from generation to generation.

We can talk about such phenomenon as multilingualism – possession and the alternate use more than two languages by people. This phenomenon has existed because Ukrainian, Polish and other languages were also used on the territory of Belarus.

There was a policy of dissemination of Russian culture and language after accession of Belarusian lands to the Russian Empire. Basically, it was directed against the influence of Polish culture. However, this policy also constrained the development of the Belarusian culture. The Belarusian language was defined as a dialect speaking of Russian.

At the beginning of the XX century a new task in the Belarusian Ethnography was to study the productive activities of the population and material culture. These research materials were analyzed by scientists. One of the leaders in these studies was Yefim Fyodorovich Karskiy. This cultural figure recognized as an outstanding philologist. Yefim Fyodorovich Karskiy was the founder of the Belarusian philology and linguistics. He created more than 700 works on a complex science of language and language systems. [3]

There were significant changes in the cultural development of Belarus after the October Revolution in 1917. Soviet ideology was introducing. It is a system of ideas and views, which were based on communism. A lot of activities aimed at Belarusization were carried out since 1924. This policy had the object of enhancing the use of the Belarusian language in all spheres of life.

The Great Patriotic War (1941–1945) caused irreparable damage to all spheres of life of the BSSR society, including culture. However, during the war and postwar years a lot of literary works were created by Belarusian authors, both in the national and Russian languages. Studying in schools was conducted as a bilingual one. It is worth to notice that in rural schools Belarusian was chosen as the main language, Russian was chosen as urban.

After the political and economic reforms in the last decades of the twentieth century, the Belarusian culture was exposed to changes again. There was a state commission to clarify the rules of the Belarusian language in 1993–1994. The Development of this commission became the foundation for further language reforms. The last change was the "Law on the rules of the Belarusian orthography and punctuation", approved July 23, 2008. The writing of numerals, foreign words, and singing has exposed to changes in this law. Two years after its approval the new and old versions was considered as the correct spelling.

Thus, we can draw some conclusions. Historical mutual influence of Eastern and Western archetypes outlook reflected in the culture of the peoples who inhabited the territory of Belarus. Many cultural events assimilated to each other. Ultimately, the culture of the population of Belarusian lands formed in the conditions of interaction of multiple factors. These factors also affect the modern population of the territory of Belarus. Modern Belarusian culture evolves and changes every year.

For a long time of existence Belarus made the historical way from almost universal illiteracy to creation of well-known artistic works and scientific discoveries. Under the constant bilingualism there has been created space for creativity and cultural environment available for people who speaks several languages. Original Belarusian culture has been developing in such circumstances for several centuries. The presence of several religious movements has also influenced the cultural development of the region's population. Different religions have brought with them new languages, new architecture, new beliefs at the same time.

Thus, we can conclude that the modern cultural image of Belarus has been formed over a long historical time and under the influence of different historical processes. It has been formed largely due to bilingualism. The different languages used by the local population as well as immigrants have become the foundation for the formation of the unique Belarusian culture.

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