

SOVIET LANGUAGE ENGINEERING: INTRA- AND INTER-REPUBLICAN TRANSLATION IN EARLY SOVIET UKRAINE

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Abstract: This article examines the complex landscape of Soviet language engineering through translation policies in Ukraine during the 1920s and 1930s. Under the early Bolshevik policy of *Korenizatsiia* (indigenization), Ukraine served as a multi-ethnic testing ground where translation functioned as a tool to bolster the symbolic capital of the Ukrainian language. The study proffers a detailed historiography and explores intra-republican translation, including the reclamation of Russian-language works by Ukrainian authors and the vibrant bidirectional exchange between Yiddish and Ukrainian literatures. It also details inter-republican efforts that integrated Belarusian, Caucasian, and Central Asian literatures into the Ukrainian sphere through direct translation. However, the article highlights a pivotal shift in the 1930s toward linguistic Russification and state repression. During this period, direct interethnic cultural ties were curtailed in favor of Russian-mediated translation, which aimed to impose a centralized Soviet identity. Ultimately, the article demonstrates how translation served a dual role: while it initially enriched the Ukrainian literary tradition and fostered cultural autonomy, it was eventually co-opted as an instrument of ideological assimilation and Soviet control.

Keywords: *Korenizatsiia* (indigenization); Soviet language engineering; intra- and inter-republican translation; Ukrainization; cultural mediation

1. Introduction

This research, conducted through a series of case studies, examines the prerequisites and processes of literary translation as a form of cultural production under conditions of coercive socio-political change. It focuses on the large-scale translation enterprises, publication policies, and literary outputs pursued by both individual translators/editors and Soviet authorities in Ukraine during the early Soviet period. The article illuminates intra- and inter-republican translation in Soviet Ukraine as a multisectoral, multidimensional, and dynamic phenomenon. It addresses a fundamental question: What can translation reveal about the cultural and political history of Ukraine? Specifically, it investigates how intra-Soviet translation was organized — both

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qualitatively and quantitatively — during the 1920s and 30s. This innovative approach breaks new ground in translation history by illuminating previously overlooked sectors, such as translations from Yiddish, while juxtaposing the outlined volume and character of intra/inter-republican translations through both cultural and ideological lenses.

Conceptualizing translation as a dual-faceted instrument, the study demonstrates that Soviet language and worldview engineering was extensively conducted through a variety of translations, retranslations, and indirect translations (either modeled after Russian linguistic and ideological patterns or produced via Russian intermediaries). These practices encompassed source-language and source-text selection, pre- and post-publication censorship, and the nuances of self-censorship. The methodological grounds for this research are rooted in recent developments within postcolonial theory as applied to the Soviet space, as well as the theory of indirect/relay translation (Annus 2017; Baer 2025; Brandenberger 2002; Bilaniuk 2005; Chernetsky 2011; Dollerup 2000; Kalnychenko & Kolomiyets 2022; Kolomiyets 2020; Monticelli 2011; Rundle 2022; Sherry 2015; Tymoczko & Gentzler 2002; Witt 2017; Witt & Baer 2018).

2. The Early Soviet Policy of Indigenization

During the early Soviet period, the *Korenizatsiia* (nativization/indigenization) campaign was launched to strengthen Soviet rule in national regions, including Jewish, Greek, and other national communities in Ukraine. The policy aimed to integrate local populations by promoting indigenous leadership and cultural development. The all-republican Ukrainization campaign was proclaimed by the XII Congress of the RKP(b) in April 1923 and culminated during 1925-1928. The Bolsheviks initiated the campaign in order to gain local support by promoting Ukrainian in the early 1920s. However, Russian remained the de facto language of Soviet administration. By recruiting local elites and supporting national languages, the weak early Soviet government sought to win the loyalty of the intelligentsia. Republics were granted rights over internal affairs, most notably in education and culture. Every ethnic group, no matter how small, gained the right to use its own language officially. The policy was a tactical move to neutralize separatist sentiments. By granting linguistic and cultural concessions, the central government aimed to prevent diverse ethnic groups from unifying against Soviet authority. For example, in Crimea and southern Ukraine, the Crimean Tatar language was officially institutionalized in the Soviet Union in 1921, with the establishment of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Crimean ASSR), and the Greek language also had some influence outside its respective community.

A primary motivation behind the policy of indigenization was to undermine pan-regional solidarity. By fostering distinct local identities and fragmenting various regions administratively — particularly in the Caucasus and Central Asia — the government ensured these groups would not consolidate into a unified linguistic or cultural bloc. Among all the Soviet republics, Ukraine was the most multi-ethnic and served as a massive testing ground for the indigenization policy — examples of which included Ukrainization, Tatarization, Polonization, and Hellenization. According to the

1926 census, only 18% of the Ukrainian SSR's residents did not belong to the titular nation (Chebotayev 2019). At that, Ukraine was notable not only for its ethnic diversity but also for the high concentration of specific Soviet nationalities living within its borders. Table 1 illustrates the percentage of the USSR's total population of each ethnic group that resided specifically within the Ukrainian SSR (Chebotayev 2019):

Table 1. Data Summary

Ethnic Group	Percentage Residing in Ukraine
Czech	75%
Jewish	52%
Polish	48%
German	40%
Greek	30%
Russian	4%

While Russians were the largest minority by sheer numbers, they represented a relatively small fraction of the total Russian population in the USSR compared to the high concentrations of Central European and Mediterranean ethnic groups found in Ukraine. Korenizatsiia involved the development of education, the press, and administration in the languages of national minorities within their concentrated settlements. This was designed to strengthen Soviet authority among diverse ethnic groups and overcome their cultural isolation. Key aspects of Korenizatsiia included: education (the establishment of schools and technical colleges, along with the publication of textbooks in national languages), media (the publication of newspapers and magazines in national languages to disseminate Soviet ideology), culture (the development of national theater and literature centered on Soviet life and values), administration (efforts to transition official record-keeping to national languages in regions with non-Russian populations). This process was abruptly halted in the early 1930s, when the policy of indigenization was replaced by a period of state repression.

In the 1920s, direct translations from local minority languages into Ukrainian — the titular language of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic — elevated minority cultures while bolstering the symbolic capital and authority of Ukrainian. However, the rise of Russian intermediaries in the 1930s reversed this trend, weakening local languages and severing cultural ties by imposing Soviet universalism and linguistic Russification. Stalinist purges further decimated translation possibilities, drastically curtailing both minority-language publications and direct translations into Ukrainian.

2.1. Translation Policy

As part of Ukrainization, translation fueled the renaissance of national literature. From the 1920s until the early 1930s, critics openly prioritized direct translations — those from the original source — over indirect ones. For instance, the first complete translation of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, published in two volumes by the Kharkiv

branch of DVU¹ in 1928, used François Reynard's 1879 French translation as its source text. The translation was done by Leonid Pakharevskyi and Pavlo Maiorskyi (real name – Sabaldyr), and the poems were translated by Marko Voronyi.

This two-volume edition had a print run of 5,000 copies, and the editors (Serhii Rodzevych for the first volume and Pavlo Mokhor for the second) scrupulously checked the text against the Italian original. Despite its overall high quality, the translation drew criticism for its “secondhand” nature. This critique persisted despite the fact that the Ukrainian version contained passages translated more accurately than those in Alexander Veselovsky's recognized Russian complete version (1891-1892), while also restoring omissions caused by Veselovsky's censorship.

The drive to enrich national literature through world classics and to build libraries of foreign literature — both classical and contemporary — was rooted in the post-imperial and pre-Soviet era following 1917. Consider, for example, the Petrograd publishing house *Vsemirnaia Literatura* ([World Literature], 1918-1924). Created under the auspices of Maxim Gorky, it pursued the ambitious task of translating and publishing all foreign classics from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries. A similar objective characterized *Vsevydav* (the All-Ukrainian Publishing House), founded in Kharkiv on May 5, 1919 (*Istoriia vydavnytstv Ukrainy* 2009/2021: 11). Both projects represented more than just enlightening endeavors; they embodied the reformation of translation from pure art into a craft and science² guided by professional principles alongside creative inspiration.

In this environment, a new school of translation began to take shape, alongside what Baskina (Malikova) aptly described as “a new type of editorial work on translations” (Baskina 2021: 11-12). This new editorial approach involved the broad engagement of recognized writers, scholars, and critics, not only as reviewers and compilers, but as stylistic editors for new translations and reprints. These measures elevated the status of translation as both an artistic and philological task. Linguistic accuracy reached new heights, and a translator's high competency in the source language became a mandatory requirement.

These tendencies prevailed throughout the 1920s following the formation of the Soviet Union in 1922. The multi-volume translation projects of this decade laid the foundation for the further development of Ukrainian culture. Signature achievements — such as the 3-volume *Russian-Ukrainian Dictionary* (1922-1932) and multi-volume editions of Western authors, including a complete 27-volume collection of the works of Jack London (1927–early 1930s), a 10-volume collection of Guy de Maupassant (1927–1930), and a 27-volume collection of Émile Zola (1929-1932) — marked the atmosphere of national revival and a new stage in translation development. The emergence of an advanced translation theory in Ukraine at that time (Kalnychenko 2016) energized and interacted with translation practices, promoting institutionalization and the professionalization of editorship.

¹ DVU stands for Derzhavne Vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, which is Ukrainian for “State Publishing House of Ukraine.”

² This purpose was served, in particular, by the brochure *Principles of Literary Translation (Printsipy khudozhestvennoho perevoda)*; Petrograd, 1919; 2nd supplemented ed., 1920), co-authored by F. Batyushkov, N. Gumilev, and K. Chukovsky.

For many interwar Ukrainian literary figures, political leaders, and scholars in Central-Eastern and Western Ukraine — who remained separated by political boundaries until 1939 — translation was inherent to their original creative work. It served as a vital tool for strengthening the authority of the national language and broadening its daily usage. However, the achievements of the Ukrainian national revival were largely undone by Stalinist repressions in the 1930s, culminating in the extermination of the Ukrainian intellectual elite during the Great Terror (Masenko 2005). Subsequently, the practices of Russification (Shevelov 1989; Flier & Graziosi 2017; Strikha 2020) and the Soviet turn to a “Russocentric Bolshevism” (Brandenberger 2002) prevailed.

3. Intra-Republican Translation

Translations of contemporary Russophone literature produced in Ukraine by non-Ukrainian speakers were relatively uncommon. In contrast, translating Russophone fiction narratives by the 19th-century classical Ukrainian authors³ served — alongside other purposes — as a symbolic act of repatriating the authorial voice to its cultural home. Translations of such works which have been geographically and culturally rooted in Ukraine, demonstrate how linguistic mediation operated even inside a single national tradition, with translators acting as agents who re-Ukrainianized texts originally written in Russian and thus reinserted them into the Ukrainian cultural sphere.

A key figure in this process was Mykola Khvylovy, who, under the pseudonym Y. Umanets, translated a substantial selection of stories by Anatolii Svydnytskyi. The 1927 Knyhospilka (Publishers' Association) edition was framed by an introductory article and scholarly notes by Mykola Zerov,⁴ whose editorial presence further anchored the project within the intellectual program of Ukrainian literary modernization. Khvylovy's translations thus functioned not merely as linguistic transfers but as interventions in the canonization of Svydnytskyi, repositioning him within a Ukrainian literary genealogy.

In 1928, Knyhospilka continued this work of internal cultural translation by publishing Mykola Kostomarov's historical novel *A Girl from Chernihiv* (Ukr.: *Chernihivka*),⁵ rendered into Ukrainian by Borys Hrinchenko. Through Hrinchenko's translation, Kostomarov's narrative — rooted in the political and social realities of the late seventeenth century — was reintegrated into Ukrainian historical memory,

³ For a description of translations from Russian literature, see Kolomiyets and Kalnychenko (2024: 295–320).

⁴ Mykola Zerov (1890–1937) was a leader of the Kyiv group of Neoclassicist poets and translators; literary scholar, historian and critic, one of the key figures of the Ukrainian cultural revival decade. Zerov is particularly renowned for his translations of ancient Roman poets such as Horace, Virgil, Ovid, and Catullus, among others. In addition to his own oeuvre, he is also renowned for his translations of French Parnassians, as well as works from Slavic languages, including Polish, Russian, and Belarusian.

⁵ Throughout this article, titles are translated from the Ukrainian versions that appeared in print. In some cases, the English translation is followed by a transliteration of the original title in parentheses.

demonstrating how translation could reclaim texts written in Russian by Ukrainian intellectuals. That same year, the Lviv publishing house Prosvita issued Vasyl Narizhnyi's two-part novel *Seminary Student* (Ukr.: *Bursak*) in a translation by Volodymyr Doroshenko, extending this translational reclamation into the Western Ukrainian publishing sphere. Doroshenko's work exemplifies how translators in Galicia participated in the broader Soviet-era project of reassembling a dispersed Ukrainian literary heritage.

In 1929, the Kharkiv publishing house *Ukrainskyi Robitnyk* (Ukrainian Worker) released Hryhorii Kvitka-Osnovianenko's novel *Master Khaliavsky* (Ukr.: *Pan Khaliavskyi*) in a translation by Prokhor Voronin, further underscoring the role of translators in mediating the nineteenth-century Ukrainian prose tradition for new Soviet audiences. That same year, the Kyiv publishing house *Siaivo* (The Glow) published Panteleimon Kulish's folk-tale-based novel *The Fire Serpent* (Ukr.: *Ohnennyi zmii*), translated by Mykola Zerov. Zerov's involvement — both as translator and as one of the leading theorists of Ukrainian neoclassicism — highlights the intellectual stakes of these projects: translation served as a means of reasserting Ukrainian cultural autonomy by reclaiming authors whose linguistic choices had been shaped by earlier imperial conditions.

Together, these translations illuminate a distinctive form of internal transnationalism: Ukrainian translators acted as cultural agents who re-anchored Russophone works by Ukrainian authors within a Ukrainian literary system, thereby reshaping the contours of national canon formation during a period of intense ideological and linguistic negotiation.

At the other pole, translations from the languages of small indigenous communities, like the voices of the Mariupol Greeks, were rather exceptional than common. An example comes from Meotian-Greek (aka Rumaic or Mariupol Greek), language of the descendants of the ancient Greek colonists who established city-states (poleis) along the shores of the Sea of Azov as early as the 6th–5th centuries BCE. A unique anthology, *From the Literature of the Mariupol Greeks*, compiled and translated from Meotian-Greek by Kassandra Kostan (Oleksandra Kostiantynivna Gargala) was published in Kharkiv in 1932. Kostan's role extended far beyond that of a translator: she functioned as a cultural mediator, archivist, and early folklorist of the Mariupol Greek community. The anthology included not only prose but also a significant body of poetic material, most notably the songs of Leontius Balji, better known among his community as Leontius Khonagbey (1853–1918). Khonagbey, a folk poet and singer, had not been systematically documented prior to Kostan's intervention. Her fieldwork — recording approximately twenty of his songs — constituted the first scholarly attempt to preserve and interpret his oeuvre. Through her translations, Khonagbey's voice entered the Ukrainian literary sphere, marking the earliest sustained engagement with Meotian-Greek poetic tradition and establishing Kostan as the foundational figure in its study and transmission.

3.1. The Yiddish Translation Corpus and Its Cultural Intermediaries

The Yiddish–Ukrainian translational exchanges of the 1920s and 1930s formed one of the most vibrant zones of cultural exchange in Soviet Ukraine. This corpus reveals a

literary ecosystem in which translators — often themselves poets, critics, and public intellectuals — served as the principal mediators between Jewish and Ukrainian cultural spheres. Their work not only facilitated the movement of texts across linguistic boundaries but also shaped the contours of Soviet Ukrainian literary modernity, canon formation, and interethnic dialogue. The period witnessed a rapid expansion of translations from Yiddish into Ukrainian, with many Yiddish writers simultaneously active as translators of Ukrainian literature into Yiddish. This bidirectional flow underscores the extent to which translation functioned as a shared cultural practice rather than a one-sided appropriation.⁶

In the late 1920s, the percentage of translations from Jewish literature was rapidly increasing. Its classics were well represented in translations from Yiddish, such as two collections of short stories, *Bontshe the Silent* (Yiddish: *Bontshe shvayg*) and *Song of the Weavers*, by Yitzhok Leibush Peretz, both published in 1931 in the translation by Efraim Raitsyn.

Translations from Yiddish-language literature were frequently published in Ukrainian literary magazines, particularly in the first half of the 1930s. For example, the Kharkiv-based *Chervonyi shliakh* (Red Path) published the following translations: the poem “Brothers” of Peretz Markish, translated by Mieczyslaw Gasco, and the poem “Response to Enemies” of Lev Kvitko, translated by Ivan Dniprovskyi. During this period, the Kyiv literary monthly *Zhyttia i revoliutsiia* (Life and Revolution) also published translations from Yiddish, for example, the short story “Destroyed Nests” by Isaac Kipnis, a Kyiv Jewish poet, novelist, and playwright. Kipnis himself extensively translated into Yiddish the works of Ukrainian classical writers Ivan Franko, Taras Shevchenko, Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky, as well as his contemporaries Andrii Holovko, Ostap Vyshnia, Petro Panch, and Oksana Ivanenko.

In 1923, the first translated anthology of Jewish poetry was published in Kyiv. Compiled and translated by Vasyl Atamaniuk, the 30-page volume, entitled *New Jewish Poetry*, was a significant milestone in the promotion of Jewish literature. Anthologies were instrumental in disseminating translations to a broad audience.

Even earlier, in 1920, the Kyiv branch of DVU published a collection of classics of Jewish literature by Yitzhok Leibush Peretz entitled *Folk Tales*, translated from Yiddish by Mykola Zerov in cooperation with Yiddish-speaking writer Oleksandr Ger (real name: Volodymyr Naumovych Vaisblat).

In addition to the works of Yitzhok Leibush Peretz, referenced previously, prominent Yiddish-speaking authors were translated during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Firstly, Mendeley Mocher Sforim, a native of Belarus and the founder of classical Yiddish literature (also writing under the pseudonym Sh.-Y. Abramovich), was represented by several collections of short stories: *The Ring of Happiness*, translated by Diodor Bobyr and L. Volodymyrov, and *The Valley of Tears* (Part 2 of *The Ring of Happiness*, translated by Gershbin and Malochenko (both published in 1928)).⁷

⁶ For more on this topic, see Kolomiyets, “The Yiddish Renaissance in Ukraine,” 98-112.

⁷ Three additional publications of Mendeley Mocher Sforim’s works, all translated by Efraim Raitsyn, include the novels *The Travels of Benjamin the Third* (Yiddish: *Masoies Binyomin Hashlishi*, 1934) and *Fishka the Crooked* (Yiddish: *Fishke der Krumer*, 1936), along with a volume of *Selected Works* (1940).

Sholem Aleichem, a renowned Jewish folk writer, was born in the Ukrainian city of Pereiaslav, which at the time of his birth in 1859 belonged to the Poltava Governorate of the Russian Empire. Since the 1920s, he has emerged as a prominent figure in the literary landscape of Ukraine, garnering widespread popularity among readers. His oeuvre, which includes a short story cycle *Tevye the Dairyman* (Yiddish: *Tevye der Milkhiker*), a novel *Motl the Cantor's Son* (Yiddish: *Motl Peysi dem Khazns*) and numerous other works, has been extensively translated, often directly, due to the universal appeal of the subject matter and its depiction of Jewish life in Ukraine. These literary works would be serialized in Ukrainian journals and consequently become part of the Ukrainian canon. In the context of Sholem Aleichem's extensive corpus, which was translated during the 1920s and 1930s, the following editions were of particular significance: the book of selected stories *My First Novel*, translated by Efraim Raitsyn, and the novel *The Flood*, translated by Gershbin and Malochenko (both published in 1928), *Comedies* (1929), etc.⁸ The two-volume *Selected Works* by Sholem Aleichem were published in 1932.⁹ Sholem Aleichem's *Selected Works* in the format of one volume but of different sizes were published twice — in 1939 and 1940, both translated by Efraim Raitsyn.

David (Dovid) Hofstein, a renowned Jewish poet whose works reflected Ukrainian landscapes, was a native of the Ukrainian town of Korostyshiv. Hofstein is widely regarded as the preeminent translator of Ukrainian classics into Yiddish, particularly with respect to Taras Shevchenko. The American scholar Amelia Glaser has analysed the semantic, stylistic and vocal subtleties of Hofstein's faithful rendering of Shevchenko's book of poetry, *Kobzar*, into Yiddish (Glaser 2017). Hofstein's 1931 Yiddish *Kobzar* translation prompted reciprocal efforts on the part of Ukrainian literati to translate Jewish literature. In 1939, the 125th anniversary of Shevchenko's birth became a catalyst for translation activity, when works in Yiddish appeared in Ukrainian anthologies alongside translations of Shevchenko's poems and the works of Ukrainian modernist poets into Yiddish. In 2018, Hofstein's translations were reprinted in independent Ukraine in the bilingual edition entitled *Kobzar: Selected Works* and illustrated with drawings by the prominent Ukrainian graphic artist Vasyl Sedliar (1899-1937), a member of the Mykhailo Boychuk school, which were previously used to decorate the unique 1931 edition of *Kobzar*. All of the Yiddish translations included here were made by Hofstein during the 1920s and 1930s (Shevchenko 2018).

Hofstein himself as an original author was represented by the edition of his *Selected Poems* in 1938, which contained five direct translations by Maksym Rylsky¹⁰ and was reprinted in 1939. Rylsky's translations were included in the (almost) complete collection

⁸ Efraim Raitsyn's translations of Sholem Aleichem's works include the following 1930 publications: the anthology *Selected Works*; the novella *Song of Songs* (Youthful Romance); and the short stories "Adele (from the *Tevye the Milkman* cycle)," "Great Luck," "The Winning Ticket," "Congratulations, We Are Already in America," and "Gymnasium." Additionally, the short story "Seventy-Five Thousand" was published in a translation by A. Stoyanivskyi (1930).

⁹ Volume 1: *Tevye and His Daughters*; Volume 2: *The Dashing Adventures of Menachem Mendel*.

¹⁰ Maksym Rylsky (1895–1964) was also a prolific translator from English, French, German, and Polish, as well as a folklore and literary scholar. Widely regarded as one of the most distinguished Ukrainian poets of the 20th century, he was renowned for his mastery of the modern sonnet and the long narrative poem. Rylsky was closely associated with the Neoclassicist group of Ukrainian poets, who employed traditional poetic forms with rhyme and meter.

of Hofstein's poetry (Hofstein 2012), entitled by a quotation from his poem in Ukrainian translation, "*O bilyi svite mii...*" (O Light World of Mine).

The head of Jewish impressionism and the founder of the Kyiv period in Jewish literature, the fiction writer David Bergelson must be particularly mentioned. His novel *Throughout* was translated by N. Rotherstein (1928), a book of short stories *Stormy Days* – by A. Pokrovskiy (1930), and a novel *Above the Dnipro River* – by Marko Zisman (1936).

A prominent poet Leib (Lev) Kvitko, known mainly for his children's poems, was published in translation multiple times, for instance, two separate editions, poetry book *The Best Name* (1929) and short story collection *Panats* (1930), appeared in translation by Volodymyr Sosiura.¹¹ The story "Two Comrades", first published in translation by Efraim Raitsyn (1932), was later printed two more times: under the revised title "Two Comrades (Lyam and Petrik)" (Yiddish: *Tsvey khaveyrim: Lyam un Petrik*) in a new translation by Zinaida Ioffe (1935) and as a short story "Liam i Petryk" in Efraim Raitsyn's translation (1936). Kvitko's poems "The Violinist" (1933) and "Piglets" (1938) were printed as separate editions in translation by Pavlo Tychyna,¹² who is considered the best translator of Kvitko's children's poetry and whose translations are gathered and reprinted in the *Anthology of Jewish Poetry: Ukrainian Translations from Yiddish* (2011: 265-275). Also, separate editions of Kvitko's poems "When I Grow Up" (1937) and "Lullaby" (1938) saw the light of day in translation by Natalia Zabala. Kvitko's oeuvre of poetry for children, which was both accessible and aligned with Soviet ideology, was translated expressly for educational purposes and appeared in various journals and anthologies.

The renowned Jewish poet Peretz Markish is widely regarded as one of the most significant Yiddish poets of the twentieth century. It is noteworthy that he gained recognition as a member of the Kyiv group of Yiddish-language poets, which included prominent figures such as David Hofstein (the leading translator of Ukrainian classics into Yiddish), Lev Kvitko (his children's poems "The Violinist" and "Etonka's Garden" were particularly popular), and Peretz Markish himself. The Ukrainian translations of Peretz Markish's Soviet-aligned poems, sometimes via Russian, were predominantly made by Pavlo Tychyna, Mieczysław Gasco, and Anton Shmyhelskyi in the 1920s and 1930s.

Among the Jewish Soviet writers popularized for their Soviet ideological resonance is the founder of Jewish Soviet poetry, Osher Schwartzman, a native of Zhytomyr, who fought as a volunteer in the Red Army and was killed in a battle with the Poles in 1919. His collection of *Poetry* was published in 1938 – in this edition, 14 translations were done by Pavlo Tychyna.

The novelist and playwright Mark Daniel, whose works, imbued with the spirit of revolutionary romanticism, were part of the repertoire of Jewish Soviet theaters, was broadly represented in translation into both Ukrainian and Russian. One particular song

¹¹ Volodymyr Sosiura (1898–1965) was a prolific Ukrainian poet who published numerous poetry collections during his lifetime. During the Ukrainian-Soviet War (1917–1921), he fought in the Army of the Ukrainian National Republic and then in the Red Army.

¹² Pavlo Tychyna (1891–1967) is widely regarded as the preeminent poet of his era, with this distinction being shared by both Soviet and non-Soviet readers and critics alike.

composed by Daniel for his own play was translated into Russian and became all-Union popular under the title “Orlyenok” (Eaglet).¹³

Translations of the works of Jewish writers little known today were also often published as separate editions. For example, a novel by Moïshe Taitsch *The Death of Comrade Wooly*, translated under the editorship of Yevhen Pluzhnyk (1932), a book of *Poems* of the playwright, storyteller, and poet Mikhail (Moïshe) Pinchevskiy, translated by Aron Kopstein (1936), a volume of *Selected Works* of I. Weissenberg, translated by Y. M. Kvitko (1931), and so on.

Dozens of talented Yiddish-language writers were born and lived in Ukraine at that time, and their works were promptly translated into Ukrainian and published in separate editions. Among them were the poet and translator Matvii Talalaievskiy, whose book of poems *Spring Oath* appeared in Ukrainian in 1935, and the writer, storyteller, and poet Hana Levina, whose books of poems *On the Sunny Side* and *The Secret* were translated by Maria Pryhara (and published respectively in 1935 and 1938).

The book of *Lyrics* of Soviet poet and public figure Itzyk Fefer was published in translation by Maria Pryhara as well (1934). Selected poems of Fefer appeared in 1937 under the title *Treasure* in translations by different Ukrainian poets (M. Bazhan, M. Zisman, L. Pervomaiskyi, M. Pryhara, M. Rylsky, V. Sosiura, P. Tychyna), in particular, the popular poem “Give me your hand, beloved!” is given in this edition in the translation by M. Rylsky. Also, a book of Fefer’s poems *Sources* was published in Lviv in 1940.

The prose writer and playwright Abram Kagan was represented by a book of short stories *The Wreckage*, translated by Efraim Raitsyn (1930) and a play *Energy*, translated by Zinaida Ioffe (1932).

Soviet Yiddish modernist Der Nister (Pinchas Kahanovich), whose historical novel *The Family Mashber* was set in a Ukrainian shtetl, became familiar to the Ukrainian reader from his short stories, which were interesting for a symbolist perception of revolutionary reality, in particular, from the short story collection entitled *From My Treasures*, published under the editorship of Olexander Finkel (1930).

The writer and journalist Hershl Orland became known as the author of the novel *The Dams*, where Orland used his memories of working as a reclamation worker in Volyn in 1926 – the novel appeared in Ukrainian translation in 1930 – and of the novel *Agglomerate*, published in translation in 1936, the theme of which was the socio-economic transformations in the life of the Jews of Ukraine (both works were translated by Efraim Raitsyn).

A talented Yiddish writer, journalist, and translator Salvador (Bezalel) Borges (born Bezalel Borodin) was interned from Volyn to Europe during the First World War, moved to Brazil and became a journalist and writer, but for his participation in revolutionary activities he had to leave Brazil and returned to Europe, and from 1935 lived in Birobidzhan. His novel *The Cry of Occupied Volyn* (Part 1) was published in 1931 in translation by Efraim Raitsyn.

¹³ The following works by Daniel were published in Ukrainian: a short novel *On the Doorstep*, translated by Efraim Raitsyn (1930), a heroic tragedy in 3 acts *Four Days (Julis)*, translated by Zinaida Ioffe (1934), plays *Ziamka the Digger*, translated by Zinaida Ioffe and Matvii (Motl) Talalaievskiy (1934), and *The Inventor and the Comedian*, translated by Matvii Talalaievskiy (1937). A separate volume of Daniel’s *Plays* was published in 1937.

A child from an orphanage, novelist Fievil Sito wrote a lot about the homeless, and his style was marked by pathetic and humor. The works of Sito were mostly translated by Efraim Raitsyn – a short story “Orphanage No. 40” (1932) and a novel *Here We Are* (1934). Olena Parkhomovska translated Sito’s novel *Immortality* (1938).

Parkhomovska also translated the works by a famous writer Hryhorii Polianker: *Shoyle from Bapillya. A Story about the People of a Small Town* (1939) and a short story “Shmaya the Robber” (1940).

Two novels of Elia Shechtman, *On the Edge* and *Plowed Boundaries*, were published in translation by Zinaida Ioffe in 1934 and 1937 respectively.

Nehemii (Nechemia) Shmain’s play *A Guest* (Yiddish: *A gast*) was translated by Z. Messin in 1938. Shmain was the brother of Khanan Shmain, the theater and film director associated with the Les Kurbas school.

However, most of the works by the born-in-Ukraine Soviet Jewish writers that were translated in the 1930s have a bigger literary-historical than purely artistic value.¹⁴ Typical works of Jewish Soviet literature were those imbued with themes and ideas of socialist construction, such as the short story collections *The Wells* (1930) and *On the Pass* (1935) of the poet and prose writer Chaim Gildin (both in translation by Efraim Raitsyn). The translated works of the playwright Abram Vevurko should also be noted among separate editions, namely, the play *My Enemy* (translated by S. Dubrovskiy, 1936) and a separate collection of Vevurko’s *Plays* (1937). Among the numerous examples of this kind of politicized literature from the genre of poetry, the poems of Avram Hontar can be mentioned. In his Yiddish poetry collection *A Clear Day* (1938), Hontar glorified the Soviet people’s work as heroic during the first of Stalin’s five-year economic plans (introduced by Stalin in 1928). This poetry collection was published in Hontar’s authorized translation into Ukrainian in 1940.

Thus, many of these translations, especially those aligned with socialist construction — such as the works of Chaim Gildin, Abram Vevurko, and Avram Hontar — reflect the ideological pressures of the period. Yet even within these constraints, translators shaped the reception of Yiddish literature by selecting, framing, and contextualizing texts for Ukrainian readers.

The most productive translators from Yiddish to Ukrainian in the 1920s–1930s were Efraim Raitsyn (for his extensive work on Sholem Aleichem) and Zinaida Ioffe (for translating Soviet Yiddish writers), followed by Maksym Rylsky (for translations of Hofstein and editorial contributions). Mykola Zerov and Vasyl Atamaniuk also had important roles, but they didn’t translate as much. The period’s cultural vibrancy and

¹⁴ Among these works are the prose writings of Petro Altman, specifically the story “Positions,” and of Noté (Noyah) Lurie, whose novel *The Steppe Calls* was published in 1934 (both translated by Efraim Raitsyn). Other notable publications include Lurie’s collection *Ordinary Life*, translated by Marko Zisman and Y. Vyshnevetskyi (n.d.), and his *Novellas*, translated by Semen Katz (1931; reprint 1938). The works of Meyer Alberton also belong to this category, including *Birobidzhan: Impressions of a Journey* and the short story “In the Mine” (both 1930), as well as the story “The BIS Mine” (1932) — all three of which were translated by Zinaida Ioffe. Among the poets, notable editions include Hanan Weinerman’s collection *To Work*, translated by Panko Peda (1932), and Matvii Gartzman’s *Poems and Ballads* (1940).

tragic repression shaped the legacy of these translators, many of whose works were lost or underdocumented due to Soviet policies.

Overall, by the late 1930s, the most prolific translators from Yiddish into Ukrainian — Efraim Raitsyn, Zinaida Ioffe, Maksym Rylsky, alongside Mykola Zerov and Vasyl Atamaniuk — had established a robust translational infrastructure. Their work reveals a literary world in which translation was not merely a technical act but a form of cultural authorship, enabling Yiddish and Ukrainian literatures to circulate within a shared Soviet space while retaining their distinct aesthetic and historical identities.

4. Inter-Republican Translation

In the late 1920s, Soviet nationalities policy peaked with the “Brotherhood of the Peoples” (Russ.: *Bratstvo narodov*), a rhetorical extension of *Korenizatsiia* (indigenization). This campaign emphasized a horizontal, class-based unity, presenting the USSR as a “happy family” of equal republics to contrast with the Tsarist “prison of nations.” Between 1926 and 1929, the state actively “engineered” national identities by promoting local folklore, costumes, and literatures to integrate diverse ethnic groups into the socialist project.

By the mid-1930s, this shifted toward Stalin’s “Friendship of the Peoples” (Russ.: *Druzhba narodov*) doctrine. Formally inaugurated in 1935 and encoded in the 1936 Constitution, this new policy replaced radical internationalism with a “Great Power” statist narrative. Crucially, it introduced a vertical hierarchy that positioned the Russian people as the “elder brother.” Under Socialist Realism, the arts began to depict ethnic minorities not as equal peers, but as groups “civilized” and “liberated” by Russian leadership, marking a definitive move toward centralized Russification (Martin 2001).

The characteristics and scope of translations from Russian literature in the 1920s and 1930s are extensively covered in the publication “Translating Russian Literature in Soviet and Post-Soviet Ukraine” (Kolomiyets & Kalnychenko 2024: 295-320) and earlier in Ukrainian in Kolomiyets (2015: 36-44). Therefore, the subject will not be addressed in this article, and instead an examination will be made of translations from Belarusian and other languages of the Soviet republics.

4.1. From Belarusian Literature: Translators as Architects of Inter-Republican Literary Circulation

The emergence of Ukrainian translations from Belarusian literature in the late 1920s and 1930s unfolded in parallel with the Soviet Union’s evolving nationalities policy. The 1929 campaign for the “Brotherhood of the Peoples” and, later, Stalin’s 1935 doctrine of “Friendship of the Peoples” created an ideological framework that encouraged inter-republican cultural exchange. Within this environment, translators became indispensable cultural and political agents, tasked with rendering the literary production of Soviet Belarus into Ukrainian and thereby integrating Belarusian authors into the broader Soviet literary system.

A foundational moment in this process was the publication of the Kharkiv almanac *New Belarus* (1929), edited by Serhii Pylypenko. Bringing together works by thirty Belarusian writers, the volume relied on a distinguished cohort of Ukrainian translators — Pavlo Tychyna, Volodymyr Sosiura, Serhii Pylypenko, Ivan Kulyk, Teren Masenko, Andrii Paniv, among others — whose collective labor positioned Belarusian literature within Ukrainian print culture. Their translations functioned not merely as linguistic transfers but as acts of cultural “brokerage,” aligning Belarusian texts with Ukrainian literary discourses and Soviet ideological expectations.

Separate editions soon followed, extending the reach of Belarusian classics and contemporary Soviet authors. Mykhailo Drai-Khmara prepared the 1929 Kharkiv edition of Maksim Bahdanovich’s poetry collection *Wreath*, introducing one of Belarus’s most revered poets to Ukrainian readers. Serhii Pylypenko translated Kindrat Krapiva’s satirical collection *Krapiva’s Fables* (Belar.: *Krapivini baiiki*), which was published in 1928 and reprinted in 1930, while Pavlo Nechai (Kyrylo Kosmin) rendered into Ukrainian Krapiva’s play *The End of Friendship* (1936). Nechai also translated works by several Belarusian Soviet dramatists, including Kuzma Chorny’s *Motherland*, A. Troyetsky’s comedy *Our Trump Cards*, and Yevstignei Mirovich’s *On a Spring Night*. These translations collectively mapped the contours of Belarusian Soviet dramaturgy for Ukrainian audiences.

The early 1930s saw a marked increase in translations of contemporary Soviet Belarusian prose. In 1930, Stepan Kovhaniuk translated Vasil Koval’s novel *Harvest* for Molodyi Bilshovyk (Young Bolshevik) publishing house. The following year, Literature and Art published Kuzma Chorny’s short-story collection *September Nights* in a translation by Ivan Tychyna (Pavlo Tychyna’s brother), whose translational activity intensified after the Second World War. In 1932, the same press issued A. Romanovich’s play *The Bridge*, translated by Andrii Dudka (pen name of Oleksii Varavva), further expanding the Ukrainian reception of Belarusian Soviet drama.

A particularly significant figure in this inter-republican exchange was Yanka Kupala (pen name of Ivan Lutsevich), a leading poet of the Belarusian Red Renaissance and an academician of both the Belorussian and Ukrainian Academies of Sciences. Kupala’s works reached Ukrainian readers relatively late: his poem “Above the Oresa River” (Belar.: “Nad rakoju Aresaj”), translated by Teren Masenko, appeared in Derzhlitvydav,¹⁵ which is an abbreviation for the State Literary Publishing House of Ukraine, in 1936, followed in 1937 by a substantial 284-page volume of *Selected Works (1905–1936)*, edited by Masenko. This edition included translations by Volodymyr Svidzinskiy, whose renderings of “Song and Strength” and “On the Death of Stepan Bulat” exemplify the nuanced poetic mediation characteristic of the period.

The Kharkiv publishing house Ukrainskyi Robitnyk played a notable role in disseminating Belarusian prose. In 1929, it issued translations of the stories portraying the village life, “Liavonicha and Symonicha” and “Once Upon a Sunday” (Belar.: “Za niadzieliu”) by Žmitrok Biadula (pen name of the Jewish-born author Samuil Pławnik), as well as his historical novel *The Nightingale* (Belar.: *Salaviej*). That same year,

¹⁵ Derzhlitvydav is an abbreviation for “Derzhavne Literaturne Vydavnytstvo,” which is Ukrainian for “State Literary Publishing House.”

Lizaveta Kardynalovska translated a story titled “Halia” in this translation, by Michaś Čarot (also spelled Mihas Charot; name at birth: Michail Kudzielka), a central figure of the Maladniak literary association whose career — and life — was cut short by Stalinist repression. Kardynalovska continued her work in 1930 with translations of Michaś Zaretsky’s first major novel and a landmark in Belarusian literature *Paths-Roads* (Belar.: *Ścieżki-darožki*), published by DVU, and his most famous short story “42 Documents,” printed by Ukrainskyi Robitnyk publishing house. Set during the February Revolution and the subsequent Civil War, the novel explored the psychological toll of the revolution and the complex moral choices faced by intelligentsia. In “42 Documents” the author tells the story of a dedicated Bolshevik revolutionary sent to a rural area to establish a Revolutionary Committee (Revkom) and fight against a local anti-Soviet “bandit” group led by a former landowner.

In 1932, Kardynalovska translated for Molodyi Bilshovyk publishers an adventure novel *Amok* by Yanka Maur (pen name of Ivan Fiodaraŭ), further broadening the Ukrainian readership of Belarusian Soviet prose.

Another major Belarusian Soviet writer, Ciška Hartny (pen name of Žmicier Žyŭlunovič) — poet, prose writer, playwright, publicist, and head of the first Soviet government of Belarus — was also actively translated. In 1929 Serhii Pylypenko translated his short story “Strikebreaker” (Belar.: “Shtreykbrekher”), published by Ukrainskyi Robitnyk and reprinted in 1932, while Oleksandr Soroka translated his books of stories *Slivers on the waves* (Belar.: *Treski na chvaliach*) (Knyhospilka, 1930) and *The Landowner* (Belar.: *Haspadar*) (LiM,¹⁶ 1932). Soroka also translated a collection of stories by M. Nikanovich, published as *In the Whirlpool of Life*, further illustrating the breadth of Belarusian prose available in Ukrainian translation.

Taken together, these translations reveal a dense network of literary mediation in which Ukrainian translators — poets, critics, editors, and public intellectuals — served as the primary agents of Belarusian–Ukrainian cultural exchange. Their work not only introduced Belarusian authors to Ukrainian readers but also embedded Belarusian literature within the Soviet project of interethnic cultural integration, making translation a key mechanism through which the ideals of “Brotherhood” and “Friendship of the Peoples” were enacted on the page.

4.2. From the Literature of the Peoples of the Caucasus (Armenian, Georgian, Azerbaijani, Ossetian, Adyghe)

The translation of literary works from the peoples of the Caucasus into Ukrainian during the late 1920s and 1930s formed a significant component of the broader Soviet project of inter-republican cultural exchange. These translations not only introduced Ukrainian readers to the literary canons of Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ossetia, and the Adyghe but also reflected the ideological imperatives of the period, which encouraged the circulation of national literatures within the framework of Soviet internationalism. The following subchapter outlines this activity by republic,

¹⁶ The full name of this publishing house is Literatura i Mystetstvo (Literature and Art), which is commonly abbreviated as LiM.

highlighting the authors translated, the translators involved, and the publishing institutions that facilitated this cultural transfer.

Armenian literature was represented in Ukrainian translation primarily through the works of its most celebrated authors. Hovhannes Tumanyan, widely regarded as the greatest Armenian writer, appeared in Ukrainian in two major editions: the story *Gikor*, translated by H. Ter-Ghevondyan and M. Chuhunenko (Kharkiv–Kyiv: Molodyi Bilshovyk, 1931), and the poetry collection under the title of a poem *Green Brother* (Armenian: *Kanjach Akhper*, Ukr.: *Zelenyi Bratyk*), translated by Pavlo Tychyna (Kyiv: Derzhlitvydav, 1940).

The translation activity of Ter-Ghevondyan and Chuhunenko also included a story by Stepan Zorian, published by DVU in 1930 under the title *The Homeless Arsho* (Ukr.: *Bezprytulnyi Arsho*). Another Armenian author, Karen Mikaelyan, executed during the Stalinist purges in 1937, was introduced to Ukrainian readers through the translation of his *Novels* by Maria Pylynska (Kharkiv: LiM, 1931).

A particularly noteworthy publication was the 1939 Ukrainian edition of the Armenian national epic *David of Sassoun*, issued by Derzhlitvydav. Edited by Liubomyr Dmyterko and Oleksandr Soroka, with general oversight by Pavlo Tychyna, the volume brought together translations by P. Tychyna, V. Svidzinskiy, Ye. Fomin, L. Dmyterko, and others. Given that more than fifty versions of the epic had been recorded by the mid-twentieth century, the precise Armenian source text used for the Ukrainian translation remains uncertain. Nevertheless, the publication marked a major cultural achievement in the inter-republican circulation of literary heritage.

Georgian literature — particularly Soviet-era prose — was translated into Ukrainian with remarkable intensity. In 1930, Knyhospilka published four editions of Mikheil Javakhishvili's story collections, all of which were translated by Heorhii Namoradze. The titles were *Collection of Stories*, *Meeting*, *Lambalo and Khama*, and *Dbacha Was Late*. The story "Two Sons," which was also published separately, was translated by Oleksandr Soroka. Javakhishvili's novel *Khizani Dzhako* appeared in two editions: as *The Scum of Life* (Ukr.: *Pokydky zhyttia*; DVU, 1930) and as *The Barricade* (Ukr.: *Zavala*; Kharkiv: Rukh [Movement], 1931), the latter translated by V. Levytskyi.

Other Georgian authors also entered Ukrainian literary circulation during this period. In 1929, DVU published Maria Dgebuadze-Pularia's novel *On the Ruins of Happiness* in her own auto-translation, edited by L. Pakharevskyi. The works of Konstantin Lordkipanidze appeared in 1930: the novel *Superfluous People* (Georgian: *Zedmeti khalkhi*), translated by O. Soroka and H. Namoradze (published in Knyhospilka), and the short-story collection *The First Mother* (Georgian: *Pirveli deda*), translated by H. Namoradze (issued by DVU).

In the same year, 1930, Knyhospilka published Levan Metreveli's story *The Bolshevik*, translated by O. Soroka, and Kolau Nadiradze's story *Gaspar*, marking the transition of the last Georgian symbolist poet toward socialist realism. LiM issued then a story "The Ferocious One" by Nikolo Mitsishvili (often referred to by his real name Nikoloz Sirbiladze), while in 1931 it published Niko Lortkipanidze's story *The Village Rake* (Georgian: *Soplis Don-Zhuani*), Petre Kutateladze's (pseudonym Samsonidze) novella *The First Storm* (Georgian: *Pirveli karishkhali*), and Demna Shengelaia's novel

Sanavardo (one of the most significant works of Georgian modernism), translated by Ye. Pluh.

Ioseb Tatishvili's prose reached new audiences through the work of O. Soroka, who rendered the story *The Washerwoman* (Georgian: *Mretskhavi*) for Knyhospilka in 1930, and H. Namoradze, who translated both the dramatic novella *The Bride of Two Enemies* (*Ori mtris satsole*, 1931) and the story *A Woman's Fate* (Georgian: *Kalis bedi*, 1932) for the LiM publishing house. The same publishers also issued in 1932 the drama *Rogor* (often translated as *How It Was*) by Karlo Kaladze — a significant work of early 20th-century Georgian theater, staged in the late 1920s as part of the Soviet effort to modernize theatrical repertoires with national motives. The translation was done by H. Tsagareli and A. Dudka (Oleksii Varavva). A classic of 20th-century Georgian children's literature, the story "Chikori" ("The Top or The Spinning Top") by David Suliashvili was also published in LiM that year.

The mid-1930s saw the publication of major Georgian classics in Ukrainian translation. In 1936, Derzhlitvydav issued a complete volume of Nikoloz Baratashvili's *Poetry* translated by Ivan Kulyk, following earlier translations by P. Hrabovskyi, B. Hrinchenko, and S. Palii. The same year saw the publication of Mikheil Javakhishvili's historical novel *Arsena of Marabda* (Georgian: *Arsena Marabdeli*), based on the life of Arsena Odzelashvili, a real-life 19th-century Georgian "Robin Hood" figure, celebrated in Georgian folklore.

In 1937, Derzhlitvydav published Sandro Shanshiashvili's drama titled *Arsen* (translation by O. Varavva and K. Tsagareli), which was a cornerstone of Georgian theater in the 1930s. Like the abovementioned novel, it focuses on the legendary 19th-century outlaw Arsena Odzelashvili, but it was specifically tailored for the high-energy, "heroic" style of the Rustaveli Theater. A play by Amiran Shervashidze *Kravchuk's Tears* (Georgian: *Kravchukis tsremlibi*), translated by A. Novoseletsky in 1940, was particularly noted for its focus on internationalist themes and the historical "friendship of nations." Shervashidze wrote the play immediately following the Soviet annexation of Western Ukraine. It centers on the historical and political "ties" between the Georgian, Ukrainian, and Russian peoples.

A major cultural milestone was the Ukrainian translation of Shota Rustaveli's medieval epic *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* (Georgian: *Vepkhistaosani*), rendered by Mykola Bazhan (Kyiv–Kharkiv, 1937; reprinted 1940). Bazhan also edited the 1940 edition of Simon Chikovani's *Poems*, which included translations by Maksym Rylsky and others, as well as the *Selected Works* of Akaki Tsereteli, featuring translations by P. Tychyna, V. Svidzinskyi, M. Rylsky, and others. In 1939, Bazhan edited the anthology *Poetry of Soviet Georgia* (Kyiv), further consolidating Georgian–Ukrainian literary ties.

Azerbaijani literature was represented in Ukrainian translation primarily through two publications issued in 1930. The first was *Young Azerbaijan*, a collection of contemporary Azerbaijani writers translated by Hryhorii Piddubnyi (Kharkiv–Odesa: Derzhvydav USSR). The second was a story by Sadik Huseyn (also appearing as Sadiq Hüseyin or Huseynov) *On the Way to a New Life* (Azerbaijani: *Yeni Həyata Doğru*), published by Knyhospilka (Kharkiv).

Ossetian literature appeared in Ukrainian translation in the 1931 LiM edition of *Ossetian Stories*, translated by Varvara Cherednichenko. This publication marked one of the earliest efforts to introduce Ossetian prose to Ukrainian readers.

In 1932, a collection titled *Circassian Songs, Legends, Myths* was published in Kyiv, translated from Adyghe by Oleksa Kyrii and edited by Maksym Rylsky. The volume offered Ukrainian readers access to the oral and poetic traditions of the Adyghe people, reflecting the Soviet emphasis on documenting and disseminating the folklore of minority nationalities.

4.3. From the Literature of the Peoples of Central Asia (Tajik, Kalmyk, Bashkir, Kazakh)

Tajik literature was represented primarily through the works of Sadriddin Aini, the founder of Tajik Soviet literature. *The Story of the Poor Tajik: Adine* (often titled simply *Adina*), was translated by Ye. Rebryk (Kharkiv: Rukh, 1931), followed by the novel *Dohunda*, translated by Rebryk and edited by A. Kovalevskyi (Kharkiv: Radianska Literatura [Soviet Literature], 1934). The latter work stands as the first true novel in the Tajik language and is considered a cornerstone of Central Asian literature, marking the shift from traditional storytelling to the modern European-style novel.

The founder of Soviet Tajik poetry Abulqasim Lahuti (also transliterated as Abulkasem Hasem Laguti or Abolqasem Lahouti) appeared in two Ukrainian editions: *Poems*, translated by B. Nikitin (Rukh, 1932), and *Selected Poems*, translated from Farsi by Teren Masenko (LiM, 1934).

Kalmyk literature entered Ukrainian translation through Anton Amur-Sanan's autobiographical novel *Mudreshkin's Son* (Russian: *Mudreshkin syn*; Kalmyk: *Muudran kövün*), translated from Russian by P. Drozdov and published by LiM in 1932.

A Bashkortostan-based women's movement and emancipation activist Antonina Nurkhat (also spelled Nukhrat or Nurpeisova), who traveled widely in Central Asia in the 1920s, was represented by a separate edition of the documentary story entitled *In the Kazakh Steppes* (Russian: *V kazakhskikh stepyakh*), translated from Russian by M. Pashkova and published by LiM in 1932. Published during the period of *Korenizatsiia* (indigenization/nativization), where the Soviet state encouraged works that depicted the transition of "backward" nomadic cultures into the socialist modern era, this book is a representative work of early Soviet "activist literature."

4.4. A Voice from the Far Northern Tundra: The Literature of the Yukaghir

In 1935, Dytydyav¹⁷ published Teki Odulok's story *The Life of Imteurgin the Elder* (also known as *The Life of Senior Imteurgin*), translated from Russian by A. Khodko. The novella was originally published in Russian in 1934 and translated into English

¹⁷ The abbreviation "Dytydyav" stands for "Dytiache Vydavnytstvo," which is Ukrainian for "Children's Publishing House" of the Ukrainian SSR.

under the title *Snow People* (London, 1934). It has also been translated into Estonian, Lithuanian, Polish, and several other languages.

Despite the fact that Teki Odulok (Nikolai Spiridonov) is considered to be the first Yukaghir scholar and writer, he created his most famous work in Russian, as a written form of the Yukaghir language had not been developed in the 1930s. The book brought the author nationwide fame across the Soviet Union and was later translated into many languages of the peoples of the USSR. This book remained the only Ukrainian engagement with Yukaghir literature until the 1970s-1980s, when the work of another Yukaghir writer, Semion Kurilov, appeared in Soviet Ukrainian periodicals (Dziuba 1995). Kurilov composed his work in both Yukaghir and Russian.

Aleksandr Titkov's article, "Tekki Odulok: The Founder of a Non-Existent Literature," provides a window into the Soviet "creative laboratory" responsible for producing the literatures of the Russian Far North. Titkov argues that:

Indeed, the novella *The Life of Imteurgin the Elder* and the book of travel essays *In the Far North* possess certain literary merits, but was Teki Odulok a writer in the strict sense of the word? [...] The novella *The Life of Imteurgin*, which enjoyed resounding success and went through several reprints, was recorded (in Russian) from Odulok's own words by one of the editors, and subsequently given a literary polish by Samuil Marshak... (Titkov 2015)

Titkov underscores the paradox of Odulok's legacy, arguing that the title of "founder" is rendered almost meaningless by the absence of successors:

But even recognizing Teki Odulok as a writer does not settle the question of him being the "founder of Yukaghir literature." Try as I might, I have been unable to find a single other Yukaghir writer besides Teki Odulok, even in the exhaustive bibliographic directory *Writers and Literati of the Small-Numbered Peoples of the North and Far East* prepared by V. Ogryzko. <...> In all probability, Teki Odulok will remain the first and only Yukaghir Russian-language writer for a very long time. As for literature that is strictly Yukaghir (that is, in the Yukaghir language), it seems it may never appear at all... (Titkov 2015)¹⁸

The quoted excerpts reflect a critical (and somewhat skeptical) perspective on the "creation" of national literatures during the Soviet era. They highlight two common themes of that period: the role of established Russian authors (like the famous children's writer Samuil Marshak) in editing and shaping the works of indigenous writers to fit Soviet literary standards (literary "patronage") and the tragic reality that many small-numbered indigenous languages remained primarily oral or transitioned directly into Russian-language literary traditions rather than developing an independent written literature (language extinction).

¹⁸ Both quotations from Titkov's article are translated into English by the present author.

5. Conclusion

Several key conclusions can be drawn regarding Soviet language and translation policy, the role of Ukraine as a translational hub, and the mechanics of literary “engineering” through translation in the 1920s-1930s. Ukraine was a kind of “testing ground” for Soviet multilingualism at that period, holding the majority of the USSR’s Czech, Jewish, Polish, and German populations, as well as other ethnic minorities and indigenous linguistic groups, such as Mariupol Greeks. The positionality of Soviet Ukraine as a multi-ethnic republic made it the primary laboratory for the *Korenizatsiia* policy, with the local languages officially integrated in schools, courts, and administration.

During the 1920s — that period went down into political and cultural history as active Ukrainization (1923-1929) — translation was among the key instruments of Soviet Indigenization and *Ukrainization* processes, albeit hypocritically, but nevertheless initiated and supported by the Soviet authorities. It served as a cultural and structural tool of developing, spreading, and raising the authority of the Ukrainian language as the titular language of the Ukrainian SSR and the language of the overwhelming majority of its ethnic population.¹⁹

The late 1920s saw a massive influx of Belarusian, Georgian, and Armenian literature into Ukraine, supported by high-profile figures like Pavlo Tychyna and Maksym Rylsky.

Direct translations from the minority languages of Soviet Ukraine (like Yiddish or Meotian Greek) strengthened the “symbolic capital” of the Ukrainian language, whilst translations of the works by Ukrainian authors like Mykola Kostomarov or Hryhorii Kvitka-Osnovianenko, originally written in Russian, including the literary heritage of Nikolai Gogol (Ukrainian: Mykola Hohol’), particularly his early Ukrainian folk culture-based writings,²⁰ reclaimed these authors for the Ukrainian national canon.

Both intra- and inter-Republican literary translations heavily reflected Socialist Realist ideologies and styles. For small-numbered or nomadic Central Asian and Siberian groups, these early Soviet “national literatures” — such as Yukaghir literature — were often engineered projects designed to meet Soviet standards rather than organic developments.

A major structural change occurred in translation strategies as a means of intercultural communication in the 1930s: the shift from direct to mediated translation. When in the 1920s, cultures engaged directly (for example, Yiddish to Ukrainian, Ukrainian to Yiddish, or Georgian to Ukrainian, Ukrainian to Georgian, and so on), fostering genuine interethnic dialogue, the rise of Russian as the “bridge” language during the 1930s resulted in the substantial severing of direct linguistic connections. The natural, lateral communication between neighboring cultures like Yiddish and Ukrainian was targeted to be intentionally broken. Translation acquired a new and focused function: to serve as a tool for linguistic and cultural assimilation

¹⁹ See the map visualizing data from the 1926 First All-Union Census of the Soviet Union, which illustrates the percentage of residents categorized as ethnically Ukrainian in each district (*raion*) of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic (MAPA Digital Atlas of Ukraine, n.d.).

²⁰ See Hohol’ (1929, 1930).

(Russification).²¹ This ideological push towards erasing unique ethnic identities in favor of a singular, Moscow- and Russo-centric “Soviet” identity, enforced linguistic standardization and Russification. Minority and other Soviet people’s works began to be more and more often translated into Ukrainian via Russian versions.

At that, the same authors and translators who built the bridges between national literatures of the USSR (e.g., Mikheil Javakhishvili, Mykola Zerov, Tekki Odulok, Michaś Čarot, and many others) were largely decimated by Stalinist repressions in the 1930s, effectively halting the development of these national literary and translation projects.

Furthermore, the very authors and translators who had constructed the cultural bridges between the diverse national literatures of the USSR — including figures such as Mikheil Javakhishvili, Mykola Zerov, Tekki Odulok, and Michaś Čarot — were systematically decimated by the Stalinist repressions of the 1930s. This widespread persecution effectively paralyzed the development of numerous nascent national literary and translation initiatives.

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²¹ The institutionalization of linguistic Russification was formalized through three resolutions of the Commission of the People’s Commissariat of Education (NKO) “on the inspection of work on the language front”: “Resolution of the NKO Commission on the Inspection of Work on the Language Front on Comrade Khvyliia’s Report ‘The Nationalist Danger on the Language Front and the Struggle Against It’” (April 26, 1933); “Resolution of the NKO Commission on the Inspection of Work on the Language Front in Matters of Terminology”; and “Resolution of the NKO Commission on the Inspection of Work on the Language Front in Matters of Grammar” (Khvyliia 1933: 115–29). Reprinted in Masenko (2005: 140–52).

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Conflict of Interests

The author(s) declare no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in relation to this research.

Ethics Statement

The author(s) confirm that this study was conducted in accordance with the Journal's Research Ethics and Integrity Statement and that all ethical requirements applicable to the study have been fulfilled.