

MOTHER TONGUE, MOTHER'S TOUCH

**KAZAKHSTAN GOVERNMENT AND SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION
OF IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE PLANNING METAPHORS**

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*Kishi pejildiler bakytty,
olar zherding murageri bolady.*

‘Fortunate are the humble,
for they will inherit the land.’

*Tatuwlastyruwshylar bakytty,
olar Kudajdyng balalary delinedi.*

‘Fortunate are the peace-makers
for they will be called God’s children.’

To the women

whose labor made this work possible:

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Dilara and Zhyldyz

Nurijla

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who inspired and helped:

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Carlyle Saylor and Jack Voelkel

Ali Beg Hakim

Sulejman Shadkam, Talant Mawkhanuly, Jiger Janabel

Abzal

To my children

and the eaglets of Aspan

ABSTRACT

MOTHER TONGUE, MOTHER'S TOUCH: KAZAKHSTAN GOVERNMENT AND SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE PLANNING METAPHORS

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To become an independent nation after the Soviet Union's collapse, the ruling Kazakh elite and Kazakh language medium school administrators struggle to restore ethnic nationality consciousness, consolidate the Kazakhs' political power at the government and school levels, and implement Kazakh as the official language, without antagonizing the large Russian minority and Russia itself and thus threatening civil and international peace. This ethnographic, language planning case study compares government documents and discourse data from a Kazakh-medium school which construct metaphors of language, state identity, and ethnic nationality identity. Findings at the macro level elucidate the micro level and vice versa.

Findings include the salience of contradictory identity metaphors of the Kazakh ethnic nationality and the Kazakh-medium school as strong, kind mothers on the one hand, and as suffering step-children, mistreated respectively in their own homeland and local community on the other. Also prominent on both levels are orientations toward language as resource for instilling ethnic nationality consciousness and as right, often formulated in the sense of duty to protect the Kazakh mother tongue.

State and school development of the "kind mother" metaphor, with its implications of cultural pluralism and political, economic, and educational incorporation of Russians and other ethnic nationalities, holds promise for improving inter-ethnic nationality relations. Mutual acknowledgment by Kazakhs and Russians of an explicit resource language orientation which affirms each others' languages not only as resources for ethnic authentication but also for political consolidation and economic development would promote the officialization and nationalization of Kazakh for ethnic nationality cultural revival and the maintenance of Russian for operational efficiency of the State. Suggested language status planning efforts include differentiation between "symbolic" and "working" definitions of official language in reference to Kazakh and Russian and a strategy of transition from Russian to Kazakh as Kazakhstan's principal language of international communication while maintaining Russian for in-group, education/school, scientific literature, and work domains. Language acquisition planning can promote administratively separate language medium schools which cooperate in teaching sciences and languages.

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